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COMMUNALISM
AND THE CHALLENGE OF FIJI INDIAN UNITY
1920-1947

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
HISTORY
MAY 1996

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Abstract

This study gives an account of the rise of communalism amongst the Fiji Indians after 1920 and describes the historical-cultural milieu in which the communal groups competed for the representative positions assigned in 1929 to the Indian community in the elected and nominated bodies of the Fiji colonial state. It elucidates the process by which the Fiji Indians, whilst left to their own devices, developed a politics of multiple constituent parts, a reflection of their religious and sectarian and linguistic diversity, and how this process was prevailed upon and the divers parts were induced to coalesce by the separate and opposed interventions but consequent interaction of two outside forces: British representative democracy and Indian ethnic nationalism. The conclusions reached provide a new understanding of Fiji Indian political behaviour in the inter-war years and an innovative framework of analysis whereby to account for the profound disjunctions apparent in the wider Fiji political culture by the end of the Second World War.
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List of Abbreviations

A.I.C.C.  All-India Congress Committee
A.Y.M.A.  Arya Young Men’s Association
Beng.  Bengali
C.B.E.  Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire
C.O.  Colonial Office
C.P.M.  Chief Police Magistrate
C.S.O.  Colonial Secretary’s Office Minute Papers and Files
C.S.R.  Colonial Sugar Refining Company
C.W.M.G.  Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi
F.C.E.  Fiji Colonial Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure
F.L.C.D.  Colony of Fiji, Legislative Council Debates
F.R.G.  Fiji Royal Gazette
FS  Fiji Samachar
FTH  Fiji Times and Herald
G.C.C.  Great Council of Chiefs
H.  Hindi
H.I.J.M.S.  His Imperial Japanese Majesty’s Ship
H.M.A.S.  His/Her Majesty’s Australian Ship
H.M.G.  His/Her Majesty’s Government
H.M.N.Z.S.  His/Her Majesty’s New Zealand Ship
H.M.S.  His/Her Majesty’s Ship
I.C.S.  Indian Civil Service
J.F.L.C.  Colony of Fiji, Journal of the Legislative Council
J.P.  Justice of the Peace
K.C.  King’s Counsellor
K.C.M.G.  Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George
M.L.C.  Member of the Legislative Council
O.C.F.  Ordinances of the Colony of Fiji
R.A.N.  Royal Australian Navy
R.N.  Royal Navy
R.N.Z.N.  Royal New Zealand Navy
Sj.  Srijut
Skt.  Sanskrit
S.P.C.  Sardar Patel’s Correspondence, 1945-50
S.W.J.N.  Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru
T.P.  Transfer of Power (see Bibliography, p.424 below, under Constitutional Relations ...)
U.  Urdu
U.K.  United Kingdom
U.S.A.  United States of America
Preface

The preface to any work is the first statement that a writer makes to a reader, but it is usually the last pages of the work to be written. It thus serves a retrospective as well as a prefatory function, for it allows the writer to offer a clear declaration of purpose and statement of limitations, thereby to warn the unsuspecting and make explanations to the sceptical.

The writing of this particular work, on the nature and impact of communalism amongst the Fiji Indians, is linked to my earlier research of communalism in modern South Asia. It arose from the inadvertent conjunction in time between the ending of my prescribed M.A. studies of things South Asian, conducted at the University of Canterbury, and the ending of the Westminster form of parliamentary government in Fiji, brought about by the military putsch of 1987 -- effected by native Fijian soldiers of the Suva garrison against a newly elected government dominated by Fiji Indians. Casting around for a topical Ph.D dissertation subject likely to attract the interest of funding agencies, the flurry of interest in the communal sections of Fiji Indian society which, breaking ranks with the main body of their racial kind, came out in support of the putsch provided me with an opening. It was a phenomenon, I argued, which called for historical explanation. The honourable members of the Vice-Chancellors' Committee
(formerly, in 1988, the University Grants Committee) agreed. In August 1988, in receipt of a state scholarship with overseas tenure, I arrived at the University of Hawaii and began work on this study.

My relocation to a foreign place operating by unfamiliar rules has not been unattended by problems. Yet the experience of conforming to conventions both novel and unanticipated is something which I share with my historical subjects. This portion of Indian history, specifically a segment of the history of Indians abroad, took place in a setting that was both exotic and distant.

It must be made clear at the outset that this is not an insider’s survey history of the Indians in Fiji. Over the past thirty years, several such studies have been undertaken by writers equipped with the necessary area and language skills. While I myself have none of the credentials necessary to undertake such studies, I have used and acknowledged them at various points in my account. Rather than surveying the main concerns of the Indian experience in Fiji -- indenture, land ownership, family formation, religious beliefs -- this work focuses more narrowly on the formation and interaction of the Fiji Indian communalist groups that competed for space on the public stage in colonial Fiji during the course of the inter-war years. It was a British colonial public stage, a worthy historical context for the projection of a New Zealand point of view.
The primary sources consulted in the course of my research were selected from what are usually viewed as two distinct areas of historical study: Pacific and South Asian. From the Central Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific High Commission (lately renamed the National Archives of Fiji), I have made use of the *Colony of Fiji, Journal of the Legislative Council*, the *Colony of Fiji, Legislative Council Debates*, the *Fiji Colonial Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure*, the *Fiji Royal Gazette* and the *Ordinances of the Colony of Fiji*. I have secured access to these five archival sources through the good offices of the Archives' Photocopying Service, from the microfilm copies held at Hamilton Library, University of Hawaii. I have also consulted the Colonial Office Correspondence files relating to Fiji (the C.O.83 series), the originals of which are held at the Public Record Office, London, and of which copies in microfilm are also available at Hamilton Library.

In something of a unpropitious counterbalance to this realized collection of Pacific archival sources, I was not able to gain direct access to the Colonial Secretary's Office Minute Papers and Files (the C.S.O. files), housed only at the National Archives of Fiji, Suva. This source constitutes the store from which the Colonial Office Correspondence, mentioned above, was originally selected for transmission, on a regular basis, from Suva to London. But it also includes material collected by British colonial officials from the body of
public resolutions and declarations, sometimes communicated in one or other Indian vernacular, put out by the various Fiji Indian communal organizations -- material which, in most cases, probably was not selected for dispatch for the edification of the Colonial Office. Yet, despite the promise attendant on this source, those who guard the public purse, both American and New Zealand, were deaf to my efforts to secure the necessary field research funding. While we all must commend the vigilance of public servants, the near-absence of this desired source is, in terms of the integrity of my study, a serious deficit. I have tried to offset this deficiency by approaching the C.S.O. files at second hand, through quoted passages, and their supporting references, cited in items of secondary literature. But such resort to middlemen is intended as a temporary expedient. At some future date, in an age of less straitened circumstances, when the largesse upon which all scholarly pursuit depends is, in due season, restored, this deficit shall be made good. For then, the opportunity to reopen my investigations, to plunge into the pool of C.S.O. files which dwell at the heart of the official British colonial endeavour in Fiji and, perhaps, to revise my conclusions, shall be seized.

South Asian archival and political party sources provide something of a second leg on which this work is supported. They include two hardy perennials of South Asian historiography of which I have made limited use: the
Constitutional Relations between Britain and India: The Transfer of Power 1942-7, published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London; and the Congress Presidential Addresses, published by the Indian Institute of Applied Political Research, New Delhi. On a broader front, I have also used material selected from the published personal papers of various Indian political figures: The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, published by the Government of India Publications Division, Delhi; Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50, published by the Navajivan Trust, Ahmedabad; the Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, published by Orient Longman, New Delhi; the Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal, published by the Iqbal Academy, Lahore; the Speeches and Statements of Iqbal, published by Ghulam Ali and Sons, Lahore; the Speeches and Writings of the Right Honourable V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, published by the Right Honourable V.S. Srinivasa Sastri Birth Centenary Committee, Madras; and the Sri Aurobindo Speeches, published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry.

Extensive use has been made of the press material of my period. Most worthy of note are the Fiji Times and Herald and the Fiji Samachar, both of which were published out of Suva, the first being the voice of the dominant Fiji European social circles, the second serving as the press organ of the Arya Samaj, the most active and best financed of the Fiji Indian communal groups.
The main theme that runs through this work is that of a contest between Indian ethnic nationalism and various forms of Indian sectarian and linguistic communalism for the right to represent the political high ground among the Fiji Indians, a contest from which Indian ethnic nationalism emerged triumphant. Unlike all other writers on things Fiji Indian, I have withheld applause. A long backward glance over the text of the concluding chapter persuades me that, working with the data gathered in the preceding research chapters, I have arrived at a novel interpretation of historical cause and effect. Swayed by contemplation of the sequence of events which led to the rise of a racially polarized political order in late colonial Fiji, this work posits that the communalist representative option, and the political pluralism to which it would likely have given rise, would have better served Fiji Indian, and Fiji national, interests. This conclusion will not please everyone and, from the direction of the Indian ethnic nationalists, it can even expect to have its impassioned detractors. But at least it has the merit of failing to conform with the orthodox view of Fiji Indian communalism, thereby fulfilling the requirement of originality, something requisite to all Ph.D works.

K.L. Daley
Hawaii
7 February 1996
Chapter One

Introduction

A great deal has been written about the internal divisions, class and communal, which afflict Indian society. These divisions usually figure as a necessary explanatory factor in historical accounts of the subcontinent during the modern era. In these works, the factor most in contention has been the impact of specifically communal divisions on the course of the modern history of the Indian people, in the subcontinent and abroad. We shall devote this work to an examination of the effect of communal divisions on the course of the history of the Fiji Indians, for the period from 1920 to 1947.

It is intended that this work will contribute towards filling a gap in the historical understanding of the Fiji Indians, that it will add to our knowledge of their social character and political intentions. There is a steadily growing body of literature on the subject of the Fiji Indians, about the indentured genesis of their community, about their later development as the colony’s majority community, and about the disquieting events that have attended their relations with the politically dominant indigenous Fijians in an independent Fiji. Yet this literature has focused almost exclusively on the interaction between the Fiji Indians and the other elements of Fijian society. It seems that scholars have been interested mainly in the racial confrontations that
developed more or less parallel with the evolution of an increasingly democratic political structure as, during the middle decades of the twentieth century, Fiji moved through the stages of British colonial trusteeship towards a redeemed sovereignty. Few have posited, and none have verified, that confrontations other than racial ones were generated by the advance of the representative principle in the politics of Fiji. This work will be the first attempt at a systematic study of the political significance of the confessional and sub-ethnic divisions within the Fiji Indian community.

While ours is a topic which has attracted never more than a passing interest from historians, references to Fiji Indian communal activism of our period are nonetheless spread, here and there, amongst the works of nine. In the order in which they have published, the nine historians (and, in parentheses, their publication dates) are: John Wesley Coulter (1942, 1967), Adrian Mayer (1961, 1963), Kenneth Gillion (1962, 1977), Robert Norton (1977, 1990), Jim Wilson (1979), Ahmed Ali (1979, 1980, 1986), Brij Lal (1979, 1983, 1992), Purusottama Bilimoria (1985), and John Dunham Kelly (1991). Let us consider briefly the gist of their various works, in respect to their treatment of Fiji Indian communalism.

John Wesley Coulter’s works¹ do not provide information on Fiji Indian communalism beyond the occasional mention that,

¹ John Wesley Coulter, Fiji: Little India of the Pacific, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1942; and The Drama of Fiji: A Contemporary History, Rutland (Vermont), Charles E. Tuttle, 1967.
amongst the Fiji Indians, "differences between various sects arise, but they do not ... lead to untoward breaches of the peace," and that "[t]heir contentions stem from differences in language ... and from differences in religion." But we include Coulter in our authorial muster because, in the following chapter, we make use of his time-and-motion study of the typical Fiji Indian farm worker's activity profile.

Robert Norton, like Coulter, also need not detain us at any great length -- though for a quite different reason. Norton's first work set the standard for what has become the classical approach to the study of politics in Fiji, that is, the line of approach which posits evident inter-racial competition and suspected underlying class conflict as the primary dynamic, or dual set of primary dynamics, of politics in Fiji. We, in contrast, posit the importance of inter-Indian communalism as determining, at least in part, the configuration of Fiji Indian politics; so our path does not often trespass on the inter-racial and class conflict ground demarcated by Norton. As to Norton's second work, supposedly a second edition of his first, it is, in truth, a separate study in which certain sections of the earlier work

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2 Coulter, *Little India* ... 1942, p.105.
3 Coulter, *Drama of Fiji* ... 1967, p.24.
are, sometimes out of all recognition, condensed with a view to set the stage for an account of political progress in Fiji after 1977, the year of Norton's first publication.

The works of Purusottama Bilimoria, Jim Wilson and John Dunham Kelly can be considered together. All three men are primarily scholars of religion, or the sociology of religion, to whom their ventures into historical interpretation are of secondary import. The religious dimension to our topic is something we intend to downplay. So let us deal briefly with our three scholars of things religious.

Bilimoria's work, an account of the founding and floruit of a Hindu reformist sect in Fiji, contains several errors of historical fact. But it nevertheless discloses many gems of Fiji Indian historical information otherwise either unavailable or unknown. By way of contrast, Wilson's article, a survey of Hinduism as it has taken root amongst the Fiji Indians, is a work of evident scholarly finesse. But it does not address the issues raised by communalism, something which can only be studied in terms of the interaction of communalist groups, one with the other and with non-communalist third parties, such as secular parties and the colonial state. Such communalist interaction lies outside

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Wilson's intended purview. Kelly's work\(^8\) comes closer, in subject matter, to our own study. He gives a fine account of communalist competition in the late 1920s in the high politics of Fiji, in those years mainly between the Arya Samaj\(^9\) and the Indian Reform League. But, for Kelly, such inter-Indian rivalry is secondary to the Fiji Indian or, more correctly, the Fiji Indian Hindu conflict with the colonial state. Kelly's thesis is focused on colonialism, not communalism.

The four remaining historians we need to consider are the four most important scholars of things Fiji Indian: namely, Adrian Mayer, Ahmed Ali, Kenneth Gillion and Brij Lal. Their works, considered in aggregate, constitute the core volumes of Fiji Indian historiography. We shall not, however, consider them as a group. These four men have set the standard against which our own study shall be judged. It may serve our purpose to reflect separately on the import of the works of each.

Adrian Mayer, an anthropologist, was the first writer to treat the history of the Indians of Fiji as a separate field of study and one to be approached in an empirical manner. The first of Mayer's works\(^10\) provides an intimate account of life

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\(^9\) We intend this introductory chapter to read smoothly; so, for this and additional aesthetic reasons, we wish to avoid a surfeit of footnotes. We have therefore consigned to the main research chapters explanations for possibly unfamiliar terms such as "Arya Samaj" and "Sanatani," "Sunni" and "Ahmadi," "sangam" and "Mahasabha," and others. For brief definitions of most of these terms, the reader can, of course, consult the Glossary.

\(^10\) Adrian C. Mayer, *Peasants in the Pacific: A Study of Fiji Indian
in three Fiji Indian villages, based on field research conducted in 1951. He mentions factions forming within the Indian village communities. But such factions, it seems, evolved around purely local concerns, such as boundary disputes between farmers, boycotts between India-born and Fiji-born individuals, even territorially defined conflicts where the families living at one end of a village, for whatever reason, confronted those residing at the other. True, the local chapters of the Arya Samaj or the Muslim League or the Sangam sometimes provided an institutional focus for one or other faction. Yet it seems to us that the issues at stake in Mayer's account, no matter how significant they were for the villagers involved, were too local to compare with the major issues, often ones of national moment, which provide the grist for our own study.

Mayer's second work\textsuperscript{11} is a slim volume which provides a broad historical survey of the Indian experience in Fiji. Mayer makes passing reference to the formation of "socio-religious associations such as the Arya Samaj, the Kabir Panth and the Ramanandi Panth" and secular associations such as "the British Indian (later Indian Imperial) Association of Fiji."\textsuperscript{12} He does not, however, elaborate at any length on


\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p.30.
the purpose and activities of these various associations. Indeed, in several instances he relies on Gillion's first work, published the previous year.

Ahmed Ali was the first ethnic Fiji Indian historian of our chosen group to arrive on the Fiji Indian historiographical scene. His three works\textsuperscript{13} can be considered together, for each addresses essentially the issue of change in the mode and purpose of Fiji Indian political mobilization, from the earliest years of the community's existence up to 1970, the year of Fiji's independence.

Ali, himself of the Sunni Muslim persuasion, has set the standard, still holding indisputable sway, whereby any account of Fiji Indian Sunni Muslim politics must be measured. We are fortunate indeed that our study calls for an account of the interaction between the various Fiji Indian communal groups, not for an account of the internal workings of any one or other or each such group. Perhaps, then, we can venture to posit a position on Fiji Indian Muslim communalism distinct from that established by Ali. Dare we even hazard to aspire to make some small contribution to the literature, beyond the bounds of Ali's peerless erudition, especially in respect to the conflict within the Fiji branch of the umma, between the

Sunni and Ahmadi believers? Perhaps we can. For when we ponder the nature of our academic relationship with Ali, our thoughts take flight to France. We recall to mind the depiction of certain Christian saints in the cathedral at Chartres -- of the manner of portrayal, in the stain-glass windows, of the fathers of the Christian church. There, set in the towering walls, Origen and Augustine and Jerome are depicted as pygmies, each seated on the shoulders of giant figures, representations of the Old Testament prophets, Isaiah and Amos and Ezekiel and the like. The medieval Christian message conveyed in stain-glass at Chartres is that the earlier Israelite prophets were the greater men, but that the later Christian church fathers, thanks to their elevated seating, were endowed with a superior view. With Ali's works at hand, dare we hope, borne aloft by this intellectual Titan, to be similarly privileged? The answer must await our chapter on the Fiji Indian Muslims.

Ali is not the only giant of Fiji Indian historiography providing us with a lofty perch. Kenneth Gillion is another. By common consensus, Gillion's two works¹⁴ are considered the standard account of Fiji Indian history. Few have met and none have bettered the standard Gillion has set -- with his command of the grammar of Fiji Indian politics, his style of

scholarly presentation, and his rigorous balance of evidence and argument. Gillion mentions how dissident Indian Muslim voices were raised periodically to protest declarations and policies supported by the dominant Hindus, how members of the Arya Samaj sometimes preferred to construct their own social facilities separate from those used by their orthodox Hindu neighbours, and how South Indian settlers occasionally distanced themselves, or were themselves distanced, from the activities of their North Indian compatriots. But inter-Indian divisions are not the central concern of Gillion's works. Gillion gives Indian-Fijian and Indian-European separation the central focus of his study and attributes to these racial divisions formative political significance. It seems that Gillion did not set out to investigate fully the ramifications of Fiji Indian communalism.

Our acknowledgment of the scholar currently holding the position at the cutting edge of Fiji Indian historiography we have left till last. The works of Brij Lal most scholars believe, represent the high water mark of Fiji Indian historiography -- at least, thus far achieved. No reviewer has yet been in a position from which to advance a credible critique of Lal's works, to bring against any part of them an argument to baffle his inimitable learning, his peerless

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erudition, his synthesis of all that has so far been written about the Fiji Indians, his untiring efforts to further our understanding of their past, their present, and their likely future. With the reviewers thus nonplussed, it is not for us to broach an appraisal. So it is by way of commentary rather than criticism of Lal's works that we venture to observe that, in respect to the communalist dimension of Fiji Indian politics (and in contrast to all other aspects of the same), Lal has not yet taken up his pen with the purpose to advance our knowledge of the Fiji Indian experience beyond the point already achieved by Ali and Gillion.

Let us now proceed to the main purpose of this introductory chapter: to set the terms of reference for our study. Let us begin by considering our title: "Communalism and the Challenge of Fiji Indian Unity, 1920-1947." The term "communalism" calls for definition. We shall be wise to make certain that all are agreed upon the nature of the phenomenon concerned, before we attempt to investigate its cause, describe its course, and contemplate its ramifications.

Derived from the Latin root *communis,* community (L. *communitat*) is a concept fundamental to an understanding of the dynamics of human societal order. As one scholar put it:

A community is formed when a group of people share something in common which distinguishes them from members of other groups and the shared element becomes the primary referent of identity. The nature of a community thus embodies a sense of

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16 *communis*-adj common, public; familiar.
discrimination -- a feeling of ... being encircled by a boundary within which members are supposed to act.¹⁷

Within Indian society, the "something" shared in common by the members of a community has usually taken the form of a set of religious symbols. This observation is a first step towards formulating a definition of communalism, but from this general framework we need to narrow somewhat our definitional focus.

In order to tighten the analytical meshes of our definition of communalism, we find ourselves at a juncture where we must choose between two alternative avenues of advance which beckon, one to either side. Turning in one direction, we could argue that the communal divisions which developed amongst the Fiji Indians to baffle the unity of their political efforts were not fresh cuts inflicted on a previously unsullied social visage but ancient wounds which had for centuries left their mark on Indian society and which, under the stress of tremendous social shocks of modern Fijian occasion, had broken open and begun to bleed again along the lines of the old scars. For shorthand purposes, let us call this the communalist renaissance option. Alternatively, setting course in a quite different direction, we could hold that the Indians who settled in Fiji developed a social formation in which the Indian ancestral cultural elements

were, from the very beginning, modified by the realities of life intrinsic to their new Fijian place; and that this altered Indian collective self, now identified as Fiji Indian, developed communal divisions which reflected specifically Fiji Indian social needs. This option we could call the singular or unique communalist development choice. We stand at the junction. Both ways ahead have temptations which attract and drawbacks which caution. Which way shall we turn?

The first option is the more problematic of the two. If we posit the renaissance approach, we could gambol awhile on the happy fields of Indian history, tracing the historic battle-lines of religious conflict in the subcontinent; but then we would have to face the problem of explaining how the memory of these ancient religious conflicts, and the social attitudes shaped by such memories, were transmitted to Fiji. While the transmission of culture from India to Fiji certainly occurred, it was not something which clearly left its imprint on the historical record. The result of the cultural transmission is evident -- in Fiji Indian language, food, style of life, and so on. But to give an account of the process of cultural transmission, something intrinsically intangible and elusive, we would have to depend on speculative reconstruction.

It is the second option which recommends the more. If we view Fiji Indian culture as a unique amalgam of things Indian and Fijian, of Indian people and Fijian place, our explanatory analysis will need to focus on the material realities of Fiji
Indian circumstances, and how Fiji Indians reacted to those circumstances. We are happier with the proposition that culture forms in the interaction of people and place, rather than with the concept of culture as a recurring pattern of behaviour, formed by an ancestral memory preserved in a religious tradition. So we shall envisage Fiji Indian culture not as a set of recurring social patterns typical of a series of Indian communities, both in the subcontinent and abroad, but as an original construct, something shaped by the material circumstances which obtained in the singular Oceanic setting of the Fiji Indian community. Having made our choice, it will be useful to our project if, at this point, we refract the religious from the material aspects of communalism. Once we have separated them, we shall discard the religious facets in order to be able to concentrate on the material.

Let us proceed to impose a materialist analysis on the phenomenon of communalism and, by so doing, complete our definitional exercise. At the outset, we shall attest that religious and communal identities, though connected, are not the same. The religious outlook comprises personal allegiance to a set of creeds and practices, often with a view to secure a reward from a deity — whether received after death or, solicited as a terrestrial boon. Communalism, in contrast, entails individual commitment to the interests of a religio-ethnic or religio-linguistic community for gaining worldly advantages at the expense of and in competition with the
members of other such communities. The competition can be for social, economic or political goals. And, most interestingly, whereas the religious traditions are, by their very definition, of ancient vintage, communalism, many scholars seem to agree, is a modern phenomenon. Communalism, it seems to us, has been vexing the affairs of men for about the same number of years as has nationalism -- two step-sisters, so we believe, begot in close succession by the impact of the promiscuous spirit of democracy on two different sets of traditional parochial communities, the political and the religious.

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18 For evidence of this consensus, see the articles and editorial commentary in K.N. Panikkar (editor), *Communalism in India* ... 1991.


20 We use the word "democracy" (Gr. *demokratia*) broadly, with a view to convey concepts such as official acknowledgement of popular sovereignty, consciousness of the consent of the populace as the source of political legitimacy, and popular involvement, in whatever form, in political affairs. In our view, representative democracy, as it evolved separately in early modern Britain, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian kingdoms, is only a particular form of democracy. By way of contrast, democracy evolved in the Swiss cantons during the same centuries in which it evolved in the north-western European kingdoms, but assumed a different, more direct, form -- a form which had much in common with the original democratic systems which evolved in many of the *poleis* of ancient Hellas. For elaboration on this matter, see Kevin Daley, "Origins of Democracy," an unpublished paper, University of Hawaii, June 1992 -- a paper presented at the "Second Annual Symposium on Issues of Culture and Communication in Asia and the Pacific" (session on "Democracy and Modernity") held at the East-West Centre, Hawaii, early September 1992.

21 A list of examples of traditional parochial communities of the political type which, in the early modern era, succumbed to nationalism would likely include Britain, France, Castile and the Netherlands. Examples of traditional parochial communities of the religious type which, also in the modern age, capitulated to communalism would likely include the Maronites of the Levant, the Druze of the Lebanon uplands, and the Muslims, Sikhs and Untouchables of the Indian subcontinent.
We have defined our analytical tool and shaped it to suit our purpose. Let us now proceed to apply this instrument to our community of study.

We readily accept the verdict of the modern nature of communalism: it is a proposition which fits well with Fiji Indian historical experience. From our own studies, it is apparent that, in the early decades of its existence, in the 1880s and 1890s, the Indian settler community in Fiji was not differentiated communally. We do not mean that community consciousness was absent amongst the Hindus, Muslims, South Indians, Christians and others who together made up Fiji Indian society. Such community consciousness existed, but, as was largely the case also in the traditional village communities in India proper, it was syncretic in nature. In the early years following the first Indian landing in Fiji in 1879, perhaps partly as a result of the socially homogenizing effect of plantation life, it was not the habit for one group of Fiji Indians to exclude themselves, or be excluded, from the public activities, religious or secular, of other groups. Differentiation of an exclusive type amongst the Fiji Indians occurred only in later years, especially during the 1920s and 1930s. Hence, given our subject, our choice of period.

The Hindus were the first Fiji Indians to organize communally on an exclusive basis, both externally over against non-Hindus and internally over against each other — that is, Arya and sanatani, the Aryas leading the way in the opening
years of the twentieth century. The Fiji Indian Muslims did not respond in kind to the Hindu communalist démarche until the third decade of the new century, and even then only on a Muslim versus non-Muslim basis. It was not until the late 1930s that differentiation began to show within the Muslim community itself, between Sunni and Ahmadi. For their part, the South Indians divided internally in the late 1920s, in the very act of asserting externally their separate communal existence. And just as the South Indian communal identity was regional in its original subcontinental setting, the South Indian internal divide in Fiji, appropriately, had a territorial dimension to it, the South Indians of the Suva-Rewa area setting themselves off, in a separate sangam, from the South Indians of the northern and western areas of Viti Levu, the colony's main island.

Why, we need to ask, did the Fiji Indians, in the 1920s and 1930s, divide themselves off severally in the manner we have described, into communal groups defined on an exclusively confessional, linguistic or sub-ethnic basis? The question asked invites us to evaluate the communalist political mode; and, by so doing, to disclose, in theoretical terms, our own attitude to communalism. So, before we specify things by introducing the main organizations actively involved in Fiji Indian communalism, now is a good time to establish a theoretical framework on the basis of which an appraisal of communalism, of both its causes and effects, can be posited.
Communalism is seen in our late twentieth-century world as an undesirable political mode. Indeed, this view, which has as its corollary that secular modes of political mobilization are the correct way to go, is, in our era, almost a truism. Who, especially in the Indian subcontinent, amongst the ranks of the learned, in a decolonizing era, would dare to stand up and take issue with the dominant secularist ideologue of the Indian nationalist movement.

Delete the foreign power and the communal arguments and demands fall to the ground.... We are told of Islamic culture and Hindu culture, of religion and old custom, of ancient glories and the like. But behind all this lies political and social reaction.... An association with any form of communalism ... means a blind ignoring of world forces and events.22

Who would dare? Muhammad Iqbal (1873-1938), poet and philosopher of the Islamic revival in British India, the man who singled out Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948) to lead the Indian Muslim struggle for Pakistan, for one.

The real parties to the present struggle in India are not England and India, but the majority community and the minorities of India which can ill-afford to accept the principle of Western democracy until it is properly modified to suit the actual conditions of life in India.23

But the struggle between the acclaimed Nehru and the revered Iqbal was a subcontinental one. Our job is to keep

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the field clear for our Oceanic contenders, for our Fijian historical subjects to determine the terms and outcome of the contest. It will not do for us to permit the resolution of this issue at any other hands but theirs, particularly as we are inclined to suspect that the nationalist-communalist conflict will present itself in Fiji in a manner much more favourable to the communalist side than was ever the case in the subcontinent. The reader can take this as a hint as to the likely main thesis of our study. But in order to leave the issue at this juncture unresolved, we shall arbitrarily adopt one of the above positions as a null hypothesis, a position to be accepted or rejected in favour of the other in the light of our Fijian study. But whose position, Nehru's or Iqbal's, shall we choose for this dubious role? Preferably, we should work with the point of view which accords closest with our own Western norms. Perhaps we should ask our contenders which of the two ideological postures is the more palatable to Western partiality.

In asking our question, let us approach the poet rather than the politician; for, from Iqbal, we can anticipate a less self-interested reply. This passage will serve the purpose.

No Muslim politician should be sensitive to the taunt embodied in that propaganda word -- communalism -- expressly devised [by Indian nationalists] to exploit what the Prime Minister calls British democratic sentiments, and to lead England into assuming a state of things which does not really exist in India.24

24 Muhammad Iqbal, "Presidential Address Delivered at the Annual Session
That states the case for communalism as an authentic expression of the political aspirations of a non-Western people: namely, the Muslims of India -- just as we intend to do for another non-Western people: the Fiji Indians. It is also a useful rebuttal of Nehru's position, a denigration of the Congress leader's stance as one designed primarily to persuade a British, not an Indian, audience. But it also explicates why we, non-Muslim and most at home in a British democratic milieu, should premiss our study, if only as a working hypothesis, on the anti-communalist position. So we shall adopt Nehru's position, thereby assigning an ambivalent privilege to the secularist stance.

Let us muse awhile on this line of thought, for our mind is now running in the right type of groove for us to pose some problems for our subject of study. It is something of a professional imperative that, sooner or later, we should do so. Problems are to an historian as spices are to a chef. It is time now for us to see if we can mix together a potent brew.

Class conflict, gender competition and racial animosity are the three things which most preoccupy current Western political susceptibilities. But, with a view to keeping things manageable, we would be well advised to follow up on

of the All-India Muslim League," Allahabad, 29 December 1930; Latif Ahmed Sherwani (editor), Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal, Lahore, Iqbal Academy, 1977 (1944), p.23. Ramsay MacDonald (1866-1937) was the British Prime Minister Iqbal had in mind.
one and leave aside the other two. So we shall opt for a 
racial ingredient to add pertinence to our work. In any case, 
in the Fiji context it is probably the more promising of the 
three.

Let us proceed to establish grounds on which to posit 
racial issues in the course of our study of the impact of 
communalism on the history of the Fiji Indians. The questions 
we have in mind are ones about which the existing literature 
on things Fiji Indian provides little instruction. The 
central issue which we posit concerns whether the racially 
polarized politics of Fiji, as that political order is now 
infamously known to have become,25 has been shaped, at least 
in part, by certain cultural imperatives commonplace in India 
proper which the Indian migrants to Fiji may have carried with 
them to their adopted Oceanic homeland.

No historian of modern Fiji ever fails to mention the 
racial rationale that informs political alignments in that 
country. By way of historical explanation, most works usually 
include intimations of a divide et impera political strategy 
supposedly put into effect by either the British colonial 
administration or the Fiji European settler community or the 
Colonial Sugar Refinery (hereafter C.S.R.) Company, or by some

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25 The racial configuration of politics in Fiji was brought forward from 
its deserved obscurity to the world's perplexed attention by the military 
putsch of May 1987 -- the first and, to date, only instance in which that 
common Third World method of changing government has been effected in 
Oceania and, again, the first instance, at least since the days of the 
regicide Oliver Cromwell (vivebat 1599-1658; dominabatur 1649-1658), of 
the forcible suppression of a national parliament allegiance to the British 
Crown.
combination thereof -- sometimes with the Great Council of Chiefs (hereafter G.C.C.) worked into the historiographical mosaic as a Fijian "collaborationist" party.

With some scepticism, we ponder the adequacy of such Eurocentric explanations. From our previous readings in Indian history, we would be more than a little surprised if the Indian community of Fiji had not also contributed to the erection of racial demarcation lines in its new land of settlement. For the Indians of Fiji not to have done so would mark them off from the main body of their compatriots as acting out of character. As Nirad Chaudhuri in his many acclaimed historical and literary works is always at great pains to disclose, much of the stratification that characterizes Hindu society is an expression of racial appraisal.

The Hindu civilization was created by a people who were acutely conscious of their fair complexion in contrast to the dark skin of the autochthons, and their greatest preoccupation was how to maintain the pristine purity of the blood-stream which carried this colour. Varna or colour was the central principle round which Hindu society organized itself, and the orthodox Hindu scriptures know of no greater crime than miscegenation, or, as they call it, Varna-samkara, the mixing of colours.... This faith in the sanctity of Varna, colour, or caste, endures and abides in Hindu society.27

26 This rather ugly word, laden with the assertion of an unwarranted moral and ideological reprimand, pervades the recent work of one author: Michael C. Howard, Fiji: Race and Politics in an Island State, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1991.

27 Nirad C. Chaudhuri, The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian, New York, Macmillan, 1951, p.123. The reader anxious to research for himself the colour-consciousness of which Chaudhuri writes can do so at little
It seems that our previous attention to Chaudhuri's works has, in this our own hour of need, repaid us handsomely. In our endeavour to breathe the life of contemporary relevance into our study, the Bengali scholar, in his splendid English, has given us a mandate for something for which to seek -- something of critical centrality to the formation of the later twentieth-century political order in Fiji.

Arising from the racial rationale of political alignments in Fiji, there is another formative element of the political order in Fiji which calls for explanation, the need for which the existing body of literature on things Fiji Indian fails to meet. Every historian who deals with our period takes solemn note, though without disclosing a satisfactory explanation, of an enduring ingredient of the political balance in Fiji, one which blighted Fiji Indian empowerment prospects: namely, the political alliance between the Fiji Europeans and the native Fijians. The one exception to this pattern is Robert Norton, an author who does devote a section to the European-Fijian alliance, but who sees the Fiji Indians as playing an indirect role in a process in which the political guile of the Fiji Europeans is seen as the dynamic factor, a Eurocentric interpretation we reject. On this subject, we should be able

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28 Expenditure of effort by perusing the frank statements of light-skin preference which pervade the marriage advertisement columns of newspapers published in the Indian subcontinent.

28 See Norton, Race and Politics in Fiji ... 1977, pp.32-37. In the supposed second edition (1990) of this work, the section in question is substantially rewritten, with much of the original information deleted.
to extend the bounds of knowledge beyond the point reached in Norton's work. For our period witnessed the genesis of the European-Fijian political alliance, a process the beginnings of which we, perhaps a little provocatively, trace to the early 1920s -- a process many authors have assigned to the early 1940s. In any event, it reached its consummation, it was made clear for all to see, in July 1946.29

In the early decades of our period, in a steadily democratizing colonial polity, Fiji Europeans and Fiji Indians were the competing parties for the prize of political power in Fiji. The native Fijians were on the sidelines, kept there by the ramifications of a benignly paternalistic colonial policy; although the Fijians were nonetheless expected soon to take their place in the political lists. The issue awaiting resolution was whether the Fijians would enter the political fray as an ally of their European or their Indian neighbours. All parties understood that the Fijian choice of ally would be decisive in constructing the future political order in Fiji. In the upshot, the Fijians joined forces with the Fiji Europeans, consigning the Fiji Indian political leaders to a permanent sojourn on the Opposition benches. This outcome is recorded in every work on things Fiji Indian, but, in our view, it has never been adequately explained. And this is a

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29 Gillion, the doyen of Fiji Indian historiography, takes the occasion of the announcement, from the floor of the Legislative Council on 16 July 1946, of the European-Fijian electoral alliance as the appropriate point in time to end his account of Fiji Indian affairs.
major deficit of Fiji Indian historiography, because the outcome, it seems to us, was quite extraordinary.

For an observer of Fiji standing at his post in 1920 and being told by some prophetic means that, in the course of the next quarter century, two of the three major communities would form an enduring political alliance, such an observer would surely have leaped to the conclusion that it was an alliance between the Indians and the Fijians that was in the offing. The intellectual guidelines of the age would have confirmed him in this belief for, by almost all criteria, the two peoples were natural political allies. Along the dichotomy between colonizer and colonized, the natural field of conflict in a nationalistic era, Indians and Fijians belonged to the same category. In terms of socio-economic situation, so beloved of the rationalizing intelligentsia of a materialist age, the rank and file of the Indian and Fijian communities endured similar conditions. And according to skin colour, which greatly affected many of the social and political mores of our period, Indians and Fijians, of whatever social class, were similarly endowed. With these considerations in view, the failure of the Fiji Indians to secure the alliance of the native Fijians appears paradoxical. To resolve the paradox, we must suppose that, in their contest with the Fiji Europeans to secure an alliance with the Fijians, the manifold advantages accruing to the Fiji Indians were outweighed by some formidable handicap. Here, then, is another task to test
our proficiency, another contribution we can seek to make to Fiji Indian historiography. As we advance into our study, let us be on the alert for evidence of some such handicap.

Our prospective investigation of Fiji Indian communalism is now focused on certain specific objectives. But, before we proceed to other matters, let us add one more goal, this time one of more general scope.

We have in mind here to address the question of determining the Fiji Indian contribution to the general conditions, social and economic, of life in Fiji. This is something which comes up occasionally in the literature and seems to have given rise to two basic conclusions, with each of which the student of things Fiji Indian soon becomes familiar. Unfortunately, the two conclusions are mutually exclusive; so scholars usually have to make a choice between these two polar opposites. While it is our intention in all matters of ideological contention to nail our own colours firmly to the fence, it may eventuate that, as our investigations proceed, we too shall be constrained, however reluctantly, to sanction one, and thereby reject the other, of the polar oppositional conclusions. For the time being, we need say no more; for the outcome of this predicament, the report of which is consigned to our Conclusion, must await the balance of evidence which shall emerge in the course of our study. But, to enable our readers to follow developments, we must illustrate here the two polar oppositional options which loom.
The first optional conclusion to the question of determining the Fiji Indian contribution to conditions of life in Fiji has been voiced by many observers of the Fiji Indian scene, but rarely as eloquently, and never as authoritatively, as by J. Judd, officer of H.M. Colonial Service. From the years that followed the ending of the First World War to the aftermath of the Second, Judd served for most of his working life in a variety of capacities in the colonial government of Fiji. He will cross our path several times in the pages below, especially in respect to the Fiji colonial government's efforts in the late 1920s to assist Fiji Indians, repatriated unhappily in India, to return to Fiji. For this our first such meeting, we see Judd in mid-1946, by which time he was a veteran colonial administrator, in his position as Acting Secretary for (native) Fijian Affairs, debating in the Legislative Council on the subject of the "protection" of the "Fijian race" -- a subject inspired by the belief held in some quarters of Fiji colonial society that, in respect to the native Fijians, the Fiji Indian community posed some sort of unspecified threat which should, by some unspecified means, be removed. The Honourable Judd, it was made plain to the assembled members, thought otherwise.

[I]t is a self-evident fact that the progress which the Colony has made since Cession [of Fiji to the British Crown in September-October 1874] would not have been possible if the Indians had not been brought in to satisfy the cry of the plantation owners for more and more labour, and if the present Indian population of the islands were suddenly to vanish ... our prosperity would burst like a
For Judd, this was a strongly held opinion: that Fiji Indian effort and enterprise were foundational to the economic prosperity of Fiji. And having thus delivered his assessment of the indispensable nature of the Fiji Indian contribution to the general well-being of Fiji, Judd finished his address by indicating that he intended to break ranks with his fellow official members and oppose the government position on the matter at hand, a stance mildly supportive of the motion on the floor, which had already been spelt out earlier in the debate by the Colonial Secretary, the senior official member present, whose job it was to state the administration's position. 31

In our experience, the second of the optional and mutually exclusive positions as to the Fiji Indian contribution to the well-being of Fiji is expressed more often in informal conversation than by the written or recorded word. For this reason, we shall illustrate the second option by employing an

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31 We were very surprised by the evidence we uncovered of Judd's demonstration of independence on the floor of the Legislative Council, as we had always been led to believe by the literature on the subject that, in British Crown colonies, officials appointed to serve in Legislative Councils were constrained to give automatic support to any explicitly stated government position. This incident calls for an article to be written and despatched for submission to The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, a proposed measure of which we here take the opportunity to claim property.
oral source -- an exciting, perhaps even provocative departure from the usual historiographical run of things, though one sanctioned for the Pacific historian by a professional overlap with anthropology, a discipline which relies heavily on the spoken word.

We chanced upon this oral source in Lautoka in March 1993, in the restaurant of the hotel where we had taken lodging. We had occupied a table and engaged at close quarters with a Bligh Water lobster. During the struggle, we made the acquaintance there, at an adjoining table, of a native Fijian male, middle-aged and of impressive build, whose many-syllable name we quite failed to command, but who, sensing our limitations of speech, told us to call him "Steve." Stabbing purposefully with a fork, he was working his way through a plate of unresisting curried shrimps. In general conversation, we mentioned our seven-year mission: our study of Fiji Indian history -- of how we were seeking to describe the course and pronounce the consequence of the communal dimension of Fiji Indian political experience. "Steve" contemplated this intelligence at some length, looking at us intently the while. Then, with measured delivery, he volunteered his appraisal of Fiji Indian social merit. "Them Injuns," he told us, "ain't no good."32 We shifted our attention momentarily from the lobster and made a note of "Steve's" pronouncement on a paper napkin readily at hand.

Preserved thus for posterity, "Steve's" declaration lay there amidst the débris of battle: the shattered arms and carapace of *Crustaceus Homaridae Decapoda*. It was, we mused in private counsel, a view decidedly at odds with that voiced by the Honourable Judd on the floor of the Legislative Council some forty-seven years earlier.

Fiji Indian endeavours are foundational to Fiji's prosperity, said Judd; the Fiji Indians are worthless, said "Steve." Here, then, are the two polar oppositional conclusions concerning the Fiji Indian contribution to life in Fiji, and here also is our final task -- yet another mission to give purpose to our study. Starting from our own chosen station on the middle ground between the positions staked out respectively by Judd and "Steve," we shall be on the alert to see whether our own appraisal of the Fiji Indian contribution to the general well-being of Fiji moves towards either the one end or the other of the optional spectrum.

Perchance we have said enough in these few pages to convey to the reader the main purpose of our study. We have established our mission. We shall examine the organizations formed by the various Fiji Indian communal groups, those organizations intended to advance in the public sphere the political views prevalent amongst the members of the respective communal groups. And, at Chaudhuri's prompting, we shall be on the lookout for signs of a Fiji Indian contribution to the establishment of the racially polarized
political order which, every scholar of things Fijian seems to agree, has been the most distinctive element of the political legacy Fiji received from the colonial era. Also, arising from this racial rationale and this time taking our cue from our own curiosity, we shall seek the reason for the Fiji Indian failure to secure the political alliance of the native Fijians. And lastly, in terms of our appraisal of the Fiji Indian contribution to life in Fiji, we shall note which of the positions staked out respectively by Judd and "Steve" accords the more closely with our own. Having thus traced out our main intended lines of enquiry, let us now identify the communal organizations with which we shall deal.

The Fiji Indian communal groups which provide the main focus of this study invariably had small beginnings. Typically, the genesis of a Fiji Indian communal organization occurred when a handful of friends and neighbours long accustomed to gathering on an irregular and informal basis decided to upgrade their relationship by introducing elements of regularity and formality. Sometimes this development was spurred by the desire to undertake a specific project, such as the building of a school. On other occasions, a desire to emulate other groups provoked the move.

The focus of this work, then, is on the nature and interaction of the various communal groups into which the Fiji Indian community formed during the period from 1920 to 1947. We shall examine the main communal institutions that emerged
to articulate a Fiji Indian voice in a colonial order which, acting on a wider compass and for reasons we shall spell out in the following chapter, had already decided at the outset of our period to extend the representative principle of government to the Indian communities resident in Crown colonies, Fiji included. Specifically, it is an account of the seven main Fiji Indian communal organizations: the (reformed Hindu) Arya Samaj, the (secularist) Indian Reform League, the (Sunni) Fiji Muslim League, the (Ahmadi) Muslim Association of Fiji, the (South Indian, Nadi-based) Then India Sanmarga Ikya Sangam, the (South Indian, Suva-based) Madras Maha Sangam and the constellation of loosely knit (orthodox Hindu) Sanatan Dharm Sabhas -- and, politically speaking, some relatively minor or ephemeral organizations such as the (mostly South Indian) Ramakrishna Mission, the (secularist) Indian Association, the (secularist) Fiji Indian National Congress, the (pan-)Hindu Mahasabha, the Indian Christian Society of Fiji and a few other organizations which also briefly played a communalist part, if not always with communalist intent, on the political stage.

We have identified twelve Fiji Indian communal organizations that were active during our period. In the

33 The Indian Reform League, founded in 1924, was explicitly secularist in its organizing and recruiting rationale. Yet, for at least its first ten years of activity in Fiji, the League operated in the communalist milieu that obtained in Fiji Indian politics in the 1920s and 1930s. So, exercising the historian's prerogative to consciously distort history in the professional interest of constructing a coherent "historical" account, we shall classify the League as a communal organization.
chapters below, we shall put these twelve communal groups through their paces and compare their performances -- in formation and growth, in success and failure, in transformation and regress, and in dissolution. But, before we lay out a plan for accomplishing this task, it may be well to forestall possible criticism by debating the prior question: Are these twelve communal groups really comparable at all? Their comparability may be open to challenge.

The objection which may be raised can be stated thus: that these communal groups had no common characteristic beyond that of all being routine gatherings of Fiji Indians, and that this characteristic is so indeterminate and vague that it cannot be turned to any practical account for our purpose, which is, to explain the challenge communalism presented to Fiji Indian unity.

Our answer to this objection is to point out that routine gatherings of Fiji Indians are a genus within which our twelve communal groups constitute one particular species. Routine gatherings of this species are called "communal groups" in order to distinguish them from "social groups," which are also routine gatherings, but of a different species. And the difference is critical to the nature of our study. When we listed above the Fiji Indian groups which constitute the main focus of our study, if we had also tabulated the Indian Reform League Cricket Club, the Tazia Committee, Sakeena Sahoo Khan’s Muslim ladies circle (Toorak, Suva), some representatives of
the myriad temple and mosque management committees, and others representing the numerous school management committees, the gist of our study could be expected to develop quite differently from the import of what we intend. And this observation is a timely reminder that the very terms of reference of our study commit us to an investigation of the less appealing side of Fiji Indian group activity, and that this obliges us to present the community's contribution to colonial society in, to some extent, a relatively unfavourable light. A mental corrective is here in order. Let us resolve to keep ever in mind that the unseemly scramble for power between the communal groups occurred side-by-side with an entire set of more edifying Fiji Indian social group activities. For every member of the group of communalist politicians, greedy of gain and faction-torn, who strutted the public stage, there were a half-dozen or more of his compatriots working devotedly at temple or mosque management, toiling diligently to keep the schools going, standing valiantly at bay at the batsman's wicket, or courteously passing the buttered scones at one of Sakeena Sahoo Jhan's afternoon tea parties. With this in mind, we shall proceed on the basis that all twelve of the Fiji Indian communal groups are, after all, susceptible to comparative study.

In view of our title, this study should cover just the events which occurred between 1920 and 1947; and yet some related facts and events of the periods that preceded and
followed do occasionally find mention owing to our desire to achieve continuity of narrative and fullness of analysis. And this is enough said about our task ahead. Let us now consider the tools we shall use to do the job.

Our research period, while itself well documented, was preceded several decades removed by a period which was not. The origin of communalism amongst the Fiji Indians probably goes back to developments which occurred in the very early years of Fiji Indian history. Unfortunately, this early period is rather poorly documented; but where direct observation fails us, a train of reasoning informs us that there must have been earlier phases in the histories of the sectarian movements which eventually rose above the lowest point of our field of vision into the historically recorded light of day. The process by which Indian migrants conveyed communal attitudes and practices from the subcontinent to Fiji is something of which, in most part, we can only guess. It is only in the later stages, when Indian communalism in Fiji assumed institutional forms, that the historian can begin to pick up the threads of the story; and it is not until the institutionalized communalist groups moved out from the confines of Fiji Indian society and ventured on to the public stage that the historian can pronounce on their progress.

The main body of this dissertation is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter is this Introduction. The second is called *India in Oceania, 1920-29*, a survey of the 1920s.
It sets the scene for the period of (mainly Hindu) communalist involvement in the high politics of Fiji. The third chapter, *Sanatana Dharma and Arya Samaj*, addresses the main division between Fiji Indian Hindus. The Sanatanis were much the larger of the two Hindu groups but, in political matters, were rather loosely organized, while the Arya Samajists were culturally more accustomed to modern methods of political mobilization, at which they proved adept, and commanded the allegiance of most of the upwardly mobile Hindus. The fourth chapter examines Hindu-Muslim relations, its title, *Muslim Separatists*, indicating the aspect of Fiji Indian Muslim activity with which this study is principally concerned. *South Indians, Christians and Secularists* is the name of the fifth chapter. It examines the nature of the division between Fiji Indians of Aryan and Dravidian ancestry and considers the communalist roles played by Indian Christians and secularists. The Christians and secularists were two closely related, sometimes interchangeable Fiji Indian groups that endeavoured to meet the dominant political culture of colonial Fiji on its own terms. The fifth chapter also surveys the later period, from the Second World War to 1947, with a view to trace the fate of the communal organizations as they sank back to mere social activities in place of their previous involvement in high politics. The sixth and last chapter is a Conclusion which provides answers to the issues broached in this Introduction. The dissertation is supported by the usual
This work relies heavily on the sources employed traditionally by historians of Fiji. Government documents, especially Colonial Office and Legislative Council records, provides the main body of material. Newspapers have been scanned for relevant items. The more important of these newspapers include the *Fiji Times and Herald* and the *Fiji Samachar*. The *Fiji Times and Herald* was published daily (excepting Sundays) throughout the period of this study. In its pages accommodating to contributed articles and letters to the editor, it provided the Fiji Indian communal activists, in most sectarian cases, with their main avenue of approach on to the public stage.

The *Fiji Samachar* had a relatively patchy publishing record during the period under study. Published in Hindi and English, it first appeared in 1927 as a monthly issue, later as a fortnightly paper, later still as a weekly. During the Second World War, it ran afoul of the colonial authorities and, for much of 1942-3, was out of circulation. The *Fiji Samachar* was closely linked with the Arya Samaj, so its view of public affairs was to some extent sectarian. The Arya Samaj, however, was in many ways the leading cultural organization amongst the Fiji Indians, especially in the formative years of Indian political advance -- in the late
1920s and the early 1930s. Where the Arya Samaj led, many other communal groups followed -- especially in terms of defining the issues adopted by the Fiji Indians as a whole and in developing an Indian public style. Other newspapers, ones which have assisted us at second hand, include Vriddhi, published and edited by Dr I. Hamilton Beattie, a member of the Indian Reform League, and Rajdut, a government paper.

What point of view do our sources impose on our work? Let us spell out from the outset that this work is not an insider view. In Fiji, we are a stranger in a strange land. Colonial government documents provide a sizable proportion of our material, so we should approach this question by considering the type of men who gathered these documents. They provide us with one of our main lines of view of the Fiji Indian communalists in action.

The body of knowledge about colonial Fiji passed down to us was gathered by the British, by practical men who needed information in order to carry on the colony’s administration, to deal with social and economic problems, and to manage people. These British officials operated moreover at the district or local level. Being first-hand, the knowledge they gathered rang true. It is not difficult to understand why; for an intellect bent upon the act to be performed and the reaction to follow, carefully feeling its object so as to detect its mobile impression at every moment, is an intellect that must remain in touch with reality. Speculation, dreams
and theories, however elevated, were luxuries in which British colonial officialdom was not permitted to indulge.

But the British administrators of empire took this realistic approach a stage further: they deliberately held aloof from their colonial subject people. Their concern to make sure that colonial officials should be aloof from the general population was not perverse. It was inspired by a conviction, founded on experience, that familiarity was inimical to impartiality and efficiency. An aloofness cultivated on this calculation was not to their discredit; but it set limits on the feelings of affection and attachment which they could expect to evoke in the hearts of the colonized peoples. This will become apparent when we see J. Judd, the colonial official quoted earlier, in action, amongst eight hundred odd Fiji Indians stranded in Calcutta. And, no doubt, these qualities of detachment and aloofness are reflected in our own work; for we would classify our point of view primarily as one seen from the District Commissioner's veranda.

Of course, colonial government documents are not the only sources used. We also make extensive use of the English-language press of the period. In particular, we pay a great deal of attention to the correspondence pages and contributed articles -- that is, the letters to the editor and articles submitted by members of the public. This is a useful source for the student of Fiji Indian things communal, because the
leading activists of the communal groups habitually made use of the pages of the English-language press to solicit funds, usually for school-building projects, to present to the public their various communal points of view, and to debate with opposing communal groups the various issues which divided them. Muslims, South Indians, sanatani Hindus, Indian Christians, and secularists were the communal activists most habitually in print in the Fiji Times and Herald, though even the Aryas made use of its pages, despite their possession of an independent organ, the Fiji Samachar. For the Fiji Indian communal activists, the English-language press was a prominent part of the public stage in colonial Fiji.

Sufficient has now been said to set the terms of reference for our investigation of the import of Fiji Indian communalism. It is time now to deliver on the measures proposed above. Let us proceed to our first research chapter, an appraisal of the form and effect of the Indian presence in Fiji as, by the opening of our period, it had evolved and manifested itself.
Chapter Two

India in Oceania, 1920-29

iam pridem Syrus in Tiberim defluxit Orontes

--- Juvenal

The Fiji Indian community was settled securely in its insular Pacific habitat by the end of indenture. Forty years of bonded Indian migration had solidly established the Indian demographic presence in the colony. In 1920, Fiji Indians comprised about 38 per cent of Fiji’s population. And the Fiji Indian rate of natural growth was rising. As the first generation of Fiji-born Indians matured, the imbalance between the genders which, in indentured days, had inhibited Indian procreation was confined increasingly to the older age groups. While indentured passage from India was a thing of

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1 Decimus Junius Juvenalis (scribbat circa A.D.100-127), Satire III, verse 62: "The Syrian Orontes has long since flowed into the Tiber."

2 Time will be measured in this study according to the Gregorian (Western Christian) calendar, as introduced into Europe in 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII (vivebat 1502-1585; fungebatur 1572-1585) and adopted in Britain in 1752 -- a revision of the Julian (solar) calendar introduced in Rome in 46 B.C. by Gaius Julius Caesar (vivebat 100-44 B.C.). When an appropriate occasion arises, however, dates of the Hindu Vikrama era, a lunar calendar (currently 57 years ahead of the Western Christian) by which Hindu rites and festivals are determined, will be indicated. The Indian Saka era (currently 77 or 78 years behind the Western Christian) will also be used, its dates appearing in the official style employed by the Government of India, that is, in conjunction with equivalent Western Christian dates. Dates of the Muslim (lunar) calendar, when used, will be preceded by the customary A.H. (Anno Hejirae: "in the year of the Hejira," which marks Muhammad's flight to Medina in A.D.622).

3 The Government of India required a minimum of forty women for every one hundred men recruited for indentured emigration to Fiji. According to the emigration records kept by the provincial government of Bengal, the proportion of adult (age 10 or over) indentured females to males who emigrated from Calcutta to Fiji was 41.04 per cent. Unlike their colleagues in Bengal, emigration officials in Madras did not record the sex distribution of indentured emigrants, though presumably they still
the past, free immigration was a continued source of Indian newcomers, especially from Gujarat and Punjab. The rate of demographic growth augured especially well for the Indian presence in Fiji when appraised comparatively; for when all avenues of population expansion were considered, the numbers of Fiji Indians were increasing at a rate markedly higher than any of the colony's other main communities.

To the influential members of one of the other communities, the Indian presence in the colony seemed yet insufficient. European economic interests in Fiji converged in the export sector where sugar and copra, produced mostly on plantations, were the main commodities. In Fiji, European plantation owners depended for sugar cane production on Indian labour, a legacy of the long years of indenture. In 1916 the Raj had suspended, and in 1917 abolished, the indenture system, ending bonded emigration from India. And, as a ramification of this move, Sir Cecil Rodwell, the Governor of Fiji (1918-1925), had promulgated an "Order in Council [m]ade the second day of

enforced the female-to-male ratio requirement. For further details, see Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants ... 1962, pp.55-58.

4 A higher proportion of women arrived under conditions of free Indian immigration to Fiji than had been the case during indenture: in the period 1927-30, 6 females to every 13 males. For further details, see Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants ... 1962, p.56, n.32.

5 At the 1921 census, Fiji Indians numbered 60,634 and Fijians 84,475, in a total population of 157,266. Fifteen years later, the 1936 census recorded 85,002 Fiji Indians, a 40.2 per cent rise, and 97,651 Fijians, an increase of 15.6 per cent. Fiji Europeans numbered 3,878 in 1921 and 4,028 in 1936, a 3.9 per cent rise.

6 New Zealand was the largest importer of Fiji sugar, while the Pacific coastal United States provided the main market for Fiji copra.
January, 1920, at Government House, Suva, which had brought this dependence to the fore.

I and my Executive Council deem it to be expedient to cancel the indentures of all the Indian immigrants at present indentured under the Indian Immigration Ordinance [of] 1891.

It was political expediency that Rodwell had in mind. Moreover, the political forces to which the Governor was responding emanated from without the colony, from a source which was increasingly making its distinctive presence felt on the Imperial stage. The fate of Fiji's indentured immigration programme had been decided not in Suva or London but in India. The abolition of the indentured labour system was a demand of the Indian nationalist movement, voiced in a motion (20 March 1916) in the Imperial Legislative Council in New Delhi and in unprecedented mass rallies throughout the subcontinent. The measure was enacted on 12 March 1917 by order of Lord Chelmsford (1868-1933), the Viceroy of India (1916-1921), under wartime executive powers. And the cancellation of existing indentures in Fiji on 2 January 1920 was also in response to Indian nationalist pressure passed on by the Raj to the colonial authorities in Suva.

7 "Order in Council," 2 January 1920; Fiji Royal Gazette (hereafter F.R.G.), 3 January 1920, number 2, Suva, Government Printer, 1921, p.5. We quote this passage in order to correct the error, reported in the works of several historians, that this event occurred on 1 January 1920.

8 Ibid.

9 Earlier in his career, Chelmsford had served as Governor of Queensland (1905-1909) and Governor of New South Wales (1909-1913).

10 For an account of the ending of the indenture system in India and
The end of indenture was a momentous landmark in the history of the Fiji Indians, a milestone of sufficient consequence to straightaway evoke a *Te Deum* from Mahatma Gandhi\(^\text{11}\) and, at greater remove in time, to persuade the present writer there to commence his research. The genesis of the Fiji Indian community was bound up with the decision of Sir Arthur Gordon (1829-1912),\(^\text{12}\) Governor of Fiji (1875-1880) and High Commissioner of the Western Pacific (1877-1883), to initiate a programme for acquiring indentured labour for Fiji from India. The first shipload of indentured Indian labourers sailed from Calcutta in 1879 and the last departed from India in 1916.\(^\text{13}\) The cancellation on 2 January 1920 of the contracts of all remaining bonded labourers in Fiji marked a momentous turning point for the Fiji Indian community.

The events which ended the indenture system demonstrated the Indian nationalist movement's ability to influence events

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\(^\text{11}\) Gandhi wrote: "The Viceroy's announcement about Fiji is entirely satisfactory.... [T]he ending of the system of indenture ... will absolve the Government and the people from the ever-increasing blame which is being laid at their door. For the past, of course, our shame remains" (see M.K. Gandhi, "Viceroy's Speech," Navajivan, 14 September 1919; translated from the Gujarati; *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* [hereafter *C.W.M.G.*], vol.16, Delhi, Government of India Publications Division, July 1965 [Shravana 1887], p.142).

\(^\text{12}\) Before and after his years in Fiji, Gordon also served as Governor of New Brunswick (1861-1866), Governor of Trinidad (1866-1870), Governor of Mauritius (1870-1874), Governor of New Zealand (1880-1882) and Governor of Ceylon (1883-1890). In 1893, Gordon was raised to the peerage as Baron Stanmore. For an account of Gordon's life, see J.K. Chapman, *The Career of Arthur Hamilton Gordon, First Lord Stanmore, 1829-1912*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1964.

\(^\text{13}\) For a detailed description and analysis of the recruitment and despatch of Indian indentured migrants to Fiji, see Lal, *Girmitiyas: The Origins of the Fiji Indians ...* 1983.
in faraway Fiji; and it was not an ephemeral phenomenon. Linked to the colony through continuing if unsteady Imperial allegiance, India was to remain a weighty factor in the politics of Fiji until Indian independence in 1947.

In the early 1920s there was an acute shortage of plantation labour in Fiji, there being little enthusiasm for contract renewal amongst Fiji Indians who had served out their indentures. The *Fiji Times and Herald* acknowledged the problem in early 1920, writing that "[e]verywhere plantations are being neglected for lack of labour."\textsuperscript{14} But the leader writer did not doubt that Indians would still be willing to migrate to Fiji, maintaining that the colony offered Indians "a condition of life ... already much superior to what they enjoy, not only in India, but in any other colony."\textsuperscript{15} The shortage of labour was the result, so the editorial continued, of Indian politics, the demands of which the Fiji Europeans could meet by fair treatment of their Indian work-force.

> If the Government of India approves of any further free immigration, we must see to it that the agreement between employer and employed is an equitable one.\textsuperscript{16}

With a view to securing an ample plantation work-force, there was strong support among the Fiji European community for continued Indian immigration.

\textsuperscript{14} *Fiji Times and Herald* (hereafter *FTH*), 19 January 1920, p.4.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
Free Migration between India and Fiji

To replace indenture, Fiji European leaders\(^{17}\) pressed the colonial state to introduce and manage new forms of Indian immigration. During the 1920s, calls for government action to secure state regulated Indian migration were common items in the Fiji European press, much along the lines of the leader article in the Fiji Times and Herald on 16 June 1920.

The necessity of obtaining more labour for our plantations must be impressed upon every man in Fiji.... Our supply of labour has been temporarily cut off. When it shall be again available is uncertain. Meanwhile the urgency of our need of more labour increases. Our valuable plantations are receiving [only] half the care and attention they need. We do not want to see them relapse into jungle as has been the case in Samoa.\(^{18}\)

Sensitive to both the European community's interests and the well-being of its own related revenue base, the colonial government budgeted for future intended Indian immigration schemes. This government measure was proclaimed in "An Ordinance to consolidate and amend the Law relating to Export Duties" in which it was decreed that "five shillings levied and collected under the provisions of this Ordinance on every ton of copra and sugar ... exported shall be set apart and applied to an Immigration Fund."\(^{19}\) Interested parties in

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\(^{17}\) For the period of this study, the Fiji European political leadership does not seem to have been drawn in main part from the planter class. Fiji European leaders were mainly businessmen and professionals. Of the Europeans elected to the Legislative Council in the 1920s, lawyers, retailers, retired military officers and a newspaper proprietor occupied most of the seats.

\(^{18}\) FTH, 16 June 1920, p.4.

\(^{19}\) Ordinance No.28 of 1920, passed in Council 10 November 1920,
Fiji, government and private, also sent accredited representatives to India to negotiate directly with the Raj for permission to initiate a new emigration programme. The main interested parties were the Government of Fiji, the Planters' Association and the C.S.R. Company.\textsuperscript{20}

The Right Reverend T.C. Twitchell, the Anglican Bishop of Polynesia, and the Honourable R.S. Rankine, the Receiver-General of Fiji, went to India in December 1919 as representatives of the Planters' Association of Fiji. During early 1920, they met the Viceroy, interested members of the Imperial Legislative Council and Mahatma Gandhi. The envoys from Fiji were informed by all parties, viceregal and legislative as well as Gandhian, that the attainment of an official status for Fiji Indians equal in all respects to that afforded the Fiji Europeans was the primary matter Fijian of interest to India. Back in Fiji, the public learnt that the Bishop and Rankine had "declared that their Government was prepared to give the required assurance, provided that a guarantee be given by the Government of India that it will send a deputation to Fiji to test the scheme generally, especially on the question of adequate wages."\textsuperscript{21} When the

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\textsuperscript{20} For the period of this study, the C.S.R. Company was the major processor and marketer of Fiji sugar. The C.S.R. Company also owned considerable tracts of leased land which it subleased to mainly Indian farmers who were on contract to supply the company with cane.

\textsuperscript{21} FTH, 19 February 1920, p.1.
Bishop and Rankine returned to Fiji it was reported in a Suva newspaper that "His Lordship the Bishop of Polynesia met the Council of Planters this morning to give a resume of his visit to India, and the conclusions he has come to as a result."\textsuperscript{22} Tellingly, the newspaper report tailed off with the statement that "\textsuperscript{[m]}uch of the subject matter is of a private nature, and cannot be made public at this juncture."\textsuperscript{23}

The good Bishop would not have had any positive news to convey to the labour-staved planters. In fact, representations by Fiji European planter interests for access to the labour market of post-1919 India were a waste of time and resources. The Raj had no intention of incurring the wrath of the educated Indian public by reintroducing the labour trade in any form, thereby providing the nationalist opposition with a ready-made issue\textsuperscript{24} -- not merely to satisfy the labour needs of a handful of distant colonial planters. The introduction of a new contract labour migration programme by the Government of India was unthinkable after

\textsuperscript{22} FTH, 31 May 1920, p.4.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} An indication of the likely nature of Indian nationalist objection to any move by the Government of India to resume the labour trade is provided in a report, published in the \textit{Barbados Advocate}, of an address by C.F. Andrews on 24 May 1929 to the local (Georgetown?) Chamber of Commerce in British Guiana. Andrews told his listeners: "[T]he old indenture system had two vital flaws in it which could never possibly be excluded ... [namely], fraudulent recruiting which inevitably takes place in a country like India ... [and] shortage of women.... [I]n the end it was this final flaw which put a stop to indenture altogether.... The condition of things in some of the colonies owing to shortage of women was so appalling morally that the Indian Government ... discontinued the system in 1917." For a reprint of the \textit{Barbados Advocate's} report, see \textit{FTH}, 26 July 1929, p.8.
implementation of the Government of India Act of 1919\textsuperscript{25} and Mahatma Gandhi's transformation of the Indian nationalist movement into a disciplined mass movement, a set of parallel developments which occurred in the period from 1919 to 1921. That the issue had life in it in Fiji is an index as to how far the Fiji European community was out of touch with changes in the wider world. But, as the 1920s advanced, the realization of how little their views and interests mattered in India slowly impressed itself on the Fiji Europeans. The colonial administration commented on this in 1927 in its annual report to the Colonial Office in London, in the section devoted to "Indian Affairs."

The Colony is becoming reconciled now to the cessation of organised immigration, and looks to the natural increase in population and the private enterprise of the classes in India which have learnt that there is a career open to them overseas.\textsuperscript{26}

Anxiety on the part of influential elements of the Fiji European community for the resumption of Indian immigration to the colony persisted for the first decade after the ending of indenture. To the end of the 1920s, Fiji European leaders advanced proposals whereby the flow of Indian immigration could be pegged at higher levels. It was noticeable, however,

\textsuperscript{25} The Government of India Act of 1919 introduced a new form of government in India: dyarchy. The new system divided government departments into two groups. One group remained under British imperial control, while the other group was made responsible to elected assemblies, central and provincial.

\textsuperscript{26} Fiji: Report for 1927, p.53; C.O.83/180.
that there was in the various schemes advanced a shift in emphasis from encouraging Indian immigration for purposes of settlement to instead merely encouraging the development of links whereby Fiji could be attached to the Indian labour market. An editorial of 29 January 1929 in the Fiji Times and Herald gave expression to this Fiji European ambivalence: it both recommended state support for regular shipping links between India and Fiji and spelt out the case for temporary, not permanent, Indian domicile in the colony.

Fiji is still short of the labour required to develop the rich lands of the Colony.... Something definite must be done. One of the proposals is that a more frequent [shipping] service between India and Fiji be maintained by Government subsidy, along lines similar to that existing between India and Malaya at present. Fiji does not require permanent [Indian] settlers.... This method of regular transport of workers would meet this requirement and would conform with the ideas of the Indian Government on the matter of emigration.\footnote{FTH, 29 January 1929, p.4.}

As it eventuated, this was the last gasp of the Fiji European campaign to resume planned Indian migration to Fiji.

Let us step back from the action and contemplate this curious episode of the abortive effort of the dominant elements of colonial society in Fiji to secure a source of plantation labour from India. It strikes us that the Fiji European efforts to preserve the plantation economy in the years following indenture were undertaken for reasons more social than economic. From the vantage view of our own era,
unencumbered with the socio-economic assumptions of the pre-1914 order, we can see that three factors were converging in the 1920s which, taken together, would remove Fiji European motivation to advance schemes for further Indian immigration to Fiji: the completion of the move from plantation to tenant farming as the main, and more efficient, way of growing cane; the onset of a global economic depression with an attendant contraction of Fiji's export markets; and the extension of the franchise to the Fiji Indians. The last two of these factors must await our further commentary in the pages below; but on the first we shall now briefly elaborate.

The changeover from plantation to tenant farming as the mode of sugar cane production in Fiji was noted in a report issued in 1929 by the Sugar Federation of the British Empire, a marketing body based in London. The report was reprinted in an issue of a Fiji newspaper. In part, it read as a requiem.

Fiji has gone through a severe labour crisis.... For some time [after the end of indenture] it was endeavoured to maintain the estate system, but the Indian desire to act as an independent farmer eventually prevailed. 28

The figures for sugar production in Fiji provided by the Federation's report indicated that the Indian tenant farmers were efficient cane growers, as the 1920s saw a significant rise in cane production. 29 It is thus necessary to find


29 The figures for Fiji's cane production in the 1920s as indicated by the Federation's report were: 1921-22, 7,000 tons; 1922-23, 29,000 tons;
reasons other than economic ones to explain why Fiji European opinion leaders continued to hanker for an immigrant Indian labour force which, by some form of contractual arrangement, could be used to keep the plantation mode of production in being. Perhaps the attraction for the Fiji Europeans lay less in the economic benefits, at least to the colony as a whole, than in the social ramifications of plantation labour relations. The conclusion we draw from our study of this matter is that, in Fiji European eyes, bonded Indian labourers made better neighbours than free Indian settlers. In any event, it is quite clear that the plantation mode did not serve Fiji Indian interests, economic or social, and, as the Sugar Federation's report of 1929 noted, the Indian refusal to provide the necessary labour force wrote finis to the plantation system in Fiji.

The decline of the plantations and the rise of independent Indian tenant farming during the 1920s was attended by rising prosperity in Fiji. The efficient growing, processing and export marketing of sugar was the mainstay of this prosperity. Evidently, the sugar industry in Fiji compared favourably with its counterpart in Hawaii. This at least was the opinion of Kilmer O. Moe, an American living in Hawaii who was "connected with the Kamehameha Schools as [an] agriculturalist" and

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1924-25, 101,000 tons; 1926-27, 85,000 tons; 1927-28, 95,000 tons; and 1928-29, 108,000 tons. For the reprint of the report, see FTH, 23 April 1929, p.7.

30 FTH, 28 August 1929, p.6. Before taking up his appointment in
who visited Fiji towards the end of the decade. On 27 August 1929, Moe addressed the Luncheon Club,\textsuperscript{31} gathered at the Pier Hotel, Suva. In an aside to his main address, a speech on the virtue of state promotion of the English language in colonies with mainly Asian populations,\textsuperscript{32} Moe made a comparison between Hawaii and Fiji in regard to the two countries' respective modes of sugar production. Fiji, Moe said, provided the more favourable sugar production model.\textsuperscript{33}

The 1920s were a period of impressive economic growth in Fiji. As Moe had appraised, the sugar industry in Fiji was efficiently managed -- sufficiently so as to make Fiji internationally competitive. In October 1928, the colonial authorities released Fiji's three-quarterly economic indices. They made glad reading. From the commentary in the press, it was clear that Christmas 1928 would be an occasion for celebrating the colony's general prosperity.

The total trade of the Colony is growing. The first three-quarters for this year total over £3,000,000 with a favourable balance just short of the million.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31} The Luncheon Club served as a social group for the members of the Suva Chamber of Commerce.

\textsuperscript{32} For Moe's view on this subject, see Appendix III (Kilmer O. Moe's Speech, 27 August 1929), pp.419-420 below.

\textsuperscript{33} For a report on Moe's address, see FTH, 28 August 1929, p.6. Moe also made contact with the Fiji Indians during his stay in Suva. For a report on a picture show he gave to a group of Indian orphans at Dilkusha, see FTH, 29 August 1929, p.7.

\textsuperscript{34} FTH, 27 October 1928, p.1. This three-quarterly result represented
The Fiji Indian community shared in the general prosperity. During the 1920s, the financial stake of the Fiji Indians grew as promisingly as had their demographic presence in the earlier era of bonded migration. This was apparent to Captain E.A. Barnett, Deputy Inspector General of Constabulary, who on "an official police tour of inspection" in July 1929 travelled throughout the northern and western districts of Viti Levu, after an absence of seven years. Barnett travelled from Ellington to Ba, and then on to Lautoka and Nadi. He told a correspondent that "everywhere" he saw substantial signs of progress and prosperity, especially among the Indian settlers. Whereas on his previous visit most of the Indian residences were of flimsy "shanties," made of old tins, today they had quite neat dwellings of up-to-date design, whilst the general surroundings indicated increased wealth. Barnett attributed the improvement in Indian living standards to "the cultivation of sugar cane." When the Government Savings Bank released its report for 1928, Barnett's observations concerning Fiji Indian prosperity were supported by the figures. In an editorial entitled "Are We Saving?," the Fiji Times and Herald commented that, for many years, "we have urged ... the Indians to place their

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for Fiji an increase in value of exports of £690,537 over the same period last year (see FTH, 29 October 1928, p.4).

35 FTH, 10 July 1929, p.3.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
savings [in bank accounts] ... instead of in some insecure
hole, as was so much their general custom,"\textsuperscript{38} then went on
to provide evidence of advice taken.

\begin{quote}
Deposits increased by £16,516 to £158,202 compared
with 1927. Withdrawals increased by £11,062,
chiefly due to the fact that there were two Indian
repatriation vessels during the year.... Europeans
have an average deposit of £46, Fijian depositors,
who number 1,972 have the low average of £7 per
head, while the 2,178 Indian accounts average £35,
and the 34 Chinese, £40. These figures speak for
themselves.\textsuperscript{39}
\end{quote}

Of course, with the onset of a global economic depression
beginning in October 1929, the colony’s financial outlook was
to look very different two years later. But for the decade
betwixt the Great War and the Great Depression, Fiji was a
prosperous colony, a prosperity that rested on free, though
never over-plentiful, Fiji Indian labour.

During the 1920s, the ruling elements in Fiji perceived a
shortage of Indians; and, the economists tell us, scarcity
generates value. A useful index of the enhanced status of
Indians following the ending of indenture was the development,
during the 1920s, of official concern in Fiji for Fiji Indians
who had returned to India -- a concern which had been almost
entirely absent during the years of indenture. It was a
widespread belief amongst Fiji Europeans that conditions of
life for Indians were better in Fiji than in India. This
belief was probably justified, at least in respect to Indians

\begin{footnotes}
\item[38] \textit{FTH}, 11 July 1929, p.4.
\item[39] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
who were wage labourers. A similar opinion was often held by Fiji Indian visitors to India. Badri Mahraj, the first Indian to sit in the Fiji Legislative Council, was one such visitor.

In January 1929, the M.L.C. was interviewed by the press.

[The] Hon. Badri Mahraj has just returned from India and say[s] the Indians are absolute fools to leave here. He says the working man in India has no chance at all. They go [from Fiji] home [to India] and lose what little they have and then cannot get a living wage or even a job in most cases.... [T]hey haven't the means to come back [to Fiji], and even when they have, they are taken down right and left trying to grease the palms of the various agents through whose hands they have to obtain passages, passports, etc.40

It followed from this belief that those Indians who, unmindful of the comparative advantages of life in Fiji, had returned to India would soon enough repent their move and look for an opportunity to retrace their journey, back to Fiji. Re-emigration to Fiji of already repatriated Indians became a new source of Indian migrants for the colony. In 1921 and again in 1928, a little over one thousand repatriated Fiji Indians took the return passage, at the expense of the Fiji government, from India to their preferred South Pacific home.

The largest batch of re-emigration passages was arranged in 1921. The re-emigrating Fiji Indians departed Calcutta in two ships, the first leaving on 2 April 1921 with 245 repatriates aboard, the second on 15 October 1921 with 887 returnees.

Under political pressure from Indian nationalist leaders,41

40 FTH, 26 January 1929, p.4.

41 C.F. Andrews, on the spot in Calcutta, led the nationalist endeavours
especially Charles Freer Andrews (1871-1940), the Government of India had resisted the efforts of the Fiji colonial authorities to effect the departures. In March 1921, the Raj decreed that assisted re-emigration be confined to Fiji Indians who had been born in Fiji, those with family or property still there, and near relatives of people in those categories. Even then, the second shipload of 1921 was delayed because of a three month ban on departures imposed in June 1921. The second ship was finally authorized to leave port only after the Secretary of State for India, prompted by the protests of the Fiji government, had queried the Viceroy over the reasons for the official stay.42

A smaller complement of repatriates made the return passage in 1928. This instance of re-emigration was initiated in October 1927 at a sitting of the Fiji Legislative Council. J.R. Pearson, the Secretary for Indian Affairs, moved

[t]hat the ... Council ... approve ... the expenditure from the Immigration Fund of a sum not exceeding £10,000 for the purpose of arranging for the re-immigration to and settlement in Fiji of a number of returned Indian immigrants who are now stranded in Calcutta.43

to persuade repatriated Fiji Indians not to re-emigrate from India while, from a distance, Gandhi assisted with financial help. Thus in July 1921, while resident in Bombay, Gandhi solicited "Rs.500 ... in connection with the Fiji-returned immigrants who are being looked after by Mr B[anarsidas] under Mr A[ndrew]'s supervision" (see Gandhi to J.B. Petit, after 7 July 1921; C.W.N.G., vol.20 ... May 1966 [Vaisakha 1888], p.338).

42 For an account of the 1921 remigration story, see Gillion, The Fiji Indians ... 1977, pp.61-5.

43 Resolution by the Secretary for Indian Affairs, 21 October 1927; F.L.C.D., Sessions of 1927 (October) ... 1928, p.191. For a press report on this resolution, see FTH, 22 October 1927, p.2.
Badri Mahraj seconded the motion. In his supporting comments, he made some interesting observations. He said:

When I have enquired before about this matter I have been told that the Government of India would not agree to the re-immigration of these people. I am glad to hear that an arrangement has been come to now.... Settlers in Fiji often receive letters from their friends who have returned to India asking their help to get back again, but they are unable to find funds for the purpose. Once this scheme becomes known throughout Fiji, I am sure there are hundreds of settlers here who will give names of repatriates in India whom they are willing to assist if they return.44

Alport Barker also spoke in support of the motion. At an earlier session in June 1927, Barker had brought forward the idea that the colonial authorities should assist the Fiji Indians stranded in Calcutta to return to Fiji. Barker had also promoted the cause in his newspaper columns. In his comments, Sir Eyre Hutson, the Governor of Fiji (1925-1929), first acknowledged the efforts of the pressman-politician, then commented on the Fiji Indians stranded in Calcutta.

I compliment the honourable member for the Southern Division on his persisting on this subject, not only ... in this Council ... but outside of it.... [O]nce they are back I hope they will think it is a better place than that which they have left and that they will stay here.45

A few months later, the Fijian public could read of the result of the colonial government's propitious apportionment.

44 Address by Badri Mahraj, 21 October 1927; F.L.C.D., Sessions of 1927 (October) ... 1928, p.191. For a press report on this address, see FTH, 22 October 1927, p.2.

45 Address by Hutson, 21 October 1927; F.L.C.D., Sessions of 1927 (October) ... 1928, p.192. For a press report on this address, see FTH, 22 October 1927, p.2.
On the steamer Sutlej, which left Calcutta on Saturday [17 March 1928] for Fiji, are 864 passengers. Included in the number are 323½ statute adults who are returning to Fiji under the Government repatriation scheme.46

There was some opposition within the colonial government to the allocation of resources for the purpose of repatriating Fiji Indians from India. One official in particular was of the view that, for the same purpose of increasing the colony's labour supply, the money could be spent more productively. It seemed to I. McOwan, the Secretary for Native Affairs, that quite modest appropriations of government funds spent on public health measures amongst the native Fijians, specifically to reduce the high death-rate amongst Fijian children of up to ten years of age, would serve the purpose better. Money spent on child welfare work amongst the Fijians, McOwan claimed, would be "a sound financial investment" which warranted "the serious attention of the Government."47 McOwan put his views on record in a letter to the Colonial Secretary on 10 May 1928.

We have recently spent a sum of £6,000 to bring back to the Colony 300 Indians, yet we permit this loss of life to occur without spending more than £500 per annum in an effort to prevent it.... The Fijians have been substantial contributors to the accumulated Immigration Funds as producers of approximately 50 per cent of the copra exported from the Colony upon which an export tax was levied and earmarked for this particular Fund. Might not

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46 FTH, 19 March 1928, p.4. The Sutlej was owned by the Nourse Line and was on contract to the Government of Fiji as a repatriate ship.

47 Secretary for Native Affairs to the Colonial Secretary, 10 May 1928; FTH, 4 September 1928, p.3.
some of this Fund be expended in an effort to increase the labour supply of the Colony by preserving the Fijian race?48

The line of argument advanced by McOwan would soon, in later years, sway the counsels of the colonial government. But during the 1920s, the expansion of the colony's Indian workforce was given priority.

At this point it is perhaps useful to remind ourselves that the Fiji Indian community was a British imperial creation. The founding and floruit of the community was bound up in the historical interaction between the Raj, the colonial state in Fiji and British settlers in Oceania -- all coordinated by H.M.G.'s imperial departments of state, the Colonial and India offices, with British venture capital supplying the fiscal means, and the Royal Navy providing the foundational support and means of communication. Fiji Indian political aspirations and expectations, therefore, were fashioned in a setting where British imperial norms held sway. To some extent, Fiji Indian values and goals reflected those norms. It might therefore assist our understanding of things if we take an occasion to witness some arms of the imperial machinery in action.

It might be informative to examine in some depth how the Fiji colonial government implemented its re-emigration scheme for Fiji Indian repatriates. The details brought to light in such a study go a long way to illustrate many otherwise obscure facets of state-society relations in colonial Fiji.

48 Ibid.
More importantly for our purposes, our research into this aspect of life in colonial Fiji has provided a window into the development of something fundamental to our topic: namely, the genesis of a Fiji Indian national identity. The development of such an identity required differentiation of things Fiji Indian from things merely Indian; and, not surprisingly, the occasion for the development of this sense of difference first occurred amongst Fiji Indians living in India.

The Fiji government, assisted by the Bengal provincial authorities, had established facilities in Calcutta, managed on the spot by its own agent, whereby prospective repatriates could be screened, selected and housed while awaiting embarkation.49 A few days before the departure of the batch of Fiji Indian repatriates, a correspondent of the Englishman, a Calcutta newspaper,50 visited the Fiji migrant base. On 14 March 1928, the Englishman published an ensuing report on the eight hundred-odd repatriates, roughly half of whom, the correspondent had discovered, "are paying their own passages to get back to steady work and comfortable conditions ... [while] the rest are being assisted by the Fiji Government."51 The article continued:

49 The re-emigration depot was formally opened on 1 March 1928.

50 During the 1930s, the Englishman was acquired by the Statesman, Calcutta's, indeed India's, premier newspaper. The present writer learnt this on 29 September 1992, in a conversation with Shri Sunanda Datta-Ray, editor of the Statesman, then serving as a writer-in-residence at the East-West Centre, Hawaii.

51 Englishman, 14 March 1928; reprinted in FTH, 25 April 1928, p.6.
For several years past numbers of emigrants to Fiji who had returned to India on holiday, and who, having ... found that conditions here were not what memory tempered by lapse of time had led them to believe, have been clamouring to go back.... An agent of the Fiji Government, Mr J. Judd, arrived in India some time ago, and his has been the difficult task of selection. Many families anxious to sail on the Sutlej have had to be rejected, and a representative of the Englishman who yesterday visited the model village near Calcutta, in which the lucky ones are being housed and cared for pending their departure, had no difficulty in sympathizing with their disappointment. Calcutta's Fiji with its 400 inhabitants is a remarkable example of what good organization and sympathetic administration can do in dealing with a social and economic problem at first sight almost insoluble. Here in specklessly clean huts have lived since March 1 a crowd of emigrant families of all creeds, well clothed, better fed than they have been for some time, and mixing together with no regard to the various castes to which they belong.\(^52\)

The correspondent from the Englishman talked with many of the inhabitants of the village so as to form his impressions from the emigrants' own stories. "There was," he reported, "little variety in them."\(^53\) Most of the emigrants, he discovered, had left Fiji "only when they had saved

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\(^52\) Ibid. The mixing together of Indians of different castes, mentioned by the Englishman, was a striking feature of depot life for intended migrant workers from the very start of the indenture system. Life aboard ship and in the plantation lines also followed this pattern. The result was that caste was not able to function amongst the groups of indentured labourers and it did not take hold in Fiji Indian social arrangements, something which the ending of indenture did not reverse. The present writer believes that the four to seven weeks aboard ship, en route to Fiji, would have witnessed the crisis of caste and the demise of its divisions -- living and sleeping in a confined space and eating the same food out of the same utensils. Caste conscious individuals would have been highly traumatized by the time the migrant ship arrived in Fiji.

John Kelly holds a similar view. He writes: "The Fiji Indians were taken to be individually and socially unattached in the modes of recruitment, in the legal terms of the contract, in the definition of 'labour units,' and in the arrangement of authority in the lines. Legally, Homo Hierarchicus died in the depots" (Kelly, A Politics of Virtue ... 1991, pp.68-69).

\(^53\) Englishman, 14 March 1928; reprinted in FTH, 25 April 1928, p.6.
considerable sums of money and the urge came to return to India and see their own country and their people."^54

This article in the *Englishman* told a story the moral of which flew in the face of Fiji's general reputation in India. In the course of the Indian nationalist campaign against indenture, Fiji had been discredited as a decent place for Indian settlement. The colony had been portrayed as a place where Indians were exploited, degraded and oppressed. The Indian nationalist view of Fiji was difficult to reconcile with the spectacle of so many Fiji Indians voting with their feet to remove themselves from the embrace of *Bharat Mata* (Mother India) and return to their island home. The article in the *Englishman* drove home the point most effectively when it reduced the issue to individual specifics, a "typical story" of "a man named Bhola, the head of a family of 19."^55

Forty years ago, when he was a child of ten, he left his home near Sultanpur with his father and mother who had decided to go "to a country far away." The three came to Calcutta ... [and emigrated to Fiji. Upon reaching maturity] Bhola married an emigrant girl and lived a life which he described as one of hard work but free from trouble. He saved Rs 2,000 ... and came back to see India eight years ago. He was robbed of his savings and arrived here destitute, but the Government paid the fares of his family to their old homes.^^56

At this point, the correspondent quoted Bhola's own words.

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^54 Ibid.

^55 Ibid.

^^56 Statement by Bhola, Calcutta, early March 1928; ibid.
We were outcastes. We had no money and no welcome. We were prevented even from taking water from the village well. We were forced to go to another village far away where we were strangers and got work as cultivators. Then it became known that we had been across the sea and we were driven away again. For eight years I have wandered all over India and have only been able to live by the help of God. We are all going back to Fiji and will not return to Hindustan.57

The Fiji Indians gathered together in the model village near the waterfront in Calcutta were standing at a point of national creation. Bhola and his confederates are our very first Fiji Indian nationalists. And this Fiji Indian moment of national creation was mediated through an officer of H.M. Colonial Service.

The officer in question was none other than J. Judd, the man who provided us with a favourable appraisal of the Fiji Indian contribution to the general well-being of Fiji.58 We now see Judd earlier in his career, acting as the veritable, if unintended, mid-wife of Fiji Indian nationalism. Judd, the public in Fiji was informed, had "preceded to India on the 3rd December 1927, on a special mission in connection with the re-emigration of Indians."59 He was to serve as the Government of Fiji's Repatriation Agent in Calcutta. To be chosen for such a job, in India Office territory moreover, Judd must have already impressed his Colonial Service peers as a keen fellow.

57 Ibid.

58 To recall Judd's words, see Chapter One, pp.26-27 above.

Before going to India, Judd had served in Fiji as a District Inspector of Constabulary; and after his return to Fiji, Judd was appointed District Commissioner of Ba.  

We are indebted to the correspondent from the *Englishman* for a glimpse of Judd in action. In a fine piece of investigative journalism, the reporter conducted an interview with the Fiji government agent. In response to a question, Judd said that there was certain employment and a living wage for every adult who sailed for Fiji on the Sutlej. "As you have seen for yourself," Judd said, "we have made a point of taking whole families back, even when we know that some will be of no value to Fiji." Judd was asked: "What will most of them do when they get there?" He answered:

The worst of them ... can get labour at half a crown a day and live in real comfort for a shilling less. Skilled labourers can make four shillings a day easily. But I hope that the great majority will settle down on their own little plots of land and become real settlers. The Government of Fiji will give them every assistance.

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60 J. Judd makes another appearance in this study in his capacity as District Commissioner of Ba in early February 1929. The reader will recall that, on 21 October 1927, the Fiji Legislative Council allocated £10,000 for "the re-immigration to and settlement in Fiji" of Fiji Indians stranded in India. The cost of Judd's mission in India and the repatriation passages he arranged consumed £6,000 of the funds allotted (see Secretary for Native Affairs to the Colonial Secretary, 10 May 1928). Perhaps we are permitted to speculate that, once back in Fiji and appointed as District Commissioner of Ba, Judd was also delegated the job of putting into effect the settlement aspect of the repatriation scheme, by use of the balance of the allocated funds.


63 Statement by J. Judd; ibid. "Half a crown" was a coin, worth two-and-a-half shillings.
Judd returned to Fiji on 12 April 1928 aboard the Sutlej, along with his re-emigrant charges. The "Report by Mr J. Judd on his Special Mission to India in connection with Indian immigrants who had been repatriated and who wished to return again to Fiji" was drafted by Judd and presented to the Colonial Secretary on 9 May 1928 and laid on the table in the Legislative Council on 24 August 1928. In his efforts to contact Fiji Indian repatriates who wished to re-emigrate to Fiji, Judd had experienced difficulty in eliciting the cooperation of local Indian officials and village headmen. Judd wrote that this lack of cooperation arose from the negative impact of the visit to India of the Simon Commission, that "[t]he opposition which this aroused militated against the success of my mission." From his first hand experience, Judd had an interesting statement to make on the relative merits of life for Indian labourers in India and Fiji.

From the experiences gained during my visit to India, I am fully convinced that the living conditions of the Indian colonist of Fiji are superior to those enjoyed by the same person in his Motherland.... This applies with greater force to

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64 For the full text of the Judd Report, see Legislative Council Paper No.41, "Re-Emigration of Indian Repatriates," 9 May 1928; Colony of Fiji, Journal of the Legislative Council (hereafter J.F.L.C.), Sessions of 1928, Suva, Government Printer, 1929, pp.1-6. For public edification, the Judd Report was published in three sections (see FTH, 28 September 1928, p.3; 29 September 1928, p.7; and 1 October 1928, p.8).


66 Legislative Council Paper No.41, "Re-Emigration of Indian Repatriates," 9 May 1928, paragraph 45; J.F.L.C., Sessions of 1928 ... 1929, p.5. For press comment, see FTH, 1 October 1928, p.8.
those who are members of what are termed "depressed classes."\textsuperscript{67}

This was probably a quite reasonable appraisal. Yet Judd also declared that the favourable conditions of life in Fiji were unlikely to convey a favourable perception of Fiji to Indian political opinion leaders, whose views influenced the government ministers and civil servants whose job it was to sanction or deny proposals for future emigration schemes.

Fiji is unfortunately viewed in India through the atmosphere of the unrest of 1920-21. Until this atmosphere is dispelled, there is little likelihood of emigration to Fiji being re-opened.\textsuperscript{68}

The unfavourable perception of Fiji held by Indian officialdom was perhaps the main consequence of the labour unrest of 1920 which had ensued in Fiji. In Fiji itself, the emergency had been ephemeral and the few instances of riotous behaviour had not inspired sustained emulation.

During his mission in India, Judd had consulted with officers of the Government of India. On 31 January 1928 Judd had met with a Mr Bajpai,\textsuperscript{69} in his office in the Secretariat, New Delhi. With Bajpai's assistance Judd had also that same day had an interview with Sir Mahommed Habibulla,\textsuperscript{70} the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{67} Ibid., paragraph 42 ... p.5. For press commentary, see FTH, 1 October 1928, p.8.
\item \textsuperscript{68} Ibid., paragraph 19 ... p.3. For press publication of the passage cited, see FTH, 29 September 1928, p.7.
\item \textsuperscript{69} Girja Shankar Bajpai, C.I.E., I.C.S. Appointed as an official secretary to the Indian delegation, Bajpai had accompanied V.S. Srinivasa Sastri to the Imperial Conference of 1921.
\item \textsuperscript{70} Mahommed Habibulla, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E: Minister for Education, Lands and Health (1928), Government of India.
\end{itemize}
Habibulla and Bajpai requested Judd to communicate a message to the Government of Fiji.

I was asked to convey to my Government the message that the Government of India ... was at all times willing to offer help, without any desire to interfere, in all problems concerning the welfare of Indian colonists. 72

Addressed as it was by officials of a powerful empire to their counterparts in a small country, it was a message the intent of which was, shall we say, open to interpretation.

Let us consider one last passage of Judd's report. It is an excerpt that serves to throw light on a matter that has long perplexed us; for, at several turns, we have been puzzled by the level of repatriation of Fiji Indians to India, and the significantly lower levels of Fiji Indian re-emigration back to Fiji. While in India, Judd had grappled with bureaucratic obstacles and failings which had limited his extent of contact with Fiji Indian repatriates. If only, he openly grieved, the Fiji government's offer of passage and resettlement had been awarded wider compass.

Had the nomination lists been opened in Fiji in time to permit of a complete list reaching the Government of India at least six months prior to

71 This Department of the Government of India had an "Overseas" section which seems to have acted as a de facto Commonwealth Affairs bureau. For evidence of this de facto role, see the "Memoranda on the Position of Indians in Fiji submitted to the Colonial Office by the Colonies Committee appointed by the Government of India," drafted for the Government of India by Habibulla's Department (in Chapter Two, pp.115-116 below).

72 Legislative Council Paper No.41, "Re-Emigration of Indian Repatriates," 9 May 1928, paragraph 18; J.F.L.C., Sessions of 1928 ... 1929, p.3.
the sailing of the Sutlej, or had the Government of India permitted publication of the Fiji Government’s offer throughout the Madras and United Provinces, there is little doubt that hundreds more would have availed themselves of the privilege of a return passage to Fiji.\(^73\)

Judd’s comment sighs the requiem of an unknown and unnamed and unnumbered host of Fiji Indians doomed by an ill-advised repatriation which, unmasked by bitter experience, proved to be a sentence of permanent separation from their preferred Oceanic home.\(^74\)

Yet population movement between Fiji and India continued to flow both ways. On its return journey in April 1928, the good ship Sutlej carried away from Fiji even more Indians than, the month before, it had brought. The experiences of Bhola and other repatriates like him, and the conclusions they arrived at as regards the superior conditions of life in Fiji than in India, had as yet limited effect in deterring prospective repatriates. In reporting on the April 1928 departure, and recording the cost to the colony, the press provided some interesting figures.

Nine hundred and seventy three Indians left Fiji on Saturday [21 April 1928] in the steamer Sutlej.

\(^73\) Ibid., paragraph 44 ... p.5.

\(^74\) The barrier preventing Fiji Indians in India from returning to Fiji was financial, including the cost of passage and the need to bribe officials. Judd’s presence would have protected his re-emigrant charges from official extortion. Even so, each of Judd’s 323\(^\frac{1}{2}\) statutory adult re-emigrants cost the Fiji colonial state about £18/10/0 to make landfall in Fiji. We arrive at this figure from Judd’s report to the Colonial Secretary, dated 9 May 1928, that "[t]he total cost of the experiment ... has been £5,968/17/9" (see Legislative Council Paper No.41, "Re-Emigration of Indian Repatriates," 9 May 1928, paragraph 41; J.F.L.C., Sessions of 1928 ... 1929, p.5).
The Fiji Government paid over £15,000 passage money, and [the departing Indians] ... took with them wealth to the total [of] £33,550. Fulfilling its pledge to the Indian immigrants the Government of Fiji despatched ... 924 [out of the 973 passenger total]. In addition to the repatriates there were also 37 men, 8 women and 4 boys who had paid their own passages.\textsuperscript{75}

A free passage to India and, on average for men, women and children, £35 in the pocket! These figures spoke of a Fiji Indian community which could effect a call on the public purse and, in its own right, was acquiring a substantial material stake in the colony.

We shall not detain ourselves further in respect to the movement of people between Fiji and India. We have provided sufficient evidence of a permanent Indian demographic presence in Fiji and of a nascent Fiji Indian nationalism, both of which were to consolidate in the subsequent years of the period of our study. With the Fiji Indians thus firmly established in their Oceanic home, and just as firmly situated in the economy of their land of settlement, it is now time to determine the place of Fiji in the South Pacific region.

**Oceanic Regional Setting**

The South Pacific is an odd sort of place. A multitude of nations inhabit its islands, yet the regional political culture does not lend itself to drawing sharp lines between its peoples. As one travels across Oceania, the nations seem

\textsuperscript{75} *FTH*, 24 April 1928, p.4. The total of £33,550 which the repatriates took home to India consisted of £27,108/4/7 in cash and £6,448/10/0 in value of jewellery.
to modulate by degree from one to another, maintaining distinctions by nuances rather than profundities. The qualities held in common that contribute to this regional cultural homogeneity include considerations geographic, linguistic and religious, as well as the absence of war and the threat of war as a means of regulating relations between Oceanic countries -- at least, since the advent of the colonial era.

Fiji generally conforms with this pattern of regional homogeneity, except in respect to one important peculiarity: the ramifications of its internal social divisions. Fiji is peculiar in that its internal social divisions are drawn more sharply than the distinctive national features that separate its citizens from their regional neighbours. During our period of study, Fiji Europeans had more in common with most Australians and New Zealanders, and Fijians with Tongans and Samoans, than either had with each other or, separately, with their fellow countrymen, the Fiji Indians.

This observation can serve as a timely reminder that colonial Fiji was part of a wider British Oceanic region. The inclusion of Fiji in this regional grouping was the dominant consideration in matters of Fiji's foreign relations and

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76 We have in mind insular geography, the English language and the Christian religion.

77 The knowledgeable reader may here protest that the existence of a significantly large community of people of mixed European and Fijian race tells against our argument. In respect to European-Fijian social interaction, we concede the point. But we stand by our statement in respect to European-Indian and Indian-Fijian social interaction.
defence, the former of which was at the command of Britain, the latter being earmarked as the responsibility primarily of Australia and New Zealand.

The regional influence of Australia and New Zealand in Fiji extended to the colony’s domestic politics. The British colonial authorities were conscious of the need to stay on side with the two Dominions. This was a consideration which had an unfavourable effect on the prospects of Fiji Indian political advance. The reasoning in the minds of the British colonial authorities whereby Anzac regional influence came to bear on Fiji was expressed by Walter D. Ellis, a Colonial Office secretary, in a memorandum he appended to a despatch received in May 1929 from Fiji, a memorandum entitled "Notes on the Constitutional Position of Indians in Fiji." Referring to the European elected members in the Fiji Legislative Council, Ellis wrote:

The European unofficials are either Australians or New Zealanders, or at least take their opinions largely from those Dominions, and they are accordingly markedly anti-Oriental. The Dominions would expect to be consulted before Indians were given a predominant position in Fiji. 78

Some elements within H.M.G. were, it seems, at least considering Indian predominance in Fiji. This in itself is worthy of note. But, in respect to the influence of the two Anzac Dominions on Fiji, here was a factor militating against the interests of the Fiji Indians.

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78 Walter D. Ellis, "Notes on the Constitutional Position of Indians in Fiji"; appended, Seymour to C.O., 24 May 1929; C.O.83/186.
We have seen how the Fiji Indian community came to be established in its island home and the place of Fiji in the wider British Oceanic scheme of things. It is now time to consider the transformation that occurred in the early 1920s in respect to Fiji Indian political expectations, and the two men who attempted to guide the process of change.

**Manilal and Sastri**

During the forty years of indenture, the colonial administration in Fiji made minimal provision for the welfare of the Fiji Indians. But the ending of indenture, and the attendant shortage of Indian labour, also saw the end of the period of official neglect.

In addition to proposals for state-funded schemes of Indian immigration and Fiji Indian re-emigration, official attention was given to ways by which greater numbers of Fiji Indians could be induced to remain voluntarily in their Fijian workplace. It is evident that the ending of indenture in Fiji coincided in time with an upsurge in official concern for improving plantation living conditions and other aspects of Fiji Indian life. The colonial authorities were encouraged in this activity by exhortations from local European opinion leaders. In mid-1920, the *Fiji Times and Herald* added its voice to the chorus of entreaties. "The Indian question," it maintained, "has grown to be a knotty problem...."

What provision is there for the "looking after" of the sixty thousand we already have? None. This colony needs a special Indian Department ... and in
each district where there are 2000 or more Indians there should be a District Indian Commissioner. These officers should be men who thoroughly understand the Indians, and can speak Hindustani fluently, who can converse with Indians on all subjects, and who can bear with their many peculiarities. 79

Such solicitations on behalf of the Fiji Indians, whether from local Fiji European society or the colonial state, were a post-indenture development. Under indenture, it had been customary in official and high social circles to take for granted the ready availability of Indian labour, a habit of mind which had not generated profound concern for the welfare of Indians domiciled in the colony. Clearly, things had changed. It seemed that the ending of indenture had heralded a new age for the Fiji Indian community, an age in which Fiji Indian interests would figure as an element, perhaps increasingly the critical element, in the politics of Fiji.

As this realization took root in Fiji European minds, it gave rise to a certain apprehension. Some Europeans gave voice to their foreboding. Thus, writing in The Times Trade Supplement in May 1920, Sir Everard im Thurn, a former Governor of Fiji (1904-1910), predicted an early Indian demographic, economic and political ascendance in the colony and the reduction of the Fiji European community to secondary status.

As in other colonies ... [the Indians] will in time, and probably in no long time, take over the colony and acquire considerable wealth. Fiji will

79 FTH, 1 June 1920, p.6.
become an East Indian settlement.... [The Europeans] should in most cases be able, though not without difficulty, gradually to assume their place as representing European influence in an East Indian community.  

The Right Reverend T.C. Twitchell, the Bishop of Polynesia, would have agreed with im Thurn. In August 1920, acting as the representative of the Planters' Association of Fiji, the Bishop made a similar prediction of an approaching Indian ascendence to officials at the Colonial Office in London, though Twitchell's prognostication was focused on Indian-Fijian, not European-Indian relationships. As one official recorded the Bishop's views:

On ... [the] question of [Indian] political rights he said quite frankly that, in his opinion, Fiji would become, in time, a purely Indian colony. The Fijian was going to the wall.

Yet it would be a mistake to conclude that the cessation of indenture in Fiji marked the ending of social disabilities for Fiji Indians. Changing economic conditions attendant on the termination of indenture, because of an unprecedented scarcity factor, had put a premium on the value of Indian labour. In the long run, such a development augured well for the prospects of a likely improvement to the social and political position of the Fiji Indian community. But such an advance had to evolve slowly, as slowly as it took for Europeans and

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81 Colonial Office Minute, 13 August 1920; attached to Rodwell to C.O., 1 July 1920; C.O.83/151.
Fijians and Indians to reconsider their attitudes of superiority or assumptions of inferiority towards each other. It was to take a long time before social relations between Indians and the other communities in Fiji would reflect faithfully the pivotal importance of the Indian community in the Fijian economy. Indeed, at the end of the period of this study the Fiji Indians still had some way to go. So, not surprisingly, in the 1920s there was little noticeable change in the immediate social status of Indians in Fiji.

In early 1920 an incident occurred which at once underscored the continuing social disabilities of Fiji Indians and revealed the Fiji European attitudes which called for their perpetuation. A New Zealand Parliamentary party, about twenty strong, visited Fiji in March 1920. The M.P.s were on a general tour of Pacific islands administered by New Zealand, including Samoa, Niue and the Tokelau and Cook Islands. Sir James Allen led the party. Harry Holland M.P. (Labour) was a member of the touring group. While in Suva, Holland made a point of meeting with D.M. Manilal, an Indian leader. This display of a supposed intimacy between the two oppositional leaders, New Zealand and Fiji Indian, drew the ire of the Fiji Times and Herald. We quote the editorial which gave expression to this indignation at some length as it provides a useful summary of Fiji European political attitudes towards the Fiji Indians, attitudes that prevailed in the colony at the opening of our period of study.
Mr Holland is no doubt desirous of obtaining information as to the cause of the recent Indian trouble here, which necessitated our asking assistance from the New Zealand Government ... but we think that some of the methods employed by Mr Holland show very bad taste, especially in view of the fact that before coming ashore, members were requested by Sir James Allen, to refrain from discussing political matters with natives or Indians. We trust that Mr Holland will learn that the recent trouble in Fiji was a purely political move, on the part of a small section of the Indian population, to obtain control of the country. They claim equality, both politically and socially, with Europeans, and even in New Zealand, where the European far exceeds the colored, there are great disabilities placed against Asiatics. In Fiji the disparity in races is very marked, and we expect no change in this respect, in fact we hope that the colored population will be very much greater than at present.... [But] we are a British possession, and being Britishers [we] have no intention of allowing the Government of this Colony to pass out of our hands.82

This declaration, with its analysis of an unfavourable demographic balance to which it bid an undemocratic defiance, stands as something of a manifesto of Fiji European political priorities in the inter-war era.

The "recent trouble in Fiji" mentioned in the editorial quoted above referred to a strike in early 1920 on the part of Indian labourers employed on the sugar plantations and in the sugar mills. It is needless to recount here the details of the Fiji Indian strikes and the colonial government's response.83 It is sufficient to relate that, in the weeks preceding the strike, the leaders of the Indian Imperial

82 FTH, 19 March 1920, p.4.

83 For an account of the 1920 strike in Fiji, see Gillion, The Fiji Indians ... 1977, pp.18-46.
Association, the selfsame "small section of the Indian population" alluded to in the editorial, had addressed several public meetings on the subject of a set of demands they had submitted on 29 December 1919 to the colonial government. The origins of the unrest lay in the rise of the cost of living for the Fiji Indians which had attended on wartime disruption of shipping and food imports; and which had been exacerbated in turn by prolonged shipping strikes in Australia. By their actions, the Indian Imperial Association leaders gave a political dimension to disturbances which might otherwise have been seen in a predominately economic light.

The strike had become so threatening to law and order in the colony that Sir Cecil Rodwell, the Governor, had issued "[a]n Ordinance to confer on the Governor in Council power to make better provision for the Public Safety during times of Civil Commotion." The Ordinance established a formidable set of executive powers. The Governor in Council could now "make regulations for all or any of the following matters" including the imposition of constraints on the movement of people, on the supply of means of transport, on the supply or possession of liquor, on the possession of firearms and on

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84 The Indian Imperial Association of Fiji had been formed on 2 June 1918. Manilal, George Suchit and Ram Singh comprised its core leadership.

85 The set of demands ranged widely, from wage increases and abolition of taxes to provision of municipal facilities and Indian suffrage. For the full list, see Ram Singh to Colonial Secretary, 29 December 1919; C.S.O., 8590/1919; in Gillion, The Fiji Indians ... 1977, p.24.

86 Ordinance No.1 of 1920, 12 February 1920; O.C.F., 1920 ... 1921, p.1.
gatherings, and for preventing intimidation.\textsuperscript{87} The Ordinance also made provision for officials to exercise a wide range of powers of arrest.\textsuperscript{88} Rodwell also requested New Zealand for troops. In response, a contingent of three officers and about fifty soldiers were dispatched from New Zealand to Fiji on the steamer \textit{Hinemoa}. On 13 February 1920, at the bridge separating Samabula from Suva proper, this force went into action in support of local police against a crowd advancing towards the town.\textsuperscript{89} The New Zealanders held the bridge, permitting the police to cross in force and disperse the crowd. In the melee that followed, one rioter was killed and several wounded. A few weeks later, the New Zealand force returned home.\textsuperscript{90}

This instance of imperial police work provides us with the right context in which to introduce Manilal Maganlal Doctor,\textsuperscript{91} in early 1920 the leading light of Fiji Indian

\textsuperscript{87} For the full list of emergency powers, see ibid., pp.1-2.

\textsuperscript{88} For the full list of the emergency powers of arrest, see ibid., pp.2-3.

\textsuperscript{89} The Samabula crowd had wanted to enter Suva to obtain food and enquire into the well-being of several political activists, including Mrs Manilal, held in state custody.

\textsuperscript{90} For a summary of this New Zealand military intervention in Fiji, one in which either failing memory or editorial imagination had increased Indian casualties to "[f]ifteen ... rioters ... killed," see FTH, 1 March 1928, p.2 -- an article entitled "South Sea Troubles" prompted by the arrival that day in Samoan waters of the cruisers \textit{H.M.S. Diomede} and \textit{H.M.S. Dunedin}, a precautionary New Zealand naval deployment in support of the Western Samoa Mandate authorities in their confrontation with Mau dissidents. After landing its contingent of thirty-odd Royal Marines in Apia, \textit{H.M.S. Diomede} had steamed to Suva where it remained based for several weeks of March 1928.

\textsuperscript{91} Indian names can be a real hurdle. In the case of our subject,
politics, whose acquaintance Harry Holland, no doubt with an eye to the spotlight, had been so anxious to make. Manilal was an associate of M.K. Gandhi, having lived briefly during late 1911 and early 1912 at Tolstoy Farm, the prospective Mahatma’s ashram in Transvaal, South Africa. Gandhi had occasion to express disappointment with Manilal, especially over the younger man’s refusal to perform physical labour, a recommended aspect of life at the ashram. Thus, a week after Manilal’s arrival at the ashram, Gandhi wrote to Manilal’s prospective father-in-law:

[I]n a settlement such as the Farm, where a certain method of work has evolved, the upsetting of that method by a well-behaved person like Manilal sets impressionable youngsters and novitiates an unintended bad example. It should be considered gracious of a thoughtful person -- in fact, it should be his duty to a certain extent -- to conform to the regulations of a settlement such as this. A guest is under no obligation to work. But Manilal cannot be reckoned among this category of guests.92

Manilal evidently was not shaping up as a satyagrahi. We shall rely on the Mahatma for this character reference.

Manilal was his personal name, Maganlal was derived from his father’s personal name and Doctor was his family name. He held no doctorate, yet in Fiji he was usually referred to as "Dr Manilal." In Mauritius, his previous place of residence (1907-1912), he was called "Manilal Doctor." Gandhi referred to him as "Mr Manilal Doctor, M.A., Bar-at-Law" (see Gandhi to G.K. Gokhale, 30 September 1910; C.W.M.G., vol.10 ... September 1963 [Bhadra 1885], p.326). Perhaps with a view to thoroughly confuse everybody, our subject signed himself "D.M. Manila!.

Manilal’s wife, an Indian lady who had spent some time in Gandhi’s ashram in South Africa, was named "Jayakunvar." Manilal’s long-term mistress, a creole lady from Mauritius who was also part of his Fiji household, was named "Madame Carbrie." His father-in-law was Dr Pranjivan Mehta who lived in Rangoon -- this time, an occupational medical doctor. Dr Mehta was an old associate of M.K. Gandhi.

92 Gandhi to Dr Pranjivan Mehta, 22 October 1911; translated from the Gujarati; C.W.M.G., vol.11 ... March 1964 (Chaitra 1886), p.170.
Manilal had arrived in Fiji in September 1912, less than a year after his brief stay with Gandhi, having in the interval visited India and married Dr Mehta’s daughter. As with respect to his stay in Mauritius, Fiji was not his home for long. On 15 April 1920, Manilal was deported from the colony.

We need to ascertain Manilal’s place in Fiji Indian history. Manilal practiced a secular form of politics, the type of approach taken by most Gujarati lawyer-politicians of that era -- including M.K. Gandhi, Sardar Patel, Bhulabhai Desai, and others. In 1916, when the colonial authorities were considering who to nominate as the first Indian member of the Legislative Council, Manilal was passed over, even though, so Gillion maintains, he was "the obvious choice to represent the Indians." Instead, the authorities chose Badri Mahraj, a plantation owner and member of the Arya Samaj, a choice which, Gillion says, "enabled the intrusion of religious issues into [Fiji Indian] politics." If Manilal had been given the seat in the Legislative Council, Gillion argues, he would probably have judged issues from a broad and non-sectarian point of view.... The government did not deliberately set out to split the Indian community ... for officials knew little of the

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93 Vallabhbhai Patel (1875-1950): Gujarati Pattidar; prominent Indian National Congress leader; intimate confederate of Mahatma Gandhi (1918-1948); Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister of India (1946-1950).

94 Bhulabhai Desai (1877-1946): prominent Bombay lawyer; resigned from the Liberal Party in 1930 and joined the Indian National Congress; led the Congress members in the Indian Legislative Assembly (1937-1942).

95 Gillion, Fiji’s Indian Migrants ... 1962, p.161.

96 Ibid., p.162.
religious factors involved ... but its action did contribute to the split. 97

In this context took place the deportation of Manilal Maganlal Doctor. Thus was communalist politics granted the opportunity to take root amongst the Fiji Indians, an authentic home-grown form of politics which might otherwise never have seen the light of day.

But it seems that Manilal was a flawed leadership prospect. Gandhi, from the start, had sensed that. By the time gunfire sounded on 13 February 1920 at the confrontation at the Samabula bridge, Manilal was showing distinct signs of a desire to lead, so to speak, from the back of the crowd. The day following the violence at Samabula, the Fiji Times and Herald had voiced the opinion that "[t]he Indian National Association 98 appears to be at the bottom of the trouble and we think that the Government should immediately declare this an illegal Association and deport its members." 99 This threat elicited from Manilal a letter to the editor dated 21 February 1920, Suva, stating: "I had left Suva for Levuka long before the strike started and I heard of it when I reached Ba on the Keva -- as witness Mr H. Ragg J.P." 100

97 Ibid.

98 The correct name was "Indian Imperial Association." The Fiji Times and Herald was probably endeavouring to put an negative slant on the report about Manilal's Association. In the political culture of Fiji at the time, the combination of "Indian" and "Nationalist" had unfavourable connotations.

99 FTH, 14 February 1920, p.4.

100 Manilal to Editor, 21 February 1920; FTH, 24 February 1920, p.5.
was signed "D.M. Manilal, President, Indian Association of Ba."\textsuperscript{101} This prompted the editor to ask:

\begin{quote}
Why has Mr Manilal suddenly dropped the Indian Imperial Association\textsuperscript{102} like a hot potato, and blossomed out as President of an Indian Association of Ba?... Has Mr Manilal resigned as President of the I.I.A., or has the association died?\textsuperscript{103}
\end{quote}

Manilal, as his stay at Tolstoy Farm suggests, may well have been inspired in his choice of political style by the example of M.K. Gandhi. But his movement away from the scene of action and his denial of complicity, let alone leadership, in the events leading to the clash between the Samabula Indians and the colonial forces could arouse in an unsympathetic breast the suspicion that Manilal Maganlal Doctor, unlike his valiant non-violent mentor, was not cut in the heroic mould.

The importance to Fiji Indian political development of Manilal's eight years in Fiji, of which some historians make much, we have chosen to downplay. We do so because, to put in Manilal's place, we have someone who, we believe, was much more important to the process -- an Indian politician of a type very different from Manilal. Indeed, our man was a kind of Indian political activist who, in a post-Gandhian world, is rather difficult to bring into ideological focus. Maybe it is for that very reason that he is largely absent from most

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{102} The reader will note that, this time, the Fiji Times and Herald got the name right.

\textsuperscript{103} FTH, 24 February 1920, p.4.
accounts. But enough of suspense. The politician we have in mind went by the name of V.S. Srinivasa Sastri. 104

When first we set out on our quest to write up the history of Fiji Indian political mobilization of the immediate post-indenture period, we did not have V.S. Srinivasa Sastri on our list of projected main characters. It was only in the course of our research that Sastri pushed his way into our study. We had no choice but to let him in -- it was either that or we would have been left with a descriptive account sans causal explanation. In our following chapter we shall indicate the moment when, during our research of matters Hindu, Sastri first came to our notice. But for the moment, instead of considering Sastri’s entry into our study, let us turn our attention to Sastri’s entry into the affairs of colonial Fiji.

In early July 1922, the good citizens of Fiji were alerted by an item in the press to the existence of the man who, perhaps more than any other, was to influence the course of events whereby Fiji Indians entered representative politics. It was an item contributed by a special correspondent based in Sydney, and was dated 21 June 1922. In part it read:

104 V.S. Srinivasa Sastri (vivebat 1869-1946): nominated to the Madras Legislative Council (1913); President of the Servants of India Society (1915-); Member Imperial Legislative Council (1916-); Member, Imperial Council of State (1920-); represented India at the Imperial Conference (1921); Delegate, League of Nations (1921) and Washington Naval (Disarmament) Conference (1921); Privy Councillor (1921); Freeman of the City of London (1921); Delegate, London Round Table Conference (1930). An intimate of Mahatma Gandhi (from November 1912), Sastri was the “revered friend, who ... has the reputation of being an eminent English scholar” who revised the English edition of Gandhi’s autobiography (see Mohandas K. Gandhi, An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth, Boston, Beacon, 1962 [1927], p.iii).
The cause of the Indians domiciled in Australia has been pleaded eloquently here by Mr Srinivasa Sastri.... His advocacy of the policy of equality and brotherhood is a skilful one, and leads by measured steps to the dominant idea -- a vote for the Indian.... Resolute and ardent in his quest for improved conditions for the Indians, he presents a graphic picture of their susceptibilities, heart-burnings, and political aspirations.\textsuperscript{105}

What this news item did not mention was that Sastri was abroad in an official capacity, that he was a de facto roving ambassador of the Government of India, an envoy assigned the task of exercising the influence of the Raj on behalf of the political advance of overseas Indian communities.

It soon became clear that this advocate of Indian political rights intended to include Fiji on his itinerary. Official communications passed between London, New Delhi and Suva whereby a visit was arranged. The public was made aware of the upcoming event only during the final moves. Thus a press item of mid-July read:

Mr H.M. Scott, K.C., the Mayor of Suva, received a telegram this morning from the Right Hon. Srinivasa Sastri.... [H]e ... will as suggested say a few words on Imperial matters after the formal reception by ... [H]is Worship.\textsuperscript{106}

Although we cannot prove it, we suspect that the Fiji Indian community, despite at this stage the lack of any Indian-owned press, was rather better informed than the Fiji European press about the bombshell that was homing in on the

\textsuperscript{105} \textit{FTH}, 4 July 1922, p.4.

\textsuperscript{106} \textit{FTH}, 16 July 1922, p.4.
colony, one which had in view to effect a radical change in European-Indian political, and eventually societal, relations. We suspect this because of another report which appeared in the *Fiji Times and Herald*, in the same issue that carried the report of the Sastri-to-Scott cable. This report referred to "a large meeting of Indians ... held at Navua on Sunday [16 July 1922]."\(^{107}\) The gathering had passed the resolution that the Fiji Government be asked to grant to Indians resident in the Colony, status equal to that of other subjects of ... [H]is Majesty the King in accordance with the resolution passed at the Imperial Conference in England.\(^{108}\)

In the following section of this chapter, we shall elaborate at some length about what transpired at the Imperial Conference of mid-1921.

The next flurry of reports came two days before Sastri arrived. One set of such reports concerned a meeting held on 27 July 1922 "to appoint delegates to represent [the] Suva district in welcoming Mr Sastri."\(^{109}\) This was the very first time we are provided with a view of Fiji Indians gathered to choose Indian community representatives.\(^{110}\) The meeting was presided over by W.M. Caldwell, a civil servant of Indian extraction, and four Fiji Indian delegates were chosen:

\(^{107}\) *FTH*, 18 July 1922, p.4.

\(^{108}\) Resolution by Indians of Navua, 16 July 1922; *ibid.*

\(^{109}\) *FTH*, 28 July 1922, p.4.

\(^{110}\) Manilal Doctor never seems to have organized mass meetings to choose Indian community representatives. His Indian Imperial Association seems to have operated in a rather elitist, even conspiratorial, mode.
Peter Grant, D.S. John, Maulvi Nasarullah Shah and Pandit Sheudat Sharma \textsuperscript{111} -- two Christians, a Muslim and a Hindu. The meeting was told that delegates from Navua, Vanua Levu, Nausori, Ba, Nadroga and Lautoka were also expected to attend the honourable visitor; and an address was drafted which, it was at this stage reported, was to be read at Sastri's reception by Badri Mahraj. Since 1916, Mahraj had served as the Indian nominated member of the Legislative Council. As we shall see, Mahraj, in the execution of this honour, was at the last minute superceded by Caldwell, the chair of this general meeting. And it seems that the purpose of Sastri's visit had by now, at long last, impressed itself on the Fiji European media. A leader article spelt it out.

Mr Sastri ... comes as an Imperial statesman, who has a desire to see his countrymen outside India receive full political privileges.\textsuperscript{112}

\textit{R.M.S. Makura}, the ship carrying Sastri from New Zealand to Canada, entered Suva Bay in the early hours of 29 July 1922. The press reported that it berthed "amid a considerable degree of excitement among the Indians assembled on the King's Wharf."\textsuperscript{113} Mahraj and Caldwell boarded to greet Sastri, then escorted him ashore to meet the welcoming delegates.

We get an invaluable glimpse here of the personages at the centre of Fiji Indian political leadership at this early

\textsuperscript{111} See \textit{FTH}, 28 July 1922, p.4.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{113} \textit{FTH}, 29 July 1922, p.4.
stage, before most of the communalist groups had yet formed. Badri Mahraj, a plantation owner and nominated member of the Legislative Council, was a member of the Arya Samaj, in 1922 the only organized Fiji Indian communal group, while W.M. Caldwell, a civil servant, was to be one of the founding members of the Indian Reform League when it was established in 1924. Our sources intimate that the two men were already jockeying for position, one against the other. It seems that competition between individual members of the Fiji Indian social elite preceded the formation of most of the communalist groups which, in later years, provided the organizational context for the expression of such competition.

The press had reported the day before Sastri's arrival that the welcoming address at Sastri's reception was to be read out by Badri Mahraj. Evidently there had been subsequently a change of plan because W.M. Caldwell read the address. The tone of the address, one drafted by a public meeting of Indians (on 27 July 1922, in Suva), was dignified and polite. Thus, Caldwell addressed Sastri:

> While acknowledging the blessings of good Government under ... [H]is Majesty's representative here, we would respectfully state that our condition can be greatly improved.114

We should here take note of the style of public address. It had a pre-Gandhian ring to it -- or, more correctly, it reflected the style of public address employed by Gandhi in

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114 Welcoming Address to V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, read by W.M. Caldwell, King's Wharf, Suva, 29 July 1922; FTH, 29 July 1922, p.4.
his pre-Mahatma period, the quarter-century period from 1893 to 1918 when Gandhi, along with most other Indian nationalist leaders, pursued a partnership-in-empire line of approach to Anglo-Indian relations. For the Fiji Indians, it was a tactical approach to politics particularly suited to the circumstances of life in their Oceanic homeland. Given the more tenuous grip on things in the Fiji Islands exercised by the Fiji Indians relative to the Indian hold on the subcontinent, partnership of one sort or another with the other communities in Fiji was the only feasible avenue of advance for the Fiji Indians. It was a misfortune for the Fiji Indians that, in the course of the 1920s, the confrontational mode of politics introduced by Gandhi during the Non-cooperation Satyagraha of 1920-22 replaced the partnership-in-empire line of approach. By 1929, when for the first time the elected representatives of the Fiji Indian community entered the Legislative Council, nationalist politics in the subcontinent provided the Fiji Indian a much less functional model. Thus it came to pass that Caldwell's commendable turns of phrase did not generally characterize Fiji Indian political statements throughout our period.

In his address, Caldwell listed for Sastri the areas where improvements in Indian social conditions were needed. They included "equal rights of citizenship" for Indians, advice for Indian farmers on crops and markets, "[e]asier and cheaper methods of obtaining land for cultivation ... and means of
transporting our produce," and the establishment of hospitals for Indians in country districts.\footnote{115}

For his part, Sastri spoke briefly but authoritatively. He told the welcoming delegates that his was "a wider mission in connection with the status of the Indians throughout the Empire."\footnote{116} The Government of India, Sastri was saying, intended to assist all Indians abroad to acquire their political rights. The Fiji Indians, it was spelt out to the assembled welcoming delegates, were caught up in a much wider movement, one which had as its objective the enfranchisement of Indians living abroad in British colonies.

So far, Sastri had met only with delegates representing the Fiji Indian community. The official welcome took place later that day in the Suva Town Hall. Henry Scott,\footnote{117} the Mayor of Suva, presided. Sir Cecil Rodwell, the Governor, and other prominent figures were present. Sastri spoke for over half an hour. That same day, the press reported on the gist of his speech.

He referred to the Imperial Conference, where it was held that inequality between community and community within the Empire was incongruous, and that this inequality should be removed.... He spoke of the promise of equality by Queen Victoria\footnote{118} and reiterated by Royalty since, of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[115] For Caldwell's full list, see ibid.
\item[116] Sastri's Address to the Welcoming Delegates, King's Wharf, Suva, 29 July 1922; FTH, 29 July 1922, p.4.
\item[117] Scott had not yet (in 1922) received his knighthood.
\item[118] For the text of the promise, see Appendix I (Queen Victoria's...
the patience of the Indian people, generation after
generation, waiting to be admitted into a greater,
wider and freer citizenship... Mr Lloyd George,
Mr Churchill and the Prime Ministers of Australia,
New Zealand and Canada agreed with the new
decision... They would gain their objective by
education, compromise, mutual forbearance, and
mutual goodwill.\textsuperscript{119}

"Education, compromise, mutual forbearance, and mutual
goodwill." These were the selfsame operative principles of
the Indian partnership-in-empire approach to politics.

Two days later, evidently in receipt of a copy of Sastri's
address, the \textit{Fiji Times and Herald} reprinted the actual text.

Politics, we should keep in mind, begins with ideas; and
Sastri's address of 19 July 1922 to His Excellency and the
assembled leaders and general public of Fiji in the Suva Town
Hall is the occasion of the seeding of Fiji Indian politics.

Indians had settled in different parts of the
Empire. In every one of these places it was true
to say that the Indian is not yet treated as an
equal subject of his Majesty. There are many
subtractions from his rights of full citizenship,
and in some places even indignities were still
heaped upon him. India was watching all these
things just now with meticulous care.... The
Imperial Conference had put the case of the status
of Indians in full in passing the resolution that
India was admitted as an equal partner in the
Empire, that any difference in nationals was an
incongruity, and emphasized the rights of Indians
lawfully domiciled in any part of the Empire to be
admitted to full citizenship. To that the Prime
Minister, Mr Lloyd George, and the Secretary for
the Colonies\textsuperscript{120} had agreed, as also had the Prime

\textsuperscript{119} \textit{FTH}, 29 July 1922, p.4.

\textsuperscript{120} In 1921, the year of the Imperial Conference, Winston Churchill held
the Cabinet portfolio for the Colonies.
Ministers of Australia, New Zealand and Canada. South Africa alone was not a party to the resolution. All the Crown Colonies were... advised and counselled to see this policy carried out, which was to remove all disabilities of Indians who were lawfully settled. The British Empire now stood for the union of the races and for the coming together of the different civilizations, so far as possible, a union between East and West.... That was why there were so many anxious consultations among the statesmen of the Empire. India, as a partner in the Empire, has to have a say on these considerations... as to how it will be possible to bridge over the gulf between community and community within the Empire. 121

The reader will note Sastri's repeated use of the term "partner" when describing what he thought should be the operating principle of Anglo-Indian relations. This places Sastri on the scale of Indian nationalist typology of the early decades of the twentieth century as a "Moderate." 122

We can usefully remind ourselves that "moderation," and the partnership-in-empire approach, remained an Indian nationalist option as late as mid-1942, when it was finally buried in August 1942 in the violence and mutual recrimination of the "Quit India" outbreaks.

Sitting in the Town Hall section reserved for the general public, a young Indian listened intently to Sastri's words. The young man's name was Vishnu Deo. In subsequent years, Deo was to devote his meteoric political career to the realization

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121 Sastri's Address, Suva Town Hall, 29 July 1922; reprinted in FTH, 31 July 1922, p.3.

122 The Indian Moderates of the 1920s, most of whom were organized, if rather loosely, in the National Liberal Federation, included such worthies as S.N. Banerjea, Lord Sinha, Dr R.P. Paranjpye, Tej Bahadur Sapru and H.N. Kunzru, this last named being one of Sastri's fellow members of the Servants of India Society.
of the goals Sastri had set out that fateful July 1922 day in Suva.

Enough has been done for now to introduce V.S. Srinivasa Sastri to our study. We shall leave him to resume his journey to Canada. He shall return to our pages in the following section of this chapter. But now, let us consider the social setting in which Fiji Indian politics developed.

Indian Imperial and Fiji Colonial Matrix

A handicap which occasionally burdened the political and social progress of the Fiji Indian community involved the negative perception, in Fiji European eyes, of the cultural and political links binding the Indians of the colony to India proper. Such links had the potential to conjure up in Fiji European minds images of an unwanted but irresistible Indian state involvement in Fijian concerns. Why this should be so may puzzle a present-day observer of world affairs. Perhaps we should here endeavour to impress upon the reader that the Indian Empire, for most of the first half of the twentieth century, weighed in as a much greater factor in the global balance of power than its main successor state, the Indian Republic (nascent 26 January 1950), has ever been able subsequently to effect. With a view to jog our memory, let us take a brief glance at the India of our period.

British India was a major power, military and economic. Maintaining a peacetime military establishment of around two hundred and fifty thousand combat troops, the Raj could, and
from 1939 to 1945 did, expand these numbers in time of war to around two and a half million men. And British India’s economic clout was scarcely less impressive than its military. In 1927, in terms of value of total imports and exports combined, the League of Nations ranked India sixth in the world.\textsuperscript{123}

It was against this backdrop that Indian nationalism took root, quickened in the breasts of its acolytes by the knowledge that an independent India would be, in its own right, a Great Power. The British imperialist rebuttal to this Indian nationalist position was to argue that the unification of India had occurred only at British hands, and that this achievement was unlikely to survive a British withdrawal. There was an element of truth in both arguments. For our purposes, however, sufficient to point out that the Fiji Indians were buoyed up in their own political struggles by their links with an ancestral homeland that, in the years 1920 to 1947, was in the world’s spotlight as M.K. Gandhi articulated and acted out the imperatives of a morally uplifting ideology that set the term of the Raj.

\textsuperscript{123} This data was provided in the \textit{Barclay’s Bank Circular} of 1929; cited \textit{FTH}, 14 December 1929, p.7. This impressive share of world trade was secured for India in the years following the establishment of the Raj — that is, it was the product, not the prerequisite, of British unification of the subcontinent. During the quinquennium 1864/5 to 1868/9, the annual average of India’s seaborne trade in merchandise, inclusive of private and government transactions, was less than 100 crores of rupees (R100,00,00,000: one billion rupees) or (at £1 = R10) 100 million pounds sterling (£100,000,000). By the financial year 1928/9, such transactions exceeded 602 crores of rupees (R602,00,00,000) or (at £1 = R13.3) 451.5 million pounds sterling (£451,500,000).
So for Indian nationalists of this era, the claims of their creed were not necessarily confined to the subcontinent, but were seen by both themselves and others as of global significance. The elevated status of an India which had arrived at a hinge of history permitted Indian political commentators to envision a wider compass. And their missives had an audience in Fiji.

To live we must grow and expand. Our nationals, wherever they may be, must be protected and allowed to spread out. I have no patience with those little Hindustanis who show white feather at the least approach of danger, and who want our colonials to march back home.... Indians must stay where they are, and they should be enabled to fight it out on the front trench. Defeatism cannot be the religion of those who believe in Greater India.124

When we examine the various lines of argument advanced by the Fiji Indian communalist groups, "Greater India" is a phrase we shall come up against repeatedly.

In Indian politics, the transition from imperial to nationalist concepts of Indian emigration is evident in a speech by M.K. Gandhi on 27 December 1901, delivered to the annual session of the Indian National Congress, meeting in Calcutta. It is worth quoting the South African Indian leader at some length because of the light his approach throws on Fiji Indian attitudes of our period of study.

Professional men can serve themselves and their countrymen by settling in South Africa. The Congress is, I believe, meant ... to testify to our

ability to stand side by side with the other civilised races of the world in foreign enterprises and self-government. Now, if we were to look for a moment at European emigration, we will find the speculator followed by the trader who, in his turn, is followed by the missionary, the doctor, the lawyer, the architect, the engineer, the agriculturist, etc. No wonder if, wherever they settle, they blossom into independent, prosperous, self-governing communities. Our traders have gone in their thousands to different parts of the world, to South Africa, Zanzibar, Mauritius, Fiji, Singapore, etc. Are they followed by Indian missionaries, barristers, doctors, and other professional men? It is, unfortunately, the European missionaries who try to teach religion to the poor emigrants, European lawyers who give them legal advice, and European doctors, who cannot understand their language, try to give them medical advice. Is it, then, any wonder if the traders, groping in the darkness, not knowing what their rights are ... surrounded by strange faces, are much misunderstood and are obliged to settle down to a life of humiliation and degradation?\^{125}

Gandhi's ideas, and their impact on Fiji Indian politics, are pivotal to many of the events and activities observed and appraised in this study. In the following chapter, we shall observe the Mahatma pronouncing very directly on events in Fiji. But, for the present, let us consider the rise of communalist forces in Indian politics.

The 1920s and 1930s were a period of newly developed mass politics in India, a period when the historic social divisions of Indian society came increasingly to inform Indian politics. These years witnessed a steady rise in political violence in many regions of the subcontinent.

\^{125} Gandhi's Address to the Indian National Congress, 27 December 1901; Seventeenth Indian National Congress, Calcutta, All-India Congress Committee, 1902; C.W.M.G., vol.3 ... April 1960 (Chaitra 1882), pp.215.
An anxiety was increasingly evident during the 1920s and 1930s on the part of Fiji's European establishment that the macabre atrocities that characterized communalist confrontations in India might one day be acted out in communalist flare-ups in Fiji. The anxiety was not perhaps entirely unfounded. The Arya missionaries and Muslim maulvis who were brought out from India to Fiji by their respective co-religionists in the 1920s and 1930s could reasonably be expected to bring along in their cultural baggage some of the communalist animus that increasingly informed the politics of the subcontinent. We shall soon see evidence of just such an ideological transfer from the subcontinent to Oceania, as itinerant Arya missionaries and Muslim maulvis, amongst others, are men whose contribution to the public life of Fiji we shall soon be examining.

There were several heated confrontations of a communalist nature between Indian groups in Fiji, especially during the late 1920s and early 1930s. It was against such a background that the Fiji Times and Herald in its editorial column of 13 December 1927 addressed the issue of Indian communalism. Under the headline "Indian Unity" the leader read in part:

At the present moment the Indian community in this Colony may be said to be at the "turning of the ways." Big alterations in connection with Indian affairs are in the making. Due largely to the energy of some of the local Indian leaders, political representation has been conceded, and even now the question of the franchise is under consideration. The whole aspect of life in Fiji for the Indian is undergoing a change, and one would imagine that, under such circumstances and at
such a time, we would find unity of purpose and cooperation of effort. But it is very evident that unity is not as complete as one would imagine.... During the past twelve months open quarrelling has taken place. Such a state of things is very undesirable, not only in the interests of the Indians, but in the interests of the Colony.... We do not want discord, we do not want the ... religious differences of India to be transplanted into Fiji.... We hope that the smouldering fires, which some foolish people are attempting to fan, will be allowed to die out.\textsuperscript{126}

In the upshot, the Fiji Indian community, in a mode of collective deportment the Indians of the subcontinent would have been well counselled to have emulated, survived its communal confrontations without instances of general mayhem, though threats and intimidation were occasionally employed by Indians on Indians in some of the disputes.

The communal fissures amongst the Fiji Indians attracted official attention. In early 1928, A.A. Wright, the Assistant Colonial Secretary responsible for compiling the official report for the year just ended, included in his section on "Indian Affairs" a passage on internal social divisions. In part, it read:

It was stated in the report of last year that the relations between the different sections [of the Indian community] were amicable. There have been some signs of friction recently, due to the tendency to focus progress first in the sectional field, but the great bulk of the population is unaffected and seems determined to preserve the old relations, without which it is impossible for this community ... to combine for its own advancement and co-operate with the Government and others willing and able to help it to take its place with the two other communities as a permanent element

\textsuperscript{126} \textit{FTH}, 13 December 1927, p.4.
and one essential to the future prosperity of the Colony. 127

A consideration not touched upon in the above analysis is that the earliest grass-roots political mobilization of the Fiji Indians, a development which the British themselves were intending to assist, was effected mainly by communalist groups. The political parties and societies formed to advance the interests of the Fiji Indians were usually based, at least initially, on a communally identified membership core. Just how many such groups had entered the political lists by the late 1920s is apparent in the following passage taken from a press report on the progress of a charitable fund launched, in August 1928, for two Indian widows bereaved when their husbands were killed in a rockfall in Walu Bay quarry.

The fund launched last Saturday by the Fiji Times and Herald ... has met with the approval of both Europeans and Indians alike.... A feature of the appeal has been the spontaneous manner in which the Indian community has come along with its contributions, showing that there is a fine spirit of comradeship becoming increasingly evident among that people. Contributions have come ... [from] the Indian Reform League, the Sanatan Dharma Sabha, the Muslim League, Arya Samaj, Madras Maha Sangam and others.... The final effect of such a union ... may be far-reaching and go a long way towards banishing the feeling of unfriendliness which may be felt at other times. 128

It is not surprising that a migrant people whose culture derived from traditional rural India endeavoured to come to

127 Fiji: Report for 1927, p.54; C.0.83/180. The report was sent from Suva to the Colonial Office, London, on 22 May 1928.

128 FTH, 25 August 1928, p.4.
terms with the colony’s modern political system by acting at first in the communalist mode. In this manner, Indian Christians were especially active in 1924 in establishing the Indian Reform League. Arya Samajists were prominent in the leadership of the Kisan Sangh, the "Farmers' Association," established in 1937. In 1941, partly as a rejoinder to the Kisan Sangh’s demarche, a group of mainly South Indian leaders formed the Akhil Fiji Krishak Maha Sangh, the "All Fiji Farmers’ Union." A similar pattern was evident in Fiji Indian involvement in the high politics of the colony, for the social composition and leadership of the main Indian political parties often had communal semblances, though usually this was more evident in their earlier years and less so as they acquired a sizable membership. It seems that the political mobilization of the Fiji Indians was the more easily effected when initiated by people already organized communally, the refurbished communal circles moving ahead in the van, claiming to represent the interests of the community as a whole, and eventually broadening their representative base in order to authenticate the claim.

The process whereby communalist groups acted, so it soon enough became evident, as a vanguard for a broader Fiji Indian entry into the politics of colonial Fiji was something British officialdom would have had little problem in accommodating. We need, however, to distinguish between the British official perspective and that of the Fiji European civil population.
For in the latter circles, any effective Fiji Indian advance into the high politics of the colony was likely to elicit a negative response.

The best way to illustrate the differential between the British official presence in Fiji and Fiji European settler society is to consider how the Fiji Indians themselves viewed the difference. Essentially, the European presence in Fiji presented itself to the Fiji Indians in two distinct forms: the British colonial state and the British settler community. In times of political crisis in Fiji, the usual lineup of forces saw the leaders of the Fiji European and Fiji Indian communities occupying the opposing corners, the Fijian leaders acting in a reserve capacity in support of the European position, and British officialdom, while not always thanked for their efforts, playing a mediating role.

It is probably true to say that Fiji Indian alienation from empire, on the occasions when it manifested itself, was focused primarily on the Fiji European community, more so than on the colonial state. Historians of the Indian nationalist movement often say that an important subliminal element in the attitude of the All-India National Congress to the British imperial regime lay in the expectation that the Raj was to be the party’s inheritance.129 Perhaps a similar expectation,

129 The Indian Civil Service and the Indian Army were the main supports of the Raj. In the 1920s and 1930s, the official Congress line, as enunciated by Gandhi, was that the Party organization would replace the civil and military arm of the Raj. But during the mid-1940s, as independence approached, the Congress leaders, holding the reins of
in respect to the Fiji colonial state, shaped Fiji Indian political attitudes. In any case, Fiji Indian confidence in empire seemed to be the greater when projected on to the higher levels of authority, the lesser when considering the local authorities close at hand, and the least of all when contemplating the Fiji Europeans amongst whom they lived. Thus, in late 1929, in view of the rejection of a motion advanced on the floor of the Legislative Council which called for common franchise of all British subjects in Fiji, European and Indian, a motion voted down by the British officials and Fiji European (and native Fijian) community representatives voting in concert, an Indian leader writer reacted:

In the interests of the solidarity of the British Empire, people in the Colonies and in India are striving to set aside differences and to bring the various communities together. Indians in Fiji could not lag behind in this effort; but their cry for common and equal rights of citizenship to all the subjects of His Majesty was obviously in the wilderness! However we trust in the Englishmen in [the] British Parliament who not only uphold and champion the cause of the Indians but really and truly stand for the high ideal of the Empire.130

And later the same month when the British official and Fiji European elected members parted company in an acrimonious division over Indian education, a Fiji Indian commentator had

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government after 2 September 1946, increasingly modified their position. By June 1947, Vallabhbhai Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister, in a letter to a Congress leader soon to be appointed Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation, was openly expressing the need for "a strong Central Government and a strong army" (see Patel to K.C. Neogy, 18 June 1947; Durga Das [editor], Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50, vol.5, Ahmedabad, Navajivan, 1973, p.72).

no difficulty in deciding with which side his community's interests lay.

From the proceedings of the [Legislative] Council on Indian education ... it is clear now that it is the European Community and not the Government that is opposed to adequate facilities for Indian education.... His Excellency [the Acting Governor, A.W. Seymour] was ... justified in wishing to extend the educational facilities.... We uphold the action of His Excellency ... and express our full confidence in him.\textsuperscript{131}

In our pages below, we have placed some emphasis on this configuration of political life in colonial Fiji. This aspect, while important, has tended to be rather elusive. The differential in Fiji Indian perceptions between H.M.G. and their own Fiji-resident European fellow settlers, though very real, has been largely unexplored, if not completely ignored, in much of the literature on colonial Fiji.

Let us proceed to tie together some of the threads of thought explored above. We have established that a perhaps understandable European anxiety to moderate Indian standards of public dispute in Fiji coexisted with a less high-minded European uneasiness at the prospect of Indian political advance in the colony. These two elements of Fiji European misgiving could, of course, be brought into concert in an approach to matters Indian which accorded well with European settler interests. The seemingly inveterate divisions which afflicted the Indian body social in Fiji, when portrayed against the backdrop of the escalating communalist mayhem in

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., pp.7-8.
India proper, could provide the Fiji European leaders with a formidable argument, directed at the British administration, for postponing reforms, desired by the Colonial Office, for extending the democratic representative principle so as to bring the Indian community into the colony's political framework. An alleged Indian unpreparedness for constructive political participation in the affairs of the colony was a recurrent theme, forthright or implied, of political discourse in Fiji during the period of this study. A press editorial of 30 January 1928, which made reference to a current dispute between Indian groups for control of the Samabula Indian School Committee, illustrates the way this message was broadcast. Under the heading "Union is Strength" the leader asserted:

"The multitude which does not reduce itself to unity is confusion." The sooner the Indian community realise this axiom, the sooner they will attain some of the ends for which they are striving. They claim political suffrage, they claim more educational facilities, they claim more and more free medical attendance; and yet they cannot come to a common agreement on such a simple matter as to how to conduct a small school.... If the Indian will quarrel and disagree over minor matters, how can unanimity exist on the large demands -- political and otherwise.... We have counselled Unity to our European settlers; we do the same to the Indian, be his creed what it may; for until he does present a common front he cannot expect to have that consideration given to his requests which might otherwise be accorded thereto.  

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132 FTH, 30 January 1928, p. 4.

133 Ibid.
It should be kept in mind, of course, that communalism was an element, not the entirety, of Fiji Indian political and social life, and a primarily communal identity was an option, not a requirement, for individual Fiji Indians. A secular dimension existed in tandem with communalist elements in Fiji Indian life, and many individual Fiji Indians were not actively involved, and some were quite unaffiliated, with communal organizations. In fact, it seems that large numbers of Fiji Indians, especially those in the lower reaches of Indian society, were quite oecumenical in their appreciation of the various communal events and festivals on offer, and moved quite readily from participation in one to attendance at another. Exclusivity tended to be a quality that informed upper class communal activity, something arising perhaps from a greater knowledge of communal origins and a resultant desire for authenticity. And not all of the Fiji Indian elite exhibited this quality: the Indian Reform League was comprised of Fiji Indians who quite explicitly abjured the primacy of any communal identity.

134 This feature of Fiji Indian politics accords with the state-building model posited by Oswald Spengler in his seminal work, in which the origin and initial ordering of political formations are attributed to the dominant class of the given society. As Spengler puts it: "[C]lass-States ... are the only States.... [I]t is always a single social stratum which ... provides the political leading. It is always a definite minority that represents the world-historical tendency of a State" (see Oswald Spengler, The Decline of the West, vol.2, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1934 [1926], pp.369-370). The theory of the class origins of political formations is also implied in Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities ... 1983.

135 Despite the secular basis of the Indian Reform League, we nevertheless classify it as a communal group, because the League had its beginnings and played out its early role in the communalist political milieu of the late 1920s and early 1930s.
We have set the stage for the advent of Fiji Indian communalist politicians as elected representatives of Indian settler society in Fiji. We need to mention, however, that when, in the late 1920s, the elected representatives of the Fiji Indians made their entry into national public life, they found another group of Indians who, for at least a prior quarter-century and arriving by a different route, had long occupied a corner of the public stage. In our account of the visit of V.S. Srinivasa Sastri to Suva in July 1922, we have already seen how Badri Mahraj, the Indian nominated M.L.C., was jostled by W.M. Caldwell, the civil servant, for to occupy pride of place among the welcoming delegates. Caldwell was one of a class of Indians employed by the colonial state. It might be useful to here categorize this class of Indian officials and to introduce some examples of the type.

British colonial political culture provided the setting in which the development of a Fiji Indian political identity took place. As was the case in India, so in Fiji, the very first Indians to play a public role in the life of the colony were those employed as state functionaries -- mainly as policemen and government clerks. For Fiji Indian political leaders

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136 None of whom, incidently, were women -- at least, up to the end of the 1920s. In November 1929, a report was laid on the table in the Legislative Council giving the race and gender of the members of the Fiji Civil Service. These figures made interesting reading. Of the permanent staff, Europeans numbered 367 (males, 272; females, 95), Fijians numbered 517 (males, 464; females, 53) and Indians numbered 139 (males, 139; females, 0). Of the temporary staff, Europeans numbered 173 (males, 172; females, 1), Fijians numbered 616 (males, 614; females, 2) and Indians numbered 711 (males, 711; females, 0). For elaboration on these figures, see FTH, 19 November 1929, p.4.
who, beginning in the 1920s, set out to enter the colony's legislative and municipal bodies, the example lay before them of Indians who were already fully engaged in public life as employees of the colonial state. Relations between the colonial state and its employees were, of course, standardized -- a far cry from the arbitrary style of management likely to pertain in plantation society. A press report of mid-November 1928 conveys the style whereby the colonial state related to its Indian employees.

A special pension of £48 a year was yesterday approved by the Legislative Council for Basdeo Maharaj, the Indian constable who was severely injured during a gambling raid at Navua in June of this year.... He was no longer fit to remain in the Force. The Governor pointed out that, in other Colonies, the usual pension rate was three-quarters of the annual pay, so that he was being treated liberally. It was certainly a very deserving case.137

Another example should be noted. On 5 March 1929, the prominent residents of Nadroga gathered to bid farewell and present a purse of gold sovereigns to P.M. Menon on his retirement from the Fiji Civil Service. Menon had served the locality for twenty-two years. C.S. Reay, the District Commissioner for Nadroga and Colo West, presented the purse. Ratu Timoci N. Vosailagi spoke on behalf of the Fijians.138 In his comments, Reay spelt out the qualities which had won

137 FTH, 16 November 1928, p.4.
138 Also present at the presentation were Dr F. Widlake, A.H. Irvine, J. Hurworth, J.C. Munday, H. Hisecox, Ratu Isikeli Dulunadau, Gajadhar Singh and Sankar Nair (see FTH, 11 March 1929, p.8).
for Menon such evident and widespread esteem -- a personal regard achieved, even in its own despite, in a social milieu where, it seems, caste differentials were taken for granted.

Some people, be they Indian or European, seem to think they lose caste if they show civility to those whom they regard as their inferiors... Mr Menon shows his good sense and caste by not troubling his head about such matters, and he has thereby ... made many friends.\textsuperscript{139}

Evidently, P.M. Menon moved confidently in the wider society of the colony. With this portent for the rise of civil society in Fiji, we shall now turn to consider the Fiji Indian advance towards participation in the politics of the colony.

Towards Responsible Government

Fiji Indian progress towards participation in the representative politics of colonial Fiji was bound up with a much wider movement: the advance of the Indian Empire towards Dominion status. That momentous saga had its beginnings in the viceregal corridors of power in New Delhi.

In June 1916, the Honourable Khan Bahadur Mian Muhammad Shafi, a member of the Governor-General’s Executive Council, took the floor and addressed Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy.\textsuperscript{140} Shafi spoke of India’s war effort, of the "124 regiments of infantry with artillery, and 28 regiments of

\textsuperscript{139} Statement by C.S. Reay, 5 March 1929; FTH, 11 March 1929, p.8.

\textsuperscript{140} Of course, the Governor-General of India and the Viceroy were positions held by the same person. British India had had a Governor since the early 1760s, Robert Clive (1725-1774) being the first to be appointed to the position. Charles, Lord Canning (1812-1862), Governor-General of India (1856-1862) during the Sepoy (H. sipahi) Mutiny (1857-58), was the first such official to serve also as Viceroy (1858-1862).
cavalry" currently fighting for the British Empire against Germany and her Turkish ally, of how "when Your Excellency obtained for Indian soldiers the proud privilege of fighting side by side with their British and Colonial comrades on the battlefields of Europe, thus attaining their full and undoubted right of upholding the King's banner ... the delight of His Majesty's subjects in this country knew no bounds."\textsuperscript{141} In view of India's contribution to the British war effort, Shafi claimed, India was morally entitled to "take her proper place in the Councils of the Empire."\textsuperscript{142} Shafi ended his address by asking leave to move a resolution.

This Council recommends to the Governor-General in Council that a representative be sent, through the Right Honourable the Secretary of State, to His Majesty's Government urging that India should, in future, be officially represented in the Imperial Conference.\textsuperscript{143}

A claim for Indian representation in the counsels of empire was, in effect, a claim for Indian sovereign statehood, the same status enjoyed by the Dominions: Canada, Australia, New


\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., p.211.

\textsuperscript{143} Resolution moved by the Honourable Khan Bahadur Mian Muhammad Shafi, Governor-General's Executive Council, June 1916; cited in Percy Dumbell, \textit{Loyal India ...} p.211. The Imperial Conference Shafi had in mind was the meeting of Prime Ministers of countries owing allegiance to the British Crown which, by 1916, had developed into an intermittent, never quite regular, event. The first such meeting had taken place in London in 1887, an opportunity which had attended the presence of the colonial leaders on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. In 1897, the Colonial Conference (as it was then called) was a planned aspect of the wider Diamond Jubilee celebration. The term "Imperial Conference" was first used for the meeting held in 1907.
Zealand, Newfoundland and South Africa. At the Viceroy's recommendation, the resolution was accepted by the Executive Council and adopted as policy by the Government of India.

The claims to representation by the Government of India were not opposed by H.M.G., the government of a realm locked in a life or death struggle with Imperial Germany. In 1917, the tide of war reached its lowest point for the Allied cause, with the collapse of the Russian war effort on the eastern front and the onset of an all out German submarine offensive on Britain's maritime approaches. For the British, it was the occasion of an historic dark hour.

Thought shall be the harder,
Heart the keener,
Mood shall be the more
As our might lessens.144

With the Raj applying steady pressure, Shafi's claim advanced towards realization. On 13 April 1917, the Imperial War Conference passed a resolution recommending the participation of India in future Imperial Conferences. It was a turning point in the history of the Empire, one which galvanized H.M.G. to spell out the goal of British policy in India. On 20 August 1917, E.S. Montagu,145 the Secretary of State for India, announced in Parliament that the goal was "increasing

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145 Edwin Samuel Montagu (1879-1924): Member of Parliament (Liberal), 1906-22; Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for India, 1910-14; Minister of Munitions, 1916; Secretary Of State for India, 1917-22.
association of Indians in every branch of the administration [of the Raj], and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire."146 The key phrase here was "responsible government," that is, government answerable to a parliament. The momentous nature of these developments of 1917 is admitted by Hugh Tinker, an eminent historian of British imperialism.

The whole future direction of the British Empire came up for questioning when, in 1917, the British government announced that India's constitutional progress was in the direction of responsible government. For the first time it was formally accepted that a non-white people must be regarded as equal to the white member-states of the Empire.147 Shafi's initiative was expanding to a measure of enormous import. And the consequences were not confined only to those Indians living in the subcontinent. As we shall see, the ramifications of this development were felt by Indians resident in every country within the Empire, including Fiji.

In keeping with the spirit of the new policy, the Government of India was invited to send a delegation to attend the first post-war Imperial Conference, held in London during June-July 1921. Chelmsford, now in the last months of his


viceregal appointment, advised Montagu of the Government of India's line of approach to the Conference. In part, his cable read:

"Maintenance of the Imperial connection has become a living issue here, and the case of the separationists is based largely on the treatment of British Indians in other parts of the Empire. On the other hand, anti-Asiatic movement in White Dominions and Colonies appears to be growing stronger.... The time has come when the whole question of future relations of India and the Empire must be fully and frankly discussed."

The Indian delegates to the Imperial Conference were E.S. Montagu, the Maharao of Cutch (an Indian prince) and V.S. Srinivasa Sastri. Girja Shankar Bajpai, the I.C.S. officer whom we met earlier in our account of J. Judd's mission to India on behalf of the Government of Fiji, also attended the Imperial Conference, as Sastri's secretary. Sastri, since 1916 a member of the Imperial Legislative Council, had represented India before a Joint Select Committee of the British Parliament (1919) and at the League of Nations (1921). He had earned a reputation in New Delhi, London and Geneva as "the silver-tongued orator of the British Empire." Now

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148 Chelmsford left India in March 1921. In April 1921, Rufus Isaacs, Marquess of Reading, the new Viceroy, landed in India.

149 Chelmsford to Montagu, 12 January 1921 (cable); quoted in Hugh Tinker, Separate and Unequal: India and the Indians in the British Commonwealth 1920-1950, St Lucia (Queensland, Australia), University of Queensland Press, 1976, p.44.

that India had won its place in the counsels of empire, Sastri intended to extend the ramifications to Indians abroad.

During the Imperial Conference, Sastri put his expertise to work. On 7 July 1921, he moved a resolution.

This conference, while reaffirming the Resolution of the Imperial War Conference of 1918 that each community of the British Commonwealth should enjoy complete control of the composition of its own population by means of restrictions on immigration from any of the other communities, recognizes that there is an incongruity between the position of India as an equal member of the British Empire and the existence of disabilities upon British Indians lawfully domiciled in some other parts of the Empire. The conference accordingly is of the opinion that in the interests of the solidarity of the British Commonwealth it is desirable that the rights of such Indians to citizenship should be recognised.¹⁵¹

Sastri's resolution put forward the claim for full political rights for Indians living within the wider British realm -- including, of course, Indians resident in Crown Colonies such as Fiji. This claim did not sit well with all the delegates present. General Smuts,¹⁵² representing South Africa, the Dominion with the largest number of resident Indians, asked for an adjournment, had the matter referred to a special committee, and subsequently tried further delaying tactics.


¹⁵² Jan Christiaan Smuts (1870-1950): South African soldier and statesman; Minister of Defence, 1910-20; Prime Minister, 1919-24, 1939-48; Minister of Justice, 1933-39; Deputy Prime Minister, 1933-39; Field Marshal. Smuts was also a writer, especially on the subject of global government and on what our own age would classify as new-age philosophy. For a sample of his works, see Holism, published in the mid-1920s.
But after three weeks of delay, the resolution was finally addressed on 2 August 1921 at the last sitting of the Imperial Conference. Lloyd George (1863-1945), the British Prime Minister (1916-1922), delivered an appeal for progress towards Sastri’s objective.

We are trying to build up a democratic Empire on the basis of the consent of all the races that are inside it.... [If the experiment succeeds] it really transfigures, I think, the human story.... Do not let Mr Sastri go back ... and say "The British Empire has refused us justice." It will be an appalling thing to say to the people who sent a million and a quarter volunteers to aid us.... Why should we deny it? Not because we do not believe in it. Here [in Britain] the Indians have the same rights.\(^{153}\)

The appeal had the desired effect. Sastri’s resolution was accepted by all of the delegates, excepting Smuts. By tradition, unanimity was required for the passing of an Imperial Conference resolution. But Smuts, an old opponent yet grudging admirer of Gandhi, waived his veto right, saying:

Although it is not possible for me to join ... let this resolution go. I do not mind, provided it does not bind me.\(^{154}\)

South Africa and its "Indian problem" need not detain us.\(^{155}\)

But the question as to whether Britain could be bound to the

\(^{153}\) Lloyd George’s address to the Imperial Conference, 2 August 1921; quoted in Hugh Tinker, Separate and Unequal ... 1976, p.51.


\(^{155}\) We shall, however, obtain the occasional glimpse of the ongoing contest between South Africa and the Raj over the status of the Indian community in South Africa. For example, the issue figured in Vishnu Deo’s keynote speech of 12 September 1929 delivered in Suva after the announcement of his election to the Legislative Council.
terms of Sastri's Imperial Conference resolution of July 1921, in respect to Indians resident in Crown Colonies, provided the issue which, more than any other, configured the Fiji Indian politics of our period. And, as related above, Sastri, in his role as the de facto roving ambassador of the Government of India, conveyed his understanding of the issue at large directly to Fiji, landing at Suva in late July 1922 with precisely that purpose in mind.

As a result of the efforts of Shafi and Sastri, the 1920s was a period of political reform in Fiji. The first official intimation that the franchise would, in due course, be extended to the Fiji Indians was contained in a government report of August 1920, a report of a Commission appointed by Sir Cecil Rodwell, Governor of Fiji, for the purpose of examining and reporting as to the best means of providing for the representation on an elective basis of the Indian population by two members in the Legislative Council of the Colony; and ... submitting recommendations regarding qualifications of candidates, the basis of franchise and all other matters relating to the subject under enquiry.  

Indenture had been dead not seven months and already, Fiji Indians were being told, elected Indian representation in the Legislative Council was on the official agenda. It had been put there by the same pressure of events which had placed the

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156 F.R.G., 30 August 1920, number 70, p.433. Seven notables of the colony were appointed as Commissioners: Sir Charles Simon Davson, Chief Justice (Chairman); Cyril Gerard Brooke Francis, Acting Attorney-General; Percy Robert Backhouse, Acting Agent-General of Immigration; Henry Guy Pilling, District Commissioner, Ba; Henry Milne Scott; Reginald Arthur Harricks; and Badri Mahraj.
issue on the agenda of the Imperial Conference. From the appointment of the Commission, events moved slowly but surely towards Fiji Indian enfranchisement, the only issue in doubt being how, not if, to admit Indians into the citizen body.

The Government of India interested itself in the progress towards Fiji Indian enfranchisement. Limitations of space do not permit an account of the many consultations between Suva, London and New Delhi on this subject and, in any case, others have already sketched the process. It is enough for us to cite a document that marked a late stage in the process, a "Memoranda on the Position of Indians in Fiji submitted to the Colonial Office by the Colonies Committee appointed by the Government of India." The Memoranda made clear that, on the issue of the extension of the franchise to the Fiji Indians, and from the very beginning of the process, the Raj had acted as the guardian of Fiji Indian interests.

In their reply dated 19 March, 1920, to the Fiji deputation, the Government of India, on the advice of a Committee of the Indian Legislative Council, asked the Government of Fiji to give a general guarantee by Ordinance, with the approval of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, that the position of Indian immigrants in their new homes would in all respects be equal to that of any other class of His Majesty's subjects resident in Fiji. The Government of Fiji, after full discussion with the elected members of the Legislative Council and

157 For an account of the process by which Fiji Indian elected representation was attained, see Gillion, *The Fiji Indians ...* 1977, pp.43-44, 69-72, 88-94 and 105.

representatives of the General Council of Planters, expressed their willingness to give the guarantee asked for. A draft Ordinance purporting to give effect to this undertaking was submitted by the Government of Fiji to the Colonial Office in 1921, but the Government of India pointed out certain ambiguities in the draft and asked that the matter should be held in abeyance pending the visit of the Indian deputation to Fiji. 159

The Indian deputation in question had visited Fiji in 1922 to assess the situation. 160 It seems that they were not impressed with what they saw. However, when the deputation returned to India and submitted its report, critical of both the social conditions under which the Fiji Indians lived and the policy, even the integrity, of the Fiji colonial authorities, it was never published. Officials at the Colonial Office (London) pressed their colleagues at the India Office (London) to suppress the report because of its "malevolent character," so one official wrote, and for the reason that "publication would arouse a storm of protest in Fiji and it would be necessary to publish a defence." 161 This argument for the virtues of a quiet life impressed itself favourably on the civil servants at both Offices of state, India and Colonies. One recommendation of the unpublished report is, however, of particular interest to us; for, in

159 Ibid.

160 The deputation consisted of B. Venkatapatiraju Garu (a member of the Indian Legislative Assembly), Pandit Govind Sahai Sharma (a member of the United Provinces Legislative Council), Lieutenant Hissamuddin Khan (of the Indian Army) and Sir Geoffrey Latham Corbett, I.C.S. Corbett wrote up the deputation's subsequent report.

161 Masterton-Smith to Hirtzel, 18 August 1923; C.O.83/167.
Letters Patent which revised the colony's constitutional provisions so as to extend the franchise to the Fiji Indians came into effect in 1929. The preamble revoked the Letters Patent of 31 January 1914 and 20 July 1916. Article 26 defined the Fiji Indian electorate, spelling out the "Qualifications of Indian Electors." To

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162 The communal roll recommendation is mentioned in the Government of India Parliamentary Paper No. 24, 12 January 1927, cited above. For a reprint of the full text, see Fiji Legislative Council Paper No. 15: "Indians in Fiji (Indian Parliamentary Paper No. 24, dated 12th January, 1927, relating to the position of the Indian Community in Fiji, published by order of the Government of India as a Supplement to the Gazette of India on the 15th January, 1927)," laid on the Table, 26 May 1927; J.F.L.C.), Sessions of 1927 ... 1927, pp.1-8.

163 But not, it will be noted, to Fijians, who had no equivalent to the India Office or the Raj to promote their interests. Fijians remained outside the representative bodies of the colonial state. Some present-day Fijian commentators see the Fiji Indian entry into representative politics in 1929 as an event which gave the Indians a head start over the Fijians in the competition for political control of an increasingly democratic polity. As Asesela Ravuvu puts the Fijian case: "There was a separate administration for the Fijians, based on tradition and custom. The Indians were under the central government and had the advantages of acquiring experiences in modern social and political processes. As Indian political demands grew, they were given their own representatives to speak for them in the colonial legislature. Fijians on the other hand continued to be represented by their chiefs, nominated by the Governor in Council from a list of names provided by the Great Council of Chiefs" (Asesela Ravuvu, The Facade of Democracy: Fijian Struggles for Political Control, 1830-1987, Suva, Reader Publishing House, 1991, p.83).  

164 The Letters Patent passed under the Great Seal of the United Kingdom on 9 February 1929. They were signed into law at the Palace by the Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VIII, regnabat 1936), the Duke of York (the future King George VI, regnabat 1936-52) and Stanley Baldwin (1867-1947), the British Prime Minister, on behalf of King George V (regnabat 1910-1936) who, incapacitated by ill-health for much of 1928 and 1929, was absent at Windsor. For a report on the arrival in Fiji of the Letters Patent see FTH, 8 April 1929, p.8. For editorial comment on the new composition of the Fiji Legislative Council, see FTH, 9 April 1929, p.4.

165 See F.R.G., 1 May 1929, number 25, p.160.

166 Ibid., p.165.
qualify, a Fiji Indian had to be male, the son of parents of Indian descent, a British subject, twenty-one years of age or upwards, resident in Fiji for at least twelve months, able to read and write a "simple sentence" in either English, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telegu or Gurmukki, and either a holder of property to the total yearly value of £5 or of a cash income of £75 or of any Government or Municipal license with an annual cost of not less than £5. In all, for a community most of whose members while frugal were generally poor, it was a formidable list of requirements. Also, "no person who is in receipt of salary payable out of the public revenue of the Colony" was eligible to be an Indian elector. This last item was a clear indication that the reform measure was perceived officially as a significant empowerment of Indian civilians and of the consequent need to define a boundary between the Indian elements of state and society, it being a tradition of British government that the Crown and the state apparatus be above politics while, of course, the parliamentary role of a constituency representative was explicitly political.

The composition of the Legislative Council was also changed. Up to 1928, seven European elected members, two Fijian nominated members and one Indian nominated member, together with twelve officials, made up the Legislative Council. Under the new arrangements, six European elected

167 See ibid.
members and three Indian elected members joined with three Fijian nominated members and thirteen officials to attend the Governor in Council. The reform measure gave the Fiji Indian community an enhanced voice in the government of the colony, for the elected element of the Legislative Council functioned as Fiji's nascent parliament. It was not however, in 1929, a sovereign parliament: official nominees outnumbered the elected and nominated unofficial elements of the Council and, if ever a deadlock between officials and non-officials should ensue, the Governor could exercise a casting vote. As long as the official members controlled the Legislative Council, real day-to-day authority rested with the Executive Council, consisting of the Governor, his five top officials and two European unofficial members. But it was widely understood that the Letters Patent of 1929 pointed Fiji towards a more distant goal: a Westminster form of government, with the state executive drawn from and responsible to a representative parliament. The reform of 1929 was a significant move in this direction though it stopped short of the goal.

Common or Communal Franchise?

The political reform of 1929 was handed down from London after consultation with New Delhi and Suva. Beyond the demand

168 The main officials appointed to any British colonial Governor's Executive Council always included the Colonial Secretary, the Government Treasurer and the Attorney General. Officials in charge of Public Works, Police, Health or other main departments might also be members, according to how the Governor preferred Executive Council arrangements.
for elected Indian representation along the lines of European representation, there was little debate during the 1920s as to what should be the guiding principles of Legislative Council representation in a communally diverse Fijian society.

But interest in representative principles was generated at lower levels of the political structure -- especially at the municipal level where issues arose in the late 1920s over racially segregated public libraries and bathing places. The sources do not agree on whether public libraries in the Suva area were in fact reserved for European use only. The complaint was occasionally voiced asserting that they were, but official rejoinders denied it. But our sources do agree that the larger of a set of two public swimming baths in Suva was reserved for Europeans. This was cause of complaint, along the lines of a letter to the editor by V. Deo in early 1929, a protest angled so as to posit common cause between Fiji Indians and Fijians. Deo wrote:

[O]ur relationships with our Fijian brethren are workable, and characterized by a very reasonable measure of mutual respect.... [W]e dislike ... the racial distinction adopted by the [Municipal] Council by reserving the large Bath to one race only, and unfairly disallowing other races from what should be a common Bath.  

This grievance, amongst others, served to bring into focus the issue of political representation and inspired Fiji Indian leaders to forward principles of representation as part of their demand for an improvement in the qualifications by which

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169 V. Deo to Editor; FTH, 5 February 1929, p.4.
Fiji Indian residents of Suva were deemed eligible to vote in municipal elections. The issue itself was perhaps rather minor, but in the lineup of political forces it prompted we get our first view of the basic configuration of political forces in the colony, an alignment which characterized Fiji politics for the remaining decades of the colonial era.

On 19 October 1927 Sir Eyre Hutson, the Governor, appointed a committee to study the Suva municipal franchise. Evidently, the committee members were unable to agree on a common approach to their task and split into three groupings. From late December 1927 to mid-February 1928, three reports were submitted to the government and laid on the table of the Legislative Council on 22 March 1929: a Majority Report, a Minority Report and a report by J.R. Pearson, the Secretary for Indian Affairs.

The Majority Report conveyed the committee's resolution that "under present circumstances the Municipal Institutions

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170 Sir Eyre Hutson, K.C.M.G. Hutson entered the Colonial Service in 1885. For the first thirty years of his career he held various posts in the colonial administrations of Barbados, Mauritius, British Guiana, Jamaica and Bermuda. He served as Acting Governor of Fiji and Acting High Commissioner for the Western Pacific (1915-16, 1918), Governor of British Honduras (1918-25) and Governor of Fiji (1925-29). He left Fiji on 18 April 1929 for retirement, handing over to his Colonial Secretary, A.W. Seymour, as Acting Governor of Fiji.

171 The nine committee members were: Sir Henry Scott, the Acting Attorney-General (Chair); J.R. Pearson, the Secretary for Indian Affairs; Henry Marks, C.B.E., the Mayor of Suva; Sir J.M. Hedstrom, Levuka Municipal Council; J.H.H. Millett, Suva Municipal Council; Ratu J.L.V. Sukuna; S.S. Chowla, Acting Deputy Registrar, Supreme Court; John F. Grant; and Ilahi Ramjan. The last three named were Indians, Chowla and Grant being active members of the Indian Reform League. The existing Suva municipal franchise arrangement had been set by the Municipal Franchise Ordinance of 1909.
Ordinance [of] 1909 operates equitably towards all classes of the ratepayers."\(^172\) Five members of the committee had supported this stand: Henry M. Scott, Henry Marks, J.H.H. Millett, J.M. Hedstrom and J.L.V. Sukuna. The resolution had been opposed in committee by four of the members: J.R. Pearson, S.S. Chowla, John F. Grant and Ilahi Ramjan.

The Minority Report was submitted by the three Fiji Indian members: Chowla, Grant and Ramjan. It called for municipal electoral reform. It was one of the very earliest efforts by Fiji Indian leaders to articulate a set of political principles for the Fiji Indian community. Since the Municipal Institutions Ordinance of 1909, the Minority Report pointed out, changes had occurred -- most interestingly, that "most of the property now owned by Indians residing in the Suva Municipal area has been acquired in recent years,"\(^173\) a confirmation that the Fiji Indians were a rising force in the colony's economy, the holders of an increasingly stake in their land of adoption. A list of grievances followed, including objections to English as the only language of literacy for determining voting rights, and complaints against Indians' exclusion on racial grounds from certain public baths and the reading room at the Suva Public Library. As regards

\(^{172}\) Legislative Council Paper No.38, "Municipal Franchise Committee," Majority Report, 29 December 1927, clause 5; J.F.L.C., Sessions of 1929 ... 1930, p.2. For a press report on this matter, see FTH, 4 October 1928, p.2.

principles of political representation, the Minority Report made the very interesting statement that the

[i]nterests of one community cannot be represented by members of another.... [T]he members of a community are the only fit and proper persons to represent it.174

This was an opinion we had to read and reread several times, to persuade ourselves of the confluence of its ostensible and real meanings. True, the Minority Report's representative principle conformed with the recommendation of the Government of India deputation of 1922. Yet that such a representative principle should be articulated by the three Fiji Indian leaders in early 1928 was very interesting. For in the wake of the extension of the franchise at the national level to the Fiji Indian community and in view of the numerical dominance of the Fiji Indians in relation to the Fiji Europeans, a sea change was soon to occur in Fiji Indian perceptions of the community's political self-interest. The principle of a common electoral roll, with the attendant affirmation of the rectitude of trans-communal representation, was in 1929 to become the cardinal tenet of Fiji Indian politics.

A passage of the Minority Report provided a declaration of Fiji Indian national identity. It read:

Exclusion of Indians from the [Municipal] Councils deprives them of a chance of training in administration without which they cannot be expected to bring their rightful contribution to the administration of the Colony.... Since Indians

174 Ibid., clause 27 ... p.6. For media commentary on this statement, see FTH, 4 October 1928, p.2.
look upon Fiji as their permanent home it is necessary that they understand their fellow colonists, share common burdens and engage in works for the commonweal.\textsuperscript{175}

The third report which issued from the Municipal Franchise Committee was written by J.R. Pearson, the Secretary for Indian Affairs. Pearson took a middle-of-the-road position between the two extremes represented by the Majority and Minority reports. He maintained that he was "unable to agree with the majority," but also could not accept the conclusions arrived at in the Minority Report.\textsuperscript{176} Amongst one or two other measures of reform, he advised that Hindustani be included as an electorally qualifying language.\textsuperscript{177}

The three dissenting Indian members of the Municipal Franchise Committee were not ignored. The Governor appointed Sir Alfred Karney Young, K.C., the Chief Justice, as a Royal Commissioner to hold public sessions "for the purpose of inquiring into the justification, if any," of the complaints voiced in the Minority Report.\textsuperscript{178}

The sessions conducted by Young, "the Royal Commissioner appointed to consider the claims of Indian ratepayers in

\textsuperscript{175} Legislative Council Paper No.38, "Municipal Franchise Committee," Minority Report, 27 January 1928, clause 28; J.F.L.C., Sessions of 1929 ... 1930, p.6. For a press report on the issues raised by the prospect of a Fiji Indian contribution to the administration of Fiji, see FTH, 4 October 1928, p.2.

\textsuperscript{176} See Legislative Council Paper No.38, "Municipal Franchise Committee," Minority Report of the Secretary for Indian Affairs, 16 February 1928, clause 2; J.F.L.C., Sessions of 1929 ... 1930, p.6.

\textsuperscript{177} See ibid., clause 5 ... p.7.

\textsuperscript{178} See F.R.G., 5 October 1928, number 54, p.358.
connection with the Municipal Franchise" were held in the Supreme Court building in Suva. 179 S.H. Ellis represented the signatories to the Minority Report. At the hearings, Ellis held that literacy in English, introduced at Fiji European prompting as a requirement in 1915 in an amendment to the franchise law, was the main obstacle to Fiji Indian enfranchisement. At one session, Ellis asserted that "[t]here cannot be any doubt that the effect of the Ordinance of 1915 was to disfranchise a great number of Indians." 180 Asked to clarify what he meant, Ellis pointed out that "there are 213 European ratepayers and 146 Indian, out of a total of 392, and there are 355 European electors and 21 Indian out of a total of 403." 181 Ellis was able to come up with these figures thanks to Vishnu Deo, Secretary of the Committee of Indian Ratepayers and Occupiers, a citizens action body which had been formed in October 1928, a move inspired by the appointment of the Royal Commission that same month. Deo and his committee colleagues had checked the municipal records and knocked on the doors of Indians living in the Suva area to collect the data Ellis presented to the Commissioner.

[The] figures summarized are as follows: The Indians who are literate in English 60.... Indians literate in Hindi 149. Indians illiterate or

179 See FTH, 27 October 1928, p.6.


181 Ibid., clause 2035 ... p.47.
unascertained 80 making a total of 289.... It appears from this that approximately 75 per cent of the Indian ratepayers and occupiers are ... disfranchised.\textsuperscript{182}

This was the main finding. After twelve sessions, the Royal Commission completed its deliberations.

The report of the Royal Commission was laid on the table in the Legislative Council on 22 March 1929.\textsuperscript{183} Young wrote that, regarding the language test obstacle to Fiji Indian franchise, "a prejudice does exist but not to the extent suggested."\textsuperscript{184} He also found that, in respect to racial segregation at the Suva Public Baths, the Minority Report's "allegation is sustained in that measures of discrimination have been adopted in the past,"\textsuperscript{185} a choice of words which intimated that steps had been taken to discourage such measures. But Young found against the Minority Report on the matter of racial segregation of the Reading Room at the Public Library -- as he put it, the "allegation is apt to mislead and affords no substantial grievance."\textsuperscript{186}

\textsuperscript{182} Ibid. For a press report on Ellis' figures, see \textit{FTH}, 8 January 1929, p.8.


\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid.
The Royal Commissioner’s report was a moderate, even-handed document, one not intended to give rise to a demand for reform. In a sense, Royal Commissions are not intended to promote radical change: the rationale behind this governmental device is to provide an authoritative and non-partisan position on the subject singled out for investigation — and, for practical purposes, non-partisan likely means moderate. Young would have understood this, but no doubt followed through with his instructions in the spirit of a Royal Commission of the Gladstonian era captured by the poet’s pen.

But still I’m a Royal Commission,
My task I intend to see through,
Though I know, as an old politician,
Not a thing will be done if I do.\textsuperscript{187}

The Commissioner’s report presented the Indian literacy figures, slightly modified, which Ellis had provided. The \textit{Fiji Times} and \textit{Herald} seized upon the difference between the number of Indian electors (21 or 22) and the number of Indian ratepayers literate in English (60 or 57) and therefore eligible to vote and drew a rather unfavourable conclusion.

These figures would tend to prove that many more Indians are able to qualify as electors than those whose names are now on the electoral roll, and support the suggestion that Indians have not registered their names out of ... lack of interest.\textsuperscript{188}

We are not able to say why there was such a difference between the eligible and the active. Perhaps municipal politics was

\textsuperscript{187} A.P. Herbert, early 1880s.

\textsuperscript{188} \textit{FTH}, 22 March 1929, p.4.
not of great interest to the Fiji Indian citizens of Suva. Whether that was the case or not, the same was not true of Fiji Indian interest in exercising the vote at the national level, as the following chapter convincingly demonstrates.

A few weeks after the report on the municipal franchise had been presented to the Legislative Council, Sir Eyre Hutson, the Governor, left Fiji for his retirement in Britain. Sir Alfred Young also retired in 1929, and was replaced by Captain Maxwell Anderson, R.N.\textsuperscript{189} Anderson arrived in Fiji from Gibraltar on 5 September 1929 and, that same day, was sworn in as the new Chief Justice by the Acting Governor.\textsuperscript{190}

Upon Hutson's departure, Alfred Wallace Seymour, the Colonial Secretary, took over as Acting Governor pending the arrival of Sir Arthur Fletcher, the Colonial Secretary of Ceylon (1926-29), appointed as Hutson's successor. A.W. Seymour seems to have empathized with the Fiji Indians, an attitude which may have come naturally to him or, we could speculate, he may have developed during his period of service in the Great War (1914-18) alongside units of the Indian Army in British campaigns against the Ottoman Turks for the defence of Egypt (1914-16) and conquest of Palestine (1917-18).

In any event and for whatever reason, the Fiji Royal Gazette issue of 10 May 1929 included an item from the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[190] See \textit{FTH}, 5 September 1929, p.4.
\end{footnotes}
Colonial Secretary's Office, dated 9 May 1929, which broadcast to the Fiji Indians a sudden rise in their official status.

It is hereby notified for general information that Wednesday, the 15th May, 1929, is hereby declared a Public and Bank Holiday throughout the Colony ... as a day of rejoicing to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the landing of the first Indians in Fiji.191

At such short notice, not everybody was ready to start rejoicing. A faction of the Arya Samaj, intending their action to register as a protest against indenture, or at least its memory, declared the fiftieth anniversary of the first Indian landing in Fiji as a "Black Day." To press home their view, they hung a black flag across Cumming Street, Suva, with "Black Day" (in English) prominently displayed on it.192 As a statement on the event which marked the introduction of Indian settlers to Fiji, the Aryas' choice of words was vulnerable to parody, especially, we could surmise, in the perception of Fijian passers-by who, for quite different reasons, may have agreed with the Arya communiqué. In Lautoka, the Arya protest was more muted: the Aryas, Seymour reported to London, "observed a fast and attended prayer meetings."193

The Aryas were not alone in protesting the occasion: many Fiji Europeans, albeit for very different reasons, also

191 F.R.G., 10 May 1929, number 27, p.209. This official announcement was reported in FTH, 11 May 1929, p.4.

192 For a report on this incident, see FTH, 16 May 1929, p.4.

193 Seymour to Amery, 1 June 1929, p.2; C.O.83/186.
adopted an attitude of disapproval. These Fiji Europeans had the *Fiji Times and Herald* to state their position. Arguing that Anzac Day and Cession Day, "events which concern the European only, the Fijian only, have been denied a public holiday,"\(^{194}\) a leading article protested the Acting Governor's decision. In part it read:

The Indian in Fiji ... has every reason to rejoice.... Of all the Colonies to which Indians may emigrate there is none [that] reaches the standard of Fiji.... The Fijian's kindly reception of the Indian, on the recommendation of the Government to which the former looks for protection in all matters, is a point which must not be forgotten.... As we said before, it is a day of rejoicing -- for the Indian.\(^{195}\)

It is clear from the sources that A.W. Seymour had overruled near-unanimous opposition in the Executive Council "on the question of proclaiming a Public Holiday."\(^{196}\) As Seymour explained in a dispatch to the Colonial Office, he had found occasion on the morrow of a meeting held on 8 May 1929 to act on a minor issue in opposition to advice given to me by Members of the Executive Council.... I ... [was] surprised ... that the advice against granting a holiday was unanimous, as my own inclination from the first was to grant a holiday.\(^{197}\)

Seymour had decided to go ahead with the holiday after receiving an appeal from M.S. Buksh, the Chairman of the

\(^{194}\) *FTH*, 13 May 1929, p.4.

\(^{195}\) Ibid.

\(^{196}\) Seymour to Amery, 1 June 1929, p.1; C.O.83/186.

\(^{197}\) Ibid.
Celebration Committee authorized to prepare the official celebrations. We shall examine the political group to which M.S. Buksh and his fellow Celebration Committee "moderates" belonged in our pages below. Sufficient at this juncture to note that Sir Maynard Hedstrom, newly returned to the colony from a trip overseas, attended a last-minute meeting of the Executive Council where, Seymour later reported, he expressed the view very strongly that it was highly desirable to declare a Public Holiday.... He thought it would be a gesture which would be appreciated by all the moderate elements of the Indian population.

Seymour wanted to recommend his action to the Colonial Office, preferably from a crowd of two rather than standing alone. But we feel sure that, while Seymour played up this incident to maximize its impact on the Colonial Office, he had from the outset intended to go ahead with the celebration anyway, irrespective of Hedstrom's stance.

On 15 May 1929 the main body of the Fiji Indian community celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival from Calcutta of the Leonidas. A public meeting was held at the Suva Town Hall. A resolution, proposed by R. Parmeshwar and seconded by Durga Prasad, was passed which, as a final word on the subject of the ending of indenture, recorded the heroes of

198 M.S. Buksh was a prominent member of the Indian Reform League (see Chapter Five, in the section entitled "Secularists," pp.359-360 below).

199 "Extract from Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Council held at Government House on Tuesday, the 14th day of May, 1929," enclosure 2, Seymour to Amery, 1 June 1929; C.O.83/186.
the hour as seen from the Fiji Indian point of view. It was an impressive list of honour.

[T]his ... meeting ... celebrates this fiftieth anniversary ... with grateful memories of the late Mr Gokhale, Mahatma Gandhi, Revd. J.W. Burton, Revd. C.F. Andrews, Pandit Totaram Sannadhaya, the late Mr. W.W. Pearson and others who championed the cause of our fathers during the humiliating conditions of their early days in Fiji. 200 Manilal Maganlal Doctor, we note, was not on the list.

The celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the first Indian landing in Fiji is a suitable occasion to mark the end of this chapter. Let us review our progress thus far.

We have set the scene for our subsequent account of Fiji Indian communalism. We have observed that the years of indenture had firmly established the Indian demographic presence in Fiji, and that the decade which followed the ending of indenture in early 1920 witnessed strenuous efforts by the colonial state to further increase the resident Indian population by promoting free immigration schemes to replace bonded passage. In the course of these efforts, we have been privileged to accompany J. Judd on his special mission to India where, on the hallowed ground of "Little Fiji" in Calcutta, we dignified Judd with the title of "unintended midwife of Fiji Indian nationalism." In the person of Bhola, the patriarch of a family of nineteen, we reached out to touch the very foundations of Fiji Indian political experience and found our first Fiji Indian nationalist. Judd and Bhola, we remind

200 FTH, 20 May 1929, p.3.
the reader, had to await our endeavours before receiving recognition of their respective historic roles.

When we turned to consider Fiji's domestic political conditions, we scored an unexpected coup. Before us, many historians have traced the outlines of the Fiji Indian political construction of the inter-war years, some to esteem it, others to disdain; but none have consulted the very architect of that construction. The name V.S. Srinivasa Sastri is absent from the index of most Fiji Indian historical accounts. By bringing Sastri to the fore, we have turned new earth in Fiji Indian historiography.

We can hazard a guess as to why the centrality of Sastri has not previously been detected. Pacific historiography owes a great deal to the methodology of anthropology, a sister discipline which presents itself in the form of detailed description, from out of which causation arises as a matter of course. Things happen because one thing just leads to another. Anthropological methods, it seems to us, lend themselves to the explanations that have been given for the Fiji Indian attachment to the cause of common roll. That Gillion attributes the drive for common roll mainly to honour (H. izzat),\textsuperscript{201} is a finding that arises naturally from his Fiji Indian cultural descriptive base.

In our view, izzat was symptomatic, not causal, of the Fiji Indian campaign for political equality. The Government of

\textsuperscript{201} See Gillion, \textit{The Fiji Indians ...} 1977, p.130 ff.
India marched Indian political enfranchisement in Crown colonies on to the British imperial agenda; and, in Fiji, the Fiji Indians, especially of the middle classes, were quickened by a feeling of rising self-worth. This sense of rising self-esteem inspired a set of exalted political and social expectations. In view of the demographic balance in Fiji, a common electoral roll would have served Indian interests; and even a community entirely lacking any sense of honour would still have advocated the policy, if only in appraisal of its material self-interest. Gillion, we think, has put the cart before the horse. At the high political level, izzat was brought to the Fiji Indians on Sastri's coattails.

If we have broken new ground in respect to bringing the role of Sastri to the fore, we have also revised the record by abandoning a favourite son of most historians of things Fiji Indian. Manilal Maganlal Doctor is usually afforded a favourable historical portrayal. We have portrayed him differently. Taking our cue initially from M.K. Gandhi we have served Manilal up in an unfavourable light. In our view, it was not Manilal but rather our own favoured communalists who, in the late 1920s, were the first Fiji Indian leaders to mount the stage of high politics.

In the last section of this chapter we traced the genesis of representative politics for the Fiji Indians, in the form

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202 For the Mahatma's unfavourable character reference of Manilal, see Chapter Two, p.79 above.
of the arrival in the colony of the Letters Patent of February 1929. The secondary sources we have quoted are weighted heavily towards South Asian, not Pacific, historical works. This is because in most Fiji Indian historical accounts the Letters Patent arrive after a desultory, pro forma exchange of correspondence between London and Suva. We have turned the spotlight on to the matter at hand and have discovered a process that had its genesis in the Indian contribution to the British Empire's war effort of 1914-18, reached its climax at the Imperial Conference of mid-1921, and was played out thereafter as mainly a matter of negotiation between the Colonial Office and the Raj. Sastri was the key figure in this process, occupying centre stage at the Imperial Conference of 1921, and subsequently, at the behest of the Government of India, following up on the resolutions passed by travelling to the colonies where Indians had settled, from Natal to British Columbia, not missing Fiji en route.

Finally, on the occasion of an episode in 1927-28 of municipal reform in Fiji, we witnessed the first attempts by Fiji Indian leaders to formulate representative principles for their community. Left to their own devices, we noted with interest that the principle of communal, not common, electoral roll recommended itself to at least some prominent Fiji Indians. But by 1929, with the new Letters Patent opening the door of representative politics, changes occurred. With two newly arrived Gujarati lawyers, Shivabhai Bhailalbhai Patel
and Ambalal Dahyabhai Patel,\textsuperscript{203} to guide the way, the demand for a common roll was adopted as the mainstream Fiji Indian policy position.

We shall close this chapter with the words of our suspected Indophile, A.W. Seymour, Acting Governor of Fiji -- part of a speech he delivered on 15 May 1929 at Albert Park, Suva, to the throngs there assembled to celebrate the fiftieth year of the Indian presence in Fiji. After acknowledging the welcoming address given by M.S. Buksh, the President of the Celebration Committee, Seymour cautioned his listeners that

\begin{quote}
the future of Fiji lies not with one community, but with the three, the British, the Fijian and the Indian. Three very different peoples of different origins and character. It is only by each people striving to develop the best that is in it with patience, sympathy and understanding of each other that we can hope to succeed.\textsuperscript{204}
\end{quote}

We shall be meeting A.W. Seymour later on several occasions in the chapters below. But now, fortified by His Excellency's words, we shall turn to consider how the leaders of the Hindu community in Fiji conducted themselves when first they ventured to participate in the politics of the colony.

\textsuperscript{203} The two Patels were not related. But both men were barristers-at-law and, again, both men had received their law education in London and attended the required dinners at the Inns-of-Court -- the same career trajectory as pioneered by their more eminent fellow-Gujarati fellow-lawyers such as M.K. Gandhi, Vallabhbhai Patel and Bhulabhai Desai.

\textsuperscript{204} Acting Governor's Address, 15 May 1929; \textit{FTW}, 16 May 1929, p.8.
Chapter Three

Sanatana Dharma and Arya Samaj

janaya daivyam janam

-- Rig Veda

Hindus have always comprised the greater part by far of the Fiji Indian community, from the earliest indenture days to the present. In the 1936 census, Hindus comprised 70,989 out of the total Fiji Indian population of 85,002 -- a numerical relationship which computes as 83.5 per cent. This was a proportion markedly higher than the Hindu percentage in the subcontinent, usually calculated at around 70 to 72 per cent, depending on whether the Jains were counted separately. We could speculate that an evident disinclination of Bengalis to embark overseas, under either indentured passage or free migration, accounts for the difference. Hindus comprised less

1 Rig Veda, mandala 10, sukta 53, verse 6: "Create the Divine race." Hinduism's genetic mission, arguably a formative impulse of Indian communalism, is confirmed by the seer in the Upanishad who proclaimed: srinvantu visve amritisya putrah -- that is, "Hearken unto me, ye children of immortality" (see Svetasvatara Upanishad, chapter 3, verse 8).

2 In the 1936 census figures, there was no Gujarati category; so most of the Gujaratis would have been counted as Hindus, the remnant as either Muslims (who totalled 11,290) or Christians (who totalled 1,665). In contrast, Sikhs (a total of 1,068) were accorded their own category.

3 In India, the census authorities classify the inchoate under-classes of the subcontinent, including Untouchables and tribal people, as Hindus, under the term "scheduled castes." During the period of subcontinental unity under British aegis (imperabant 1849-1947), had the Untouchables and tribals been counted separately, caste Hindus would have been reduced to a minority of the population, a point commented on by Gandhi in a letter to the Viceroy in June 1947. Gandhi wrote: "The caste Hindus ... are ... a hopeless minority.... Their supremacy where it exists is purely moral" (see Gandhi to Mountbatten, 27/28 June 1947; in Nicholas Mansergh, E.W.R. Lumby and Sir Penderel Moon (editors), Constitutional Relations between Britain and India: The Transfer of Power 1942-7 [hereafter T.P.], vol.11, London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1982, p.714).
than half the population of British Bengal, the subcontinent’s most populous province, so Bengali under-representation in the Fiji Indian communal lists undoubtedly militated in favour of a higher proportion of Hindus.\(^5\)

The term "Hindu" can convey several meanings. Originally, in its Sanskrit form (Skt. Sindhu), it was primarily a geographical expression, meaning "an inhabitant of the Indus River region," a term which was subsequently extended to the people of the whole subcontinent. It later came to convey a cultural connotation, one which identified genetically a specific human community, similar to the present meaning of the terms "Arab" or "African." Later still, it came to be used to impart a religious association, as a term comparable to "Christian" or "Muslim," which is how the word is most commonly used today.

Yet we should be wary of an exclusively religious use of the word "Hindu." Hinduism is the name not of a routinized

\(^4\) British Bengal included the present-day Indian province of West Bengal and the independent state of Bangladesh.

\(^5\) Of the 45,439 indentured Indian migrants to Fiji who embarked from Calcutta in the period 1879 to 1916, only 150 were Bengalis, a mere 0.33 per cent (see Lal, *Girmiṭiyas: The Origins of the Fiji Indians ...* 1983, p.50). Lal believes that favourable employment conditions in a rapidly industrializing Bengal explain why Bengalis were so under-represented in the ranks of Fiji’s Indian migrants, though he notes that some British officials in Bengal attributed the small numbers to the reputedly timid spirit of the Bengalis. For his part, Gillion believes that there were both temperamental and economic reasons for Bengali reluctance to emigrate (see Gillion, *Fiji’s Indian Migrants ...* 1962, pp.45 and 51).

In any event, assuming that few if any Bengalis were among the 14,536 indentured Indian migrants to Fiji who embarked from Madras in the period 1903 to 1916, and that the Bengali rate of repatriation to India was close to the Fiji Indian average, it is likely that Bengalis made up scarcely more than 0.25 per cent of the Fiji Indian community.
belief system of universal affirmation, but rather for a set of loosely-knit cults and beliefs autochthonous to the Indian subcontinent. It is not so much a religion as a "federation of religions," held together by a common allegiance to certain scriptures and sacred writings in Sanskrit, a particular Weltanschauung and ethos shaped in the main by concepts imparted by these Sanskrit texts, and by certain social customs and practices that define a distinctive way of life -- one designated as Indian. And our use here of the word "Indian" is deliberate; for "Hindu" and "Indian" are etymologically the same, being derivatives respectively of the Persian and Greek forms of the Sanskrit "Sindhu." As stated in our introductory chapter, it is our intention to press against the religious dimension of Fiji Indian communalism in order to emphasize the materialist aspect. To further this purpose, we venture to hope that we have established in the reader's mind Hinduism's subliminally attendant meanings: geographic and genetic.

Perhaps we have said enough to introduce Hinduism. It is now time to consider its communal forms. For our purposes, Hindu typology in Fiji can be reduced to two main groups: the Sanatana Dharma (the Eternal Way) and Arya Samaj (Society of

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6 The phrase "federation of religions" is used by Ninian Smart in his chapter on Hinduism (see Ninian Smart, The Long Search, Boston, Little Brown, 1977, pp.25-48). Another author has maintained, in a catchy phrase, that "[t]he Hindu religion ... is rather an anthropological process than a religion in the [W]estern sense" (see S.A. Siddiqui, The Forgotten History, 1857-1947, Dacca, Gafur, 1974, p.26).

7 See Chapter One, pp.13-14 above.
the Aryans or "noble men"). In the opening years of the twentieth century, the Hindu community in Fiji articulated itself politically into these two groups, a process which occurred in tandem with the first ventures by Fiji Indians to participate in the public life of the colony. Let us now consider why these two groupings recommended themselves to the Fiji Indian Hindus and the relative strength of each.

Fiji Indian Hindu Communal Options

The *Sanatana Dharma* represented the more traditional of the two Hindu sectarian groups and commanded the allegiance of by far the greater part of the Hindu community in Fiji. Of the several reasons why *Sanatani* Hinduism appealed to the broad body of Fiji Indians, two stand out. On the one hand, it was the dominant ancestral religion in the two areas of the subcontinent from which most Indian migrants to Fiji had come: the middle Gangetic plain and southern peninsular India. On the other hand, it could present itself in a wide range of forms, from simple devotional rituals (*H. puja*), which could be performed by pious housewives or busy merchants, to learned texts on ethics and philosophy which could satisfy the intellectual proclivities of the most learned and leisured scholars. In the concluding pages of his essay on Fiji Indian Hinduism, Jim Wilson bears authoritative witness to the

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8 Actually, there were three Hindu groups; for, strictly speaking, the Hindu community of Fiji included most of the South Indians resident in the colony. However, for our purposes South Indian political activity in Fiji will be dealt with in a separate chapter.
individual satisfaction and social serviceability of the religion.9

Sanatana Dharma is usually translated as the "orthodox" form of Hinduism. We are somewhat uncomfortable with this translation, though not sufficiently so as to reject its use. We shall let it stand. Yet whatever connotations are suggested by the word "orthodox," rigid implementation of a received set of conventions does not convey the reality of sanatani Hinduism.10 Hindu orthodoxy is a pluralist phenomenon: it encompasses as many sets of religious conventions as the thousands of castes (H. jati) into which Hindu society is traditionally organized. Nor does the term necessarily exclude from its compass creative or eccentric individuals. Mahatma Gandhi, a radical reformer of received Hindu lifestyle if ever there was one, always insisted that he was a sanatani Hindu -- such being his reply to this frequent query even as late as the 1930s, a time by which his "experiments with truth" had committed him to a lifestyle fundamentally at odds with traditional Hindu practice.

Gandhi's oft-proclaimed allegiance to Sanatana Dharma was a matter of no small importance to the course of Fiji Indian

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9 See Jim Wilson, "Fijian Hinduism"; in Vijay Mishra (editor), Rama's Banishment ... 1979, pp.86-111.

10 In this study, we shall standardize our own use of the terms "sanatani" (with or without Hindu/Hinduism/Dharmis) and "Arya" (with or without Samaj/Samajist/Samaji) according to the practice of the editors of the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, perhaps the finest body of scholars of things Indian ever gathered together for a single task, to whose expertise in such matters we are happy to assent.
politics of our period. This was because the Fiji Indian adherents of Sanatana Dharma, unlike their fellow sanatani Hindus of the subcontinent, faced a powerful challenge to their beliefs from the local adherents of another Hindu sectarian group: the Arya Samaj. It was no small comfort for Fiji's sanatani Hindus to be able to identify the Indian nationalist movement's acclaimed moral and political guru, the nascent pater patriae of a reborn Ind, as one of their like.

To explain why the Arya Samaj loomed so large in the political and social life of the Fiji Indian community, relative to their more modest impact on the course of events in the subcontinent, we must first relate how it came to pass that the Aryas were the first Fiji Indian communal group to venture as an organized body into the public life of the colony.

On 25 December 1904, a group of Fiji Indians met in Samabula, a suburb of Suva, at the home of Mangal Singh. Along with the host, the gathering included such worthies of the Hindu community as Biharilal, Gaji Pratap Singh, George Nanku, Pandit Shiu Dutt and Pandit Dwarka Dutt. At this meeting, the first formally constituted chapter of the Arya Samaj in Fiji was formed.11 The new organization's primary aims were the revival of Hinduism amongst the Fiji Indians and

11 For an account of the founding of the Fiji chapter of the Arya Samaj, see Pandit Nardev Vedalankar and Manohar Somera, Arya Samaj and Indians Abroad, New Delhi, Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, 1975, pp.122-3. From our own research, it seems that this event of 25 December 1904 passed unnoticed by the public media in Fiji -- at least, it was not accorded a press notice, neither did it attract press comment.
the establishment of a system of formal education for the community. Despite its small beginnings, the formation of this communal group was for the Fiji Indians an important development. And, in the last week of December 1917, the Aryas of the Fiji Indian community added to their institutional cohesion with the formation of the Arya Pratinidri Sabha of Fiji,\(^\text{12}\) intended to act as a standing ginger group to devise and implement Arya programmes in Fiji Indian society at large. In subsequent years, notably in the early decades of the period of this study, Aryas were habitually at the forefront of the movement for the political and social advancement of the Fiji Indians.

The explanation for the political dynamism and militancy of the Aryas in Fiji, relative to their more numerous but less organized sanatani fellow Hindus, is bound up with an appreciation of the origins and nature of the wider Arya Samaj movement.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883), a Hindu reformer from Kathiawar, had founded the first Arya Samaj on 10 April 1875 in Bombay. The advent of the Swami on the Indian scene was a story made familiar to later generations of Fiji Indians by Arya missionaries. Let us see if we can capture the flavour of their mission.

\(^{\text{12}}\) As in the case of the founding, in late 1904, of the Fiji chapter of the Arya Samaj, our research failed to turn up any press notice or comment recording for posterity the formation in late December 1917 of the Arya Pratinidri Sabha of Fiji.
Swamy Dayananda ... was born at Morvi, a town situated on the bank of the Machhooka River in Kithiawar, Guzerat ... in 1824, A.D. Realising the greatness of perfect brahmcharya, he remained a bachelor throughout his life. He acquired intense insight and knowledge of Sanskrit Philosophy and Theology and he was a past master of those subtle and recondite arguments of which Sanskrit literature is so full.\(^{13}\)

Dayanand had experienced enlightenment as a youth when, during the fast of Shivaratni, he observed the inability of an image of Shiva to protect the offerings placed before it from the depredation of a nibbling mouse. "[I]nherit,\(^{14}\) says one of his biographers, "a strong will from his father and a benevolent disposition from his mother,\(^{14}\) the later reformer had dispensed with image worship and attendant ritual, advancing instead a monotheistic version of Hinduism which favoured widow remarriage and the education of females and opposed child marriage and caste. Dayanand also attacked untouchability and advocated the right of all to study the Vedas, Brahmins and non-Brahmins, men and women alike.

When we view the Aryas in action in Fiji, it will be apparent that a peculiar militancy informed both their words and deeds, especially their words. Perhaps it will be useful to establish whence this militancy arose. The explanation is bound up with the context of the founder’s time and place.

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\(^{13}\) Shri Krishna, Arya Missionary, Lautoka; a contributed article, *FTH*, 9 May 1927, p.6.

Swami Dayanand’s lifetime coincided with the era which witnessed the floruit of the British presence in the subcontinent.\textsuperscript{15} Like so many Indians of his time, Dayanand identified the West with power and hegemony -- qualities which he himself accepted as the hallmarks of a superior civilization. His reforming technique was first to (literally) list the cultural differences between the Western and Indian ways of life.\textsuperscript{16} He attributed the West’s evident material superiority to these cultural differences. Upon study of the Vedas, however, Dayanand found support for the very cultural qualities and societal practices he had identified as advantageously setting off Europeans from Indians.\textsuperscript{17} From this premiss, Dayanand reasoned that the Indians of ancient times had been as great as the British of his own time, but that subsequent generations of Indians had lost the Vedic virtues, especially textual Brahminism and

\textsuperscript{15} The defeat of Napoleonic France and the restoration of the balance of power in Europe in 1815, as effected by the course of war and the terms of settlement of the Congress of Vienna, along with the final defeat of Maratha Peshwa in 1818, marked the dawning of an era of unchallenged British hegemony in India. The formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 marked the end of this period of unchallenged British supremacy.

\textsuperscript{16} For the list compiled by Dayanand of the “sterling qualities” and “noble deeds that have contributed to the advancement of the Europeans,” see his publication \textit{The Light of Truth}, pp.443-4; cited in Wm. Theodore de Bary (editor), \textit{Sources of Indian Tradition}, vol.2, New York, Columbia University Press, 1958, pp.82-3.

\textsuperscript{17} Dayanand found in the Vedas not only European cultural qualities and societal practices: he also discovered evidence of the use, in second millennium B.C. India, of firearms and electricity. For commentary on Dayanand’s argument as a \textit{reductio ad absurdum}, see Dennis Gilmore Dalton, \textit{Indian Idea of Freedom: Political Thought of Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghose, Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore}, Gurgaon (Haryana, India), Academic Press, 1982, pp.43-46.
martial valour (Skt. ksatratej). Dayanand spent the later years of his life exhorting Hindus to pursue and secure the cultural differentiae of the Westerners which he had listed, the selfsame original Aryan qualities found in the Vedas. 18

This brief outline of the empowerment context in which the founder of the Arya Samaj formed his ideology needs to be rounded off by situating the reform movement in its Hindu cultural context. In approaching this task, we are conscious that we are stepping forward on to potentially dangerous ground. It is often queried, mostly on behalf of cultures classified as "indigenous," whether an outsider can ever hope to portray equitably and evenhandedly the essence of an alien tradition. So we commission Nirad Chaudhuri to provide the explanation.

Let me deal with the starting point first. It coincides with the appearance of the cleavage which is absolutely basic to the ethnography of India -- a cleavage which, once it had made its appearance, was never obliterated afterwards. It is the chasm which separates all the primitives of India en bloc, without regard for the differences of cultural development existing among them, from all the civilized persons en bloc, whatever the species of civilization to which they, in their secondary groupings, belong. Anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians will have no difficulty in understanding which distinction I have in mind, for it is one which is absolutely basic to their discipline. 19

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Having thus set the scene, Chaudhuri, without a break, addresses the heart of the matter.

It was no less basic to the Hindus of ancient India, though as a problem of living and not of study.... [T]hey never forgot it, nor allowed it to be forgotten by the other side. But they defined it in terms of race, that is, genetically. They called themselves "Arya" (Aryan), which signified "nobly born," and the pre-existing people "Anarya" (not Aryan), and they made the boundary line between the two absolutely impassable in theory, and very difficult to cross in practice. The notion of racial superiority, which was present in this distinction from the outset, was later widened to include that of moral superiority. The Hindu said to a fellow-Hindu, "You are Arya," in the same tone as that which an English colonial assumed when he said to a fellow-colonial, "You are White." Any dishonourable act or conduct was described as being unworthy of an Aryan, or befitting only a non-Aryan. The Sanskrit phrase Anarya-jushta (Na + Aryajushta or Anarya + jushta) might have meant either.\textsuperscript{20}

This then was the historical cultural context that shaped the imperatives of Dayanand's reform movement, one which correlated Aryanism and attitudes of racial superiority.

The methods, organization and items of social reform advanced by Dayanand, many observers felt, were appropriated from the practices of Christian missionaries -- alien proselytizers whose activities in India Dayanand denounced. Indeed, there was something of a parallel between Christian missionary proselytization and the religious "conscientization" (H. shuddhi) practiced by the Arya Samaj. The Aryas themselves often acknowledged parallels between their own activities and historic Christian aspects of

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
religious reform, along the lines of the address by an Arya speaker on 17 November 1929 to the Second Annual General Meeting of the Arya Samaj in Singapore, who maintained that the conditions under which the Rishi [Dayanand] had to work and the evils which he had to fight against, prevailing at that time in the Hindu Society, were almost exactly the same as those with which Christ had to deal during his Ministry against his own people.21

However, there was a significant difference between the two movements: unlike the Christian missionaries' universal conversion objective, the Aryas focused their shuddhi efforts only on ethnic Indians -- an intimation, the attentive reader will already discern, of the genetic dimension that informs the Hindu identity. To be an Arya, one has to be born Aryan. The objective of shuddhi was to make Aryas, the "noble men," conscious of their status, one inherently elevated.22 And a further development of this objective was the Sangathan movement, which aimed at the conversion of Indian Muslims to Hinduism. In Western political terms, the Aryas were Hindu/Indian nationalists, men whose identity as Hindus was fused and interchangeable with their identity as Indians.

Touched thus by reforming zeal and animated by nationalistic enthusiasm, the Arya Samaj soon developed into a formidable force in Indian society, especially in


22 For a learned account of the shuddhi campaigns conducted by the Aryas in India, see R.K. Ghai, Shuddhi Movement in India: A Study of its Socio-political Dimensions, New Delhi, Commonwealth Publishers, 1990.
modernizing professional and middle class circles. Sir Herbert Risley, an observer of the Indian scene during the Edwardian era, gave his appraisal of the reason for this pattern of Arya Samaj support.

[The Arya Samaj] offers to the educated Hindu a comprehensive body of doctrines purporting to be derived from Indian documents and traditions and embodying schemes of social and educational advancement, without which no real progress is possible.

In Fiji, the Arya synthesis of traditional Indian form and modern progressive spirit was to provide several ambitious Indian leaders with a cohesive ideological identity, one which equipped them for operating effectively within the dominant Western political culture of the colony. Yet before proceeding with an account of Arya Samaj activity in Fiji, we should establish that the very prominence of the Arya Samaj in the politics of the Fiji Indian community in the 1920s and 1930s differentiated Fiji Indian politics from the Indian subcontinental mainstream.

When our period opens in 1920, the Gandhian revolution conducted within the Indian nationalist movement was already in the process of invalidating, in terms of its political acceptability, the worldview which had inspired Swami

23 Herbert Hope Risley (1851-1911), K.C.I.E. (1907), C.S.I. (1904), C.I.E. (1892): entered the I.C.S., 1873; served on the Census Commission for India, 1899-1902; Home Secretary, Government of India, 1902-9; Secretary, Judicial and Public Department, India Office, from 1910; an eminent British anthropologist, organized the anthropological chart of Indian people.

24 Herbert Risley, The Peoples of India, pp.244-5; cited in Lajpat Rai, A History of the Arya Samaj ... p.178.
Dayanand, a process largely completed by the late 1920s. From the Gandhian viewpoint, Western civilization was not something to admire: it was an evil from the embrace of which the Indians (and, for that matter, the British) should sensibly endeavour to escape. Instead of listing British virtues, most of which in Dayanand's view were of a martial type, Gandhi posited the superior courage of satyagraha, the superior ability to suffer injury rather than to inflict it. And Gandhi directed his message not at Hindus but at Indians -- albeit, Indian Muslims noticed, his pronouncements were often couched in Hindu terminology. This ostensibly secular approach enabled Gandhi to accept Hinduism in the unorganized, open-ended form it had traditionally assumed, and to direct social reform away from unresolvable theological concerns into tangible matters such as rural uplift, liquor prohibition and the promotion of certain chosen elements of cottage industry. And the Mahatma remained a sanatani Hindu.

In the new post-1920 Gandhian order of things, with the Raj visibly expiring, Swami Dayanand's emphasis on Western categories of Hindu self-criticism was increasingly incompatible with the Indian nationalist spirit; and, if subjected to an uncharitable analysis, it could even be interpreted as intellectually collaborationist.

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25 We use the phrase "certain chosen elements of cottage industry" for the benefit of the reader who may not be initiated in Gandhian terminology. For the initiated, read "khadi work."

26 For a Gandhian critique of the ideology and practices of the Arya
surprisingly, after 1920 the Arya Samaj was a declining force in the Indian nationalist movement and, after the deaths of Swami Shraddhanand\textsuperscript{27} and Lala Lajpat Rai\textsuperscript{28} in the late 1920s, it no longer served as an avenue of advancement for Indian nationalist leaders. It is an index, therefore, of a gap which had opened up between the respective politics of the Indians in Fiji and India proper that, in the inter-war years, the Arya Samaj was in the forefront of Fiji Indian social and political progress. The politics of the subcontinent, so it seems, was not transplanted intact in Fiji. From the very beginning, Hindu political activity in Fiji exhibited qualities peculiar to itself.

It might be time and space well employed for us to surmise why the Aryas were so markedly present in Hindu politics in Fiji. Perhaps, in our previous paragraph, we erred in making the subcontinental norm the criterion whereby to measure the relatively greater strength of the Aryas in Fiji. It occurs to us that if instead we had narrowed our comparative choice to, say, the Punjab, the comparative standard would have been such as to make the strong Arya presence in Hindu politics in Fiji seem unremarkable. We would judge that, from the 1880s

\begin{itemize}
\item Samaj, see M.K. Gandhi, "The Arya Samajists," Young India, 12 June 1924; C.W.M.G., vol.24 ... March 1967 (Chaitra 1889), pp.228-30.
\item Swami Shraddhanand (1856-1926): the pre-eminent Arya leader in India, known at an earlier stage in his career as Mahatma Munshiram.
\item Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928): an Indian nationalist leader from the Punjab; organized a massive agrarian movement in the Punjab in 1907; President of the Indian National Congress, Calcutta session, 1920; died of injuries sustained during demonstrations against the Simon Commission.
\end{itemize}
to the 1940s inclusive, Swami Dayanand’s reformist sect was as prominent in the Hindu politics of the Punjab as, during the 1920s and 1930s, was the Fiji chapter of the Arya Samaj in the politics of Fiji. It remains to identify some common factor, common to the Punjab and Fiji, which can be advanced to explain the similarity. One feature of Hindu experience in the two places springs immediately to mind: in both places, Hindus formed a minority of the population. We wonder whether a case could be made for Fiji as Hindu frontier: that is, Fiji as a place conducive to the prominence of Arya Hindu militancy, given the minority, and therefore relatively insecure, position of the Hindu community of Fiji. We here posit the theory and end our moment of profitable musing.

The social policy of the Arya Samaj in Fiji was focused primarily on the establishment and maintenance of primary and secondary schools intended for the education mainly, but not exclusively, of young Indians. The first primary school was built at Saweni, on the outskirts of Lautoka, on the western side of Viti Levu. Completed in 1918 and officially opened

29 In the British Punjab (durabat 1849-1947), which included present-day Pakistani Punjab, Indian Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, Muslims formed a majority community of slightly more than 50 percent, Sikhs numbered something less than one fifth of the total, and Hindus made up the remaining 30 per cent or thereabouts. In colonial Fiji, Hindus comprised about 83 per cent of an Indian community which, until the mid-1940s, was itself a minority community in a country dominated religiously by Christianity, to which, in one form or another, the native Fijians, Fiji Europeans, Part-Europeans and a small number of Fiji Indians were allegiance.

30 For an account of the fund drive and committee work undertaken by the Arya Samaj for the establishment of Gurukul Saweni, see Pandit Nardev Vedalankar and Manohar Somera, Arya Samaj and Indians Abroad ... 1975, pp.126-127.
on 7 November 1919 by the Lautoka District Commissioner, the white outlines and orderly classrooms of the Gurukul Saweni announced on behalf of the Fiji Indian community the beginning of a new era just as, a few weeks later, the Order in Council of 2 January 1920\textsuperscript{31} that cancelled unexpired contracts of indenture marked the ending of the old.

In subsequent years, several new primary schools were entered on the roll call of the Arya Samaj's educational institutions. From our reading of the sources it seems that the Aryas were motivated in this activity by the same two ambitions which moved the other communal groups to do the same: the desire to preserve the community vernacular and to acquire Western educational standing. In 1930, the Arya Samaj Girls' School in Samabula and the Vunimono Arya School were established. In 1938, the Arya Kanya Patshala was opened at Ba. The Bhawani Dayal Memorial School in Wainibuku was completed in 1942 as was, the following year, the Naduna Arya Patshala in Labasa. The Swami Shradhanand Memorial School in Samabula and the Vunikavikaloa Arya School in Ra were both opened in 1952, the same year that saw the completion of the Arya Samaj's first two secondary schools, the D.A.V. Boys' College and the D.A.V. Girls' College, both situated in Samabula. In 1956, the D.A.V. Primary School was opened in Ba and, respectively in 1961 and 1963, two other primary schools

\textsuperscript{31} For a citation of the relevant text of the Order in Council that cancelled indenture, see Chapter Two, pp.41-42 above.
were completed in Labasa, the Korotari Arya Patshala and the Wainikoro Arya Patshala. Pandit Vishnu Deo, about whom we shall soon elaborate, had two memorial schools named after him, a primary school in Suva and a secondary school in Lautoka, the first opened in 1970, the second in 1972.32

This impressive commitment to educational uplift by the Arya Samaj in Fiji was a measure of the type of person likely to be attracted to Swami Dayananda's reformed version of Hinduism. Generally, the Arya Samaj tended to recruit its supporters from the emerging Fiji Indian middle class, mainly cane growers, shop owners and professionals. It seems that, amongst the Fiji Indians, there was some correlation between endeavours to secure a position in British colonial society and, by adoption of Swami Dayananda's social reforms, to close the gap between Indian and European cultural norms. To epitomize the type, let us now examine an individual case.

Hindu Communalism

It is perhaps unsurprising that the most influential Fiji Indian leader of the early decades following the end of indenture was an Arya. Vishnu Deo was the pre-eminent champion of Indian, especially Hindu, interests in Fiji from the mid-1920s through to the early 1940s.33 In this

32 For further entries on the list of Arya Samaj educational institutions, see Pandit Nardev Vedalankar and Manohar Somera, Arya Samaj and Indians Abroad ... 1975, pp.125-126.

33 Our assessment of the pre-eminence of Vishnu Deo in the Fiji Indian politics of this period has already been established by Kenneth Gillion.
formative period of Fiji Indian political awakening, Vishnu Deo contributed more than any other elected Indian leader to the formation of a Fiji Indian political identity.

Despite his prominence in Fiji Indian public affairs, we know surprisingly little about the private life of Vishnu Deo. A painstaking scrutiny of our sources and extensive reading of secondary historical works has availed us little. The consummate Fiji Indian communalist, Vishnu Deo yet awaits his biographer. His diet, his health, his hygiene, his Sanskritization -- all remain concealed behind the veil which so often secretes the private Indian world. We can pronounce only on the activities that marked his ventures onto the public stage and on the persona, no doubt carefully fashioned, he thereupon assumed.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Vishnu Deo was at the forefront of the Arya effort to establish schools. He was elected to the Legislative Council in the first ever election of Fiji Indian representatives. He was also active as the editor of two papers, Fiji Samachar and Vaidik Sandesh, both of which promoted the cause of Fiji Indian political advance; though in an earlier period, before he ventured into private enterprise

According to Gillion, "the leading champion of Hinduism, and the Arya Samaj in particular, was Pandit Vishnu Déo.... Vishnu Déo was the most important Indian leader in Fiji for more than two decades" (see Gillion, The Fiji Indians ... 1977, p.107).

34 Mahatma Gandhi's lifestyle was a notable exception to this Indian societal characteristic, for Gandhi's every private activity, however intimate, was pointedly on public display. Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) also permitted a remarkable degree of public knowledge of his private life.
journalism, he had served for a brief spell as an assistant editor of the government Indian paper, the Rajdut. Once again we see the pattern whereby a political activist's first steps in public life were undertaken in colonial government employ. Most famously, Vishnu Deo, in 1929, on the floor of the Legislative Council, heralded the issue of the common electoral roll, the principal item of contention that demarcated the Fiji Indian stance against the dominant Fiji European community in the high politics of the colony.

In view of his importance in determining the character of Fiji Indian political identity, it is highly pertinent to an understanding of the nature of Fiji Indian political mobilization in the 1920s to realize that Vishnu Deo functioned politically within Fiji Indian society as essentially an Arya communalist. A dedicated Arya, Vishnu Deo was a consistent critic of sanatani Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. Yet Vishnu Deo, more than any other Fiji Indian leader, heralded the issues which set the Fiji Indians apart from the other inhabitants of Fiji, especially the European settlers and native Fijians. To understand what made Vishnu Deo tick is, in large part, to understand the political dynamics of the Fiji Indian community of our period.

There is no denial as to the overtly communalist style in which Vishnu Deo presented himself to his fellow Fiji Indians. On matters religious, Vishnu Deo had little of the ambivalent in him. Certainly, a reader of the Fiji Times and Herald in
mid-November 1927 would have readily understood that the letter to the editor from V. Deo of Lautoka was unmistakably an anti-Muslim tract. Vishnu Deo began his letter by citing the words of an unnamed "correspondent from Lautoka."

[A] plot was made by some leading Mohammedans of Lautoka, Ba and Nadi, to cripple V. Deo, because he has been protecting and helping a Muslim girl of about 13 years of age, whom they desired to abduct for immoral purposes. The information leaked out and Lautoka Hindus prepared themselves to ... [protect] V. Deo. Fortunately, a hand was not laid on him or else there might have been a serious breach of [the] peace. The matter was at once reported to the police and enquiries were instituted.35

Having thus set the scene, Vishnu Deo himself addressed the editor.

In asking you to publish the above I wish to say that ... these kinds of actions of some of our people are detrimental to ... the Indian community. My desire is to eradicate such evil practices.... I make no distinction between Hindus and Mohammedans. I do not like to see these people fight. I want our conditions to better and therefore we should expose these so-called leaders, who are doing great harm to the community.36

Vishnu Deo's protestations notwithstanding, it is difficult to believe that his letter was written with a view to be anything other than communally inflammatory, especially as the case of the Muslim girl appears to have required subsequently no police action or court appearance.

It fell to S.A. Raymond (alias A.R. Sahu Khan), the Secretary of the Fiji Muslim League, to respond to Vishnu

35 Vishnu Deo to Editor, FTH, 15 November 1927, p.4.
36 Ibid.
Deo’s attack. Raymond did so in a letter to the editor, published in the Fiji Times and Herald on 29 November 1927. Raymond wrote:

[I]t is hardly believable that some of the leading Mohammedans of Lautoka, Ba and Nadi desired to abduct a girl of thirteen years for immoral purposes. Another notable thing appears to me to be the assertion that the Lautoka Hindoos prepared themselves to protect V. Deo upon the alleged information leaking out and it was only afterwards that the matter was reported to the police for enquiries. I have been in communication with the Secretary of the Anjuman-Isha-at-ul-Islam at Lautoka.... The statements contained in V. Deo’s news are in self-praise and [are] merely a free play of his imagination. The whole affair appears to have been between Mohammedans and the Secretary of the Anjuman-Isha-at-ul-Islam tried to bring about satisfactory arrangements between the parties concerned.... Now that the Hindoo-Muslim disagreement is dissipating, especially in Suva, Rewa and Navua, where Mohammedans and Sanatans ... are fastly regaining their past friendship, such letters as that of V. Deo will again create dissension and poison the feeling of the one community against the other.37

Even though the above charges against Vishnu Deo come from the pen of an avowed opponent, it must be said that S.A. Raymond’s characterization of the dynamic Arya leader contained not a few home truths.

Arya partisans other than Vishnu Deo were active on the public stage in the late 1920s. On 23 December 1927, a meeting was held at the Suva Town Hall to deliver a welcoming address to Pandit Amichand, an Arya Samaj teacher newly

37 S.A. Raymond to Editor, FTH, 29 November 1927, p.6. We have more to say on this incident in our pages below, in respect to an exchange of views between S.A. Raymond and another Fiji Muslim League leader (see Chapter Four, pp.287-289 below).
arrived from India. The event was organized by the leaders of the Suva-based Arya Samaj, amongst whom J.P. Maharaj, R. Parmeshwar, Sirdar Singh and Udrek Singh were present alongside the Pandit on the platform. Parmeshwar, recently resigned from his position as the inaugural secretary (fungebatur 1924-27) of the Indian Reform League and newly (we presume newly) received into the Arya Samaj, rose to deliver the prepared welcoming address. Evidently, the Arya leaders had decided, when drafting the welcoming address, to take the opportunity to criticize certain eminent figures, especially Indian Reform League leaders, who they perceived as "Jai Chands" (traitors) to Fiji Indian interests. Translated from the original Hindi, the welcoming address in part read:

Revered: When we set our feet on this Island there was not a Hindu who did not have his queue and sacred thread, but to-day [only] some [few] people may be found who wear a queue and a sacred thread. Woe ... bitter woe!38

This was strong stuff, even when presented objectively. But, alas for the peace and tranquility of communal relations amongst the Fiji Indians, the Arya leaders had decided to put a subjective spin on things by apportioning communal blame.

Aryan Hero! Among other causes of our condition we hold the prime to be those Indians who have ... come here from India, some of whom are at present holding Government appointments.... [T]hey ... seeing here wantonness ... and coquetry fell into the same pit. Not only this but some ... for motives of self-interest, with ... the purpose of

38 Welcoming Address to Pandit Amichand, delivered by R. Parmeshwar on behalf of the leaders of the Arya Samaj, Suva Town Hall, 23 December 1927; translated from the Hindi; FTH, 26 March 1928, p.4.
deceiving us, started societies to beat the drum of Indian reforms in which dancing, liquor drinking, meat eating ... profligacy ... and other sins were given the guise of physical culture. They consider it uncivilised to use their Indian names.\textsuperscript{39}

This statement identified the men of the Indian Reform League, many of whom were India-born civil servants, as the instigators of the supposed Hindu cultural decline. However, in order to clear the decks for the intended communalist action, the Arya leaders were at pains to emphasize that their proclaimed animosity towards the specifically identified group of government employees of Indian extraction was not to be confused with opposition, or even ingratitude, towards the British colonial regime.

We are thankful to the local Government. Except for these men ... it has done its best to improve us and is still doing so.... God! Henceforth prevent the birth of these vile traitors ... among the Hindu race.... It is better for Indian women to remain barren.\textsuperscript{40}

The welcoming address deeply moved the capacity audience in the Suva Town Hall. However, when eventually it was published, the welcoming address raised feelings of a decidedly negative type in at least four of the men to whom it indirectly but unmistakably referred -- four of the India-born civil servants in Fiji either active in the Indian Reform League or with adopted Anglicized names: namely, Sant Singh Chowla, S.A. Buksh, S.R. Daniels and W.M. Caldwell.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
The Arya leaders seemed to be gunning especially for S.S. Chowla, the Indian Reform League leader. Just a few days after the arrival of Pandit Amichand, the Aryas had another occasion for celebration. The tenth anniversary of the Arya Pratinidri Sabha of Fiji was celebrated "with pomp and splendour" at Nasova, Lautoka, on 30-31 December 1927 and 1 January 1928. It was reported that around three thousand men and women, "including the delegates and representatives from all parts of Fiji ... assembled to make the celebration a success." The two resolutions passed to mark the occasion were perhaps symptomatic of the then rising tide of Indian communalist tension, in the subcontinent and amongst the Fiji Indians. The first resolution referred to the recent assassination in India, at Muslim hands, of a Hindu nationalist figure, a prominent Arya leader.

[We] deeply mourn ... the loss of His Worshipable Swamy Shraddhanand and other Aryan heroes. And the second resolution addressed an incident of communalist discord which had occurred some days previously in Fiji.

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41 FTH, 16 January 1928, p.3.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid. Swami Shraddhanand was assassinated on 23 December 1926. In the Indian world, it was the event of the year. The Swami's killer was one Abdul Rashid, a Muslim. Rashid had called at the Delhi residence where Shraddhanand lay ill and shot him twice at point-blank range. The day following the killing, Gandhi, in attendance at the All-India Congress Committee meeting in Gauhati, Assam, broke the news to the delegates with a graphic account of the slaying (see "Gandhi's Speech at A.I.C.C. Meeting, Gauhati," 24 December 1926, Hindi Navajivan, 6 January 1927; translated from the Hindi; C.W.M.G., vol.32 ... April 1969 [Chaitra 1891], pp.451-4).
[We] regard ... with contempt the words used by Mr Chowla at a meeting of the Madrasis of Suva held on 26th December, 1927, to the effect that the religious men who exclaim religion are badmash (rogue, immoral, etc) and do not know religion. S.S. Chowla, the Indian Reform League leader, active amongst the South Indians -- again the object of Arya insult and provocation, this time, openly named. Clearly, something of a vendetta was being pursued. The Arya leaders and S.S. Chowla were recommending different types of political identity to the Hindu community in Fiji -- the one indisputably religious, the other supposedly secular. And lamentably, in the course of their factional competition, vociferous remonstrances of the impolite type quoted above were increasingly setting the tone of Fiji Indian politics.

The confrontation took on a sharp focus on 10 January 1928, when the Fiji Samachar published the text of the welcoming address to Pandit Amichand, along with a leader article which elaborated on the themes it had raised. Chowla came into possession of a copy. He was outraged by the publication of what he considered a vituperative attack on his personal character.

S.S. Chowla had arrived as a free migrant in Fiji in 1909. He had found employment as a civil servant and been appointed to a variety of responsible positions in the colonial

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44 The term "Madrasis," meaning "people from the Madras Presidency," was in Fiji synonymous with "South Indians," the term we ourselves prefer.

45 FTH, 16 January 1928, p.3.
administration. He is an example of that type of Indian who, by securing government employment, were the very first Indians to play a role in the public life of the colony. In 1924, along with the Reverend A.W. McMillan, he had assisted with the formation of the Indian Reform League. By late 1927, the time of Pandit Amichand's arrival, Chowla was Acting Deputy Registrar of the Supreme Court. Offended at the innuendo directed towards him in the welcoming address, Chowla mustered his three civil servant colleagues in support and levelled charges of criminal libel against the authors and publisher.

Such an issue made for good politics. This was apparent from a letter to the editor of the Fiji Times and Herald from a reader who signed himself "Observer," a letter published in early February 1928.

I have been an ardent studier of the present turmoil and sectional religious strife amongst the Indian Community.... [A]t the present juncture the Indian Community is divided into two sections ... Arya Samajists and non-Arya Samajists.... Before the arrival of Swami Ram Manoharaanand Saraswati ... the Colony knew nothing of the Arya Samaj religion, the followers of which at the present time are being talked about night and day at the home of nearly every Indian.46

The author of this letter was in large part justified in attributing the "sectional religious strife" in the Fiji Indian community during the 1920s to the Arya Samaj. The members of that religious body, more than the members of any other, were to be found in the forefront of public alarm,

46 "Observer" to Editor, FTH, 4 February 1928, p.7.
sounding the tocsin of communal clamours. But as the decade advanced, the spirit of militant communalism spread more widely amongst the Fiji Indians its countenance of reproach, and the mood ceased to be the possession solely of the disciples of Swami Dayanand. Before proceeding with consideration of Chowla’s suit, we shall examine the rise of a new militancy which at this time made itself apparent amongst the previously rather quiescent sanatani Hindus.

When, in comparison to the Aryas, we described the sanatani Hindu community as quiescent, we had in mind the sanatani Hindu level of political activity in Fiji -- we did not mean quiescent in general character. The fact of the matter is that sanatani Hindus were no strangers to militancy, any more or less than Aryas. Indeed, on the subcontinent many of the most radical Indian nationalists were sanatani Hindus. Consider for example the nationalist rationale of Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950), presented to a nationalist gathering in 1909 at Uttarpaka, India, under the auspices of the local branch of the Dharma Rakshini Sabha.

When ... it is said that India shall rise, it is the Sanatan Dharma that shall rise. When it is said that India shall be great, it is the Sanatan Dharma that shall be great. When it is said that India shall expand and extend herself, it is the Sanatan Dharma that shall expand and extend itself over the world. It is for the Dharma and by the Dharma that India exists. To magnify the religion means to magnify the country.... [N]ationalism is not politics but a religion, a creed, a faith.... This Hindu nation was born with the Sanatan Dharma, with it it moves and with it it grows. When the Sanatan Dharma declines, then the nation declines, and if the Sanatan Dharma were capable of
At Aurobindo’s hand, Indian nationalism was unmistakably Hindu nationalism, and couched in rather mystical terms. We have adequately established, we think, that in the Hindu social milieu to be sanatani is not necessarily to be any less visionary about Hindu political prospects than the most enthused Arya; so we shall now proceed to view the sanatani Hindus in action in the politics of Fiji.

In late November 1927, Ramsewak, the president of the Sanatana Dharma Maha Mandal of Nausori, wrote to the editor.

On the 27th of November last the Sanatan Dharma Sabha of Suva held a meeting here. A registered body of that name has been in existence here for some considerable time.... I would like to make it known that this Sabha is quite distinct from that one of Samabula which has been formed without our knowledge. It appears that the Samabula Sabha is gathering donations for bringing out a teacher from India and I would also like to say that we are not in any [way] concerned with such collection. 48

It seems that those sanatani Hindus who had formed the new Sabha had done so with a specifically communalist objective in mind. They were intending to recruit from India a sanatani Hindu pandit, someone who could counter the Arya missionaries already active in the colony. A political strategy pioneered by the Aryas was now, it seemed, being adopted by sanatani Hindus. Ramsewak’s letter continued:


48 Ramsewak to Editor; FTH, 1 December 1927, p.4.
[The Sabha in question has declared that it has no connection with the Arya Samaj or any other religious body. I say without hesitation that the Arya Samaj is also a branch of the Sanatana Dharma... To me it appears a very unwise policy on the part of the Sanatana Dharma Sabha of Samabula to have planted a seed of hatredness.]

In the passage quoted, Ramsewak was expressing the traditional sanatani Hindu attitude to Hindu reform groups: an all-inclusive tolerance. But in Fiji, as the 1920s progressed, such tolerance was a wasting asset. Let us end this digression into the rise of a new militancy amongst sanatani Hindus with a glimpse of their tribulation.

A peaceful meeting of the Hindus in Suva was held ... at Samabula on the 12th [of February 1928] ... to form a branch of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Mandal of Rewa. Despite the notice issued by the non-co-operators to boycott the meeting, it was well attended; about 300 Hindus ... participated.

Organized communal boycott, it is plain, was now a factor in sanatani Hindu social relations in Fiji and it was a matter of remark that a public meeting of Hindus could be conducted peaceably.

The preliminary hearing to consider Chowla's charges was held on 26 March 1928. A. Hallam Roberts, Acting Chief Police

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49 Ibid.

50 This traditional sanatani Hindu attitude of tolerance was not confined to fellow Hindus of reforming bent. In India, it had long been established practice amongst Hindus to extend tolerance to the followers of other religions, especially to Jains, Parsis and Sikhs. In fact, some sanatani Hindus regarded the followers of these three religions, and of some others, as distinctive types of Hindus. For a learned discussion on this subject, see M.K. Gandhi, “Are Sikhs Hindus?” Young India, 22 May 1924; C.W.N.G., vol.24 ... March 1967 (Chaitra 1889), pp.104-6.

51 FTH, 14 February 1928, p.3.
Magistrate, was on the bench. R. Crompton and Hollins
Crompton appeared for the prosecution and G.F. Grahame for the
accused. The men charged with libel were the same four Arya
leaders present on the platform at the Suva Town Hall when the
welcoming address had been read: namely, J.P. Maharaj, R.
Parmeshwar, Sirdar Singh and Udrek Singh. Sharing with them
the burden of accusation was a fifth prominent Arya: B. Ram
Singh, printer and publisher of the Fiji Samachar, and
erstwhile confederate of Manilal Maganlal Doctor.  

The person who called himself "B. Ram Singh" was an
interesting character, something which emerged in the
spotlight of interest that attended the libel trial. Fiji-
born and orphaned at an early age, he was one of those men, of
a type of which there seemed to be quite a few in the upper
levels of Fiji Indian society, engaged in consciously
constructing a personal identity. Before adopting "B. Ram
Singh" as his name, he had been called "Mr Yakub," a name
which suggested Muslim communal affiliation. A "B. Ram Singh"
persona, especially if designating an enthused Arya, was
at a polar opposite position on the communalist spectrum of

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52 To recall Babu Ram Singh's involvement with Manilal, see Chapter Two,
p.77, n.84 above.

53 The "B." in B. Ram Singh stood for "Babu," a term of occupational
identity meaning "scribe" or "clerk" but, in a largely illiterate societal
setting, with an implication of rank -- something along the lines of "Sir"
or "Master."

54 As a matter of adoption, it was a militant Hindu persona. Ram is the
Hindu word for God, and Singh means a lion -- a combination that suggests,
we suppose, a fierce commitment to Hinduism.
Indian society from where one would expect to find a "Mr Yakub." The *shuddhi* and *sangathan* efforts of the Aryas of Fiji was evidently harvesting converts from amongst the Muslim community. Yet even "Yakub" may not have been our subject's original name. An indication of just how many Indian communal options may have been considered before "B. Ram Singh" recommended itself to our beleaguered editor is hinted at in a letter to another editor from Ramroop of Suva, one of our subject's boyhood companions -- a former friend, that is, whose July 1928 wedding day celebration was unpleasantly denigrated in the pages of the *Fiji Samachar* and who addressed an outraged letter of complaint to a more honourable newspaper. Ramroop wrote that B. Ram Singh had been

reared ... first in the house of a Hindoo, then in the house of a Musalman, and then in the house of a Christian, his last step-father, who made arrangements for his education at the Mission School.55

It seems that Chowla’s suit was only one incident in a career driven by the imperatives of a communalist pilgrimage.

The court first wanted to determine the extent of the Hindi-reading public in Fiji. In order to determine this, S.A. Buksh, sub-editor of the Government Indian paper,56 the *Rajdut*, was called to the witness box. The press reported:

[Buksh] estimated that about 5 per cent of the 66,000 Indians in Fiji were literate, and about 4 per cent could read Nagri characters. Mr Crompton

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55 Ramroop to Editor, 24 July 1928; *FTH*, 26 July 1928, p.2.

56 This was Vishnu Deo’s former job.
asked the witness whether he was not guessing, that he thought the census indicated that 10 per cent were literate.\textsuperscript{57}

Both men had underestimated Hindi literacy in Fiji. We are rather puzzled at Buksh, the sub-editor of a Hindi-language newspaper, being so ill-informed on this point. In fact, the 1921 census reported that of Indian males over 15 years, nearly 27 per cent were literate; and of all Fiji Indians, male and female, a little over 16 per cent were literate out of a total population of 60,619. By 1928, the year of the trial, Fiji Indian Hindi literacy rates would probably have improved somewhat on the 1921 figures.

The case continued for several days. The offending welcoming address had been spoken and published only in Hindi, so argument revolved mainly around considerations of translation and circulation — the actual court proceedings being conducted, of course, in English. The prosecution maintained that the officially translated version indicated that criminal libel had occurred and that, in one form or another, the libellous welcoming address had been accorded wide proclamation. The defence queried the accuracy of the translation offered and downplayed the extent of the Fiji Samachar's circulation. The climax of the trial came on 4 April 1928. The press reported what transpired.

There was a sensation in the Suva Police Court this morning when counsel for the prosecution ... announced that the defendant, B. Ram Singh,

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{FTH}, 27 March 1928, p.6.
publisher of the *Fiji Samachar*, had apologised and had undertaken to publish the apology in his paper.... Counsel for the prosecution asked that the summons be withdrawn and, the Acting C.P.M. offering no objection, the accused was set free.\(^{58}\)

The *Fiji Times and Herald* also provided its readers with the text of the apology that had resolved the case. Addressed to "Mr Chowla and other Indian members of the Fiji Civil Service who have come from India,"\(^{59}\) it read in part:

I publicly apologise to you for printing and publishing in the December [1927] issue of the *Fiji Samachar* an address of welcome presented to one Professor Ami Chand at the Town Hall Suva on 22nd December 1927 which to my knowledge contained groundless allegations against you.\(^{60}\)

The apology was signed "B. Ram Singh," witnessed by S.B. Patel and dated 4 April 1928.

In early 1928, the leaders of the Suva Arya Samaj were active on another front. They engineered a plan whereby the Arya Samaj could seize control of the Indian school at Samabula. They intended to accomplish this objective by packing the School Management Committee with Arya supporters. But before we render an account of the Arya Samaj offensive on the educational front line at Samabula and the prolonged crisis which this attempted sectarian takeover of the school engendered within the Fiji Indian community, let us introduce the Honourable John Caughley, appointed in late 1927 to the

\(^{58}\) *FTH*, 4 April 1928, p.4.

\(^{59}\) B. Ram Singh's Apology, 4 April 1928; *FTH*, 4 April 1928, p.4.

\(^{60}\) Ibid.
newly-created position of Director of Education, a post of critical importance in the late 1920s in mediating relations between the Fiji Indians and the colonial state.

On 8 December 1927, there was a flurry of excitement at the government building in Suva housing the Supreme Court when "a very representative gathering of Indians" gathered to welcome Caughley. It seemed to the reporter covering the event that "the various Indian bodies" were represented. In fact, the representatives of one important "Indian body" were absent from the welcoming group, the leaders of the Arya Samaj having been pointedly not invited. Caughley was formally welcomed by Hakim Din, the Indian spokesman.

We ... wish to take this opportunity of welcoming you to the scene of your future labours. We are glad that at long last a Director of Education has been appointed and we feel that your arrival is going to be a "red letter" day in the annals of the Indian community in Fiji. We ... hope that the educational needs of our children will be fully realised and adequately provided for.

Hakim Din did not confine himself to generalities. He took the opportunity to alert the Honourable Caughley to an imposed

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61 By the time of his appointment to this post in late 1927, Caughley had retired from his former position as Director of Education in New Zealand.

62 FTH, 9 December 1927, p.7.

63 Ibid.

64 Hakim Din, as a member of the Board of Education, was soon to be working alongside Caughley, assisting with the formulation of educational policy.

65 Welcoming Address by Hakim Din, 8 December 1927; FTH, 9 December 1927, p.7.
penalty, one bitterly resented, under which the Indian community laboured and to suggest a specific remedy to alleviate the handicap.

We would respectfully suggest that as the existing Government Secondary schools in Suva do not admit Indian pupils, the establishment of a Secondary school here, to provide facilities for advanced education of Indian children, is a very urgent need. 66

The general thrust of Hakim Din's statement would have appraised Caughley of the kind of issues that rankled in European-Indian community relations in colonial Fiji. Coming as he was from a working lifetime in the Department of Education in New Zealand, evidence of the rancour that informed some aspects of social relations in Fiji may have been an eye-opener for Caughley. As certain events of late 1929 were to prove, the newly arrived Director of Education took this aspect of colonial social relations to heart and, in concert with a like-minded official, A.W. Seymour, the Colonial Secretary 67 and Acting Governor, seized the opportunity presented by the interregnum between the departure of one Governor and the arrival of a successor to force the pace of Fiji Indian education. 68

66 Ibid.

67 The term "Colonial Secretary" can be used, depending on the context, either as an abbreviation of "Secretary of State for the Colonies," a ministerial cabinet appointment in H.M.G. in charge of the Colonial Office, or as the title of the senior official of a Crown Colony, immediately under the Governor, responsible for the general coordination of the various departments of the colonial government.

68 The Seymour-Caughley initiative on behalf of Fiji Indian educational aspirations is dealt with in Chapter Three, pp.229-235 below.
The notables of the Fiji Indian community who participated in the welcoming of John Caughley were soon given evidence that the newly appointed Director of Education intended to lose no time in addressing the problems of Indian education in Fiji. This was conveyed in an official notice which began to appear in the pages of Suva’s main newspaper little more than a week after the welcoming event.

The Director of Education is anxious to have information concerning the number and qualifications of any people of the Indian race who might be capable of acting as teachers in Indian schools. He would be glad therefore to forward to any such persons a form on which particulars might be filled in.... It is understood that this is a kind of educational census which would enable the Director to know approximately what teaching talent is available for Indian schools.69

With the appointment of the Honourable Caughley, a new spirit of purpose took hold of the Indian education scene in Fiji.

The absence of the Arya leaders from the welcoming ceremony afforded to Caughley on 8 December 1927 was symptomatic of growing communalist tensions within the Fiji Indian community, especially amongst the Hindus. These tensions aroused some anxiety in the sensibilities of some observers. One such citizen was S.K. Narain Pillai of Nausori. Two days after Caughley’s welcoming, a letter was published in the Fiji Times and Herald in which Pillai gave expression to his concern.

I being a Hindu have to say that Arya Samajists and Sanatana Dharmis are one. Both of us owe our birth to a common stock. In the ages gone by we were one. If we are in two different camps at the

69 FTH, 19 December 1927, p.10.
present moment it does not mean that we are in any way enemies. We are brothers still.\textsuperscript{70}

But this plaintive appeal for Hindu unity was, in late 1927, something of a cry in the wilderness.

Two weeks after his welcoming by Hakim Din, who had spoken only of the social estrangement between Europeans and Indians, Caughley was provided with evidence of social alienation of a different type -- this time, between Fiji Indians of different sectarian hue. On 21 December 1927, Caughley conducted a scheduled inspection of the Samabula Indian School. On this occasion, it was the worthies of the Arya Samaj who took the opportunity to formally welcome the new Director of Education.

We, the members of the Arya Up-Pritinidhi Sabha of Suva take this opportunity of gladly welcoming you to our midst. We regret that, owing to not being informed of the proposal to present you with an address of welcome by the other Indian societies of Suva, we were unable to take part in that function.\textsuperscript{71}

Caughley would have realized by now that here, amongst the Fiji Indians, was a rather fractious social milieu. It was reported that he replied with a measure of homespun advice.

In his own country of New Zealand, the principle was generally accepted and acted on that "Education must be outside of politics...." So he hoped that when it came to deciding on school matters all sectional and party special interests would be subordinated to the interests of the children.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{70} S.K. Narain Pillai to Editor; \textit{FTH}, 10 December 1927, p.7.

\textsuperscript{71} Welcoming Address to the Honourable Caughley, delivered by R. Parmeshwar on behalf of the Arya Up-Pritinidhi Sabha of Suva, Samabula, 21 December 1927; \textit{FTH}, 23 December 1927, p.7.

\textsuperscript{72} \textit{FTH}, 23 December 1927, p.7.
There was little prospect that Caughley might have successfully imparted non-partisan educational management principles in Fiji. Indeed, Caughley appears again in the pages below -- himself demonstrating a style of educational administration scarcely devoid of political intent. But let us leave Caughley for a while to pursue his official duties while we turn to consider an incident in which the Arya Samaj of Fiji reached out across the globe to participate in the Hindu politics of India proper, an involvement that elicited direct communication with Mahatma Gandhi.

The incident we have in mind was first brought to public attention by a November 1928 press entry which broadcast the text of a telegram.

*Fiji Times* reports you ordered killing calf. Hindoos perturbed. Wire truth.\(^{73}\)

The sender was the Suva branch of the Arya Samaj; the receiver was M.K. Gandhi. The cable elicited a prompt response.

Calf dying great agony. Painlessly killed by medical advice assistance.\(^{74}\)

The calf had been killed at Satyagraha Ashram, Sabarmati -- Gandhi's ashram near Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Judging by the

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\(^{73}\) Arya Samaj (Fiji) to Gandhi, received on 7 November 1928 (cable); cited in *FTH*, 14 November 1928, p.6. In Gandhi's *Collected Works* (vol.38, p.28, n.2), the corresponding entry spells "Hindoos" as "Hindus." Evidently, either the *Fiji Times* and *Herald* misquoted the text of the telegram or the scholars of the Publication Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, when compiling *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, took upon themselves the liberty of standardizing terms which appeared in the Mahatma's incoming mail.

\(^{74}\) Gandhi to Arya Samaj (Fiji), on or after 7 November 1928 (cable); *C.W.M.G.*, vol.38 ... March 1970 (Phalguna 1891), p.28.
conjunction in time, the telegram from Fiji seems to have
inspired Gandhi to delve further into the nature of ahimsa and
how to apply the principle in everyday life. The Mahatma’s
findings provided material for the front pages of the Indian
nationalist press.\textsuperscript{75} Reprints of some parts of these
articles were published in the Fiji press.\textsuperscript{76}

While Arya Samaj efforts in Fiji thus registered in the
politics of the subcontinent, a communalist crisis of
unprecedented severity was building up in Fiji itself which
was of pivotal concern to determining the future political
leadership options available to the Fiji Indians. It is now
time to provide an account of the saga of the Samabula Indian
School Management Committee putsch.

\textbf{Encounter at Samabula}

The foundation of the Samabula Indian School had been laid
in 1924 by Sadhu Basawas Das. In the years that followed,
private subscriptions were elicited to complete the
construction of the school. Success attended these efforts.
But as the project matured it seems that the sponsors had a
falling out -- along communal lines. A letter to the editor
from J.P. Maharaj,\textsuperscript{77} dated 12 October 1927, intimated that

\textsuperscript{75} See M.K. Gandhi, "Some More Posers in Ahimsa," \textit{Young India}, 22

\textsuperscript{76} See M.K. Gandhi, "When Killing may be Ahimsa"; \textit{FTH}, 14 November 1928,
p.6.

\textsuperscript{77} The \textit{Fiji Times and Herald} identified the writer of this letter as
"R.P. Maharaj," but we confidently correct this to "J.P. Maharaj," who at
the time of writing was President of the Arya Samaj and Chairman of the
something of a three-cornered split had occurred amongst the school's sponsors, a split between Muslims, sanatani Hindus and Arya Samaj Hindus. Referring to a previous exchange of correspondence, Maharaj wrote:

It is rather curious how a "Mr Raymond" becomes concerned in our Samabula School. He does not appear to be identical with Mr A.R. Sahu Khan, our former Vice-President. Assuming the reply is from Mr A.R. Sahu Khan (now Mr Raymond), who has come forward to the aid of the "Sanatana Dharmi," I would ask him to read my previous letter carefully.... The reasons why the Mohammedans were rejected have already been given.... [T]he election was by majority of votes and if Mr Raymond and his friends have made themselves unpopular why should they grumble on not being elected?... I am at a loss to understand why the employment of an Arya Samaji teacher is causing uneasiness.... If the proposed teacher is not to be an Arya Samaji, why should he be a Muslim or of any other denomination?78

The Aryas and Muslims sponsoring the school project had evidently parted company over the appointment of Thakur Sardar Singh, an Arya, as headmaster of the new school.

On 20 November 1927 the completed building was formally opened. It seems that communal confrontation over the school had not yet reached a level sufficient to warn off respectable social personages, as the leading citizen of Suva officiated.

The [Samabula Indian School] ... was opened by His Worship the Mayor, the Hon. Henry Marks, C.B.E., in the presence of a large gathering.... Mr J.P. Maharaj, the Chairman of the School Committee, briefly addressed the gathering.79

Samabula Indian School Management Committee.

78 J.P. Maharaj to Editor, 12 October 1927; FTH, 20 October 1927, p.6.
79 FTH, 22 November 1927, p.3.
By January 1928, the school was ready to enroll pupils. On 29 January 1928, a meeting of the subscribers was held at the school building. Pearson, the Secretary for Indian Affairs, the Honourable Caughley and Alport Barker were also present. With the editor himself thus present, the Fiji Times and Herald was well placed to report on the meeting's proceedings.

Long before the appointed time about 400 non-subscribers had gathered at the premises and had crowded the class-room and surrounded the building. They were evidently instigated to do so.... The threatening behaviour and riotous manner of the ringleaders ... were sufficient to convince all that a plot was organised to cause trouble. 80

Fortunately, the Inspector General of Constabulary, anticipating trouble, had dispatched two stout policemen to the scene. The Fiji Times and Herald report continued:

On arrival Mr Pearson, who presided, found that the majority of those who had taken seats inside were non-subscribers and had no right to be there. He requested them to leave. 81

The unwanted spectators, giving voice to the reasons for their confrontational attitude, complained that no one on the School Management Committee represented the Sikh Gurdwara Committee, the Sanatan Dharm Sabha, the Muslim League or the Madras Maha Sangam. The Sikh leaders present did not object to their lack of representation, but the others did. Pearson made some enquiries and discovered that the Committee had been formed without prior advertisement. He decided to try and

80 FTH, 31 January 1928, p.6.
81 Ibid.
reopen the selection process whereby the composition of the Committee could be changed. In his endeavour, he received support from the floor.

Mr S.A. Raymond, who stood up as a representative of the Moslem League, said: "I agree with the Chairman that a representative from each of the Societies mentioned be taken." Messrs Bhairo Maharaj and Jaishri Maharaj, representing themselves as Sanatan Dharmis, agreed with Mr S.A. Raymond.82

But the Arya Samaj leaders present voiced their opposition to the prospect that any non-Arya Indian groups would gain access to the Committee.

Mr V. Deo objected to the proposed selection on the ground that except the Sikh none of the Societies named have contributed a single pie.... He said all individuals donated in their personal capacity and therefore they had the right to elect their own Committee. If the unfair selection was allowed he asked for a representative of Gujraties who have been subscribing.83

Pearson decided to put the issue to the floor. The Fiji Times and Herald reported the outcome.

The Chairman moved, "That a representative from [the] Arya Samaj, Moslem League, Sanatan Dharma, Madras Sangam, Sikh Committee, and a Gujerati be taken on the Managing Committee...." Mr Deo moved, and Thakur Sardar Singh seconded, that "The Managing Committee be selected by the Subscribers from among themselves...." The motions were then put to the meeting, and by a overwhelming majority Mr Deo's motion was carried.84

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid. The phrase, "a single pie," refers to the Indian sub-unit of currency where the rupee (H. rupaiya, from Skt. rupya "coined silver") is divided into one hundred paisa (H. paisa), the singular term being paisa or pie.

84 Ibid.
The confrontation at the school between the Aryas, allied with the Sikhs, and the opposing coalition of sanatani Hindus, Muslims and South Indians attracted the attention of the general public of the colony. Yet the issue which was so exercising the Fiji Indian community around Suva was perhaps not easily comprehensible to many Fiji Europeans. And the Arya triumph, as signified by the passage of Vishnu Deo's motion, may not have registered with them. That at least was suggested by a comment offered by the Fiji Times and Herald as to its initial view of whose guiding hand had determined the outcome -- not Vishnu Deo's, but Pearson's.

Throughout the meeting disturbances were continually made by the non-subscribers, who had gathered there. Mr Pearson handled the situation very tactfully and conducted the meeting ably. The success achieved was due to the presence of Messrs Pearson, Caughley and Barker. But for their presence and the Police assistance trouble was inevitable.85

It depends on what Barker meant by "success." Perhaps he meant success in terms of Pearson presiding over a peaceful settlement -- any settlement. But, in terms of the politics of school committee control, it was, of course, the Aryas, not Pearson, who had carried the day. And this was acknowledged by the Fiji Times and Herald a few days after the meeting.

The current commotion in Suva is about the management and teaching at the Samabula Indian School. The non-Arya Samajists are opposed to T. Sardar Singh teaching at the school and say that the Arya Samajists are retaining monopoly of the school ... [by] selecting such members to the

85 Ibid.
committee as are amenable to them and thereby preventing the removal of the present teacher from the school.\textsuperscript{86}

The paper went on to note that, in protest against the Arya success, some non-Arya Indian parents were refusing to send their children to the school.

Their hope of having the management of the school satisfactorily conducted perished last Sunday.\ldots The meeting held at Samabula was really a stormy one. The mob was undoubtedly a bit excited when they were refused votes and asked to \textit{[leave]} \ldots although many held interim receipts for subscriptions given.\textsuperscript{87}

But it proved to be only the first round of a conflict which had many more rounds to go. The capture of the school committee by the Aryas inspired the other sections of the Fiji Indian community to close ranks in an anti-Arya front. On 7 February 1928, a press report indicated that, when the right issue was in contention, the political unity of most of the Fiji Indian groups could be speedily effected. Paradoxically, in these years, only a move to oppose the Arya Samaj could have inspired such a show of (non-Arya) Fiji Indian unity.

A mass meeting of Hindoos, Mohammedans and Christians was held at Samabula under the auspices of the Sanatan Dharm Sabha, Suva, with the object of the formation of a Unity Board and \ldots consideration of the present dissensions.\ldots Speeches were made \ldots deploering the present state of tension and urging unity in the name of common brotherhood and common interests.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{86} FTH, 4 February 1928, p.7.

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{88} FTH, 7 February 1928, p.3.
The *sanatani* Hindus; it will be noted, hosted the meeting which effected this show of unity. And the anti-Arya purpose of the meeting was explicitly stated in the resolution adopted. The meeting resolved

[t]hat the Government be asked that in view of a certain section of the Community having captured, to serve their own ends, the non-sectarian school recently established at Samabula, it either remove the present Arya Samaj teacher from the school and hand over the management of the school to the Samabula public or take over the school itself and run ... [it] as a Government Primary School.\(^9^9\)

The passage quoted above should be read carefully and committed to memory. As we shall soon see, the *sanatani* Hindus were subsequently to refuse their support for any such proposed solution. And even though elaboration about this group must await a later chapter,\(^9^0\) we should observe at this juncture that it seems that an ostensibly secular hand was guiding the formation of the anti-Arya front -- in fact, a communalist group in mufti which, all along, had most persistently afforded opposition to Arya domination of Fiji Indian politics. We learn the identity of this group from a reading of another resolution passed.

That this meeting congratulates the Indian Reform League for the success it has achieved in uniting Hindoos (*sanatanists*), Mohammedans and Christians.\(^9^1\)

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\(^9^9\) Anti-Arya coalition resolution, Samabula, early February 1928; ibid.

\(^9^0\) For an account of the activities and ethos of the Indian Reform League, see Chapter Five, pp.359-361 below.

\(^9^1\) Anti-Arya Indian coalition resolution, Samabula, early February 1928; *FTH*, 7 February 1928, p.3. This evidence of the prominent role played by
The anti-Arya forces within the Fiji Indian community now seemed to be in the ascendent, and officialdom too was moving towards the adoption of an anti-Arya position. There was always the potential for state action against the Aryas. Although they had an ambience of modernization about them, something likely to be perceived favourably in colonial circles, in time of upset the Aryas were rather more likely to be perceived as a group of trouble-makers.\(^{92}\)

In early 1928, the colonial authorities decided to terminate Arya control of the school by refusing official school registration and repudiating the method of election of the Management Committee. By way of explanation, Caughley, the Director of Education, issued a press release.

A teacher who is a propagandist of the Arya Samaj was appointed headmaster of the school. This placed the land, building and equipment, as well as control of the school ... in the hands of the Arya Samaj.\(^{93}\)

Having thus publicly identified the problem, the government proceeded to impose its solution. During March 1928, the Department of Education passed formal notice to the Samabula

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\(^{92}\) As we have already noted, to some extent they were a group of trouble-makers. For a reminder of our theory of the "Hinduism in danger" Arya political imperative, and of how the unusually, though not uniquely, prominent Arya role in Fiji Indian politics suggests a "Hindu frontier" classification for Fiji, see Chapter Three, pp.151-152 above.

\(^{93}\) Director of Education's press release, FTH, 25 February 1928, p.4.
Indian School Management Committee that it would not be officially recognized, that the school would have to be placed under alternative management. The government move quickened the Aryas to make one last effort to carry the day. On 18 March 1928, the Arya leaders sponsored a public meeting at the Samabula Indian School to protest the action the colonial authorities had taken. Elected to the chair, Sardar Harnarendar Singh presided over a "well attended meeting."94 Two days later, the Fiji Times and Herald reported on the Arya move. An interesting feature of the meeting was that the communal allegiance of speakers protesting the government action extended beyond Arya ranks -- indeed, that a nascent Arya-sanatani alliance was in the offing.

Mr V. Deo explained ... what was being done to deprive the Managing Committee, elected by the subscribers, of the control and management of the school. He said that the Education Department was not prepared to recognise the Committee and has therefore refused its application for exemption from registration.... The Chairman spoke at length.... He regretted the attitude of some of the Indians who were placing obstacles in the proper conduct of the school.... He added that those who did withdraw children from the school were ill-advised and would realise their mistake.... Thakur Sardar Singh said ... that no Arya Samaj or any religious teaching was being given at the school.... Mr Bisesar Singh, Secretary, Sanatan Dharma Maha Mandal, Suva, said that the members of his Mandal subscribed £20 to £30.... [I]f the proposed change of control of the school takes place, the members of his Mandal would make a claim for the refund of the amount.95

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94 FTH, 20 March 1928, p.3.
95 Ibid.
The meeting addressed a petition signed by those present, mostly Samabula residents, to the Acting Colonial Secretary protesting the Education Department's refusal to recognise the school committee and asserting the right of the committee to control and manage the school.

But this last-ditch effort failed. The non-Arya sections of the Fiji Indian community had demonstrated sufficient opposition to the prospect of continuing Arya Samaj control of the school committee to force the hand of the colonial authorities. On 18 May 1928, the Director of Education ordered the Indian School at Samabula to close. The government itself then took over the school, an event that registered in the Legislative Council on 5 June 1928 when the following motion was passed:

That this Council approves an appropriation from General Revenue of a sum not exceeding £550 to be used ... in establishing a Government Primary School at Samabula for Indian boys. 96

Early in 1929, the authorities re-opened the school with an Indian Christian headmaster. 97

This outcome was, of course, acutely disappointing to the Aryas, and, the sources intimate, was also viewed with regret

96 FTW, 6 June 1928, p.3. We depend on the Fiji Times and Herald for the text of this motion as the official record of the Fiji Legislative Council Debates of June 1928 have not survived, and the Fiji Royal Gazette did not publish the text of this 5 June 1928 motion in its pages devoted to Legislative Council minutes.

97 The position had been advertised in early January 1929. For the "Government Notice" advertising for a Headmaster and Assistant Master for the Samabula Indian School, his duties to commence on 11 February 1929, signed by "J. Caughley, Director of Education," dated 5 January 1929, see FTW, 11 January 1929, p.5.
by some sanatani Hindus. It seems that, according to the issue and the nature of the opponent involved, different levels of political loyalty registered on the consciousness of sanatani Hindus. The protest at the government action, only to be expected from the Aryas, was in the upshot expressed by members of both Hindu groups at a public meeting on 24 February 1929. The Fiji Times and Herald reported the event the next day.

Many Hindus gathered on Sunday at Samabula to reunite for the common welfare of the Hindu community, and to consult each other and discuss the best ways and means of obtaining redress in the matter of the Samabula Indian School. Pandit Bhagwat Prasad was voted to the chair.... He appealed to all to forget the past and to start anew. He pointed out the urgent need of Hindu unity and organisation. He referred to what he termed the injustice done to the Hindu community by the appointment of a non-Hindu teacher against the wish of the subscribers to the Samabula Indian School.98

A "non-Hindu" teacher, it will be noted, not a non-Arya one. Something had changed mainstream Hindu perceptions of the issue at stake. But the government action continued to be supported by the Fiji Muslim League, the Madras Maha Sangam and the Indian Reform League.99

We set out in this chapter to investigate the nature of Hindu communalism amongst the Fiji Indians. The encounter at Samabula has shown us how the Hindu community reacted during

98 FTH, 25 February 1929, p.4.

99 The reader will recall that these groups, and at the time the sanatani Hindus also, had earlier requested the colonial government to take the action which was taken (see Chapter Three, pp.181-182 above).
a prolonged period of confrontation -- a display of the Hindu communalist mode of political mobilization. Now perhaps is the time to arrive at some provisional conclusions.

From our case study, the mechanics of Fiji Indian political action seemed to operate differently according to the nature of the issue, as defined by the identity of the political forces engaged. The Arya Samaj leaders' initial attempt to seize control of the Samabula Indian school, by stacking the Management Committee with Aryas, met with opposition at first from all other major Fiji Indian communal groups, sanatani Hindus included. But as the colonial state was drawn into the controversy sanatani Hindus started to shift their position. In the wake of Caughley's announcement that the government intended to terminate Arya control of the school,\(^{100}\) increasing numbers of sanatani Hindus crossed over to support the Arya position. When the government took over the running of the school, the final communal lineup saw the Hindus united in opposition to the government move, with the Muslims, South Indians, Indian Christians and Indian Reform Leaguers united in support of the government-imposed outcome -- in large part, a Hindu versus non-Hindu communal lineup, except for the South Indians joining forces with the non-Hindu groups. For our purposes, the behaviour of the sanatani Hindus is the most interesting aspect of the issue. It seems that when the issue first arose the Aryas and sanatani Hindus were opposed to each

\(^{100}\) To recall Caughley's communiqué, see Chapter Three, p.183 above.
other at the social level where only Indians were involved, but that once the issue was raised to the political level with the intervention of the colonial state, the sanatani Hindus closed ranks with their Arya fellow Hindus.

The issue of the Samabula Indian school ended with the government action described above. A casual observer of the political scene in Fiji might have been forgiven for regarding the whole issue as, so to speak, a storm in a teacup -- a source of public disquiet easily removed from the public agenda by the colonial state the moment it felt obliged to act. Such a view was expressed in March 1929 in a letter to the editor by a reader who signed himself "Kai Samabula." Arguing, in respect to the government-appointed headmaster, that the citizen body of the colony should not trouble "as to whether the individual is a Hindu, Christian or Muslim, so long as he is qualified to carry on the work,"¹⁰¹ the writer went on to identify, inadvertently, what a neutral observer might well have ascertained as the import of the matter.

The great do-ado is being created by a handful of mischief-makers because the appointment of the headmaster was not given to an Arya Samajist candidate.... [E]veryone concerned should be glad to see the school opened by the Government under an experienced and qualified teacher.... Vishnu Deo is making a big thing out of the appointment of a Christian Indian.... [I]t is due to the efforts of the Christian missions that there is some little education amongst the Indians today.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ "Kai Samabula" to Editor, FTH, 7 March 1929, p.2.
¹⁰² Ibid.
"Kai Samabula" provides us with an on-the-spot view of the Samabula Indian school issue, as seen by an interested Fiji Indian observer. Yet perhaps we, with hindsight, can advance an understanding which assigns the whole affair much greater significance. It was the process, not the outcome, that counted. Essentially, the Fiji Indian community, in the late 1920s, was in the process of sorting out its leadership elite. Issues like the running of the Samabula Indian school provided the context for this selection process. The communalist nature of the issue gave an advantage to leaders of overtly communalist organizations which, in turn, made likely that the first generation of representative Fiji Indian leaders would be communally-minded. And the timing was important. The advent of Fiji Indian elected representation in the Legislative Council was imminent, something of which Vishnu Deo and his fellow activists were undoubtedly mindful. Vishnu Deo and the others who "Kai Samabula" referred to as a "handful of mischief-makers" would soon be contending for political objectives of real consequence.

But, in the coin of disunity and contention, the Hindu community in Fiji was to pay a price for tolerating the Arya Samaj moves to sort out the Hindu leadership elite through largely fabricated communalist confrontations. The success of Vishnu Deo and his fellow Arya leaders at assuming, for a time, the leadership of at least the Hindu section of the wider Fiji Indian community was bound to recommend their
zealous contentiousness to other aspiring groups. As we have seen in respect to the sanatani Hindu adoption of an increasingly zealous communalist stance, it was not long before the Arya techniques were emulated. Nor was the sanatani Hindu change of communal stance ephemeral. Two newspaper reports of April 1928 intimated that sanatani Hindu groups were gearing up for a long-term communalist confrontation, and to play the communalist game by the tried Arya methods. The first press report in part read:

A meeting of the "Sanatan Dharm Sabha" was held on April 1 in Wailailai "Kuti," under the presidentship of Pt. Eindayal Maharaj.... Pandit Brindaban [said] ... that a Sanatani Pandia is very urgently needed and that ... a well educated teacher ... should be obtained from India as soon as possible.103

And the second entry reported:

A well attended meeting of the Sanatan Dharma Mandal, Nausori, was held at Nausori Dharmashala on the 22nd instant to welcome Thakur Kundal Singh, newly arrived teacher for the Mandal’s School.104

The sanatani Hindu desire to equip their community with learned religious personnel was not readily satisfied, nor is there any doubt that it was the Arya example that spurred the movement. In mid-1929, the Fiji Samachar reprinted a letter from a Suva correspondent that had earlier been published in Indian Views, a journal based in Durban, Natal. The Suva correspondent gave his South African Indian readers some

103 FTH, 13 April 1928, p.7.
104 FTH, 25 April 1928, p.6.
general comments about Fiji, comments which suggested involvement on his part in the affairs of the Muslim community in Fiji. But the correspondent devoted his most pointed remarks to the affairs of the Hindus in Fiji. He wrote:

The Orthodox Hindoos are striving hard to procure a preacher of the Sanatan Dharma from India. Their principal motive in doing so is to counteract the activities of the Arya Samaj. May God save our dear little Fiji from all communal tensions.\(^{105}\)

It was a development pregnant with implications for the future of the Fiji Indians. The press reports quoted above indicated that the politicization of the sanatani Hindu community would be patterned on the Arya mode of operation, one which invited mimesis in Fiji of the communalist concerns and attitudes that prevailed in the subcontinent. Where Arya missionaries had led, a steady stream of pandits (Skt. panditas), maulvis, acharyas and other religious dominies were to follow -- all to instruct their Fiji Indian neophytes, eagerly receptive, in the rudiments of the respective communalist variants of an ethnic nationalism, the renown of which, at Gandhi’s inspired hands, was already evident but of which the nemesis, in a tragic future, was as yet hidden. In this manner, the Indian communal organizations in Fiji acted as a set of conduits whereby the communalist politics of India proper were imported to Fiji and contributed significantly to the development of Fiji Indian political attitudes. This development carried the potential to lead the Fiji Indians

into committing the error of maladaptation to the Fijian political environment. At the very least, these communalist conduits were bound to facilitate the likelihood of such maladaptation.

The issue of the Samabula Indian School was significant in another respect. It gave rise to a confrontational atmosphere which encouraged the leaders of the Fiji European community to articulate a political viewpoint which was to become, in later years, the main plank in the Fiji European political stance towards the unwelcome prospect of Fiji Indian political advance: namely, a proclaimed solicitude for the welfare of the native Fijians, and the attendant need on their behalf to block Fiji Indian advancement. An editorial in the Fiji Times and Herald in mid-July 1928 marked the occasion of its annunciation. While welcoming "the provision of the Department [of Education] with a Director and Assistant Director at its head," the leader posited:

[H]ow is he going to handle the vast problems of "educating" two races ... as different in every respect as the polar regions differ from the tropics? The position calls for two distinct lines of operation -- almost two departments, one to deal with the Fijian, the other the Indian.  

There were no prizes offered to the readers of the Fiji Times and Herald for guessing which of the "two distinct lines of

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106 FTH, 13 July 1928, p.4. John Caughley, of course, was the Director of Education and a Captain Philips was the Assistant Director of Education.

107 Ibid.
operation" Alport Barker, M.L.C., thought should be accorded preference in the allocation of public resources.

[W]e ... urge on the Director that his duty lies first to the problem of the Fijian. We, as well as the Indians, are interlopers in this country, but the Fijian looks on British rule as his salvation, while he regards the Indian as "less than the dust." All that we Europeans can do to keep alive the spirit of the Fijian as a race must be done. He must be taught to make the best use of land that is rightly his or it will drift into other hands ... the hands of the Indian.108

In a later era, when the Fiji Indian political tide was running at its strongest, this rationale was to provide Fiji European politicians with their main oppositional stance.

Let us pause to consider the activities of the Honourable John Caughley, Director of Education. In the leader column of 13 July 1928 quoted above, Alport Barker had asked of Caughley the rhetorical question: "How is he going to handle the vast problems" of education in Fiji? Six months later, Caughley submitted a report to the Legislative Council which went a great deal of the way in providing an answer, one which Barker and his fellow European elected members, so an unhappy future was to reveal, were not at all pleased to receive.

There is one Government Indian School, and we give a small grant to about 23 [private Indian] schools. For the 18,000 Indian children needing education the Government spends 5/- per head per annum and only about 2,000 are thus assisted. A number of private schools are in existence, and though the efforts to provide schooling is very commendable, many of these schools are of little value. To meet the needs only of children between 6 and 10 years of age I estimate that we need at least 100 schools

108 Ibid.
to accommodate 100 pupils each.... I recommend that in 1929 ten such schools be built and opened.109

That last recommendation, when eventually acted upon by a well-meaning Acting Governor, was to bring on a crisis of the first order in the political relations between the colonial government and the representatives of the Fiji European community. Caughley also reported the need for "an advanced school for Indian boys."110 Anticipating, not at all correctly, that the prospect of building one hundred schools for Indian children would recommend itself to the European elected M.L.C.s, Caughley held that an advanced school was "required to supply educated lads to train as teachers, of whom we shall need a large number eventually."111

It must be said of the Honourable Caughley that though he was in colonial Fiji he was not quite of it. The gist of his report was quite out of harmony with Fiji European thinking on the subject. In an unhappy future, the reaction by Barker and his fellow European elected members to official efforts to jump-start the implementation of Caughley's recommendations was to cause a virtual breakdown in relations between the

109 Report submitted by the Director of Education, Legislative Council, 9 November 1928; FTH, 10 November 1928, p.6. We depend on the Fiji Times and Herald for the text of this report as the official record of the Fiji Legislative Council Debates published the report in a supplement which has not survived, and the Fiji Royal Gazette, though it mentions the report, did not publish the text in its pages devoted to Legislative Council minutes. For those unfamiliar with pre-decimal sterling, the monetary notation "5/-" refers to the sum of five shillings.

110 Ibid.

111 Ibid.
representatives of the Fiji European community and the British colonial authorities, a rift requiring intervention from London by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. But in the meantime, the Aryas were stirring into public action again.

From 29 to 31 December 1928, the Silver Jubilee of the Arya Samaj was held at the Kanya Maha Vidayala Grounds at Samabula. It was reported that "[n]early £1,000 was subscribed during the festival towards the cost of erecting a girls’ school at Samabula."112 A press article contributed by a member of the public provided an account of the Silver Jubilee events.

The proceedings were commenced with a ceremony of the hoisting of the OM flag.... This was hailed by the audience with deafening cheers and enthusiastic shouts of Jai, of Vedic Dharma, of Rishi Dayananda and of Mother India.113

New officers were elected to serve for the approaching new year. Thakur Kundan Singh Kush was made President Elect, to replace J.P. Maharaj, the outgoing President. Several resolutions were passed. One read:

That arrangements be made for the importation of the Vedic literature in different languages for distribution in the Colony.114

Another resolution urged

[t]hat provision be made as far as practicable to teach Hindi to all in general and members of Arya families in particular.115

112 FTH, 2 January 1929, p.4.

113 Contributed article, FTH, 5 January 1929, p.6.

114 Resolution, Arya Samaj meeting, Samabula, late December 1928; ibid.

115 Ibid.
Vedic religious and Hindi linguistic proselytization! After twenty-five years of activity in Fiji, the Arya Samaj had remained true to Swami Dayanand’s original intent.

The defeat of the Arya attempt to control the Samabula Indian School provided the impetus for the building of the first Arya Samaj Mandir, one "beautifully decorated by the young Aryans of Samabula."\textsuperscript{116} It was opened at Samabula on 18 August 1929,\textsuperscript{117} during the election campaigns of Vishnu Deo and John Grant, the two candidates competing to represent the Fiji Indians of the Southern Division in the Legislative Council. It was around this time that a new note of communal conciliation became discernable in Arya public pronouncements, an effort to de-emphasize sectarian differences amongst Fiji Indian Hindus. Thakur Kundan Singh Kush, the Arya leader, officiated at the opening ceremony, with J.P. Maharaj and R. Parmeshwar at his side. It was a joyous occasion.

Amidst cheers of "Bharat Mata ki Jai" ... the Mandir [was] opened.... Hymns were sang and

\textsuperscript{116} \textit{FTH}, 23 August 1929, p.6. A mandir is a Hindu temple. The word is derived from the Sanskrit \textit{mandira}, meaning house or room. The temple concept was first impressed upon, and subsequently adopted by, the Indians when, in the era of Alexander III (the Great) of Macedon (vivbat 356–323 B.C., regnabat et militabat 336–323 B.C.), they came into contact with the Greeks. In ensuing writings, \textit{deva-mandira} means temple, and \textit{sayanamandira} means bedroom. The temple concept was probably developed first by the third millennium B.C. Egyptians, a people who were ruled by a living god whom, we can surmise, they needed to suitably house.

\textsuperscript{117} At least, the \textit{Fiji Times and Herald} claimed that this was the date of the Mandal’s opening. The \textit{Fiji Samachar} reported that the Mandal was opened on 19 August 1929. Of course, both newspapers might have been correct. The basic unit of the Hindu calendar is the \textit{tithi}, the lunar day, which can begin at any time of the solar day. Perhaps the Mandal was opened on 18 August 1929 solar time, and the hour of opening was during 19 August 1929 lunar time, and the two newspapers reported the timing of the event differently, according to the two different calendars.
prayers offered by Pandit Shri Krishna Jee Sharma, the Arya Missionary.\textsuperscript{118}

J.P. Maharaj addressed the gathering. He pointed out that "25 years ago the first Arya Samaj was formed in Fiji at Samabula and the first Arya Samaj library ... [had stood] where the Mandir was built."\textsuperscript{119} The Mandir had cost £552. The constructors, Messrs Morris Hedstrom Ltd, those pillars of the Fiji European establishment, were thanked "for their praiseworthy help."\textsuperscript{120} But Maharaj reserved his warmest praise for the young Aryas who had worked on the project.

Since the Libel action people took advantage of and tried to crush the Arya Samaj from all sides but thanks to God ... the young folks ... sprang from the dark and helped to erect such a fine building of their own.\textsuperscript{121}

The mood seemed to be one of all-round communal rapprochement. Even on the subject of the Samabula School, the opponents of the Arya Samaj no longer had sanatani Hindu or even Muslim particularity. As J.P. Maharaj put it:

The members of the Arya Samaj had felt very much the necessity of a Mandir of their own. It was decided to erect this Mandir soon after the Samabula School was taken away from the Indians by the Government.\textsuperscript{122}

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\textsuperscript{118} FTH, 23 August 1929, p.6.
\textsuperscript{119} Address to Aryas by J.P. Maharaj, 18 August 1929; ibid.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{121} Address to Aryas by J.P. Maharaj, 18 August 1929; FS, October 1929, vol.3, number 10, p.15. The "libel action" mentioned by J.P. Maharaj was a reference to S.S. Chowla's charge of criminal libel laid against prominent Aryas, an event covered earlier in this chapter.
\textsuperscript{122} Address to Aryas by J.P. Maharaj, 18 August 1929; FTH, 23 August 1929, p.6.
\end{flushleft}
The Indians, not the Arya Samaj, had lost control of the school, and the government, not the sanatani Hindus or even the Muslims, was the cause of Aryan woe. The interpretation of events had changed. Parmeshwar, Secretary of the Arya Samaj and Vishnu Deo's lieutenant for the election campaign then in progress, would have approved the politics of the new approach. This thought is a useful prompt for ourselves; for it is now time to return to the affairs of Vishnu Deo.

Legislative Council Entry

As mentioned earlier, in 1929 Vishnu Deo stood for election to the Fiji Legislative Council, contesting the Indian Southern Electoral Division seat.123 John Grant, an Indian Christian and a leader of the Indian Reform League, was Deo's only rival candidate. In the Indian Northern and Western Division, two Hindu candidates, Parmanand Singh and Dr C.M. Gopalan, contested the seat. In the Indian Eastern Division, a Hindu candidate ran against a Muslim: J.R. Ramchandra Maharaj (sometimes called Ramchandra Rau, and misspelt as Row) against Khalil Sahim.

It is clear that the Fiji Indian community at large was engrossed with the elections, especially in the contest

123 The Indian Southern Electoral Division comprised the provinces of Rewa (including the Municipality of Suva), Namasi, Serua, Naitasiri, Colo East, Tailevu and Kadavu. There were two other Fiji Indian electoral districts. The Indian Eastern Electoral Division comprised the provinces of Lomaiviti, Lau, Macuata, Bua and Cakaudrove, and Rotuma "and its Dependencies." The Indian Northern and Western Electoral Division comprised the provinces of Ra, Colo North, Colo West, Nadroga, Nadi, Lautoka and Ba. For these and further details on electoral boundaries, see F.R.G., 26 November 1929, number 70, p.500.
between John Grant and Vishnu Deo, whose Southern Division field of battle included the Suva area with its politically aroused populace.\(^{124}\) This was the first ever election in Fiji Indian history, with 1,404 Indian registered voters out of a community which, in 1929, was around 71,000 strong.\(^{125}\) Voters were spread rather unevenly between the three Indian electoral districts: 640 electors in the Northern and Western Indian Electoral Division, 663 in the Southern Indian Electoral Division and only 101 in the Eastern Division.\(^{126}\)

In view of the highly charged communalist atmospherics of Fiji Indian politics in the late 1920s, it was remarkable how readily the Hindu majority of the Southern Division put aside their differences and closed ranks behind Vishnu Deo. An early indication of this Arya-sanatani Hindu solidarity was conveyed in the following electioneering report of late August 1929.

On ... 25 [August 1929] ... Mr Vishnu Deo, one of the candidates for the Indian Southern Division, addressed a very well attended meeting at the Sanatan Dharma School, Vunimono, Nausori. Owing to the large gathering the meeting was held in the open air, under the shade of trees.... Thakur Kundan Singh Jee Kush was in the chair. The

\(^{124}\) See \textit{FTH}, 27 July 1929, p.4.

\(^{125}\) By way of comparison, in 1929 there were 1,356 Fiji European registered voters out of a community around 6,000 strong, figures which included the colony's Part-Europeans, classified electorally as "general" voters, the same category as the Europeans.

\(^{126}\) See the Indian Electoral Registers, prepared by B.St.J. Fisher, Registrar, Supreme Court; \textit{R.G.}, 3 July 1929, number 38, pp.336-358. The Southern Indian Electoral Division Register was completed by 25 June 1929, the other two Indian Electoral Division Registers were completed by 3 July 1929.
remarkable feature of the meeting was the intense interest of the audience... [A] hearty vote of confidence was moved by Mr R. Parmeshwar, seconded by Pandit Shri Krishna Jee Sharma and carried with acclamation.127

The rival candidate was also out on the stump that same day. John Grant was supported by leading members of the Indian Reform League and the South Indian Madras Maha Sangam. This is probably a sufficient explanation why Grant, unlike Vishnu Deo, did not gather his supporters in the grounds of a sanatani Hindu school.

Mr J.F. Grant addressed a large gathering of Indians at Viria [Viria?] on [25 August 1929].... Mr G. Suchit presided and Mr Grant ... received a unanimous vote of confidence.128

George Suchit, an Indian Christian active on the public stage, will make another appearance in a later chapter. We shall for the moment keep our focus on the election campaign, shifting the scene to election day at Suva’s main polling station.

According to a press report on election day, the historical occasion was a colourful sight.

For the first time in the history of Fiji, the Indians are enjoying the right to vote for a representative in the Legislative Council of the Colony.... This morning the scene at the Court House was an animated one.... The first vote polled was by Mr Anthony Grant, who was scrutineer for his brother, Mr John F. Grant, and the second by Mr Parmeshwar, scrutineer for Mr Vishnu Deo.129

127 FTH, 27 August 1929, p.4.
128 FTH, 26 August 1929, p.4.
129 FTH, 5 September 1929, p.5.
The colourfulness of the event seems to have had an order about it, colours being used by the Fiji Indian voting public to express an attachment to both Indian nationalism and the candidate of preference.

The supporters of both candidates wore the national colours red, green and white. The distinguishing factor was that the supporters of Mr Deo had a red centre in their rosettes while those of Mr Grant had a white centre. Many cars flew the colours.130

The results of the election were reported five days later. Vishnu Deo received 419 votes, John Grant 162, and 13 were informal (that is, incorrectly completed). With this convincing win, Vishnu Deo was elected. In the Indian Northern and Western Division, it was a closer run race between the two Hindu candidates: Parmanand Singh received 309 votes and Dr C.M. Gopalan received 222, with 57 informal. In the Indian Eastern Division, the Hindu candidate won a landslide victory over his Muslim opponent: J.R. Ramchandra Maharaj received 63 votes, Khalil Sahim 20, and 5 were informal.131

As related above, R. Parmeshwar acted as Vishnu Deo’s lieutenant for the election campaign, giving an unmistakable Arya flavour to the core leadership of Deo’s team. But the

130 Ibid.

131 For the official election returns see F.R.G., 23 September 1929, number 53, pp.487-488. For a report on the result in the Indian Southern Electoral Division, see FTH, 10 September 1929, p.4. For a report on the result in the Indian Northern and Western Electoral Division and the Indian Eastern Electoral Division, see FS, October 1929, vol.3, number 10, p.22.
competition between Vishnu Deo and John Grant for the support of the Indian electors of the Southern Division did not see the Hindu community split along Arya-sanatani lines. This information, partly available to us through examination and analysis of the election campaign reports, is also clear from inference: given the size of his majority, Deo must have carried the greater part of the sanatani Hindu vote.\footnote{132}{The figures, expressed in percentage terms, which support this statement are that Hindus comprised 83 per cent of the Fiji Indian community, 88 per cent of the Southern Division voters correctly cast their votes, Vishnu Deo received 72 per cent of the votes correctly cast and that therefore Deo must have received the greater part of the Hindu vote.}

There was a communal pattern to both the composition of the opposing campaign teams and the polling, but it was not one which split the Hindus.

Vishnu Deo and a large majority of the Fiji Indian voters had cause for celebration. On 12 September 1929, a social evening was held at the Arya Samaj Mandir at Samabula under the auspices of the Arya Young Men's Association (hereafter A.Y.M.A.).\footnote{133}{The A.Y.M.A. is not to be confused with the Samabula Arya Samaj Boy Scouts Troop formed in August 1928. Shankar Pratap served as Scout Master; and here confusion might arise for Pratap also served separately as the Secretary of the A.Y.M.A. For a press release on the scheduled activities of the Arya Boy Scouts, see FTH, 20 November 1928, p.7.} The meeting had been called, it was reported, "in honour of Mr Vishnu Deo on his being elected as one of the representatives of the Indian Community in the Legislative Council."\footnote{134}{FTH, 17 September 1929, p.8.} Sudhakar Gazi, Chairman of the A.Y.M.A., and Shankar Pratap, the Secretary, had organized the event.
Parmeshwar, Vishnu Deo’s lieutenant, was elected to the chair. After the formalities had been completed, Vishnu Deo addressed the assembled group. According to a press report, Deo first reminded his listeners of the wider Imperial context of the Fiji Indian struggle for political empowerment -- that is, of how Fiji Indian politics was intimately bound up with the politics of Indian settler politics in British Africa and the progress there of the Government of India’s emissary: V.S. Srinivasa Sastri.

[Deo] pointed out the harm which had been done to the cause of the Indians in Kenya by the Indians in Fiji having accepted the communal franchise. He was not surprised ... that the Rt. Hon. S.V. Shastri had to return from South Africa disappointed because his suggestion of a common electoral roll ... was turned down by the white settlers there.... [I]n view of the message of Mahatma Gandhi that India was unable to help us until the attainment of Swaraj, Indians in Fiji should endeavour to stand on their own legs. In view of this message he, with others, had accepted the communal franchise under protest. He was aggrieved that we are accused of asking for social equality with the Europeans. Indians did not wish, nor ask for that, but what they asked for was equal opportunity and such political rights as had been promised them.135

Vishnu Deo’s speech of 12 September 1929 was perhaps the most important single statement of political intent in Fiji Indian history. The common roll issue he on that occasion defined announced to the colony the principal Indian political objective of the day, one that was destined to shape political

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135 Address by Vishnu Deo, Arya Samaj Mandir, Samabula, 12 September 1929; ibid. The report quoted was contributed to the press by an unnamed person present at the meeting.
relations in Fiji for the remaining forty odd years of colonial rule and beyond.

The Legislative Assembly opened for the new session on 25 October 1929. A.W. Seymour, the Acting Governor, rose to open what was, he reminded the members, "the first Session of the Legislative Council reformed under the Letters Patent passed under the Great Seal of the United Kingdom on the 9th February [1929]." Seymour extended a warm welcome to the three newly seated Fiji Indian members. He said:

I trust that their entry in this Legislative body may prove an accession of strength and wisdom to our deliberations ... to the benefit of their constituents, and an assistance to the Council and Government.

It was a stormy set of sessions. The first indication that a new spirit of confrontation had entered the counsels of the colony came on 30 October 1929, the second day of sitting, during Question Time, a time-honoured parliamentary practice in which individual members unburden themselves of their

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136 The full muster in the Legislative Council sessions of October-November 1929 consisted of the Acting Governor, thirteen nominated officials, six European elected members, three Fijian nominated members and three Fiji Indian elected members. The three Fijian nominated members ("Native Members") were Ratu Jone Mataitini, Ratu Deve Toganivalu and Ratu Popi Seniloli. The three Fiji Indian elected members were Parmanand Singh (Northern and Western Division), J.R. Ramchandar (Eastern Division) and Vishnu Deo (Southern Division). For the names of the Fiji European elected members and the British officials, see F.L.C.D., Sessions of 1929 (October-November) ... 1930, p.99.


138 Ibid.

139 The Legislative Council met for eight sessions during October-November 1929: on 25 and 30 October, and on 1, 5, 6, 8, 14 and 15 November.
electors' concerns and propose remedial action directly to the officials in charge of the ministries and departments of state. Vishnu Deo was the first Indian elected member to take the floor. Significantly, his first question addressed neither the internal affairs of the Fiji Indian community nor inter-racial domestic relations in Fiji: it concerned the colony's inter-Imperial relations with India. It was a choice of issue that spoke volumes on the Arya, if not necessarily the Fiji Indian, sense of political priorities. Deo asked:

Will the Government be pleased to state objections, if any, it has or will have against the appointment by the Government of India of their Agent in Fiji, as in the Crown Colony of Ceylon and in the Union of South Africa?140

And, as an extension to this first question, Deo also asked:

In view of the inadequate Indian representation in this Council, and until the claims to full and equal rights to the Indian in Fiji have been reasonably met, will the Government consider the desirability of recommending to the Right Honourable the Secretary for the Colonies to agree to the appointment of an Agent of the Government of India in Fiji, in place of the Secretary for Indian Affairs?141

Vishnu Deo was asking that J.R. Pearson, the Colonial Service official (recruited after retirement from the I.C.S.) holding the office of Indian Affairs, be replaced by an official of the Government of India. Deo may well have preferred India

140 Question (1) by Vishnu Deo, Member for the Indian Southern Division, 30 October 1929; F.L.C.D., Sessions of 1929 (October-November) ... 1930, p.122.

141 Question (2) by Vishnu Deo, Member for the Indian Southern Division, 30 October 1929; ibid.
Office over Colonial Office authority but, in an age in which the spirit of nationalism was extending its hold to all people, not only Indians, this was not a political line likely to be favourably received in British or Fijian circles, or to any people the political sentiments of whom were Fiji-centred.

It fell to H.H. Rushton, the Acting Colonial Secretary, to state the government’s reply, one which illustrated the consultative relationship the appertained between H.M.G., the Raj and Suva.

After mature and careful consideration the question of the appointment of an agent in Fiji of the Government of India was settled by the Secretary of State for the Colonies in consultation with the Secretary of State for India and the Government of India. The Government of Fiji is not prepared to re-open the question.

The Acting Colonial Secretary’s answer to Vishnu Deo’s second question was also in the negative.

This question cannot be answered in view of the statements which form a preamble to the question, which statements in the opinion of the Government are not justified.

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142 This was not to say that Deo necessarily liked the Raj. By 1929, the Government of India had a large Indian component and, as we have seen in respect to efforts by the Raj to end indenture, demands voiced by the Indian nationalist movement had been contributing to Government of India policy since at least the second decade of the twentieth century.

143 When not Acting Colonial Secretary, H.H. Rushton was the Colonial Treasurer.

144 Reply to Question (1) asked by Vishnu Deo, Member for the Indian Southern Division, 30 October 1929; F.L.C.D., Sessions of 1929 (October-November) ... 1930, p.126. For a complete review of the official position on the issue raised by Vishnu Deo’s Question (1), see the "Position of the Indian Community in Fiji," a selection of state documents "published for general information" by order of A.W. Seymour, Colonial Secretary, 7 March 1927; F.R.G., 11 March 1927, number 13 (Supplement), pp.90-97.

145 Reply to Question (2) asked by Vishnu Deo, Member for the Indian
It seems reasonable to conclude from this first question raised on the floor of the Legislative Council by a Fiji Indian elected member that the Raj was perceived as a likely champion of Fiji Indian interests in any interaction between London, New Delhi and Suva; and that Deo thought that this favourable influence on Fiji Indian affairs could be brought to bear more strongly if the links between New Delhi and Suva were direct, not mediated through London. In both respects, this perception was correct. And, in fact, a search for ways of strengthening governmental links between India and Fiji was, in the early decades of our period of study, the main plank in the Fiji Indian leaders' external affairs policy.

The three Fiji Indian M.L.C.s did not neglect domestic concerns. It is instructive, however, to note the type of issues they raised. For example, Vishnu Deo asked:

Will the Government be pleased to consider the advisability of including most important and main Hindu and Muslim festival days among the Public Holidays of the Colony?\(^{146}\)

And he further asked:

If the answer to [the first question] ... is in the negative, will the Government please do away with all those public holidays that are purely Christian in character and significance?\(^{147}\)

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\(^{146}\) Question (24) (a) by Vishnu Deo, Member for the Indian Southern Division, 30 October 1929; \(F.L.C.D., \) Sessions of 1929 (October-November) ... 1930, p.124. For a press report on this motion, see \(FTH, \) 5 November 1929, p.3.

\(^{147}\) Question (24) (b) by Vishnu Deo, Member for the Indian Southern Division, 30 October 1929; \(F.L.C.D., \) Sessions of 1929 (October-November)
This was not the kind of issue with which to forge parliamentary alliances across the cultural divide. And Indian Christians living in Vishnu Deo’s electorate surely had cause for feeling poorly represented by their M.L.C. The communalist side to Vishnu Deo’s politics was thus on display from his earliest representations in the Legislative Council.

In reply, the Acting Colonial Secretary, speaking for the government, rejected Deo’s first query on the grounds that persons of the Hindu and Moslem Faiths have opportunities to observe their respective festivals in accordance with their beliefs, customs and desires.\textsuperscript{148}

Rushton was hardly being very forceful in his defence of the colonial government’s policy position, one indisputably evenhanded on matters religious. Deo’s second question was rejected because

\begin{quote}
[t]he public holidays to which the Honourable Member refers confer a great benefit on all classes, and their observance has become an established practice to which economic conditions throughout the world have been adjusted.\textsuperscript{149}
\end{quote}

This was the style of British colonial officialdom in Fiji: rather detached and impervious to it all.

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\textsuperscript{148} Reply to Question (24) (a) asked by Vishnu Deo, Member for the Indian Southern Division, 30 October 1929; \textit{F.L.C.D.}, Sessions of 1929 (October-November) ... 1930, p.130. For a press report on this reply, see \textit{FTH}, 5 November 1929, p.3.

\textsuperscript{149} Reply to Question (24) (b) asked by Vishnu Deo, Member for the Indian Southern Division, 30 October 1929; \textit{F.L.C.D.}, Sessions of 1929 (October-November) ... 1930, p.130. For a press report on this reply, see \textit{FTH}, 5 November 1929, p.3.
Undaunted, as anyone would have been, by Rushton’s phlegm, Vishnu Deo resumed his offensive on the next day of session. On a line of approach which was essentially a continuation of the Arya mode of politics, Deo was clearly determined to place issues of racial or religious grievance on the colony’s political agenda, just as, in earlier years, he and his fellow Aryas had striven to breathe life into religious quarrels and to engineer communal confrontations within Fiji Indian society, thereby to establish a context in which to propose Arya solutions. Grievance aimed at Muslims, Christians, sanatani Hindus or whichever convenient non-Arya group, was the form of political expression with which he was most familiar. And Deo preferred religious, racial and ethnic concerns as the source of the necessary grist for his censure. This frame of mind was intrinsic to his religious allegiance. To be consciously Arya was to be ethnically aroused.\textsuperscript{150}

One of the questions Deo broached in the Legislative Council was pure Arya. On 1 November 1929, Deo advanced an issue which illustrated a central tenet of the Hindu worldview, an precept which, in its full theoretical grandeur, provided the rationale for the Arya mission within Hinduism. To a possibly mystified Council, he asked:

\textsuperscript{150} This set of characteristics of Fiji Indian politics could be used to support an analysis of colonial political relations along the lines as accomplished by James Scott (see James C. Scott, \textit{Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance}, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1985). Daunted, however, by the prospect of inviting comparison of our work with Scott’s, we ourselves shall not here attempt such an analysis.
Is the Government aware that Indians are not "natives" even in their own country -- India?\(^{151}\)

Deo was referring to the extra-subcontinental origin of the Aryans, comprehension of which required a knowledge of second millennium B.C. Eurasian steppe peoples' migratory history, something probably not in general currency in colonial Fiji. From the epistemological footing thus established, Deo asked:

> If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, will the Government be pleased to state why in Fiji Indians are legally referred to as, and included in the term, "native"?\(^{152}\)

Deo continued with his query by listing several sections of Ordinances enforced in Fiji where, in respect to the Fiji Indians, the word "native" and one other supposedly offensive term, "aboriginal," was used. His then made the assertion:

> Is the Government aware that the sections of the Ordinances enumerated in (b) are humiliating to Indians as a race?\(^{153}\)

Rushton rose to the occasion. Approaching the questions in the order as originally asked, he told Vishnu Deo:

> The answer is in the negative. Every person born in a country is strictly a native of that country. The Government is not aware whether it is usual for Indians in India to describe themselves or to be described as "natives."\(^{154}\)

\(^{151}\) Question (3) (a) by Vishnu Deo, Member for the Indian Southern Division, 1 November 1929; F.L.C.D., Sessions of 1929 (October-November) ... 1930, p.146.

\(^{152}\) Question (3) (b) by Vishnu Deo, Member for the Indian Southern Division, 1 November 1929; ibid.

\(^{153}\) Question (3) (e) by Vishnu Deo, Member for the Indian Southern Division, 1 November 1929; ibid.

\(^{154}\) Reply to Question (3) (a) asked by Vishnu Deo, Member for the Indian Southern Division, 1 November 1929; ibid ... p.150.
In delivering this reply, Rushton's demeanour probably added to the official "The Government is not aware" the implied subordinate clause "nor does it care." Yet, in reference to the use of the term "aboriginal" in some of the Ordinances which Vishnu Deo had listed, the Acting Colonial Secretary confessed:

> It has been judicially pointed out that the word "aboriginal" as used of Indians in the Ordinances of Fiji does not bear its strict etymological meaning.\(^{155}\)

So perhaps Vishnu Deo had in fact smoked out a certain terminological inefficiency in the wording of the colony's regulations. If so, the Acting Governor's declared hope that the presence of elected Fiji Indian M.L.C.s would prove an "accession of ... wisdom"\(^{156}\) to the government was not entirely disappointed. The Acting Colonial Secretary continued with another official reply.

> Government does not consider it degrading to include Indians in the definition of "native." The term is a convenient one to embrace all races which are included in particular legislative provisions.\(^{157}\)

From the British point of view, it was a sensible answer to a silly question. To the three Fiji Indian representatives, the governmental convenience invoked in the official reply was an

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\(^{155}\) Reply to Question (3) (c) asked by Vishnu Deo, Member for the Indian Southern Division, 1 November 1929; ibid.

\(^{156}\) See the passage quoted from the "Address by His Excellency the Acting Governor," 25 October 1929; in Chapter Three, p.204 above.

\(^{157}\) Reply to Question (3) (d) asked by Vishnu Deo, Member for the Indian Southern Division, 1 November 1929; F.L.C.D., Sessions of 1929 (October-November) ... 1930, p.150.
indulgence assumed by the administration at the expense of the self-esteem of the Hindu, if not quite the Indian, community.

Limitations of space do not permit us to consider at greater length the many questions, mostly concerning the domestic interests of the Fiji Indian community, that Vishnu Deo, J.R. Ramchandar and Parmanand Singh asked of the government during the four Legislative Council sessions of October-November 1929 they attended. The matters they raised included issues of taxation, the leasing of agricultural land, education, welfare, access to medical facilities, treatment of Indian prisoners, the racial composition of the state services, and the use of Indian languages to broadcast state information. We could spend a great deal of time and space covering these matters. But instead we must press on to consider a matter of greater import. For the round of questions posited by Vishnu Deo and his two fellow Fiji Indian elected members were, so to speak, in the nature of initial small arms fire in a battle intended to be fought by heavy artillery.

The central issue that the three Fiji Indian members were manoeuvring towards had been enunciated publicly by Vishnu Deo on 12 September 1929 at the Arya Samaj Mandir at

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Samabula.\textsuperscript{159} It was previewed again on 13 October 1929 at an "Indian Round Table Conference" held at the Crown Theatre, Lautoka. The Conference was convened by A.D. Patel, a Gujarati barrister resident in Ba who had arrived recently from India, and his associate S.B. Patel, a Lautoka barrister, also newly arrived from India, who was voted to the chair. As S.B. Patel said when he addressed the gathering, "the Conference was called to have the opinion of the leading people expressed and to frame their future programme of political work."\textsuperscript{160} Several issues were aired, including questions of land policy and education. But the principal issue discussed concerned a proposed common franchise.

Resolved ... that the Indians in Fiji should be granted common franchise along with other British subjects in the Colony and therefore requests the three Indian Elected Members ... to lodge a protest against the present franchise on racial lines and authorizes them to adopt any effective policy they may deem expedient ... for the realization of their rights.\textsuperscript{161}

In this instance, a resolution passed at a public meeting was a good indication of what the Fiji Indian M.L.C.s intended to initiate on the chamber floor. On 5 November 1929, Vishnu Deo introduced the anticipated motion that, for decades to come, was to set the terms of Fiji Indian political participation in the high politics of the colony. It read:

\footnotesize
\begin{quote}
To recall Deo's address, see Chapter Three, p.203 above.

\textsuperscript{159} FS, November 1929, vol.3, number 11, p.40.

\textsuperscript{161} Indian Round Table Conference resolution, Lautoka, 13 October 1929; ibid.
\end{quote}
That the Council recommends to His Excellency the Acting Governor that he be pleased to convey by telegraphic message to His Majesty's Government the view of this Council -- (a) that political rights and status granted to Indian settlers in this Colony on racial lines are not acceptable to them; and (b) that Indians in Fiji should be granted Common Franchise along with other British subjects resident in the Colony.\textsuperscript{162}

Deo followed up his resolution with a speech in its support, which he began by quoting the words of the Marquess of Salisbury (1830-1903), Secretary of State for India, written in a despatch to the Viceroy on 24 March 1875.\textsuperscript{163} When Deo finally resumed his seat, Parmanand Singh rose and "heartily" seconded the motion. Singh said:

I would like to point out that there are no two minds amongst the Indian community in Fiji on this question.... [It] behoves our self-respect and our sense of British citizenship to stand for common and equal rights for all His Majesty's subjects resident in this Colony.\textsuperscript{164}

It was perhaps the most dramatic moment in the modern history of Fiji. In terms of the domestic politics of the colony, it amounted to a declaration of war by the Fiji Indian elite against European dominance of representative politics in Fiji. After Parmanand Singh had finished speaking, the Acting Colonial Secretary rose to speak. Rushton said that the

\textsuperscript{162} Motion by Vishnu Deo, Member for the Indian Southern Division, 5 November 1929; \textit{F.L.C.D.}, Sessions of 1929 (October- November) ... 1930, p.178. For a press report on this motion, see \textit{FTH}, 15 November 1929, p.2.

\textsuperscript{163} The reader can peruse Lord Salisbury's words in Appendix II (Lord Salisbury's Despatch, 24 March 1875), p.419 below.

\textsuperscript{164} Statement by Parmanand Singh, Member for the Indian Northern and Western Division, 5 November 1929; \textit{F.L.C.D.}, Sessions of 1929 (October- November) ... 1930, p.180. For media comment on this statement, see \textit{FTH}, 15 November 1929, p.2.
Letters Patent, passed into law on 9 February 1929, had granted Fiji a new constitution, one which adequately met the requirements of the colony.\textsuperscript{165} When Rushton finished, he was followed by Ratu Popi Seniloli, a Fijian nominated member, who spoke briefly, but with emphasis. Seniloli said:

\begin{quote}
[O]n behalf of my people I wish to state that we are satisfied with the new Constitution ... and we are opposed to any variation.\textsuperscript{166}
\end{quote}

The Fijian European members evidently expected that the Fijian members would oppose the motion. Sir Maynard Hedstrom voiced his belief that the Fijian members' opposition to the purpose of Vishnu Deo's motion reflected an attitude widespread in Fijian society. Hedstrom spelt out what he thought was the purpose behind Deo's motion.

\begin{quote}
[I]n less than twenty years from to-day the number of Indian voters in the Colony will be sufficient to elect every Elected Member that comes into the Council, if you have a common electoral roll.... I say that whilst the Fijians are a sober, law-abiding, loyal people, nothing could be done in this world which would give them greater offence than to feel they were being governed, or that in any way the authority of government had been transferred from the European to the Indian.\textsuperscript{167}
\end{quote}

None of the three Fijian nominated members took the floor to rebut Hedstrom's evaluation of Fijian attitudes. This Fijian

\textsuperscript{165} For the statement by the Acting Colonial Secretary, 5 November 1929, see \textit{F.L.C.D.}, Sessions of 1929 (October-November) ... 1930, p.181.

\textsuperscript{166} Statement by Ratu Popi Seniloli, Native Member, 5 November 1929; \textit{F.L.C.D.}, Sessions of 1929 (October-November) ... 1930, p.181. For a press report on this statement, see \textit{FTH}, 15 November 1929, p.2.

\textsuperscript{167} Statement by Sir Maynard Hedstrom, Member for the Eastern Division, 5 November 1929; \textit{F.L.C.D.}, Sessions of 1929 (October-November) ... 1930, p.182. For an appreciative, if altogether partisan, press reaction to this statement, see \textit{FTH}, 15 November 1929, p.3.
response, unfavourable to the motion, drew a reply from Vishnu Deo. It seems that the Fiji Indian leader had expected Fijian support. Deo said:

I was very much surprised to find the native member opposing the motion.... I do not think the opinion of the native member is the opinion of the native population. He is a Government servant, and he is a nominated member. He does not in any way represent the Fijian community.¹⁶⁸

This was not a polite manner of address -- again, not the sort of thing on which parliamentary alliances would likely be built. Moreover, Vishnu Deo’s statement disdained the premiss on which indirect government in Fiji was based: that Fijian chiefs were assigned a role in colonial government precisely because they were the recognized traditional leaders of their people. One of the purposes of our study is to account for the failure of the Fiji Indian leaders to secure a political alliance with the leaders of the native Fijians.¹⁶⁹ Perhaps the first glimmer of an answer to our quest is starting to take shape in our mind as we imagine the looks on the faces of the three Fijian chiefs as they listened to Vishnu Deo giving them his surprising news about themselves.

Sir Henry Scott was the only European elected member, other than Sir Maynard Hedstrom, to speak at any length in reply to

¹⁶⁸ Statement by Vishnu Deo, Member for the Indian Southern Division, 5 November 1929; F.L.C.D., Sessions of 1929 (October-November) ... 1930, p.186. For a press report on this statement, see FTH, 16 November 1929, p.8.

¹⁶⁹ To recall our announcement of this intended line of investigation, see Chapter One, pp.22-25 above.
Vishnu Deo’s resolution. In his address, Scott asked the Council to consider from where the demand for a common electoral roll originated. According to Scott, the inspiration for Vishnu Deo’s resolution came from without the colony. Referring to the demand for common roll, he said:

I personally do not believe that this movement was started in Fiji.... But I do believe that it is a movement that has been studiedly considered and brought over from India by certain emissaries. These emissaries are now living here, not for the betterment of the Indian community, but for their own aggrandizement, political and otherwise. 170

Scott was probably referring to the brace of newly arrived Gujarati lawyers: S.B. and A.D. Patel. We shall observe both men in action below, in this and later chapters. 171

When the Council divided to decide the issue, the challenge thrown down by Vishnu Deo’s motion was, of course, met, the thirteen British officials, six European elected members and three Fijian nominated members joining forces to vote the motion down: three in favour, twenty-two against. But this was not the end of the matter. When the motion was defeated, Vishnu Deo rose and addressed the Council.

[W]hen this is the sense of this Council and when the common cause of the Empire has received such a cold reception as this, I consider that the continuance of our co-operation will simply be futile. I therefore regret to have to take leave

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170 Statement by Sir Henry Scott, senior Member for the Southern Division, 5 November 1929; F.L.C.D., Sessions of 1929 (October-November) ... 1930, p.186.

171 For A.D. Patel’s main appearance in our pages, see Chapter Five, pp.381-383 below. Both Patels (who were unrelated) were Gujarati Hindus, and both were secularist in terms of their socio-political identity; and, for our purposes, we prefer to classify them as secularists.
of the Council. I will submit my resignation in due course.\textsuperscript{172}

In making this stand, Vishnu Deo was joined by his two colleagues. Parmanand Singh told the Council: "I am in duty and honour bound to my constituents to support my friend and send in my resignation in due course."\textsuperscript{173} And J.R. Ramchandar spoke the only sentence he contributed to the day's debate on the subject of common franchise, saying, "I [shall] send in my resignation also."\textsuperscript{174}

The action of the three Fiji Indian M.L.C.s marked the beginning of a three-year boycott of the Legislative Council by the Fiji Indian leaders.

**Withdrawal and Boycott**

The withdrawal of the three Fiji Indian members raised a storm of criticism amongst Fiji European opinion leaders. The editorial page of the *Fiji Times and Herald* expressed the view

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\textsuperscript{172} Statement by Vishnu Deo, Member for the Indian Southern Division, 5 November 1929; *F.L.C.D.*, Sessions of 1929 (October-November) ... 1930, p.187. For a press response to this statement, see *FTH*, 16 November 1929, p.8. For the text of the letter of resignation Vishnu Deo sent to the Acting Governor, see Deo to Seymour, undated; Seymour to Passfield, 13 November 1929, enclosure 2; Despatch No.333, p.29; C.O.83/187.

\textsuperscript{173} Statement by Parmanand Singh, Member for the Indian Northern and Western Division, 5 November 1929; *F.L.C.D.*, Sessions of 1929 (October-November) ... 1930, p.187. For the text of the letter of resignation Parmanand Singh sent to the Acting Governor, see Singh to Seymour, undated; Seymour to Passfield, 13 November 1929, enclosure 3; Despatch No.333, p.30; C.O.83/187.

\textsuperscript{174} Statement by J.R. Ramchandar, Member for the Indian Eastern Division, 5 November 1929; *F.L.C.D.*, Sessions of 1929 (October-November) ... 1930, p.187. For the text of the letter of resignation J.R. Ramchandar sent to the Acting Governor, see Ramchandar to Seymour, undated; Seymour to Passfield, 13 November 1929, enclosure 4; Despatch No.333, p.31; C.O.83/187.
that "[t]heir action in withdrawing from the Council Chamber was absolutely without any excuse or extenuation." The leader writer went on to hint darkly at external influences which may have inspired Vishnu Deo's motion.

Chiefly owing to pressure from India ... [H.M.G.] agreed to give the Indians elective representation.... The Fijians, although the owners of the country ... have no "India Office" behind them to impose unfair pressure on this little country.... Sir Maynard Hedstrom hit the truth when he accused influences in India (and a local inspiration as the intermediary) as the origin of their ... demand.176

Barker's memory was at fault. We checked the records carefully and found that Sir Henry Scott, not Hedstrom, had commented in the Legislative Council debate on the external source of inspiration for the common roll movement.177 Nevertheless, when first we read it, Barker's editorial critique of Vishnu Deo's Legislative Council initiative was an invitation to delve into the sources which we were unable to resist. Our investigations suggested that the "influences in India" the European elected M.L.C.s had in mind centred not on Mahatma Gandhi, as we had permitted ourselves to anticipate, but rather on V.S. Srinivasa Sastri.

In the course of our research, this was the finding which inspired us to endeavour to establish the place of V.S. Srinivasa Sastri in Fiji Indian history. An initial survey of

175 FTH, 7 November 1929, p.4.
176 Ibid.
177 To recall Scott's words, see Chapter Three, p.217 above.
secondary sources soon ascertained that this aspect of Fiji Indian politics still awaits its historian, for virtually nothing has been written on the role of Sastri in the development of this central policy plank of Fiji Indian public life. In the limited time we ourselves could devote to a search for primary material relating to this matter, we did our best to correct the deficit, the results of which the reader will already be familiar from attention to the previous chapter. As related above, V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, en route from New Zealand to Canada, had stopped over in Suva on 29 July 1922 and delivered a speech to a gathering in the Town Hall. On that occasion, Sastri had expounded the rationale of Indian political rights within the Empire. Vishnu Deo was in the audience that day at the Suva Town Hall and heard Sastri’s address. According to our sources, Vishnu Deo’s common electoral roll initiative almost certainly owed a great deal of inspiration to the ideas presented that day in Sastri’s speech to the citizens of Suva. Here we have a finding, not commented on previously by any other historian, which permits us to claim distinction for our study.

The connexion linking Sastri and Deo is such a portentous feature of our study, such a critical attribute of our argument, that we would be negligent not to quote at least one such source that intimated Deo’s inspirational debt to Sastri. Perhaps the source which most directly, and most briefly, asserted the claim was expressed in mid-November 1929 in a
letter to the editor from a reader who signed himself "Kai Viti," and began by setting the scene to the drama.

A few years ago that eminent Indian statesman, the Hon. Srinivasa Sastri, passed through Suva on his way to Canada to endeavour to swing the conference that was being held there to the doctrine of equal rights to British nationals wherever domiciled. Mr Sastri made a memorable speech in the Suva Town Hall and, without a doubt, it was the finest oratorical effort heard in this colony.178

Without a break in the text, "Kai Viti" went on to make the Sastri-Deo connexion so vital to our justification for the departure we have ventured to pioneer from the position established in orthodox histories of the Fiji Indians.

Now, Mr Vishnu Deo's speech to his motion in the Legislative Council, with slight variations to meet the circumstances, is a practical repetition of Sastri from start to finish. Those who have followed the utterances of the Indian statesman on his pet subject have come to regard the words used by Mr Vishnu Deo -- "Now that the British Empire stood for the union of races" ... down to ... "bridging the gulf between community and community" -- as exclusively Sastri's.179

It is clear that "Kai Viti" had in his possession a written record of the Legislative Council proceedings of 5 November 1929,180 for Vishnu Deo had indeed employed the said phrases in his speech in support of his motion calling for a common electoral roll. "Kai Viti" concluded his letter with a

178 "Kai Viti" to Editor, FTH, 18 November 1929, p.8.
179 Ibid.
180 There were three possible ways whereby "Kai Viti" could have got access to the record of Legislative proceedings: in the pages of the Fiji Royal Gazette, in the pages of the Fiji Times and Herald, or by being present in the Legislative Council chamber on 5 November 1929 -- this last either as a sitting M.L.C. or from a seat in the Visitor's Gallery.
comment in support of Sir Henry Scott’s contribution to the debate, the relevant part of which we have already quoted above. 181

The Senior Member for the Southern Division, who incidently as Mayor of Suva had presided at that memorable meeting referred to, evidently recalled Sastri’s words when concluding his speech against the motion in the Legislative Council, when he stated that the movement had been studiously considered and brought over from India. It would appear therefore that the motion was not a presentation of the views entirely of Mr Vishnu Deo and his colleagues and it looks that they have been used merely to fire the shots. 183

These passages taken from "Kai Viti's" letter can serve as a summary of much the same argument we ourselves have advanced.

In the immediate wake of the resignation of the Fiji Indian M.L.C.s, the Fiji Indian community held a series of public meetings to discuss the new situation. The first of these was held on 6 November 1929 in the Suva Town Hall, in which "Mr [S.B.] Patel, barrister, of Lautoka, presided." 184 Vishnu Deo, the man of the hour, was present. Addressing the assembled throng in English, Deo reportedly "laid great stress on his desire for peace." 185 Deo went on to say, presumably from the basis of a projected view of a future Indian-

181 To recall Scott's words, see Chapter Three, p.217 above.

182 "Kai Viti" was quoting inaccurately here. We checked the record and found that Sir Henry Scott used the adverb "studiedly," not "studiously."

183 "Kai Viti" to Editor, FTH, 18 November 1929, p.8.

184 FTH, 7 November 1929, p.4.

185 Ibid.
dominated Legislative Council, that the native Fijians "would be protected by the Indians" though he did not indicate the nature of the threat to Fijian interests against which he proposed the Fiji Indians would make their stand. The meeting decided to form an "All Indian National Congress" -- a president, vice-president and secretary being voted into office.\textsuperscript{186}

Another meeting of Fiji Indians took place on 10 November 1929 at Ba. Vishnu Deo, S.B. Patel, A. Sahu and Randhir Singh were present, though this time A.D. Patel, the local barrister, presided. All present supported the resignation of the three Indian members -- a move made "to shield the honour and prestige of the [Fiji Indian] community," Randhir Singh said. A resolution "expressing warm congratulations and sincere support was unanimously adopted."\textsuperscript{187}

The issue of common franchise and the manner in which it had been handled on the public stage had been effected by the Arya leaders acting, in the high politics of the colony, on behalf of the Fiji Indian community. Not surprisingly, given the dominant position of the Arya leadership at this juncture in Fiji Indian politics, it was the Arya media organ, the Fiji Samachar, that provided the most thorough explanation for the turn of events centred around Vishnu Deo's Legislative Council

\textsuperscript{186} For a full account of the meeting, see ibid.

\textsuperscript{187} This account of the Ba meeting was contained in a contributed article; see FTH, 22 November 1929, p.8.
motion. We quoted earlier a brief passage taken from the *Fiji Samachar’s* November 1929 issue.¹⁸⁸ We here quote that passage again, this time as part of a larger section of text.

We heartily congratulate the three Indian elected members of the Fiji Legislative Council for taking such a courageous stand as they did when their motion was rejected by the Council on the 5th November 1929 by 22 to 3.... It is to be regretted that all the official, European elected, and the Fijian nominated members opposed the motion which could have been accepted as an expression of opinion at least from the Indian side of the House and forwarded to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies for consideration ... [and] action. The motion did not contain any fresh claim. It contained the view that the rights pledged to Indians by such responsible British Statesmen as Lord Salisbury ... be granted. Yet the motion was rejected. In the interests of the solidarity of the British Empire, people in the Colonies and in India are striving to set aside differences and to bring the various communities together. Indians in Fiji could not lag behind in this effort; but their cry for common and equal rights of citizenship to all the subjects of His Majesty was obviously in the wilderness! However we trust in the Englishmen in [the] British Parliament who not only uphold and champion the cause of the Indians but really and truly stand for the high ideal of the Empire. The Indians throughout the Colony of Fiji uphold the action of the three Indian elected members and ask them to continue the constitutional fight for a common electoral roll on a common franchise without any discrimination between the races that compose the British Empire.¹⁸⁹

Even after the passing of more than six decades, this statement as proclaimed from the pages of the Arya press organ stands as a testament to the high ideals and moral rationale that inspired the leading elements of the Fiji Indian

¹⁸⁸ To recall the relevant passage, see Chapter Two, p.101 above.

community in their initial venture into Fijian high politics. And it seems that the *Pacific Press*, another newspaper published primarily for Fiji Indian readers, a source beyond our direct reach, had endorsed the Arya position.

We are glad ... to note that the *Pacific Press* of the 9th November 1929 agrees that the action of our elected representatives "is an example of high idealism worthy of [the] best traditions of India."\(^{190}\)

Study of the Fiji Indian faction, usually hostile to the Arya Samaj, whose views were represented in the pages of the *Pacific Press* awaits a later chapter.\(^{191}\) It is sufficient for the moment to note that the Arya position in respect to the common roll issue was supported by this anti-Arya group.

Yet, at the practical level, the interests of the Fiji Indian community were sacrificed on the alter of what the *Pacific Press* called "high idealism." There was something of an other-worldly quality to the Fiji Indian M.L.C. resignation issue, not so much in respect to the resignations as such but to the extraordinary duration of the absence of any Fiji Indian presence in the Legislative Council chamber. For three years the Fiji Indian leaders displayed an obstinate attachment to an unserviceable tactic focused on an unrealizable goal. The Letters Patent of 1929 had opened the door for the Fiji Indians to take their first steps forward

\(^{190}\) Ibid., pp.6-7.

\(^{191}\) We examine this Fiji Indian political faction in Chapter Five, in the section entitled "Secularists," pp.359-361 below.
into the politics of elected representative government. Those steps had now faltered.

Yet perhaps we are being unduly prosaic in our analysis of Fiji Indian action in respect to the common role issue, perhaps we are being altogether too shallow in our understanding of Fiji Indian priorities. The Fiji Indian leaders who led the boycott of the Fiji Legislative Council in late 1929 may have been seeking objectives more exalted than mere parliamentary advantage. We might usefully recall at this juncture that, since September 1920, the official Indian National Congress line was not the mere capture of the existing organs of state in India but rather the substitution of the existing state by a Congress party state. If Gandhi was to be taken at his word, it would have seemed at the time that the Congress leaders even intended for India a substitute for the industrial revolution, to establish in its stead an economy based on cottage industry. It was an era in which Indian leaders were accustomed to thinking in decidedly grandiose terms. Perhaps Fiji Indian leaders were sensitive to the political atmospherics emanating from the subcontinent and projected in their private counsels schemes of a future political order in Fiji more grandiose than we, in our unimaginative innocence, can sensibly attribute to them.

So instead of advancing an explanation based on an assertion of other-worldly qualities in the Fiji Indian character, perhaps we should consider the effect of
inspiration from another source, terrestrial but exogenous to Fiji. For the resignation of Vishnu Deo and his two fellow M.L.C.s attracted Mahatma Gandhi's attention and re-awakened his interest in things Fiji Indian.

The Mahatma was alerted to the crisis in Fiji on the very day of the resignations. His informant was the Secretary of the Indian National Congress of Fiji, Lautoka branch, who sent Gandhi a cable from Suva.\textsuperscript{192}

\begin{quote}
Indian members motion common franchise rejected Council today all three resigned.\textsuperscript{193}
\end{quote}

Gandhi replied to the Secretary of the Fiji Congress in mid-November 1929. Addressing him as "Dear Friend," Gandhi wrote:

\begin{quote}
I had your cablegram.... I congratulate the members who have resigned by way of protest. I hope that they will stick to their decision and not seek re-election till a common franchise is granted. United effort and agitation will surely bring about relief at an early period but whether it comes early or late it is perfectly useless to go to the Council unless this elementary thing is done.\textsuperscript{194}
\end{quote}

A few days after writing this letter, Gandhi published a brief note in his main English-language newspaper on the issue in faraway Fiji. Explaining the context in which the issue had

\textsuperscript{192} Vishnu Deo and his confreres had established a Fiji Indian National Congress at a public meeting in Lautoka on 12 May 1929, with A.D. Patel as President and A.R. Sahu as Secretary. It seems that A.R. Sahu sent the cable to Gandhi. For an account of the formation in May 1929 of the two Fiji Indian National congresses, see Chapter Five, pp.362-364 below.

\textsuperscript{193} Secretary, Indian National Congress of Fiji to Gandhi, 5 November 1929 (cable); cited in M.K. Gandhi, "Notes: Indians in Fiji," Young India, 21 November 1929; C.W.N.G., vol.42 ... December 1970 (Agrahayana 1892), p.191.

\textsuperscript{194} Gandhi to Secretary, Indian National Congress of Fiji, 14 November 1929; C.W.N.G., vol.42 ... December 1970 (Agrahayana 1892), p.166.
arisen and offering the observation that acceptance of a common roll was evidently "too much for the white exploiters of Indian labour,"\textsuperscript{195} Gandhi advised the Indian public that

\begin{quote}
[t]he Indian members elected by Indian electors only have really no influence in the Legislative Council. I congratulate the three members on their patriotic spirit in having resigned from the Council by way of protest. I hope that they will on no account reconsider their decision unless a common franchise is obtained. Having resigned however they must not sit idle but continue their agitation for the simple justice to which they are entitled. If the Indian colony in Fiji is well organized, the citadel of anti-Indian prejudice is bound to break down through united effort.\textsuperscript{196}
\end{quote}

This exhortation by Gandhi was often reprinted in the Arya press in Fiji during the three years the Indian boycott of the Legislative Council was maintained.\textsuperscript{197} And where the Mahatma led, some other eminent Indians followed -- along the lines of the appeal of Pandit Banarsidas Chaturvedi, in the pages of the \textit{Modern Review}, reprinted in the Arya press in Fiji, that "our people in Fiji must fight for a common roll. They must not be satisfied with second-rate citizenship."\textsuperscript{198}

The policy of abandonment of the three Fiji Indian seats in the Legislative Council endured. From late 1929 to 1932, the Mahatma's policy of non-co-operation in representative


\textsuperscript{196} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{197} For example, see \textit{FS}, 25 June 1932, vol.6, number 26, p.5.

\textsuperscript{198} Pandit Banarsidas Chaturvedi, in an article published in the \textit{Modern Review}; reprinted ibid.
politics was pursued far more effectively in Fiji than ever it was in India proper.

The Fiji Indian elected M.L.C.s had abandoned the Council floor, but the high politics of the colony continued. And it was an inopportune time for the Fiji Indian representatives to be absent from their post. Before the inauspicious year 1929 had ended, an issue of the utmost import to the Fiji Indian community arose to perplex the governance of the colony.

As we have recorded above, the Legislative Council commenced its new session on 25 October 1929. As a carry over from the previous session; a certain Message No.18\textsuperscript{199} was amongst those laid on the table for the new Council to consider. From its contents, it was clear that the Honourable John Caughley was intending a political showdown for, in respect to the building of schools for the Indian community, the Message criticized the educational policy of former administrations. Attached to Message No.18 was a memorandum (Annexure 1) from the Director of Education which in part read: "The Indians, brought here not at their own instance, but for the benefit of the Colony, are now permanent and free

\textsuperscript{199} For the text of the three-page document, see Council Paper No.113, Message (No.18 of 1929), 19 June 1929; Laid on the Table, 30 October 1929; J.F.L.C., Sessions of 1929 ... 1930. In the Index of the Journal, the entry is headed "Message No.18 -- Proposed Improvements regarding Fijian and Indian Education." The Message was signed by all seven European elected M.L.C.s of the last Legislative Council to be formed on the basis of the old (pre-1929) Letters Patent: namely, J.M. Hedstrom (Eastern Division), Henry M. Scott (Municipality of Suva), Henry Marks (Municipality of Suva), Alport Barker (Southern Division), P.W. Faddy (Western Division), H.H. Ragg (Northern Division) and W.E. Willoughby Tottenham (Vanua Levu and Taveuni Division).
colonists of Fiji." This passage sounded like it could have come from the pen of somebody schooled politically by Lord Salisbury. However, the European elected members thought it "in bad taste." And it seems that they believed that Caughley was acting at the instigation of A.W. Seymour. In a statement they authorized for public release they said they were not prepared to scrap policy arrived at by due process under the previous Governor at "the dictates of an Acting Governor in whom they had no confidence."

This statement signalled a political crisis of the first order. The issue it posited pitted the representatives of the Fiji Europeans against the British administration. And the bone of contention, so it emerged to an alarmed public, was in the different set of attitudes that distinguished the Fiji European view of their Fiji Indian neighbours from the official British line of approach to that Indic community.

A.W. Seymour, the Acting Governor, possibly without fully consulting his Executive Council, was thus advancing a

\[200\] *FTH*, 15 November 1929, p.4. We depend on the *Fiji Times and Herald* for the accuracy of the passage quoted as Message No.18, Annexure 1 has not survived in the Colony of Fiji, Journal of the Legislative Council records.

\[201\] For the Marquess of Salisbury's point of view concerning the appropriate political status of Indian settlers in British colonies, see Appendix II (Lord Salisbury's Despatch, 24 March 1875), p.419 below.

\[202\] See *FTH*, 15 November 1929, p.4.

\[203\] See ibid.

\[204\] This was claimed by Sir Maynard Hedstrom, a Member of the Executive Council. Seymour, addressing the accusation during a sitting of the Legislative Council, denied the charge. When Sir Murchison Fletcher arrived, the Governor asked both men to let the matter lie, which they
scheme for building nine Indian schools in one year, one school less than the ten recommended earlier by the Honourable Caughley.\textsuperscript{205} This plan overrode the scheme of Sir Eyre Hutson, the recently retired Governor, who had intended to build nine schools over a five year period -- a scheme which had been fashioned with a view conciliatory to the strong feelings of European elected representatives, all too frequently expressed,\textsuperscript{206} against school-building for Indians. Seymour, it seems, was in a hurry to implement his scheme. It could be deduced that the reason for his haste was related to Pacific shipping schedules, for he made his move just prior to the arrival of the new Governor.\textsuperscript{207}

In their opposition to Seymour's move, the European elected members of the Legislative Council went over the Acting Governor's head: they addressed a protest to Lord Passfield,\textsuperscript{208} the Secretary of State for the Colonies. did. So the issue seems to have been left unresolved.

\textsuperscript{205} For the relevant passage of the Report submitted by the Director of Education to the Legislative Council, 9 November 1928, see Chapter Three, pp.193-194 above.

\textsuperscript{206} During the period of the 1920s and early 1930s, whenever the prospect was mooted for the allocation of state funds for Indian educational projects, the pages of the \textit{Fiji Times and Herald} never failed to provide arguments against advanced education for Indian youngsters -- advanced, that is, beyond the basic primary school level.

\textsuperscript{207} Sir Murchison Fletcher, the new Governor, was due to arrive on 22 November 1929. For more details on his expected arrival and the preparations to welcome him, see \textit{FTH}, 13 November 1929, p.4.

\textsuperscript{208} Lord Passfield was none other than Sidney Webb (1857-1947), husband of Beatrice Webb (1858-1943). These two prominent Fabian socialists were for years in the forefront of British left-wing political action. Perhaps they are best remembered as two of the more prominent founders of the London School of Economics and Political Science (1894). In the immediate
Referring first to Hutson's Message No. 13 of 1928, wherein the Governor had laid out the scheme for building nine schools in five years, their cable further read:

Acting Governor's extremely provocative Message 18 of 1929 to which we take strong exception ... [and that the] Acting Governor ... proposes use official majority force his views on Council. 209

The European elected members claimed, moreover, that Hutson's initial proposal to build Indian schools had been advanced in a context which had posited an experimental basis for the very idea of having state-supported Indian schools.

Passfield intervened to stop the Seymour-Caughley initiative. The Colonial Secretary of State reduced the new Indian schools to be built in 1930 from nine, as proposed by Seymour, to three. He cabled Seymour:

I consider ideal to be aimed at is equal educational facilities for all races, but that I am of course aware that the ideal can be reached only by stages and with due consideration for the financial resources. 210

It seems that the Colonial Office recoiled from the prospect of open rupture between the elected representatives of the Fiji Europeans and the colonial administration. But relations remained strained. On 16 November 1929, Sir Maynard Hedstrom

aftermath of World War I, they also founded the New Statesman and Nation (later abbreviated to the New Statesman), the left-wing weekly journal. For an assessment of the character and politics of the Webbs by a great historian who was their intimate, see Arnold J. Toynbee, Acquaintances, London, Oxford University Press, 1967, pp.108-128.

209 European elected M.L.C.s to Passfield, 7 November 1929 (cable); quoted in FTH, 13 November 1929, p.8.

210 Passfield to Seymour, 12 November 1929 (cable); quoted in FTH, 13 November 1929, p.8.
resigned from the Executive Council over an incident in the Legislative Council in which Seymour had hinted at improper behaviour on Hedstrom's part. But the arrival of the new Governor helped settle things down. At Sir Murchison Fletcher's request, Hedstrom withdrew his resignation from the Executive Council on 25 November 1929.

As was to be expected, Fiji Indian community leaders expressed disappointment at the outcome of Seymour's initiative. They did not, however, as perhaps it might have been expected, make a connexion between the failure of Seymour's initiative and the political tactics of the three Fiji Indian M.L.C.s, whose absence from the Council chamber meant that Seymour had no elected members to weigh in in his support or to counter-petition the Secretary of State for the Colonies when that worthy was brought into the action. Yet the Fiji Indian opinion leaders did not draw the conclusion that it was better to have the Fiji Indian elected seats occupied and Fiji Indian interests championed than to leave it to others to look after their community's interests. The failure of Seymour's initiative evidently did not convey to the Fiji Indians a suspicion that the campaign to promote a common electoral roll might have had a fallible basis. It

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211 For the text of Hedstrom's letter of resignation, see FTH, 16 November 1929, p.4. The clash between Seymour and Hedstrom was over a minor matter of procedure. That the incident expanded into a crisis prompting Hedstrom's resignation is an illustration of the tensions which vexed relations between the colonial government and the European community leaders.

212 See FTH, 26 November 1929, p.4.
seems that, in the thinking of the time, grand strategy was everything, parliamentary tactics a secondary consideration.

Yet education was the Holy Grail of Fiji Indian politics, a sacred objective worthy of the service of any political knight-errant. A pro-Indian position had been advanced on the floor of the chamber, the advocate of which could not be ignored. The Arya press did not fail to praise the virtue of the side contending for the Fiji Indian cause.

In the words of His Excellency the Acting Governor, "there are areas where Indians have settled in considerable numbers, and where there has been no provision for them of educational facilities of any kind" and "The necessity of remedying this situation is imperative." The need for definite action was pressing and His Excellency was therefore justified in wishing to extend the educational facilities, which the Indian Community welcomed as the first instalment of what ought to have been ages ago. We uphold the action of His Excellency the Acting Governor and express our full confidence in him. 213

The political crisis over the Seymour-Caughley initiative gave rise to a new round of public meetings conducted by the leaders of the Fiji Indian community. One such meeting was held in the Suva Town Hall on 20 November 1929. Seven resolutions were passed in all. The first stated that

[t]his public meeting of Indians loyally expresses its absolute concurrence with the just and timely Message No.18 of 1929 of His Excellency the Acting Governor and unreservedly upholds the action proposed and taken by him in respect of Indian Education. 214


214 Resolution passed at the Suva Town Hall at a public meeting of Fiji Indians, 20 November 1929; FS, December 1929, vol.3, number 12, p.11.
A second resolution expressed the meeting’s "full confidence in His Excellency the Acting Governor and in his Government" while another condemned "the action taken and the attitude adopted by the European Elected members against the small increase of provision proposed ... on the Draft Estimates of the Colony for the year 1930." However, the resolution that interests us most was the one that held that

the existing system of franchise which tends towards friction between the different races bearing allegiance to His Majesty the King Emperor is the cause of the present political upheaval in this Crown Colony and as the only satisfactory solution respectfully requests His Majesty’s Government to consider ... granting ... common franchise to all British Subjects resident in Fiji.

The nuts and bolts issue of Indian education, this resolution intimated, was not going to divert the Indian leaders from the grand scheme of things represented by the common roll demand.

As mentioned above, in late November 1929 Sir Murchison Fletcher, the new Governor, arrived in Fiji. He immediately set about resolving the outstanding problem of the day: the doubts of the Fiji Indian leaders as to the benefits of representative government as formulated under the terms of the Letters Patent of February 1929. On 26 November 1929, a notice was published in the Fiji Royal Gazette by the Supreme Court Registry, entitled "Legislative Council Elections." The notice was authorized by B. St.J. Fisher, Returning Officer.

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215 Ibid.

216 Ibid.
Notice is hereby given that I will attend at the Office of the Registrar, Supreme Court, on Monday, the 16th day of December, 1929, to receive nominations of candidates for the election of a Representative for the Indian Southern Electoral Division.217

Accompanying this notice were two others of similar wording, addressed to prospective candidates for respectively the Indian Eastern Electoral Division and the Indian Northern and Western Electoral Division.

From his previous position as the Colonial Secretary of Ceylon, Fletcher would have been well placed to have observed Indian politics of the early 1920s. The Non-co-operation Satyagraha (1920-22) would undoubtedly have attracted his attention. Armed with knowledge of the patchy response Indian politicians had afforded Gandhi’s call for council boycott, Fletcher probably expected that one or other Fiji Indian faction would accept the call for Indian representatives to re-enter the Fiji Legislative Council. Yet, when the deadline had passed, the Returning Officer reported that "notice is hereby given that no nominations were received."218

Fletcher would have been puzzled by this negative outcome. In his estimation of likely Fiji Indian behaviour, the Governor had stumbled. And not he alone; for we too must confess our confusion. Our disarray bids us take pause to

217 F.R.G., 26 November 1929, number 70, p.600.

218 F.R.G., 17 December 1929, number 76, p.630. Alport Barker seems to have been privy to the Returning Officer’s report, for his paper reported this development one day ahead of the official announcement (see FTH, 16 December 1929, p.4).
reconsider our bearings. From the telescope of grand events let us remove, to peer with puzzled brow and faltering assurance into the microscope of our own counsel.

We have already remarked on the unexpected display of unity by the Hindu community, as measured by voting patterns, during the Legislative Council elections of September 1929. That no Hindus came forward, to offer their services in the stead of the three Hindu M.L.C.s who had withdrawn the same, is not a matter of puzzlement. But, on the strength of our study so far, we are unable to account for the refusal of leaders of the Fiji Muslim League, the Indian Reform League, the two South Indian Sangams or of prominent Indian Christians to advance their claim, voiced loudly enough before and during the election, to the vacant Legislative Council seats.

As 1929 drew to a close, Fletcher tried again to recruit some Fiji Indians for the Legislative Council. He decided to summon the Fiji Indian leaders to Government House for consultation. The Fiji Samachar, whose editor was one of the official invitees, provided the public with authoritative coverage of the occasion.

When no nomination was filed on the 16th December 1929 ... His Excellency the Governor, Sir Murchison Fletcher, invited Dr A. Deva Sagayam and Messrs Ambalal D. Patel, Shivabhai B. Patel (Barristers), Sahodar Singh, John F. Grant, Abdul Karim, Ramchandra Maharaj, Parmanand Singh and Vishnu Deo to ... Government House on ... 27th December 1929 for the purpose of discussing the franchise and other matters affecting the Indian Community.219

Dr A. Deva Sagayam could not attend through ill health, and Ramchandra Maharaj was also absent: the erstwhile M.L.C. was in Labasa assisting with relief work amongst his former electors, the victims of a recent flood. After the conference, the correspondent of the Fiji Samachar, probably none other than Vishnu Deo himself,\(^{220}\) reported the following.

His Excellency opened the Conference by saying that he wanted the co-operation of the Indian Community in the Council.... He quoted the state of affairs in Hong Kong and in Ceylon and expressed his disapproval of the action taken by the Indian members who resigned from the Council. He added that for Crown Colonies [the] communal system of franchise was considered the best for all races.\(^{221}\)

Fletcher asked A.D. Patel for his point of view. Patel was reported as having said:

The last election has clearly shown the mutual antagonisms of different races in this Colony. Acceptance of the present franchise would accentuate those differences instead of alleviating them.... [U]nless and until the present constitution is changed we cannot see our way to co-operate with the Government through the Council. The question of common franchise was an Imperial question which would have to be solved presently by the Imperial Parliament.\(^{222}\)

S.B. Patel and Vishnu Deo concurred with A.D. Patel's stand. Somewhat more surprisingly, so did John Grant who, only two

\(^{220}\) If we have surmised wrongly and the author of the Fiji Samachar report was not Vishnu Deo, then Babu Ram Singh, the paper's publisher, would have written the report on the basis of interviews.

\(^{221}\) FS, December 1929, vol.3, number 12, p.17.

\(^{222}\) Ibid.
years previously in drafting the Municipal Franchise Committee Minority Report of 27 January 1928, had recommended communal franchise. With the Hindu and Christian Indians in general agreement, Fletcher decided it was time to play the Muslim card. Fletcher posed the issue to Abdul Karim.

His Excellency then told him that the Moslems in Ceylon ask for separate electoral roll and protest against common [roll].... Mr Abdul Karim replied that he knew not the condition of Ceylon but for Fiji he preferred common electoral roll.

Something was at work which had succeeded in bridging the deepest communalist fissures within the Fiji Indian community, though we are not yet in a position to identify it.

"Independence Day" and Bhagat Singh

In the closing weeks of 1929 and the opening month of 1930, political consciousness amongst the Fiji Indians reached unprecedented heights. There are intimations in the historical sources that things were even threatening to get out of hand, that mass forces, mobilized for the election campaign, quickened by the Indian M.L.C.'s resignations and Council boycott, and further aroused by Seymour's school-building initiative crisis, started to move ahead of those leaders long accustomed to an effortless political control of the lower orders of the Fiji Indian community. How else to explain the fact that Vishnu Deo and other leading lights of

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223 For the relevant passage of the Municipal Franchise Committee Minority Report, see Chapter Two, p.123 above.

Fiji Indian politics were strenuously engaged in January 1930 in urging upon the Fiji Indian masses the virtues of political restraint. To witness this surprising turn of events we need consider the manner in which the Fiji Indian community of Suva celebrated Indian Independence Day in late January 1930.

Indian independence being celebrated eighteen years before it was achieved calls for explanation. On 2 January 1930, the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress had decided to celebrate 26 January 1930 as Independence Day,225 a move intended to lift the spirits of Indian nationalists, not to raise a revolt or to inspire any form of insurgency. Congress leaders throughout India were to gather their party supporters, hoist the nationalist flag and read a declaration, drafted by Gandhi, that proclaimed "the inalienable right of the Indian people ... to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil."226 The Raj was envisaged as an obstacle to the attainment of these goals, so Gandhi was hoping that

225 The forty-fourth session of the All-India National Congress Committee meeting in Lahore on 29 to 31 December 1929 declared the need for the Indian nationalist movement to aim at the independence of India as its ultimate goal (see "Presidential Address by Jawaharlal Nehru," Lahore, December 1929; A.M. Zaidi [editor], Congress Presidential Addresses, vol.4 [1921-1939], New Delhi, Indian Institute of Applied Political Research, 1988, pp.353-370).

Gandhi was given the responsibility to conduct a civil disobedience campaign to realize the goal. The decision to celebrate 26 January 1930 as "Independence Day" was the first move in his campaign. The Salt March Satyagraha of March-April 1930 was the second move in what turned out to be a gradually escalating campaign of civil disobedience.

"Independence Day" became established on the nationalist calendar — so much so that, despite actual independence being attained on 15 August 1947, the January day is still celebrated in India (but not in Pakistan).

Indians would conclude from this public exercise that it was in their interest to sever the British-Indian connexion.

Not all Indians reasoned along these lines. Symptomatic of the growing Hindu-Muslim rift within the Indian nationalist movement, Muslim political activists opposed the celebration. In Dacca, Bengal, the event staged by the local Congress leaders collapsed into a bloody Hindu-Muslim riot. But Gandhi's call roused a response in the Punjab, the United Provinces, Delhi and Bombay. And Gandhi's call was answered also in faraway Fiji. Moreover, the Fiji Indian rank and file responded with unprecedented enthusiasm, arousing some nervousness on the part of their leaders. We can witness this surprising turn of events if we vicariously think ourselves into the scene at the Arya Mandir in Samabula on Indian Independence Day in 1930.

On Sunday [26 January 1930] ... the Arya mandir was illuminated with a number of Colman's benzine lamps.... [B]efore the time of the meeting the Mandir was full to its utmost capacity. The presence of the members of every section of the Indian community ... [gave the] impression of unanimity of the Indians on political matters.... The presence of a few native Fijians not only added beauty to the gathering, but also gave an idea of the sympathy entertained by the Fijian towards the Indian course [? cause]. Among those present the following were notable: Messrs J.P. Maharaj (chairman), Thakur Kundar Singh Kush, Vishnu Deo, Kanhai Singh and Sahodar Singh.228


228 FS, 1 February 1930, vol.4, number 5, p.10.
Vishnu Deo arose to address the gathering. On this occasion, he was on unfamiliar political turf. Acting the part of an Indian nationalist leader doing his duty by the distant Mahatma's command was all very well; but what if the rank and file, unfamiliar with the non-violent mode of political expression which Gandhi had persuaded his followers to adopt, was to interpret things literally? It was one thing to generate enthusiasm, so as to confound established order, quite another to openly defy that order. Events, it seems, had caused Deo to abjure action in favour of prayer. He said:

Tonight we have gathered here not to declare Independence, as unfortunately has been imagined by many. How could it be possible for us to do so in Fiji?... We are here to pray to God to enable our compatriots in India to successfully attain their heart's desire. 229

Deo was followed on the dais by Sahodar Singh who confirmed that there was indeed a limit on how much political precedence could be imported from India to Fiji. Singh regretted aloud any trouble they may have caused the colonial authorities.

Some of my Indian friends have been broadcasting wrong information ... as to the object of this meeting, that we are going to declare INDEPENDENCE in Fiji. What a nonsense! Even the Intelligence Department has believed such an unfounded yarn, hence the screening about this Mandir of Police Officers. Our Intelligence Department is not expected to be trifled by these mischief mongers. Gentlemen, to-night our meeting ... is ... to commemorate the Declaration of Independence Day in India. 230

229 Ibid.
230 Ibid.
Clearly the radical wing of the Fiji Indian leadership had reached the limit of their oppositional options for action and needed at this point to rein in their following.

Something was in the air of Fiji Indian politics in the three year period of the boycott of the Legislative Council, something which seemed to unbalance things. To elaborate on what we mean, we invite contemplation of an item that appeared in the Fiji press in August 1931. It concerned a report of a meeting of the Suva Municipal Council in which the Mayor had occasion to read a Minute dealing with what he inclined to view as misuse of the Town Hall. The Mayor read out:

On June 6th last Vishnu Deo engaged the Hall for a "Religious meeting" to be held on June 21st [1931]. It has now been brought to my notice that it was not a religious meeting, but the fifth annual meeting of the Hindu Maha Sabha, a quasi-political body.  

The meeting had been chaired by Thakur Kundan Singh Kush, the prominent Arya leader who when we met him in December 1928 was President Elect of the Arya Samaj, now in a new role as President of the Hindu Mahasabha, with K.B. Singh assisting as Secretary. From this personnel lineup, it seems that the Hindu Mahasabha was something of an Arya front. Both President and Secretary, the Mayor was at pains to tell the Councilors, were employed as teachers at state-subsidized schools -- Kush at the Hindu school at Vunimono, Nausori, and Singh at the Hindu school at Tausa, Viria. The problem which

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231 Mayoral Minute, Suva Municipal Council meeting, early August 1931; FTH, 6 August 1931, p.8.
had arisen, causing the Mayor's consternation, was the text of the resolution, passed at the Mahasabha meeting,

*[t]hat in connection with the deaths of Motilal Nehru, Bhagat Singh, Jagat Sukdeo and Ganesh Shankar, this meeting expresses sorrow at their untimely death, [and] considers their sacrifice Mother India's pride.*^232

It was a rather odd combination of names. Motilal Nehru (1861-1931), father of Jawaharlal (1889-1964), independent India's first Prime Minister (1946-1964), was an eminent Indian nationalist leader, a constitutionalist to the marrow, who had died of natural causes at an advanced age. Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, another prominent Congress leader, had been killed at Cawnpore (Kanpur) on 25 March 1931 while trying to pacify the activists of a bloody Hindu-Muslim riot.\(^233\) To lament the passing of these two men was unproblematic. Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev, on the other hand, were two (along with Rajgur, their confederate, three) terrorists hanged at Lahore on 23 March 1931 for the murder of a "Mr Saunders" -- a European mistakenly believed to have been involved in the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, an Arya worthy and a leading Indian nationalist figure in the Punjab. (Rai had died as a result of a lathi-beating, inflicted during a street confrontation between nationalists and police in 1928.)\(^234\) To mourn their

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^232 Resolution passed by the Hindu Mahasabha, Suva Town Hall, 21 June 1931; FTH, 6 August 1931, p.8.

^233 For elaboration on the impact of the Cawnpore riots on Hindu-Muslim relations, see Chapter Four, pp.314-315 below.

^234 The name "Mr Saunders," the European murdered by Bhagat Singh and
deaths was to invite the charge of disloyalty to the British Empire, or even sedition against the Crown. Vishnu Deo had moved the resolution.235

The Mahasabha resolution drew the fire of press criticism. In response, K.B. Singh, the General Secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha, wrote to the editor from Nausori on 9 August 1931 in his organization’s defence. His letter read in part:

The [Maha] Sabha did not show any sympathy or endorse the actions of all of them but expressed sorrow at their deaths without any reference to any action of the Government.236

K.B. Singh followed up this denial by maintaining that mistranslation had occurred, that if one understood how Hindi grammar worked, the original language of the resolution, the word "sacrifice" in the resolution was meant in the singular, not the plural, and was in reference to the death only of Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, the would-be pacifier of the Cawnpore riots. But, in rejection of K.B. Singh’s disavowal, the editor inserted a note of reply, maintaining that

our correspondent is merely quibbling with words. In expressing sorrow at the execution of a murderer ... [the Hindu Mahasabha] in effect demonstrated sympathy, more particularly as it was the subject of a public resolution.237

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235 For editorial comment (in Hindi) in the Arya press on Vishnu Deo’s resolution, see FS, 25 June 1932, vol.6, number 26.

236 K.B. Singh to Editor, 9 August 1931; FTH, 11 August 1931, p.7.

237 Note by Editor, FTH, 11 August 1931, p.7.
The editor view of things was supported by a letter from a member of the public, one "Fiji Indian," a letter which attacked those "who go under the disguise of Hindu Maha Sabha." It was a formidable indictment.

From the resolutions passed by [the men of the Maha Sabha] ... their frame of mind has been utterly exposed. The deaths of criminals of the worst type have been mourned, but one is a bit surprised that no mention has been made of Maulana Muhammad Ali, who resorted to saner methods [of political action].

"Fiji Indian" went on to say of Vishnu Deo's Mahasabha men:

And yet these very people plead the doctrine of "Ahimsa" and shriek at the top of their voice against the slaughter of animals. How paradoxical!

Our own view of things was similar. Like H.M.G. ministers and the Indian nationalist leaders before us, we repaired to seek the resetting of our compass at the Mahatma's hand.

The initial Gandhian response to the execution of Bhagat Singh and his two fellow terrorists was expressed in a resolution passed by the All-India National Congress Committee meeting in Karachi in late March 1931. Drafted by the Mahatma himself, the resolution in part read:

This Congress, while dissociating itself from and disapproving of political violence in any shape or form, places on record its admiration of the

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238 "Fiji Indian" to Editor, FTH, 11 August 1931, p.7.


240 "Fiji Indian" to Editor, FTH, 11 August 1931, p.7.

241 Ibid.
bravery and sacrifice of the late Sardar Bhagat Singh and his comrades Syts. Sukhdev and Rajgur, and mourns with the bereaved families the loss of these lives.\footnote{Resolution on Bhagat Singh and Comrades," All-India National Congress Committee, Karachi, 29 March 1931; Report of the 45th Indian National Congress, p.32; C.W.M.G., vol.45 ... July 1971 (Asadha 1893), p.363.}

This Congress resolution seems to have inspired Vishnu Deo's resolution passed by the Hindu Mahasabha on 21 June 1931 in the Suva Town Hall, although Deo's version removed Gandhi's subordinate clause "dissociating ... and disapproving" of Bhagat Singh's violent act. And while Vishnu Deo and the other Fiji Indian leaders evidently kept themselves well informed about official Congress resolutions, they probably were less knowledgeable about the trend of events as expressed, in a more diffused manner, in the Indian press. For in the immediate aftermath of the Congress resolution, another British official was murdered\footnote{Mr Peddie, District Magistrate of Midnapore, was shot dead by terrorists on 7 April 1931. This information, and the following note on the slain wife of a British officer, is taken from two notes provided by the editors of The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (see C.W.M.G., vol.46 ... August 1971 [Sravana 1893], p.1, notes 1 and 2).} and the Sikh League, in imitation of Congress, passed a resolution praising Sajjan Singh, the convicted killer of the wife of a British officer.\footnote{The lady's name was Mrs Curtis. She was killed in Lahore on 13 January 1931 (see ibid.).} This run of events gave Gandhi second thoughts about the wisdom of the Congress resolution. The Mahatma voiced his regrets in an article published in mid-April 1931, only two weeks after putting forward the Congress resolution.
The extolling of murderers is being overdone. If we are to sing the praises of every murderer because the murder has a political motive behind it, we should proceed from praising the deed to the deed itself. The praising of Sajjan Singh as a hero raises a doubt in my mind about the wisdom of my having been the author of the Congress resolution about Bhagat Singh. My motive was plain enough. The deed was condemned. The spirit of bravery and sacrifice was praised. The hope behind was that we would thereby be able to distinguish between the deed and the motive, and ultimately learn to detest deeds such as political murders.... But the effect of the Congress resolution has been perhaps quite the contrary. It seems to have given a passport for extolling murder itself.245

It seems that unaware of, and consequently unguided by, the Mahatma's second thoughts, the leading light of Fiji Indian politics had seized upon too readily, and emulated too enthusiastically, the official Congress resolution.

But even as the Fiji Indians, with one voice, bid defiance to the communal electoral arrangements spelt out in the Letters Patent of 1929, communalist tensions within Hindu society in Fiji arose again in wrath to perplex the counsels of Fiji Indian unity.

Hindu Communalism Revisited

The advent of the new year A.D.1932 brought in its retinue a resumption of communalist confrontation between the Aryas and their sanatani fellow Hindus. The readers of the Fiji Samachar were the first unsuspecting constituents of a recruitment effort to broaden the conflict to come -- at

least, those readers whose eye fell on a certain item in the 9 January 1932 issue, a notice issued under the auspices of the Arya Samaj, Suva. Translated from the Hindi, it read:

Book of debate. This book will be printed and ready after three weeks. Whoever desires to order a copy should send 5/- speedily to the secretary of the Arya Samaj, otherwise he will regret it. There is a great present demand for the book [and] after it is sold out [those who fail to secure a copy] will be very sorry for themselves. 246

Interested members of the Hindi-reading public hastened to secure copies of the book. And not all the customers who entered the premises of the Indian Printing and Publishing Company Limited at 44 Waimanu Road, Suva, were quite what they seemed. Sheoprasad (sometimes written "Supersad") Sharma, a clerk employed in the Inspector General’s office, was one such customer. For the sum of three shillings, Babu Ram Singh, the proprietor of the Fiji Samachar, sold Sharma a copy across the counter on 9 January 1932, little knowing that the customer was a police agent. The copy ended up in the hands of Inspector Kermode of the Fiji Constabulary.

The book was not on sale for much longer. The first intimation that the storms of communalist controversy were once more to be unleashed was conveyed in a brief item in the Fiji Samachar, one with the heading "Shastra[r]th in Fiji with the Arya Samaj" and the sub-heading "Taken away by Police."

246 Arya Samaj advertisement, FS, 9 January 1932, vol.6, number 2, p.16; translated from the Hindi (at the request of the presiding judge, Suva Police Court, 15 February 1932) by A.W. McMillan, Inspector of Indian Schools; cited in FS, 20 February 1932, vol.6, number 8, p.4.
In the afternoon of the 12th January 1932, Inspector Kermode and Sergt. Indar Singh called at the office of the Fiji Samachar and took away all the undelivered copies of the "Shastrarth in Fiji with the Arya Samaj," a compilation of correspondence between the Sanatan Dharm Sabha of Suva and the Arya Samaj, containing the subject matter of the religious debate in writing held in June 1931.247

The police also secured testimony from members of the public who had purchased copies of the book. Two were found: Khargu (also written "Khargoo"), "a cultivator at Nasinu," and Bhagwati Prasad, who lived at Flagstaff.248 Both men had purchased a copy of the book from Vishnu Deo at the Fiji Samachar office on 11 January 1932.249

The police laid the book in the hands of the judiciary with a view to determine whether, according to law, it contained "dissolute, lewd, impure, gross and obscene matters to the manifest corruption of the morals as well of youth as of other liege subjects of our ... King, in contempt [of] his Crown and dignity."250 The Acting Chief Police Magistrate decided that it did. Pronouncing judgement from the bench, on 27 January 1932 he ordered the destruction of all copies.

G.F. Grahame and A.D. Patel, appearing for the Indian Printing and Publishing Company, lodged a notice of appeal,

247 FS, 16 January 1932, vol.6, number 3, p.17.
248 See FS, 20 February 1932, vol.6, number 8, p.4.
249 This police work can be inferred from the account of the subsequent court proceedings reported (see ibid.).
250 Ibid., p.3. Hollins Cromton, representing the Crown, cited this splendid passage of statutory law when presenting his case.
which they later changed to an application for leave to appeal. On 1 March 1932 the application was heard by Captain Maxwell Anderson, R.N., the Chief Justice, who gave his decision the following day. It seems that the case was judged by British statutory law, not by colonial ordinance.

His Honour ruled that the Imperial Act under which the action was taken was an act of general application to the Colony. His Honour was of [the] opinion that the procedure followed by the Acting Chief Police Magistrate was right and that he would not grant leave to appeal. 251 

That sealed the fate of the offending book. But the Chief Justice decided nonetheless on a stay of execution because, he said, he wanted his decision against the book to have no bearing on certain "criminal proceedings pending." 252 He therefore ordered that the confiscated books were not to be destroyed until fourteen days after the conclusion of the Criminal Sessions of March 1932. 253 

"Criminal proceedings pending"? In what was becoming something of a judicial ritual to mark the climax of a bout of communal confrontation amongst the Fiji Indians, Babu Ram Singh was once again in the dock -- this time, with Vishnu Deo for company. Their preliminary hearing took place on 15 February 1932 at the Suva Police Court. G.F. Grahame conducted the case for the defence. He posited that the whole

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251 FS, 5 March 1932, vol.6, number 10, p.5.
252 Ibid.
253 See ibid.
affair was essentially a private religious debate between two opposing Hindu sects, sanatani and Arya, and did not warrant a response by the public authorities. The Arya side of the debate was represented to the public at large by the offending publication *Religious Debate in Fiji with the Arya Samaj*. To prove that this work was part of an internal Hindu theological exchange of views, between Aryas and sanatani Hindus, Grahame cited extensively from *Vriddhi*, a source that has so far lain beyond our reach. *Vriddhi*, as the Acting Governor had once explained in a dispatch to the Colonial Office, was "a Hindi-English newspaper published in Suva and controlled by Mr I.H. Beattie ... a wealthy European Medical Practitioner." We have mentioned the name of Hamilton Beattie in our pages above and he earns another mention in our pages below. His paper, *Vriddhi*, advanced a sanatani Hindu view of the controversy, and it is mainly through its pages that we can appreciate that the Arya and sanatani Hindu communities were the main parties to the dispute, and that the colonial state had been brought in at a late stage, at least six months into the controversy, and even then only because Arya enthusiasm had led to an act which breached the indecency laws, thereby requiring Crown prosecution.

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254 Seymour to Amery, 1 June 1929, p.3; C.O.83/186. By the time this dispatch reached London, Leopold Amery had departed the Colonial Office and Lord Passfield had taken his place -- a ramification of the change of government that took place on 4 June 1929.

255 For mention of Hamilton Beattie, active amongst the Fiji Indians in one way or other, see Chapter One, p.37 above and Chapter Five, p.335 below.
The British colonial judiciary, it emerged, were not the only body of men in Fiji who regarded the Arya book as obscene: it was a view held by many sanatani Hindus. Thus, just a few days after the Arya book was available for sale, Vriddhi had contended:

It is heard that Pandit Murarilalji Kaushikacharya Shastri will reply to the filthy book dealing with Shash[tr]arth (religious debate) in which mean and obscene attacks are made on the gods and goddesses of the Sanatan Dharmis. 256

Evidently the Arya and sanatani Hindus were in the midst of a bitter communalist controversy -- despite the continuing unity of both tactics and purpose which the Hindus and non-Hindus, as a united Fiji Indian national body, were still displaying in the ongoing Fiji Indian boycott of the Legislative Council. We are here brought face to face with one of the major problems arising from our research: the need to explain the structure of Fiji Indian politics, one which evidently permitted inter-Hindu communal confrontation and Fiji Indian national unity to function simultaneously. But we won't venture to theorize on this central point of our study -- not yet. Let us return to the Suva Police Court to observe the arraignment of Vishnu Deo and Babu Ram Singh.

From Grahame's evidence submitted in court we learn that Vriddhi attacked the Arya religious stance again in a late January 1932 issue. In its eagerness to discredit the Aryas,

256 Vriddhi, 14 January 1932; quoted by Counsel for the Defence, Suva Police Court, 15 February 1932; cited in FS, 20 February 1932, vol.6, number 8, p.3.
Vriddhi, on 26 January 1932, reported that the confiscated Arya publication had been "condemned as indecent" -- even though the Acting Chief Police Magistrate did not deliver any such judgement until the following day.\(^{257}\) Having made this point, Grahame again cited from the pages of Vriddhi. The editor had written:

> In giving evidence for the defence Mr Vishnu Deo proceeded to describe the religious differences prevailing among the Indians in Fiji, but this was not considered relevant to the point at issue -- the indecency of the book in question. It is rumoured that the Arya Samaj are collecting money for the legal expenses of this case. We doubt whether many people will be anxious to advertise their lust for and appreciation of indecent literature by subscribing to such a cause.\(^{258}\)

As Grahame presented the case for the defence, the facts of the matter were elaborated. Five hundred copies of the pamphlet had been printed of which 254 had been confiscated by the police. Another fifty or so copies had been dispatched to overseas subscribers\(^{259}\) -- an intimation of the wider Arya network, of which the Fiji chapter of the sect was part, linking the Fiji Indians with Indians overseas, presumably mainly in India. That left about two hundred Hindi-reading Fiji Indians who, according to the court charges, had been exposed to the corrupting influences of the Arya book. The

\(^{257}\) Vriddhi, 26 January 1932; quoted by Counsel for the Defence, Suva Police Court, 15 February 1932; cited in FS, 20 February 1932, vol.6, number 8, p.3.

\(^{258}\) Ibid.

\(^{259}\) See FS, 19 March 1932, vol.6, number 12, p.5.
supposed indecency of certain passages of the Arya publication was the central focus of the proceedings against Deo and Singh. The passages in question had been chosen by the Arya leaders from a body of ancient Indian writings known as the Puranas.260 The Puranas had played a major role in the formation of Hindu civilization, in some ways even more so than the Vedas. According to Anand Swarup Gupta:

Although the Veda has been regarded as the primary source of dharma, yet the religion of the Hindu society has been predominantly Puranic.... Moreover, while the study of the Veda was reserved for the highly educated section of the upper classes, called dvijas, and was, therefore, not accessible to the lower strata of the society, the Purana was meant both for the upper classes as well as the masses in general.... The Puranas have been the main source of inspiration for the religious thoughts and socio-cultural activities of the Hindus.261

It seems that the Arya leaders had chosen to call into questions religious writings of critical importance to sanatani Hindu beliefs.

The contents of the offending book were not quoted directly as, so a newspaper reported, "[i]t was agreed that the passages should not be read in open court."262 Victorian

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260 The Puranas, or "Legends" of the gods, were composed in the first millennium A.D. (circa A.D.300-900). Along with earlier sacred writings such as the Vedas, Brahmanas, epics (Ramayana and Mahabharata) and Laws of Manu, the Puranas were part of the corpus of Hindu holy text, according to sanatani perceptions.


262 FTH, 15 February 1932, p.8.
notions of public probity, it seems, were alive and well in our period of colonial Fiji.

A.W. McMillan, Inspector of Indian Schools, was called to the stand. McMillan, competent in Hindi, had translated certain selected passages of the Arya book where the Puranas were extensively quoted. "The Purans," McMillan explained for the court's instruction, "were part of the Hindu religion, although certain sects did not accept them, such as the Arya Samaj, and are regarded as sacred by the Sanatan Dharm."263 After McMillan had given evidence, Babu Ram Singh reserved his defence, was committed for trial, and bail was set at £20 along with two sureties of £20 each. Attention then turned to Vishnu Deo, the second defendant, whose arraignment followed the same process and had the same outcome.264

On 7 March 1932, Babu Ram Singh and Vishnu Deo pleaded not guilty to the charge laid against them of selling the offending book, Singh to Sheoprasad Sharma, the police plant, and Deo to Khargu, the farmer from Nasinu. Two days later, the case came before the Chief Justice. The press reported that the "keen interest shown in the case was manifest in the large attendance of members of the Indian community, there being a large overflow outside the Court."265

263 FS, 20 February 1932, vol.6, number 8, p.4.
264 For an account of Vishnu Deo's arraignment, see "The Second Case," ibid.
265 FTH, 9 March 1932, p.4.
Babu Ram Singh’s court appearance was something of an anticlimax. D.C. Chalmers, a Lautoka barrister representing the accused, asked that "the original plea of not guilty be substituted for one of guilty." As when he issued a public apology to S.S. Chowla over the libel case, Babu Ram Singh seemed to fade somewhat when things came to the crunch.

But Vishnu Deo was made of sterner stuff. G.F. Grahame, appearing for Deo, asked leave to re-open the pleading and for an additional count to be added: namely, "that accused unlawfully caused to be sold a certain indecent, scandalous and obscene book." From the bench, the Chief Justice protested: "But that is a more serious offence." Grahame replied: "It is a misdemeanour under the common law." The amendment was agreed. Deo proceeded to deliver his plea.

The Arya press reported:

Mr Vishnu Deo adhered to his previous plea of not-guilty to the charge of selling the Shastrarth book to Khargu and pleaded guilty to the charge of procuring the publication and sale of the Shastrarth book, which in the eyes of the common law of England contained obscene passages from the Purans.

The common law misdemeanour to which Deo had pleaded guilty was a less serious offense than the breach of statutory law.

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266 FTH, 9 March 1932, p.4.
267 FTH, 9 March 1932, p.4.
268 Ibid.
269 Ibid.
270 FS, 12 March 1932, vol.6, number 11, pp.13-14.
D.C. Chalmers addressed the court in mitigation. Chalmers conceded that the offending passages of the *Puranas* were obscene and that the government had the duty to destroy the book. Then he stated the case for mitigation.

For the incidence of liability the law assumes that a man intends the reasonable consequences of his acts; and under this rule liability cannot be escaped. But when the question of extent of liability is raised, then, your Lordship, I feel that I may with justification draw attention to the actual state of mind accompanying the act. Succinctly, it was a theological discussion which has inadvertently wandered into court.\(^{271}\)

In the interests of religious freedom, Chalmers held that "the merits of this controversy are entirely outside the case," and that in pleading guilty, Babu Ram Singh and Vishnu Deo were "in no measure surrendering the principles for which they are contending."\(^{272}\) Chalmers went on to tie up the case.

In effect, the publication is an attack on these offending passages and intended as a condemnation of them. The ideals were right, the methods wrong. Had the pamphlet, instead of quoting the passages *in extenso*, merely referred to them, it is submitted with great respect that the pamphlet would not offend in law. It is a matter of method.\(^{273}\)

Chalmers appealed to "the religious teachers ... [to] expunge from the religious literature these offending passages, or at least permit them to drop into obscurity."\(^{274}\)

\(^{271}\) Ibid.

\(^{272}\) Ibid.

\(^{273}\) Ibid.

\(^{274}\) *FTH*, 9 March 1932, p.4. Also see *FS*, 19 March 1932, vol.6, number 12, p.3.
G.F. Grahame rose to plead in mitigation for Vishnu Deo. His client, Grahame reminded the court, was "an Arya Samajist -- a modernist of Hinduism -- and as a result of attacks emanating from Sanatan Dharm pandits on the Arya Samaj beliefs and a challenge to debate, an arrangement was arrived at by which [the two groups' respective arguments could be put in writing]."  

Grahame continued:

The Arya Samajists in their effort to vindicate their belief that the Puranas in parts accused their ancestors, deities, seers and sages with gross indecencies and impure practices of the most filthy and unnatural description have referred ipsissima verba to parts of the Puranas and have come within the mesh of the law. I believe their intention, so far as they had any, actually was not to "corrupt" public morals -- it was to reform those who already ... in their belief are exposed to and affected by such corrupting influences.

It remained only for the court to decide on the penalty to be imposed. Anderson, the Chief Justice, first issued a stern reprimand.

You Vishnu Deo have been a member of the Legislative Council of this Colony and both you and Ram Singh have sufficient education to realise that no community will permit an outrageous and obscene attack upon the religious beliefs of any section thereof.... [Y]ou are treading on dangerous ground. Religious disputes have never throughout the history of the world assisted the progress of the human race; more often they have led to rupture and bloodshed, and bloodshed may lead to charges of treason.

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275 FS, 19 March 1932, vol.6, number 12, p.3.
276 Ibid., p.4.
277 Ibid. The same passage of the Chief Justice's address, word for word, was reported in FS, 19 March 1932, vol.6, number 12, p.6.
In winding up his judgement, the Chief Justice cited the words of "a distinguished Indian judge." It was an interesting commentary on the Arya role in Indian society.

The Arya Samaj ... stands for progressive and militant Hinduism. On the one hand its leaders are often at odds with orthodox Brahmanism on questions of social reform; on the other, they carry on an active propaganda directed ... against Christianity and the religious beliefs of their Moslem fellow countrymen.

Singh and Deo were fined £5 each and ordered to contribute £25 to the costs of the court. Both men were also ordered to put up £25 together with two sureties of £25 "to be of good behaviour for the ensuing twelve months."

The two Arya defendants had lost the case. Yet, with a view to the context of the Arya-sanatani debate on the religious significance of the Puranas, the Aryas had scored a victory of sorts; for the judicial arm of the colonial state had pronounced the Puranas as obscene -- or at least those selected passages of the Puranas cited in the offending Arya publication. This may help to explain why the court action was accorded such thorough reporting by the Arya press, every session of the court being faithfully recounted.

278 FTH, 9 March 1932, p.5. Also see FS, 19 March 1932, vol.6, number 12, p.6.

279 Ibid.

280 For the full text of the verdict, see ibid.

281 A comparison between the Fiji Samachar and the Fiji Times and Herald is instructive on this point. The FS accounts of the trial sessions were fully reported, mostly in the first person form, while the FTH accounts were a little less thorough and written mostly in the third person form.
the Arya press content with complete coverage, but also commented editorially at length on proceedings.

One of these editorial offerings, unearthed by our research, took us rather aback. From the pen of either Babu Ram Singh or Vishnu Deo, both of them fresh out of the dock and in deliberation together, came this eulogy of Captain Maxwell Henry Anderson, R.N., the Chief Justice of Fiji -- a commentary on the stern reprimand Anderson had addressed to Deo and Singh, the two convicted defendants, at the close of the trial.

We express our grateful appreciation of the kind advice which His Lordship the Chief Justice was pleased to give to the Community as a whole. His Lordship advised all "to leave religious disputes out of the purview of public debate or controversy," "to exercise toleration," not to expend "time and energy reviling or holding up to ridicule the beliefs of any community" and to work together "loyally for the ... betterment of all classes ... regardless of the religious faith of any particular section or individual." We welcome this advice.282

The two Arya leaders were not dissembling. Babu Ram Singh and Vishnu Deo not only voluntarily broadcast this statement in their press organ but actually followed up on the advice received. For early 1932 was to be something of a watershed period for Hindu communalism in Fiji, a time that marks the beginning of the decline of inter-Hindu communal conflict, its removal from the stage of high politics in Fiji, and its replacement by a Fiji Indian nationalist mode of politics.

282 FS, 24 March 1932, vol.6, number 13, p.3.
The purpose of our study has been served by our illustration of the continuing communalist milieu of local Fiji Indian politics, even in the midst of Fiji Indian unity at the national level over the issue of the common roll. An explanatory framework for this phenomenon shall be provided in our Conclusion. But for now, let us now review our chapter findings.

We have observed how, amongst the Fiji Indians, the Arya Samaj was the first Hindu organization to contend for Indian empowerment in the politics of the colony. And, in terms of political style, where the Aryas led, the sanatani Hindus followed -- at least until the mid-1930s. In keeping with the sect's theology, the Arya style of politics was strongly weighted towards racially and ethnically informed interpretations. An alternative approach would have been to impose a class analysis on the woes of colonial society; but solicitude for the lot of the working man was not a noticeable preoccupation of the Arya leaders, a group of men themselves drawn from the professional and commercial classes. Of course, given European and Fijian attitudes of racial disdain of things Indian, it might have happened anyway that representative politics in a steadily democratizing Fiji would have shaped itself into racial compartments; but, with the Aryas forming the Fiji Indian political van, it ensued the more certainly. The very word "Arya" was itself an assertion of racial pride and distinctiveness and, as Vishnu Deo
informed a puzzled Legislative Council, Indians (by which he meant Aryan Indians) could not be considered "natives," not even in India.\footnote{283 This, of course, was a slap for both the non-Aryan South Indians and the native Fijians.} This, of course, was a slap for both the non-Aryan South Indians and the native Fijians.

In respect to the inter-connectedness of Fiji Indian politics with the politics of the subcontinent, our study of the Hindu communal groups in Fiji has disinterred a wealth of evidence of how, first, the Arya Samaj and, following suit, the sanatani political groups acted as conduits whereby ideas, issues, and even personnel from India were brought to Fiji to assist Hindu sectarian political mobilization. The Arya missionaries and sanatani pandits thus summoned to Fiji supplemented significantly the flow of other, mostly secular, leaders sent to the colony -- especially the three Gujarati lawyers that Gandhi (himself a Gujarati lawyer) encouraged to settle in Fiji: namely, Manilal Maganlal Doctor, S.B. Patel and A.D. Patel. This Indian subcontinental communalist contribution to the sectarian development of Fiji Indian politics is not always understood and, in the existing literature, it has never been adequately acknowledged. In the pages above, we have attempted to rectify this deficiency.

Inter-Hindu communal tensions have been the central focus of interest of this chapter. The contrast between the two main Hindu groups in our period was perhaps best expressed in

\footnote{283 The reader can refresh his memory of this incident in the Legislative Council by turning to Chapter Three, pp.210-212 above.}
a speech delivered by Mahatma Gandhi to the Ahmedabad branch of the Arya Samaj on 12 January 1920. On that occasion, the Mahatma, just like the Chief Justice of Fiji when he delivered his verdict at the 1932 indecency trial, was in a rather critical mood. He told the assembled Aryas:

I have especially observed two defects in the present Arya Samaj movement. One of them is asahishunta; in English it is described as intolerance. I do not go to the length of saying that this is found in the Arya Samaj alone, but certain it is that the Arya Samaj has allowed itself to be carried away by the prevailing wind.... I have never seen any good coming out of intolerance. Propagation of religion in such a spirit is only an imitation of [Western Christian] missionaries and takes the same form as their activities, with the result that propagation comes to be the be-all and end-all of dharma.... Sir Alfred Lyall writes in a book of his that real dharma spreads so silently that the people do not even know that it does.

In making these observations, the Mahatma, it seems, anticipated the judgement of Captain Maxwell Anderson, R.N., Chief Justice of Fiji, by a margin of twelve years. Still addressing the assembled Aryas, Gandhi illustrated what he meant by drawing an analogy between the silent spread of

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dharma and the silent, slow but sure growth of a tree. Having expounded on this first fault, Gandhi then addressed the second flaw in the way of the Aryas.

The other defect which I observed in the Samaj is lack of restraint on the tongue. These days the tongue is in greater use than the sword and, the way it is used, the wound it inflicts is more painful than that by a sword. I have often noticed in the sermons that the Samajists exercise no control over their tongue... Think and reflect over the temper of the rishis and munis. You will see that they preached the truth with the utmost gentleness, without ever getting excited.²⁸⁷

Perhaps we can recognize in the points raised by the Mahatma some of the peculiarly Arya qualities which bedeviled the Fiji Indian politics of our period.

We have completed our illuminating moment of communion with the Hindu community of Fiji. It is now time for us to consider the activities of the Muslims, another communal group of Fiji Indians that made their mark on the politics of the colony.

Chapter Four

Muslim Separatists

La ilaha illa Allah . . . Muhammad rasul Allah

-- Koran

The difference between Hindus and Muslims was, and still is, the most fundamental cultural difference within the Fiji Indian community. Historically, the distribution of Hindus and Muslims amongst the Fiji Indians averaged out at a six-to-one ratio. Of the 60,969 Indians brought to Fiji under indenture, 14.6 per cent had identified themselves as Muslim, most of them North Indians who had embarked from Calcutta. In the years that followed the ending of indenture the proportion of Muslims seems to have stayed fairly stable, the 1936 census recording 11,290 Muslims out of a total Fiji Indian population of 85,002 -- a numerical relationship which computes as 13.3 per cent. This was a proportion markedly lower than the 24 per cent of the population of British India (in 1941) that was Muslim, but quite close to the 10 per cent of the people of truncated India (in 1951) and even closer to the 12 per cent of the people of present-day India (in 1991) allegiant to Islam.

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1 Koran, sura 2, verse 164 and sura 48, verse 30: "There is no god but Allah.... Muhammad is the messenger of Allah."

2 See Lal, "Fiji Girmitiyas: The Background to Banishment"; in Vijay Mishra (editor), Rama's Banishment . . . 1979, p.18.

3 The years indicated in parenthesis are Indian census years. Since 1881, the Government of India has conducted a census in every year ending with the integer "1" -- that is, in 1881, 1891, 1901 and so on up to, most
The term "Muslim" means "a follower of Islam." The word can also be used as an adjective -- in the sense that to be muslim is to be faithful, devoted (to Allah). The term "Islam," the name of the religion or way of life (Ar. din), is usually translated as "submission" (to the will of Allah). Islam was first pronounced, then established, by Muhammad (A.D.570-632), an Arabian prophet (610-632) and oasis-state ruler (622-632). It burgeoned into a full-blown civilization, complete with a universal faith and a universal state, within the span of a single human lifetime, from Muhammad's first revelation (610) to the battle of Karbala (680).

But while Islam grew to its full stature in the proverbial three score years and ten, the last twenty years of this progress, from the death of the Caliph Ali (A.D.661) to the death of his son, Husain, at Karbala (A.D.680), witnessed the transformation of a political faction, the party of Ali (Ar. Shi'at 'Ali), into a distinct and increasingly detached Muslim sect and, eventually, group of sects: the Shi'a. In a development parallel in time, the main body of the Muslims claimed the inspiration of Muhammad's behavioural example (Ar. Sunna) as their own distinct basis for religious and political
legitimation,\footnote{The Koran, of course, provided for all Muslims the foundational basis for religious and political legitimation; but precisely because primary acknowledgement of Koranic text is common to both Sunni and Shi'a, the Koran is not an element of the explanation for the Sunni-Shi'a split.} -- distinct, that is, from the Alid rationale. They set themselves off from the Shi'a by describing themselves as Sunni Muslims.

At this juncture, let us establish that we do not need to devote any further space to consideration of Shi'a Islam. The Muslims of the Fiji Indian community were and still are overwhelmingly Sunni. In interviews with officials of the Fiji Muslim League conducted in March 1993, we were assured that there were no Shi'a Muslims in Fiji. This may be correct. From our own research, we ourselves have concluded that a separate Shi'a Muslim group never surfaced into public view in the Fiji of our period. But this is not quite to say that Shi'ism never had any followers in Fiji; for, under unfavourable conditions, it is the practice of most Shi'a sects to dissimulate, to conceal the messianic aspects of faith peculiar to Shi'a Islam under an outward show of allegiance to the dominant Sunni norms. So, in the classical spirit of historical research, one which ponders the unknown as well as pronouncing the known, let us leave open the possibility of a crypto-Shi'a Muslim presence in Fiji.

Despite the absence of Shi'a Muslims in the public life of the colony, the Sunni Muslim section of Fiji Indian society did not thereby constitute in Fiji the entirety of things
Islamic (although for the opening decade of our period things did have that appearance). For in the 1930s, Ahmadi Muslims of the Qadiyani sect, some of whom were already active in the colony’s public affairs in generic Muslim guise, established a distinctive sectarian presence amongst the Fiji Indians. For the moment, we shall defer elaboration on the origins and nature of the Ahmadiyya, and on the reasons for the division between the Ahmadi believers, into the Lahori and Qadiyani sects. It is sufficient to recount that the Fiji Indian Muslim community was not religiously homogeneous, that at best it was an amalgam of distinct sectarian parts, Sunni and Ahmadi; and that at worst the issues which arose on the Muslim internal divide could at times be more bitterly contested than the perennial concerns of Fiji Indian society which demarcated Muslim from non-Muslim.

We shall now proceed to consider the activities of the two main organizations that gave expression to the Muslim viewpoint amongst the Fiji Indians: the Fiji Muslim League and the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat-i-Islam. The League was the first of these Muslim communal organizations to be formed.

Fiji Muslim League

On 31 October 1926, the Fiji Muslim League was formed. The following day, the advent of the new organization was reported in the press.

A representative meeting of the Mohammedans in the Colony was held at the Toorak Mosque ... for the formation of the Fiji Muslim League.
Representatives from Lautoka, Nadi, Ba, Labasa, Levuka, Navua and Rewa were present and it was unanimously decided that the society be non-racial and non-political, but social and religious. The Board consists of Abdul Aziz Khan, President; X.K. Nasirudin, Vice-President; Munshi Nasir Ali, Secretary; S. Kifayat Hussain, Assistant Secretary; Ata Mohammed, Treasurer, and twelve other members.  

The founders of the new organization were evidently aware of the possibility that they might be drawn into situations of confrontation with the members of other communal groups. Their response to this understanding was to attempt, from their organization's very beginning, to minimize the likelihood of such confrontation. Thus, with a view to assuage any suspicions of intended religious proselytization, the Fiji Muslim League decided to include the following rule in its charter: "Discussions in rebuke to other religions or of a political nature will not be allowed at any meeting of the League."  

This press notice which reported the formation of the Fiji Muslim League itself calls for comment. It will be recalled that the founding in December 1904 of the Fiji chapter of the Arya Samaj passed unnoticed in the colony's press, as indeed did the establishment in December 1917 of the Arya Pratinidri Sabha. In view of the different treatment accorded the later formation of the Fiji Muslim League, we are perhaps

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7 FTH, 1 November 1926, p.4.

8 Charter of the Fiji Muslim League, Rule 32; cited ibid.

9 To recall our commentary on this press deficit, see Chapter Three, p.142, n.11 and p.143, n.12 above.
entitled to assert that in the nine years following the founding in 1917 of the second Arya organization, the Indian presence in the public life of the colony had become significantly more visible. The cause for the difference is not difficult to discern; for these were the same years which saw the ending of indenture and the commencement of the moves to enfranchise the Indian communities settled in British colonies -- the first process being advanced primarily by the Raj, the second by the Colonial Office, both actions having been prompted by pressure from the Indian nationalist movement.

There was here also a pattern of timing between landmark political events in India and Fiji which warrants comment. In India, the All-India National Congress had been formed in 1885, the All-India Muslim League in 1906 -- an interval of twenty-one years. In Fiji, the Arya Samaj was formed in 1904, the Fiji Muslim League in 1926 -- an interval of twenty-two years. As in India so in Fiji, the Muslims organized a separate political institution one generation after their Hindu compatriots.

The Fiji Muslim League played a particularly important role as a social organization for Fiji's Muslims. In our work with the sources, we were occasionally given a glimpse of this dimension of League work. Consider for example the following press report of April 1928.

The Fiji Muslim League held a general meeting at the Jumma Mosque, Toorak, yesterday afternoon. A
large number of Muslims were present, including people from Lautoka and elsewhere, to bid farewell to the departing Muslims who are leaving the Colony by the Immigrant Vessel Sutlej.... A young Muslim lad named Mohammed Yusuf, who is going to India for education at the Aligarh Muslim University, gave a ... speech ... in which he very ably expounded the Beauties of Islam.\textsuperscript{10}

It is a commentary on the importance of the religious and social, as opposed to the political mission of the Fiji Muslim League that competition between branches of the League was not in evidence nor, before the public advent of the Ahmadiyya, were efforts made to form an opposing Muslim organization. On the surface at least, harmony seemed to characterize relations between the various district and local branches of the Fiji Muslim League. Branch meetings of the League quite often had members from other branches present, much along the lines of the reported meeting of the Nausori branch in October 1928.

On Sunday, the 21st instant, the first Annual General Meeting of the Nausori Branch of the Fiji Muslim League was held at the Jame' Mosque, Nausori. There was a large attendance. The office-bearers of the Suva Head Office [of the Muslim League] were also present.... The meeting opened with a prayer and a hymn by Maulvi Hyder Buksh. Mr A. Ghafoor Sahu Khan was voted to the chair. The students of the "Hidayat-ul-Islam" School sang a welcome song.\textsuperscript{11}

Yet not everything was quite as it appeared. Underneath the surface of events, elements within the Fiji Indian Muslim community dissentient of Sunni norms were biding their time. Present at such League meetings were many Ahmadi Muslims

\textsuperscript{10} FTH, 16 April 1928, p.6.

\textsuperscript{11} FTH, 27 October 1928, p.7.
maintaining a generic Muslim identity and who, in later years, were to secede from the League and form a separate Ahmadi Muslim organization.

In the years that followed the formation of the Fiji Muslim League, the League's annual general meetings provided a regular occasion for the airing of issues important to the colony's resident Muslims. The leading elements of the Muslim community could use their positions in the League as a platform from which they could make inroads into the colony's political system, expounding the Fiji Indian Muslim point of view. It was not long before Muslim League leaders were contributing a Muslim representative viewpoint to Fiji politics. In this respect, liquor prohibition was the first issue which attracted Muslim attention.

On 30 November 1926, the Fiji Times and Herald featured an article by A.W. McMillan that argued the case for an extension of the prohibition laws. The article was entitled "Partial Prohibition in Fiji: Doomed to Failure." Its author was apparently reaching out for support from the colony's Indian Muslim residents.

True it is that a minority of the Indian immigrants into Fiji hail from the drinking low-castes of N. India and from the toddy-drinkers of Madras.... But taken as a race they are abstemious, and they despise the very name of intoxicating liquor, usually on religious grounds. As a member of the All-Fiji Muslim League said to the writer a week ago, "The 7,000 Mohammedans in the Colony stand for Prohibition."12

12 A.W. McMillan, "Partial Prohibition in Fiji: Doomed to Failure"; FTH,
The Fiji Muslim League had been in existence for less than four weeks and already it was registering in the politics of the colony.

Prohibition was an important issue in Fiji in the late 1920s. As in India so in Fiji, it was an issue ready-made for popular mobilization of Indian society, an issue that Hindus and Muslims could each claim as their own and over which, potentially, they could quite readily unite. Moreover, as McMillan's article demonstrates, there were in Fiji significant sections of the Fiji European community which supported prohibition and recognized potential allies amongst their Fiji Indian neighbours.

In mid-1927, the drive for prohibition received a stimulus from the efforts of Reverend L.M. Thompson, the Secretary for Education of the Methodist Missionary Society of Australia. Methodism was the majority Christian denomination amongst the Fijians.13 Seemingly, the Reverend Thompson, returning to Fiji in 1927 after an absence of many years, saw evidence that Demon Drink was making headway in the Fijian Methodist flock. He took the occasion of an opportune introduction to W. Ormsby-Gore, a British cabinet minister, to impress an urgent appeal for official prohibition in Fiji. As he wrote to Ormsby-Gore: "Drunkenness is increasing especially among young

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30 November 1926, p. 6.

13 About 85 per cent of Fijians were Methodist, most of the remainder being Catholic.
Chiefs (Fijian)" and that "equally serious is the situation amongst the Indian population."

Ormsby-Gore approached L. (Leopold) C.M.S. Amery, Secretary of State for the Colonies, and asked him to investigate the matter. Amery instructed Sir Eyre Hutson, the Governor of Fiji, to conduct an investigation into the liquor problem in the colony.

The Governor ordered his administration officers to report on the liquor situation in the colony. As far as the Fiji Indian community was concerned, the British officials were unable to discover evidence to verify Reverend Thompson's perception of a deteriorating social fabric. McOwan, the Secretary for Native Affairs, reported that there had been a very considerable increase in the number of permits issued during the past few years to Indians but these have been mostly confined to the better educated class, the well to do cultivators, artisans and taxi car drivers. Except insofar as the welfare of the Fijians is affected through the possibility of illicit traffic [of liquor] ... [there is little cause of concern for the] immoderate use of liquor by Indians. They are much too thrifty and careful to spend their earnings on drink.\footnote{McOwan was cautioning, but Indian consumption itself was unlikely to reach immoderate levels. Pearson, the Secretary for Indian Affairs, agreed with the general thrust.}

Liquor might be passed on by Indian procurers to Fijian consumers, McOwan was cautioning, but Indian consumption itself was unlikely to reach immoderate levels. Pearson, the Secretary for Indian Affairs, agreed with the general thrust.

\footnote{Thompson to Ormsby-Gore, 9 July 1927; cited in the "Memorandum by the Secretary for Native Affairs on the Liquor Question in Fiji," 8 May 1928, p.3; C.O.83/180.}

\footnote{"Memorandum by the Secretary for Native Affairs on the Liquor Question in Fiji," 8 May 1928, pp.3 and 4; C.O.83/180.}
of McOwan's assessment, but thought that Indian abstinence arose from more than merely a sense of thrift. In his own report, Pearson disclosed an additional, religious reason.

[A] factor which I think does, on the whole, conduce to temperance is the religious revivalist spirit which has taken some hold both among Hindus through Arya Samaj activities and among Mohomedans. Both movements advocate abstinence and in so far as they influence the population they must help the temperance cause.16

In receipt of his officials' reports, the Governor conveyed their import to Amery.

I am of the opinion that existing conditions referring to the use of alcoholic liquor by Fijians or by Indians in the Colony do not warrant, at the present date, my moving the Legislative Council to amend the Law to impose further restrictions.17

In the interval between his requesting and receiving Hutson's assessment of the liquor question in Fiji, Amery himself had paid a brief visit to the colony. It was the first ever visit to Fiji of a Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Indian community in Suva took the opportunity to petition Amery for redress of grievances. With a view to take full advantage of the occasion, the various Indian groups combined to present the petition as a united community. The petition called for more Indian schools, an increase in the number of Indian members in the Legislative Council, the abolition of the residential tax and several workplace and

16 "Memorandum by the Secretary for Indian Affairs on the Liquor Question in Fiji," 13 June 1928, p.5; C.O.83/180.

17 Hutson to Amery, 21 August 1928; C.O.83/180.
land leasing improvements. For his part, Amery took the opportunity to urge the Indians to accord Fiji their first allegiance.

I would ... remind you that the important thing is that you should identify your interests with those of Fiji as a whole, and while naturally proud of your origin ... [to work] together ... as a single community and [to] forget ... here in Fiji any differences that may possibly divide Indians at home.18

It was not surprising that Amery took the opportunity of his visit to Fiji to address the problem of Fiji Indian disunity. For Amery, the formation of the Fiji Muslim League would have sounded a warning bell: that the embittered relations between Hindus and Muslims in India proper were extending their countenance of reproach from India Office territory to his own Colonial Office turf. This was the perception also of many people in Fiji, it being a common reproach voiced by observers of the Indian communal scene that the inspiration for communal dispute amongst the Fiji Indians came from India proper.19

Whatever might have been the source of its inspiration, the formation in October 1926 of the Fiji Muslim League was symptomatic of the rising tensions which were developing between Hindus and Muslims in Fiji. Indeed, within a few weeks of the League's founding, Fiji witnessed the first major

18 Amery's "Reply to Address from Indian Community," 24 December 1927; C.O.83/180.
19 For one of many examples of such complaint recorded in our pages, see Chapter Four, pp.287-289 below.
incident which brought Hindus and Muslims into open communal confrontation.

Communalism Rampant

The issue which arose centred around the activities of Muslim butchers, especially those involved in the marketing of beef products. This was an issue open to disputatious Hindu and Muslim religious interpretations: for the Hindu religion prohibits the killing of cows and the eating of beef, practices considered entirely proper under Islam. It seems that feelings against these practices amongst the Hindus of the Suva-Rewa area had been building up for some time during the early 1920s. In any event, the issue in late 1926 of a state licence for the opening of a slaughter-house at Koronivia provided the spark for a Hindu-Muslim communal confrontation.

The first intimation of likely communal conflict over the proposed slaughter-house issue to register with the colonial authorities came in the form of a letter from a leader of the Sikh community of Samabula to the Inspector General of Constabulary, Suva. It in part read:

Sir, I have the honour to inform you that on the 13th day of April, 1926 a written complaint was made to the Gurdwara Committee by the Mohamedans of Nasinu that some of the Sikhs killed a pig for eating purposes and as a matter of religions the Mohamedans of Nasinu felt it strongly and they asked the Gurdwara Committee to go into the matter and forbid the Sikh community of Nasinu from killing pigs for eating purposes which would stop the religious feelings and quarrelling.... Now, as Enait of Koronivia, Rewa, applied for the license
of a butchery, and it is against the Sikh religion to kill cows and if Enait would be granted permission to erect a butchery, the Sikh community of Nasinu, no doubt, will start to kill pigs and there may be serious trouble between Hindoos, Sikhs and Mohammedans which may be spread in the districts of Rewa and Suva. Therefore, I beg to ask that the Central Board of Health may be asked to refuse the registration of a slaughter house to Enait in order to prevent the religious fire between Hindoos and Mohammedans.  

The colonial authorities acted swiftly to settle the mounting controversy. On 1 December 1926, the Central Board of Health met to determine the official position. On the following day, the press reported the outcome. It seemed that the ramifications of Hindu-Muslim communal attitudes were extending beyond the bounds of the Fiji Indian community, that such attitudes were beginning to affect state-society relations in Fiji.

The Inspector General of Constabulary reported that the petition from Indians against the granting of the application by one Enite for a slaughter house license was genuine and the people signing were concerned at the prospect of having cows killed.... Enite, the applicant, wrote that instead of a European officer coming out to make enquiries, Sergeant Munsha Singh had come and turned the people against him and his proposal. He said Munsha Singh was the wrong kind of officer to send out.... It was decided that consideration be deferred until the members of the Board and M.O.H. and the Inspector visit the site proposed.  

"Munsha Singh was the wrong kind of officer," the Muslim butcher had complained -- meaning, of course, that a Hindu or

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20 Indar Singh, President, Gurdwara Committee, Suva to Inspector General of Constabulary, Suva, 28 November 1926; FTH, 3 December 1926, p.4.

21 FTH, 2 December 1926, p.4.
Sikh official was, in Muslim eyes, an unwanted and distrusted type, that a European official was much to be preferred. It was a protest which queried whether Fiji Indian officials could, with public confidence, serve a secular state.

A week later, the Board’s decision was put into effect. As the *Fiji Times and Herald* reported on 8 December 1926:

> Some of the members of the Central Board of Health paid a visit of inspection yesterday to the property of Enite, on the Suva-Rewa Road about the 11-mile post.... The site ... is some 12 to 14 chains from any dwelling and cannot possibly provide a nuisance. The proposed slaughter-house will meet the requirements of the regulations.... The site is on a breezy upland, with plenty of natural drainage and will provide a healthy and suitable site for the purpose.  

A very interesting judgement! It seems that the Muslim butcher’s qualms about having the issue decided by a non-Muslim Fiji Indian official were not unfounded, that Sergeant Munsha Singh’s earlier unfavourable appraisal of the suitability of the site of the proposed slaughter-house had been communally biased. Communalist attitudes amongst the Fiji Indians, it seems, were not confined to the members of communal organizations. Evidently, such attitudes could also be found in state officials of Indian origin, and these attitudes could be so strongly held as to corrupt the due process of office.

With the requirements of state regulations thus met, the licence to open the slaughter-house was duly issued to Inayat

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22 *FTH*, 8 December 1926, p.4.
(Enite/Enait) and his European partner. Here the matter could have been expected to rest, especially as it seemed that peacemakers were active amongst the Fiji Indian community. On 16 December 1926, the Fiji Times and Herald brought this promising development to public attention.

An interesting discussion took place last night at the Fiji Muslim League's Toorak Mosque between Mr Chowla and the leading members of the Fiji Muslim League. It was agreed that the Mohammedans had nothing to do with the proposed slaughter-house at Koronivia and that there should be no ill-feeling between the Hindoos, Sikhs and Mohammedans on the subject. Chowla undertook to approach the Gurdwara Committee and the leading Hindoos on the subject and ask them to be tolerant. 23

Here we see Sant Singh Chowla, the Indian Reform League leader of libel arraignment fame, 24 playing the part of Fiji Indian community mediator. It seems that he was endeavouring to pour oil on the troubled waters of Hindu-Muslim social relations. And another old friend of ours, Babu Ram Singh none other, was also actively involved, though with different intent: to ensure that (continuing the metaphor) any oil at hand be spread to feed the flames of communalist dissension. For the editorial report quoted above elicited a response, one which intimated that not all Indians were enamoured of the ruling of the colonial authorities on the slaughter-house issue nor noticeably in agreement with Chowla and the Muslim League

23 FTH, 16 December 1926, p.4.

24 For a reminder of Chowla's criminal libel suit taken out against the leaders of the Arya Samaj, see Chapter Three, pp.161-163 and 166-170 above.
leaders' call for communal tolerance. Thus Babu Ram Singh, with the intention of heading off Chowla's mediatory work, wrote to the editor:

It would be well for our readers to know that Mr Chowla was not representing either the Hindus or the Sikhs, when he discussed this matter with the Muslim League members. It is very difficult to understand why Mr. Chowla should have promised the Mohammedans to ask the Hindus and the Sikhs to be tolerant, in view of the fact that the Hindus are doing their very best to stop the license, thereby preventing the good relationship, that has been in existence between the different sections of the Indian Community, since coming to this Colony some fifty years ago, being broken.\textsuperscript{25}

Significant numbers of Fiji Indians saw the issue in a manner similar to Babu Ram Singh. As Enait and his partner proceeded to establish their business, they encountered continued opposition from activist elements of the local Hindu and Sikh communities. The issue came to a head in April 1927 when certain Hindu leaders of the Suva-Rewa area called a public protest meeting. The \textit{Fiji Times and Herald} commented on this development. From the editor's viewpoint, the rise in Hindu-Muslim communal tension amongst the Fiji Indians was attributed to alien elements from India proper.

We regret that there is evidence that attempts are being made to introduce the feuds of India into Fiji. It is alleged that an anti-Muslim meeting was held at Nasinu on Sunday [24 April 1927] and that the activities of a recently arrived priest from India are largely responsible for the bitterness which is already making itself felt. It is time the Government took notice.... We do not want the troubles of India in Fiji. Our Indian community has been a happy peaceful one in the

\textsuperscript{25} Ram Singh to Editor, \textit{FTH}, 21 December 1926, p.6.
past, and we want this condition to continue.... We have no use in Fiji for people who stir up religious strife.26

This editorial critique elicited a swift rebuttal from a reader, one who protected his anonymity by signing himself "A Sincere Samajist." The "recently arrived priest from India" the paper had written about was identified by the irate reader as "Pandit Shri Krishna Sharma, Arya Missionary." Chiding the paper for its depiction of the Pandit as a troublemaker who spent his time "running down Christians and Mohammedans," the "Sincere Samajist" protested:

Is it not a fact that the opening of the butchery by Inayat and the open sale of beef at Nasinu and Samabula is the cause of strained feelings between the two communities?... The Hindus are quite prepared to live on amicable terms with anybody, but they certainly protest to meat, such as beef, being cooked and eaten close to them, just to annoy them.27

The "Sincere Samajist's" rejoinder aside, the Fiji Times and Herald was probably to some extent justified in attributing the Hindu-Muslim confrontation of December 1926 and early 1927 to influences from India proper. Official sources indicate that the colonial authorities also believed that the confrontation over the slaughter-house had not occurred within a purely Fiji Indian context, but that the communal ramifications of what would have otherwise have been a minor local issue were augmented by the effect in Fiji of an

26 FTH, 27 April 1927, p.4.

27 "Sincere Samajist" to Editor, FTH, 2 May 1927, p.7.
incident which occurred in India. In December 1926, Swami Shradhanand, a Hindu leader, was assassinated by a Muslim.\(^{28}\)

When the news of his killing reached Fiji, the relations between Hindus and Muslims had noticeably worsened.

The assessment advanced by colonial officials for the rise of Hindu-Muslim communal confrontations in Fiji, namely, that instances of untoward communal incidents in India influenced communal relations in Fiji, was supported by a civilian observer of the Fijian scene. On 9 May 1927, the *Fiji Times* and *Herald* featured an article contributed by A.W. McMillan.

He maintained that

\[\text{few things impressed the writer in coming to Fiji from India in 1924 more than the amicable, friendly relations existing between Hindus and Mahommedans. They eat, drink and smoke together and attend each other's weddings and funerals in a way unknown in India; and as to the celebration of the Ram Lila Festival and the Mohurrum "Tazia" (where bloodshed is common in India), here in Fiji the friendly cooperation is such that many Europeans are to this day ignorant as to which occasion is connected with Hinduism and which is Mahommedan.... Unfortunately the past six months have seen a growing estrangement between the two sections of the Indian community.... Probably the inter-communal strife in India during the past two years has been a contributing or predisposing cause of increased sensitiveness in Fiji, producing a soil on which the germs of discord readily thrive.}\(^{29}\)

Having stated his view of the apparent decline in Hindu-Muslim relations in Fiji, McMillan addressed the causes for this deterioration. According to McMillan:

\[\text{For a reminder of the circumstances of Swami Shradhanand's assassination, see Chapter Three, p.161, n.43 above.}\]

\[\text{A.W. McMillan, contributed article; *FTH*, 9 May 1927, p.3.}\]
The aim in Colonies like Fiji must be to depart from those caste distinctions, causes of inter-communal friction, and factors that hinder national progress, and to blaze and explore new trails that will lead to Hindu-Muslim unity and show the path of progress to the conservative Motherland.\(^\text{30}\)

The good Reverend was evidently expecting big things of Fiji's Indian citizenry. As McMillan advanced to the heart of his argument it would have become apparent to his readers that, in the Reverend's view, the main onus for "blazing and exploring" new modes of communal interaction in Fiji lay with the colony's Hindus.

The question for Hinduism to face today is whether in a matter such as "Cow-Protection" she can adapt her ancient teachings to a twentieth century world? Whether she wishes to live in 2,000 B.C. or 2,000 A.D?... If she can get a modern outlook on this question she will overcome what is perhaps the greatest obstacle to Hindu-Muslim unity. Here in Fiji the eye must be not on the mythological past, but on the scientific present.... Instead of urging a social and economic boycott of Mahommedan brethren who happen to be beef-eaters like the Indo-Aryans of Vedic times, if a deputation of teachable, keen men were sent, say, to New Zealand, to see how the Cow responds to good treatment, much constructive work might result. Instead of reviving the caste spirit and persuading men to tread Old India's well-worn path of communal discord, let Hindu and Muslim Leagues in Fiji combine in the formation of a Dairy Improvement Society.... Obstructionists, negative tactics will produce wrangling and ill-feeling, but along constructive lines of research, Hindu-Muslim unity can be promoted -- a unity which is absolutely essential.... [L]et the devoted attachment to the cow which has come down through long centuries be directed into channels of scientific enquiry and practice. Let Fiji lead.\(^\text{31}\)

\(^{30}\) Ibid.

\(^{31}\) Ibid. McMillan's article was criticized by Pandit Shri Krishna in a public address reported by the Fiji Times and Herald on 4 June 1927
The tendency of European observers to compare communal relations in Fiji with prevailing conditions in India was demonstrated again in July 1927 when J.R. Pearson, appointed to the newly created position of Secretary for Indian Affairs, conducted a tour of Nadroga, Nadi, Lautoka, Ba and Ra "for the purpose of investigating conditions amongst the Indians." Upon completion of his tour, the Secretary was interviewed by the press. Perhaps we are entitled to surmise that Pearson, a former I.C.S. man, was well placed to make a comparison between Indian subcontinental social norms and developments on the same as pioneered by the Fiji Indians. "Conditions are so much different from India" Pearson said, that

[i]n some respects the Indians here are in the process of developing a social system of their own. There is a much more intimate contact between the members of different castes and religions than in India. They are on more intimate terms and take part in each others ceremonies to a greater extent. The Tazia is a very good example of this. Strictly speaking, it is a Mohammedan festival, but it has come so much a fair to all classes that it has lost all its religious meaning for the Mahommedans. In

(p.8). Shri Krishna was particularly incensed at McMillan's assertion that Indo-Aryans of the Vedic era (1500-500 B.C.) had been beef-eaters, something the Pandit vigourously denied. McMillan stood by his statement, defending his position by reference to modern scholarship on the subject in a letter printed in the Fiji Times and Herald on 10 June 1927 (p.6).

32 Interview with J.R. Pearson, Secretary for Indian Affairs; FTH, 19 July 1927, p.4.

33 The concept of Fiji Indians as pioneers of Indian social reform was first conveyed to us in a conversation with Dr Jagdish (J.P.) Sharma, the leading scholar of things South Asian at the Department of History, University of Hawaii. This astute insight into the possible historic ramifications of Indian settlement in Oceania occurred to Sharma during a period of study of Fiji Indian society he conducted in the 1980s.

34 Interview with J.R. Pearson, Secretary for Indian Affairs; FTH, 19 July 1927, p.4.
fact I believe the stricter Mohammedans rather repudiate it as a religious affair altogether.\textsuperscript{35}

This last observation was to be confirmed by later developments; for within three years the "stricter" Muslim repudiation of the Tazia noted by Pearson in 1927 was to grow into a Muslim demand for the banning of the event. Here we could usefully recall that we earlier theorized that the effort to effect communal exclusivity amongst the Fiji Indians was primarily an upper class characteristic, something arising from a deeper knowledge of communal origins which motivated a drive to achieve authenticity.\textsuperscript{36}

As the level of communal consciousness rose in the Hindu and Muslim compartments of Fiji Indian society, instances of Hindu-Muslim dispute became more frequent. One such instance occurred in late 1927.

It will be recalled that, in mid-November 1927, Vishnu Deo, the prominent Arya leader, made an inflammatory anti-Muslim claim concerning the welfare of a thirteen year old girl who supposedly had been threatened with sexual abuse by several leading Muslims of Lautoka.\textsuperscript{37} It had fallen to S.A. Raymond, the Secretary of the Fiji Muslim League, to respond to Deo's attack in a letter to the editor.\textsuperscript{38} In his letter, Raymond

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{36} To recall our line of thought on this matter, see Chapter Two, p.104 above.

\textsuperscript{37} For a reminder of this incident, see Chapter Three, pp.156-157 above.

\textsuperscript{38} For the text of selected passages of S.A. Raymond's letter, see
had mentioned that he had been "in communication with the Secretary of the Anjuman-Isha-at-ul-Islam at Lautoka and have received a reply in Urdu, of which a copy, translated in English, is submitted herewith."\textsuperscript{39} Mohammed Tawahir Khan was the secretary in question and, in his letter to Raymond, he provided a insider’s view of the process whereby relations between Muslims and Hindus in Fiji were becoming increasingly estranged.

\begin{quote}
[T]he Aryans are working up a religious strife against the Mohammedans. They are very uneasy over the Lautoka Mosque and are libelling Mohammedans with groundless assertions.... [A]s this affair [of the thirteen year old girl] concerns Mohammedans only -- and not a single Aryan -- I do not know what these people gain by making such untrue statements. The Aryans read newspapers from India and look down upon the Mohammedans contemptibly.\textsuperscript{40}
\end{quote}

Mohammed Tawahir Khan was here making a serious charge against the way in which the Fiji chapter of the Arya Samaj was conducting its political affairs, nothing less than an indictment against the Arya leaders of primary responsibility for the upsurge of communal animosity which bedeviled Fiji Indian public life in the late 1920s. And Khan’s arraignment continued:

\begin{quote}
Formerly we were passing our days in Fiji in concord and happiness. We had no religious quarrels and one religious section used to help the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{39} S.A. Raymond to Editor, \textit{FTH}, 29 November 1927, p.6.

\textsuperscript{40} Mohammed Tawahir Khan to S.A. Raymond, November 1927 (translated from the Urdu); \textit{FTH}, 29 November 1927, p.6.
other. Ever since the Aryans began to get their leaders out from India we have become faced with religious quarrels.... The Government ought to quickly fix these people who are causing trouble here, like in India. They wish to ruin Fiji, like India.  

It was a disturbing development. By late 1927, it seems, communal relations between Aryas and Muslims in Fiji were developing a confrontational dimension which reflected, if still somewhat mildly, the growing disharmony of Hindu-Muslim relations in the subcontinent.

The preceding passage touches on a rather controversial issue: the degree, if any, to which communalist ideologues from India proper, who visited or resided in Fiji, formulated and guided the communalist controversies and confrontations which afflicted Fiji Indian politics of our period. Of course, it is not a matter of dispute that secular modes of political expression amongst the Fiji Indians owed a great deal to adult India-born and India-trained uitlanders: Manilal Maganlal Doctor, Shivabhai Bhailalbhai Patel, Ambalal Dahyabhai Patel and Swami Rudrananda, to name but a few. But the general impression, imparted by the literature, is that the communalist leaders amongst the Fiji Indians were a more home-grown body of men. In terms relative to the secularist leaders, this general impression is probably correct. But not so in absolute terms. The Fiji-born communalist leaders, such as Vishnu Deo and Babu Ram Singh, shared the public platform.

41 Ibid.
with India-born communalists, especially itinerant missionaries and lecturers.

Let us witness an itinerant Indian communalist propagator about his business in Fiji. We were alerted to the presence of one such gentleman, a visiting Arya missionary active on the public stage in 1928, by a letter to the editor from K.S. Dean, Honorary Secretary of the "Jumma" Mosque, Toorak -- a letter dated 24 April 1928. "I was surprised to read the ... Report of Mr Jaimani's lecture in the Town Hall," Dean wrote, in reference to an article which had featured a few days earlier. As presented in his lecture to the good citizens of Suva and reported in the press, it was Jaimani's depiction of the Muslim concept of God/Allah which had moved Dean to write in protest. It seems that Jaimani had seriously misrepresented the orthodox Muslim position. Proceeding, at some length, to correct Jaimani's falsification of Muslim theology, Dean went on to level a charge at the Arya visitor, an arraignment which, alas, has come increasingly to inform our own thesis.

In a way it is not really astonishing if Mr Jaimini did really pass these remarks because nearly all the preachers of the Arya Samaj are to be found possessed of biassed feelings against Islam and Christianity and some of them even go so far in their lectures and writings as to distort facts. Mr Jaimini has come here ... in the pretence of teaching Vedic Philosophy but ipso facto he is merely preaching non-Islamism and non-Christian[ity] ... and not pro-Vedism, as he should.42

42 K.S. Dean to Editor, 24 April 1928; FTH, 26 April 1928, p.6.
Jaimani, Dean was saying, did not confine himself to praise of Vedic virtue, but evinced a negative attitude towards Islam and Christianity. Jaimani, let us remind ourselves, was an Arya missionary. And his, of course, was an attitude which we encountered repeatedly in the previous chapter, in our account of Arya Hindu activity.

To discover what sort of lecture Jaimani had travelled so far to deliver, we examined the sources for further evidence of his progress. Our search was not in vain. Jaimani did not remain long in Fiji. Indeed, he may have been on something of a British Empire lecturing tour, especially to colonies with resident Indian communities. In December 1928 he landed in Trinidad where he assumed a busy lecturing schedule. On this Caribbean leg of his journey, we are privileged with a view of him in action through the efforts of M. Hariprasad Sharma, the President of the Arya Sabha of Trinidad. In time to make the April 1929 issue of the Fiji Samachar, Sharma wrote to his fellow Aryas in Fiji on the progress of the man he referred to as "India’s Representative in Trinidad."

Shriman M. Jaimini, B.A., late Pleader Punjab, has been in our midst since 17 December 1928. He has delivered 30 lectures ... in Trinidad.... He delivers lectures on Indian culture, Vedic lore, Indian Philosophy, Indian Literature and Vedic religion.... He has removed misrepresentations and misunderstanding concerning India from the heart of foreigners. Now the Indians, especially students, fell proud of their ancient civilisation and Mother Culture. The idea of nationality and patriotism has been infused in the hearts of youth.\footnote{M. Hariprasad Sharma, "India’s Representative in Trinidad;" FS, April}
"Nationality and patriotism" we don't doubt; but not, it seems, as focused on Trinidad. Nor, we suspect, in Jaimani's lectures delivered in the early months of 1928, as focused on Fiji. Here, in respect to the political mobilization of Indians abroad, in British colonies outside the subcontinent, we come up against a formative characteristic: the tendency towards the advancement of a Greater India political identity. In the movement towards establishing self-governing states, and eventually building new nations, in colonies whose residents were drawn from a variety of recently intermingled ethnic and racial types, here was a handicap assumed, thinkingly or unthinkingly, certainly by the Arya and, to some degree at least, probably by all the Fiji Indian leaders.

Separate Representation?

The special social needs of the Indian Muslim community in Fiji occasionally called for political action in which the Fiji Muslim League played a representative role, direct or indirect, as the champion of Indian Muslim interests on the stage of high politics. The rather exacting degree of confinement of the feminine gender to the private realm peculiar to Muslim society provided the context to one such occasion.

1929, vol.3, number 4, p.9. We came across another note on the progress of "Pandit Jaiminiji Vedic Missionary," this time from "South America" (presumably, British Guiana), which mentioned that the colonial government of Trinidad had granted the travelling Arya speaker the right of free passage on the railways of the colony (see FS, 1 February 1930, vol.4, number 5, p.8).
On Friday 2 November 1928, a group of Indian Muslim ladies of the Suva area met in the house of Sakeena Sahoo Khan (Senior) in Toorak, Suva. They elected their hostess to the chair. Agreement was reached on several matters of concern. Resolutions were passed. Along with requests directed at the government "to lay pipe water supply from Flagstaff ... to the residents of Muanivatu, Vatuwaqa and Samabula" and to prevent "the smuggling of opium and charas into the Colony" and for legislation to "eliminate the importation of all intoxicants including alcohol," the ladies resolved:

That the Government be asked to appoint and station in Toorak a female doctor ... qualified to treat optical and maternity cases as we (Indian women) abhor the idea of being examined by male doctors. This office was to some extent filled by Mrs Hakim Din44 ... but since her departure we (Indian women) are left in despair.45

The ladies decided to entrust the leaders of the Fiji Muslim League with the task of bringing their concerns to the attention of the colonial authorities.

44 We have already met Hakim Din, though not his wife, when we considered the appointment in late 1927 of the Honourable John Caughley to the newly-created position of Director of Education (see Chapter Three, pp.171-172 above). Hakim Din, a member of the Board of Education, had assisted Caughley in formulating a new educational policy for the colony. Sometime in 1928, Hakim Din, owing to his wife’s indifferent health, had resigned from his Fiji Mission work and returned to India. When S.S. Chowla spent eight months on holiday in India in 1929, he met Hakim Din, in charge of a mission school in the Lahore district, about one hundred miles from the city. Chowla also met ex-Sergeant Thakur Singh, living on his pension in his village in the Lahore district. In Bombay, Chowla met Mr Mitra, formerly a resident of Nadi. For further details about these three Fiji Indian repatriates and a report on Chowla’s impressions of India in the grip of Mahatma Gandhi’s Civil Disobedience Satyagraha, see FTH, 27 August 1929, p.4.

45 Muslim ladies’ circle resolutions, Toorak, 2 November 1928; FTH, 8 November 1928, p.7.
The appeal by the Muslim ladies to the colonial government was not ignored. It seems that the ladies' request was received and considered by no less august a body than the Executive Council. And a reply favourable to the Muslim ladies' desires, as expressed in their November 1928 resolution, was communicated to the Muslim League.

In late 1929, the general public was informed of the government response to the Muslim ladies' request in a newspaper report on "Question Time" in the Legislative Council. As one item in a long list of measures proposed to the colonial authorities for the welfare of Fiji Indian society, J.R. Ramchandar, one of the Indian elected members, representing the Indian Eastern Electoral Division, had asked:

Will the Government consider the granting of a yearly subsidy for a lady doctor who would be prepared to undertake work amongst Indian women?46

J.R. Ramchandar was proposing this measure as part of a call for government intervention on a wide range of welfare recommendations. But on this particular item, the government had already pronounced. This gives us cause to wonder whether we have here caught J.R. Ramchandar and his two fellow-Hindu M.L.C.s, Vishnu Deo and Parmanand Singh, the two Aryas, with their politically representative shirts showing? The three Indian elected members evidently were not privy to happenings within the Indian Muslim community, for they did not know of

46 Question (17) by J.R. Ramchandar, Member for the Indian Eastern Division, 30 October 1929; F.L.C.D., Sessions of 1929 (October-November) ... 1930, p.136.
either the Muslim League's request to the authorities on this matter or the government's favourable response. From H.H. Rushton's, the Acting Colonial Secretary's, reply to Ramchandar's question, it seems that in order for a message to be passed between the Indian elected M.L.C.s and their own Indian Muslim constituents, the services of a British official spokesman was required. For Rushton told Ramchandar that

[a] request was received in September last from the Fiji Muslim League asking whether the Government would approve of the grant of a yearly salary to a lady doctor who would undertake work among Indian women in Suva, and the League was informed in reply that the Government would be prepared to support a motion, if introduced into the Legislative Council, inviting the Council to make such a grant on the following scale: (a) in respect of a lady qualified as Sub-Assistant Surgeon, £75; (b) in respect of a lady qualified as Assistant Surgeon, £75; (c) in respect of a fully qualified lady doctor, £150.47

In its rather ponderous way, Rushton's reply spoke volumes as to the integrity of the colonial order in Fiji. Despite the complete absence of public tub-thumping and ideologically inspired polemics, the Muslim ladies, acting discreetly through the good offices of the Muslim League, had not petitioned the colonial authorities in vain. We are indebted to the ladies for acting in the manner they did. For this incident is a useful illustration of how the political system worked in colonial Fiji, of how the colonial administration worked in colonial Fiji, of how the colonial administration

47 Reply to Question (17) asked by J.R. Ramchandar, Member for the Indian eastern Division, 30 October 1929; F.L.C.D., Sessions of 1929 (October-November) ... 1930, p.137. For a press notice partly recording and partly paraphrasing most of this exchange as it occurred on the floor of the Legislative Council between Ramchandar and Rushton, see FTH, 27 November 1929, p.6.
could and, in this case, did respond to the needs of one of the weakest, least politically active, and, indeed, almost invisible sections of the Fiji Indian community.

Two observations on state-society relations in colonial Fiji need to be highlighted here. The first is that when the Muslim ladies set out to communicate their concerns to the authorities, they instinctively turned to the Muslim League to, on their behalf, open up a line of communications between themselves and the colonial state. The second observation of interest to us is that, in responding favourably to the Muslim League's request, the British officials indicated that their preferred manner of approach would be "to support a motion, if introduced into the Legislative Council," on the issue at stake. Essentially, the British officials were endeavouring to persuade the Fiji Indian Muslims to make use of the existing parliamentary channels of communication. The British would have known, of course, that the leaders of the Fiji Indian Hindu majority community, many of them Arya, would, in any democratic political arrangement, likely sit astride the parliamentary path between Fiji Indian society and the colonial state. But it seems that the British thought that the best political system for the Fiji Indians would be one modelled on Westminster, not one designed to accommodate the objective realities of Fiji Indian society.48

To recall the Indian national secularist and Indian Muslim separatist rationales as voiced by their respective champions, Jawaharlal Nehru and Muhammad Iqbal, see Chapter One, p.17 above.
affiliations amongst the Fiji Indians, and the political representative ramifications arising thereupon, were factors the British preferred to discount.

We have seen the Fiji Muslim League in action, representing discreetly to colonial officialdom the concerns of a segment of Fiji Indian Muslim society. Now let us view the League in action on the wider public stage.

On 20–22 December 1928, about seven weeks after the Muslim ladies' meeting at Toorak under the chairmanship of Sakeena Sahoo Khan, a conference of the Fiji Muslim League was held. In view of the presence in the Suva area of Muslims from other areas who had come to attend the conference, the Second Annual General Meeting of the League was held on 23 December 1928, under the chairmanship of Syed Lateef Shah Saheb. Maulana Soofi Shah Mohammed Hassen Saheb Hanafi-alqadiri, D. Amiruddean, Nure Abdul Khan (Treasurer), M.S. Buksh, Munshi Raheem Buksh and X.K. Nasiruddean (Secretary) were present.

The Second Annual General Meeting passed four resolutions of which we ought to take note. The first resolution was that should the Government of Fiji desire to grant further scholarships to promising Indian Youths the funds would be better expended if the lads were sent to India for higher education, instead of New Zealand.49

In India, unlike in New Zealand, Muslim education was an option. In view of several instances which have come to our

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49 Fiji Muslim League resolution, Suva, 23 December 1928; FTH, 4 January 1929, p.3.
attention of young Fijian Indian Muslims going to India in pursuit of Muslim education, we are perhaps entitled to assume that sectarian as well as financial considerations motivated this resolution. We are encouraged in this belief by another resolution passed by the Muslim League that same day, which stated:

that as able teachers may not be available locally the Government be respectfully asked to pay particular regard to the teaching qualifications in Urdu of such teachers as would be selected in India to come out to Fiji and serve in the Government Schools for Indian children to be established here.

Here we are reminded that language, or in this case the optional written form of a particular north Indian language, is an element of Indian Muslim-Hindu communal difference. If the Fiji colonial government was intending to recruit teachers from India, the Fiji Muslim League was saying, then it should urge on prospective candidates a knowledge of Urdu as one of the officially recommended skills.

Educational issues were not the only ones to be expressed in resolutions passed by the Fiji Muslim League at its Second Annual General Meeting held in late December 1928. Issues concerning alternatives to English Common Law, as the colony’s

50 For recollection of the journey to India in April 1928 of young Mohammed Yusuf, see Chapter Four, pp.271-272 above.

51 Fiji Muslim League resolution, Suva, 23 December 1928; FTH, 4 January 1929, p.3.

52 In their spoken form, Urdu and Hindi are in most essentials the same language; but in written form, they are two separate languages — Urdu being communicated in a script derived from Arabic, Hindi employing the Nagari script derived from the written form of Sanskrit.
legal code, were also raised — along the lines of the resolution which in part read

that the Government be most respectfully asked to procure copies of the "Hindoo Law" and "Mohammedan Law" which are in use in the Courts of India and ... a handbook be prepared from the said Laws for the guidance of District Commissioners in the Colony.53

It was the practice in the law courts of the Raj to use the Sharia, the laws derived from Muslim jurisprudence, or its various Hindu equivalents, in cases involving Muslim or Hindu plaintiffs or defendants, especially when they involved issues of Muslim or Hindu family life. The Fiji Muslim League was asking that this British India practice be adopted in Fiji.

However, it was the last resolution passed by the Fiji Muslim League at its late December 1928 general meeting which addressed most directly the communalist issues which, in the late 1920s, were increasingly straining social relations amongst the Fiji Indians. It read:

That this Annual General Meeting feels alarmed at the anti-Islamic propaganda which is being assiduously fostered up all over the Colony by a certain section of the Indian community and respectfully appeals to the Government to take every precaution in safeguarding the interests of the Muslim Minority Community when political privileges are extended to the Indians of Fiji.54

We have no difficulty identifying the Aryas as the "certain section of the Indian community" of whose behaviour the Muslim

53 Fiji Muslim League resolution, Suva, 23 December 1928; FTH, 4 January 1929, p.3.

54 Ibid.
League men were complaining. In an even more evident reference to the activities of the Aryas, the Second Annual General Meeting of the Fiji Muslim League also made known that it took "strong exception to objectionable caricatures and pamphlets containing spurious writings and dialogues which are circulated throughout the Colony by a certain Association." It seems that some Aryas were distributing anti-Muslim pamphlets brought from India. The assembled Muslims directed a request to the government to "take rigid measures" to ban the importation of such literature.

It is clear from the resolutions quoted above, as passed on 23 December 1928 at the Second Annual General Meeting of the Fiji Muslim League, that Muslim separatists in Fiji looked to the colonial state to provide a political niche for the Muslim community, one separate from the main body of the Fiji Indian community. In the upshot, the maintenance of minority rights never became as operative a principle of government in Fiji as it was in India. It was, nonetheless, an approach to problems of government in Fiji which was optionally available, a line of approach which might have worked its way into the minds of colonial administrators on any occasion when the level of confrontation between the Fiji Indians and officialdom threatened the underpinnings of the colonial state. With this

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55 Ibid. The Aryas had been circulating pamphlets defaming the lifestyle, especially the sexual practices, of the prophet Muhammad.

56 See ibid.
possibility in mind, it made sense for the British colonial authorities to at least keep open a line of communication with the Fiji Indian Muslim separatists. They could never tell when they might need them to help counter an unwelcome move by the Fiji Indian majority community.

The other side to this coin was that it often served the interests of the Muslim community in Fiji to foster close relations with British officialdom and the Fiji European community. Let us recount an instance of such solicitation.

On 19 February 1929, the Fiji Times and Herald ran a contributed article on a four-day gathering, lasting from Wednesday 30 January to Saturday 2 February 1929, of "the Muslims from Lautoka, Ba, Nadi, Tavua, Nadroga and Suva" on the occasion of the opening of the newly built Lautoka mosque known as the Masjid-ul-Anwar, an event impressed on the contributor as "a sight that will be long remembered."\(^{57}\)

Reporting on the meeting held on 31 January 1929 with around four hundred Muslims present, the article continued:

Sergeant Zamin Hussain of Ba was unanimously voted to preside over the meeting.... [He] related the strenuous work done by Mohammed Towahir Khan Saheb [Secretary, Anjuman-Isha-at-ul-Islam] and Kitab Khan Saheb of Lautoka.\(^{58}\)

Maulvi Habib of Tavua and Maulvi Abdul Rahman of Ba were also present at the meeting. Both delivered a brief address. The Fiji Muslim League's recent decision to advise the

\(^{57}\) Contributed article, FTH, 19 February 1929, p.6.

\(^{58}\) Ibid.
deferral of further mosque construction in favour of the building of Muslim schools was mentioned, and endorsed. On Friday 1 February 1929 the main event took place: the opening of the new mosque. Mohammed Ibrahim Khan Saheb, the President of the Anjuman-Isha-at-ul-Islam was present. The Muslims present, now seven to eight hundred strong, had invited some British officials and local Fiji Europeans to attend. The main guests included A.M.O. Farquhar, General Manager of the C.S.R. Company; H.C. Monckton, the District Commissioner of Lautoka; H.H. Ragg, resident of Ba and a force to be reckoned with on the floor of the Legislative Council; and, yes, none other than J. Judd, back from his duties in Calcutta, now in his capacity as the District Commissioner of Ba. These European guests shared the front seats with an impressive number of Fiji Indian Muslim eminences, including Khalifa Abdul Karim Saheb of Nausori, Rewa; Maulvi Saiyad Rahman, Imam of the Jame Masjid, Toorak; Gulam Nabi; and Abdul Rahman Sahu Khan Saheb. Khalifa Abdul Karim Saheb addressed the assembly, saying that Muslims could "congratulate themselves for the Mosque and for the interest shown by the European community for the Muslim cause." It seems that in Lautoka social relations were quite cordial between the leading elements of the Fiji Indian Muslim

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59 For these and further lists of names of eminent guests, see ibid.

60 Address by Khalifa Abdul Karim Saheb, Lautoka, 1 February 1929; FTH, 20 February 1929, p.6.
community and their counterparts in both the British administration and the Fiji European community, and that here there was at least the potential for Anglo-Muslim political co-operation. Unhappily, this potential was not realized. The Muslim League leaders never won the electoral support of sufficient numbers of non-Muslim Fiji Indians so as to be able to exercise on behalf of the whole Fiji Indian community their evident aptitude for reaching out and acquiring allies over the barriers of race. This, as we have repeatedly observed, was an ability the Arya leaders noticeably lacked.

The festival of *Baqr-Id*\(^{61}\) for A.H.1347 was celebrated on Monday 20 May 1929 at Toorak Mosque, Suva. The prayers were led by Maulvi Saiyad Rahman Saheb, the officiating mullah for the Suva branch of the Fiji Muslim League.\(^{62}\) This event serves as a reminder of a topic we need to address: the issue of the public celebration of religious festivals, and of how these occasions sometimes served as a flashpoint for communalist disputes, especially between Muslims and Hindus.

Of Festivals and Frenzy

In our introductory chapter, we mentioned that communal differentiation of an exclusive nature was not evident amongst

\(^{61}\) Also written as ‘*Idu’l-Azha* or *Id-ul-zoha*. In the Muslim calendar, *Baqr-Id* celebrates the intended but aborted sacrifice by Abraham of his son Ishmael, the builder of the Kaaba (Ar. *ka’bah*, "square building") in Mecca and progenitor of the Arabian tribes.

\(^{62}\) For a report on this event contributed by a Muslim participant, see *FTH*, 28 May 1929, p.8.
the Fiji Indians during the early decades following their arrival in the colony.\textsuperscript{63} Under the rigours of indenture, the Indian workers' general condition of life fostered social homogeneity. As far as the plantation owners were concerned, of course, Indians were Indians. Not surprisingly, plantation work-force organization reflected the plantation owners' viewpoint. For their Indian labourers, life on the lines, in rudimentary and rather crowded circumstances, conferred precious little dignity of human difference -- of caste, religion or gender. Indians lived together in confined areas, worked together, ate together, intermarried and joined together in common celebrations.

Such celebrations included participating together in the festivals of the various Indian religions. The Shi'a Muslim festival of \textit{Muharram}\textsuperscript{64} became the principal annual celebration of the Fiji Indians during indenture. For our own part, we could note that the eastern districts of the United Provinces (Uttar Pradesh) contributed more indentured migrants for Fiji than any other region of India,\textsuperscript{65} and that these

\textsuperscript{63} See Chapter One, pp.15-16 above.

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Muharram} is celebrated by Shi'a Muslims during the first month of the Muslim lunar year. It marks the defeat and death of the Imam Husain in battle against the Umayyad Caliph Yassid I on 10 October A.D.680 at Karbala, southern Iraq. In Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and other areas of Shi'a concentration (such as Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, India), the festival features processions of Shi'a Muslim males who flail themselves bloodily with chains to mitigate the anguish generated by the memory of their ancestors' failure to adequately support Husain at his last battle.

\textsuperscript{65} This fact of Fiji Indian origins was unearthed by Brij Lal in his work on the genesis of the Fiji Indian community (see Lal, \textit{Girmitiyas: The Origins of the Fiji Indians} ... 1983).
same districts received their high culture from the nearby city of Lucknow, a cultural centre long dominated by Shi’a Muslims. From this set of observations, we could speculate that remembrance of the calendar of festivals commemorated in the eastern United Provinces was the reason why *Muharram* was chosen by the Fiji Indians as their main annual celebration. Known in Fiji as the Tazia, this celebration came to be marked by noisy, colourful frivolity rather than by strict observance of Muslim ritual. It seems that, during indenture, such displays of social communion did not raise sectarian objections of ritual improbity. Indeed, even as late as 1928 the Fiji press could carry the following advertisement:

A Tazia will be held at the C.S.R. Co’s lines on Saturday, 22 December [1928]. All are cordially invited.66

The advertisement was signed by the current members of the Tazia Committee, the three men organizing the proposed event: Bhawani Bik, Sinapatti, and Chukri Singh.

All three of the names of the members of the Tazia Committee indicated Hindu communal affiliations. The inter-communal fraternization to which the press announcement pointed, however, was an echo of the spirit of an earlier age: the era of indenture. In the new age of iron which had been ushered in by the Great War, the rampant forces of nationalism and communalism were everywhere ending the old order. Alas, the happy, carefree days of indenture, when confessional

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66 Tazia Committee advertisement, *FTH*, 21 December 1928, p.5.
differences were not a focus of outrageous enthusiasm, were a fading memory.

In the late 1920s, Muslim voices were raised to protest the perceived impiety of the Tazia -- a useful index of the growing diversity of the Fiji Indian community which attended the ending of indenture. In mid-1928, the Fiji Samachar commented on this growing Muslim opposition to the Tazia.

The Tazia is a festival of the Shia section of the Mohamadan Community. The Sunni section is totally against it. In Fiji it has lost its religious significance firstly because it is now celebrated by non-Mohamedans ... secondly because gambling and other vices are encouraged at the festival.\(^67\)

The protests eventually proved effective. In 1930 the Tazia was banned\(^68\) and in 1940, again at official writ, an attempted revival of the festival was aborted.

On 15 and 16 June 1929, the last public celebration of the Tazia was held at Muanivatu, near Samabula. The Acting Governor, A.W. Seymour, attended for about one hour, observers noting that he showed much interest in the proceedings.\(^69\) Evidently the event was a great success. The sources give us no intimation that Muslims objected to the presence of non-Muslims at the festival. This leads us to suspect that objections to the Tazia were propagated by ethnically aroused


\(^68\) For an insight on the official process which eventually led to the Tazia being banned, see C.S.O.1113/1930; in Gillion, *The Fiji Indians* ... 1977, pp.105-106.

\(^69\) See *FTH*, 18 June 1929, p.5.
elements of the Fiji Indian Muslim social elite, that the event still enjoyed the support of the larger part of the Fiji Indian social rank and file. If we are correct in thinking this, then it is a matter of remark that, in 1930, the protests of the elite won the day, that within ten years of the ending of indenture Fiji Indian society had developed a hierarchical structure which permitted the elite elements to condemn a popular festival and consign it to oblivion.

Perhaps the reason why Fiji Indian Muslims eventually felt motivated to take steps to curb the celebration of the Tazia was bound up with contemporary events occurring in the subcontinent. We should at least consider the possibility that growing tensions between Hindus and Muslims in Fiji in the 1920s, a development all too evident to the seasoned observer, were not entirely a result of the ending of indenture and an attendant increase in the cultural complexity of the Fiji Indian community. Another factor may have been the increasing contact between Fiji Indians and India proper. The early 1920s heralded a new era in India as much as in Fiji, and that a marked deterioration in Hindu-Muslim relations was one of its new features. Could it be perhaps that some of the political activity of the Fiji Indians in the 1920s and 1930s and the early 1940s was inspired by reports of similar activity in India proper?

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70 One such observer was the Reverend A.W. McMillan. To recall his observation, made in 1927, of the rising tide of Hindu-Muslim conflict, see Chapter Four, pp.284-285 above.
If our instincts have served us well and we are correct in our hypothesis as broached in the preceding paragraph, then the rising barrage of reports emanating from India of Hindu-Muslim communal clashes assumes some importance as a contributing factor to Fiji Indian communalist history. There was a depressing similarity to such reports, much along the lines of the news of the riots reported in a cable received from Calcutta on 1 July 1928.

Thirteen were killed and many injured in the Hindu and Moslem riots during the Moslem procession at Khar[agpur].

And, again, a few months later, the Fiji public read of another event where

[s]erious clashes between Hindus and Mohammedans, resulting in a large number of casualties occurred at the Ganpati Hindu Festival. At Surat and Nasik the Hindus attacked the mosque, while the Moslems were at prayer. At Surat the Moslems attacked the Hindu procession. A fracas between Sikhs and Moslems occurred at Hyderabad.

And the new year witnessed an intensification of communalist outrage perpetrated on the streets of many cities in India -- including Bombay, according to a press cable sent on 8 February 1929.

There have been serious Hindu-Moslem riots. The police twice fired on the Hindu crowds attacking the Moslem quarter.... Five were killed and 135 injured.... The total casualties in Bombay were 33 killed and 200 injured.

71 FTH, 2 July 1928, p.2.
72 FTH, 1 October 1928, p.5.
73 FTH, 9 February 1929, p.2.
And just two days later, the casualty list of the Bombay riots was updated.

Further serious rioting has occurred. The troops fired several volleys before the mobs dispersed, and prevented the Moslems and Pathans desecrating the Hindu temples. It is feared that there will be a heavy death-roll, which to yesterday amounted to 69 killed and 449 injured. 74

And on 13 February 1929, a cable confirmed the continuing mayhem.

Clashes between Mohammedans and Hindus are still occurring. The prevailing lawlessness has defied all government measures to restore order. The government has instituted a curfew order. 75

The report went on to state that the death-toll in the Hindu-Muslim riots stood at 123 killed, 757 injured.

It was in the context provided by the reports of Hindu-Muslim confrontation in India proper that the Fiji Indians approached their late-1929 initiation into representative democracy. To those familiar with the arguments advanced by the majority and minority confessional communities of the subcontinent in respect to political representative preferences, it will come as no surprise to learn that Hindu leaders in Fiji argued the case for a unitary electoral model premised on the concept of a secular Fiji Indian identity, whereas their Muslim counterparts asserted the need for an electoral system that reflected Fiji Indian society’s distinct, and occasionally discordant, confessional

74 FTH, 11 February 1929, p.2.

75 FTH, 15 February 1929, p.6.
allegiances. The debate between the two was played out in, amongst other places, the pages of the Fiji Samachar. Given that particular medium, it was a debate in which, of course, the Aryas controlled the terms of engagement and provided the editorial spin.

The proposed communal system of franchise, i.e., Europeans, Indians, and Fijians to elect their own representatives separately, is not very desirable for it has a tendency of sectionizing all affairs of the Colony and thereby creating a barrier which in time to come will prove detrimental to the future advancement of the Colony.... Now we regret to find that our misguided brethren are clamouring for sub-communal franchise.... [In India] public opinion is totally against it, and the witnesses before the Simon Commission have condemned it wholeheartedly.... We must always consider we are Indians, and therefore in all political matters we must never divide ourselves into Hindus and Moslems, or Bengalis, Panjabis, Gujratis, Beharis, Madrasis, and others. It is very sad to observe that "the Muslim Community" has taken a lead in the advocacy of sub-communal franchise. There is no anti-Islamic propaganda in Fiji and we therefore disagree with their resolution No.6 passed at the second annual general meeting of the Fiji Muslim League held on the 23rd December 1928. We quote below the resolution as published in the Fiji Times [and Herald] of the 4th January 1929.76

Vishnu Deo, soon to be representing the Indian Southern Electoral Division in the Legislative Council, depended, it seems, on the English-language press to keep him abreast of happenings amongst the Muslim community. From the pages of the Fiji Times and Herald he had learnt that the Fiji Muslim League had resolved

[t]hat this Annual General Meeting feels alarmed at the anti-Islamic propaganda which is being

76 FS, January 1929, vol.3, number 1, p.6.
assiduously fostered up all over the Colony by a certain section of the Indian community and respectfully appeals to the Government to take every precaution in safeguarding the interests of the Muslim Minority Community when political privileges are extended to the Indians of Fiji.\textsuperscript{77}

The "certain section of the Indian community" to which the Muslims were referring was undoubtedly Vishnu Deo and his fellow Aryas. Not surprisingly therefore, having stated the Muslim League’s position, the Arya organ went on to assert that Muslim anxieties were unjustified.

\[T\]he Muslim community have no ground to presuppose that the [Indian] elected members, whoever they may be, will not represent the interests of the Muslim Minority Community which forms a part of the Indian Community.... [We] trust that our brethren will yet realise the folly of their advocacy for sub-communal political rights to Indians in Fiji.... Let us get together and do good to ourselves as well [as] to the Colony, our land of adoption.\textsuperscript{78}

The passage quoted is an example of the type of polemics whereby the Arya press in Fiji engaged its Muslim and other communalist rivals. By the late 1920s, the Aryas had developed quite a sophisticated angle of approach, one which permitted a full display of the sort of attitudes likely to stoke the fires of communal discord. Let us see if we can catch this Arya technique, an aspect of public life in colonial Fiji by which the Aryas acquired a weighty advantage over their Muslim League opponents.

\textsuperscript{77} Fiji Muslim League resolution, 23 December 1928; quoted in \textit{FTH}, 4 January 1929, p.3; quoted, from the \textit{FTH}, in \textit{FS}, January 1929, vol.3, number 1, p.6.

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{FS}, January 1929, vol.3, number 1, p.7.
An item which appeared in the Arya press in early 1930 may serve our purpose, a report which built on an article published in an earlier issue which had censured the Nausori branch of the Fiji Muslim League. And here we are able to make contact at second hand with a source which, so far, has lain beyond our reach.

The Pacific Press dated 1st February has published a letter written by X.K.N. Dean ... Secretary of the Fiji Muslim League, in answer to our Nausori correspondent's notes published in the Fiji Samachar of the 25 January 1930 ... [regarding] a Muslim meeting and inflammatory speeches. 79

Having thus set the scene, the Fiji Samachar proceeded to quote from its own earlier issue a passage which, on its second printing as on its first, could be counted on to further inflame communalist passions amongst the Hindu section of Fiji Indian society.

On the 12th January at Nausori a meeting of Mohamedans was held in which Mr A.G. Sahu and other educated Moslems were present. In this meeting Hindus were called "Kafir" [Apostate], "Slaves" [U. Gulam], "Shoes of Mohamedans" [U. Musalmano ke Juti], and India as a place where Mohamedans marry [U. Sasural]. 80

Thus could Vishnu Deo and Babu Ram Singh, so to speak, pour oil on the fires of communalist discord: to capture the offending words in print and, not once but twice, deliver them up for reading at the breakfast table of just about every Hindu family in the colony.

79 FS, 8 February 1930, vol.4, number 6, p.11.
80 FS, 25 January 1930; quoted in FS, 8 February 1930, vol.4, number 6, p.11.
Our account of this incident is one of those many instances where it has been our unhappy obligation to disclose the tensions that informed Arya-Muslim communal relations within Fiji Indian society. This sorrowful duty, however, can be endured the more readily in that it has also been given to us to reveal that, quite often, one or other of the rival Fiji Indian communalist groups was successful in making common cause with some of the non-Indian communities of colonial Fiji. And here is an appropriate place to announce a finding arising from our study which no other historian of things Fiji Indian has yet had occasion to broadcast: that the Fiji Muslim League was the Fiji Indian communalist group which, in reaching across the barrier of race, demonstrated the greatest aptitude. In a newly-minted sovereign state such as Fiji, where the political order has had to strain mightily to contain the racial antagonisms within its fragmented citizen body, the Muslim League's apparent affinity for trans-racial political combination was an early pointer to an alternative line of development for Fiji Indian politics. Beginning with our account of political co-operation between certain prominent European religious leaders and the Muslim League in respect to the endorsement of prohibition in Fiji, we have already related several incidents where this Muslim League capability was on display,81 and now we shall relate another.

81 To recall a notable instance of the Muslim League working in harmony with Fiji Europeans and British officials, see Chapter Four, pp.301-303 above.
It will be recalled that, at a meeting of the Hindu Mahasabha held at the Suva Town Hall on 21 June 1931, Vishnu Deo and other prominent Aryas passed a resolution expressing their sorrow at the execution of Bhagat Singh and his fellow terrorists. This initiative by the Aryas evoked a hostile response from the Fiji European press. And a citizen who signed himself "Fiji Indian," who we suspect was a Fiji Indian Muslim, wrote a letter to the editor also in condemnation of the Mahasabha declaration. 82 This instance of a Fiji Indian Muslim aligning himself politically with the Fiji Europeans is of added interest, because it helps us demonstrate another controversial aspect of Fiji Indian politics: the close connexion which often seems evident between events occurring in India and Fiji. In his letter, "Fiji Indian" referred to the Hindu-Muslim riots which had occurred at Cawnpore in the aftermath of Bhagat Singh's execution. To drive home his point, "Fiji Indian" quoted from a report, issued in India, on the causes of the Cawnpore riots.

The immediate cause of the outbreak of the riots was the refusal of some Mohammedans to close their shops in honour of Bhagat Singh. 83 And, in further reference to Hindu Mahasabha activities in Fiji, "Fiji Indian" went on to say on his own impulse that

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82 To recall the words he wrote, see the three passages quoted from "Fiji Indian" to Editor (FTH, 11 August 1931, p.7) in Chapter Three, p.246 above.

83 Report on the causes of the Cawnpore riots, March 1931; quoted in "Fiji Indian" to Editor, FTH, 11 August 1931, p.7.
"[t]he Government should prosecute these agitators at once and nip their nefarious activities in the bud."\textsuperscript{84} It was an indictment of the Mahasabha resolution which would have come as readily to the pen of an opinion leader of the Fiji Europeans. With that comment, perhaps enough has now been said to illustrate the public style of the Muslim League, the first of our Fiji Indian Muslim organizations, for the time has arrived for us to consider the advent of the second.

\textbf{Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat-i-Islam}

In opening this section of our study, we have stepped onto a communalist rift within Fiji Indian society which is still very much active. Indeed, drawing on our fieldwork experience, the opportunity beckons for us to make use of anecdotal material.

We ourselves experienced an instance of what, in retrospect, seemed evidence of current Sunni-Ahmadi alienation. On 24 March 1993, we visited the Fiji Muslim League Headquarters (National Secretariat) in Samabula, Suva.\textsuperscript{85} Our informants at the Headquarters, despite our

\textsuperscript{84} "Fiji Indian" to Editor, \textit{FTH}, 11 August 1931, p.7.

\textsuperscript{85} The Fiji Muslim League Headquarters (National Secretariat) is located at the corner of Ratu Mara Road and Lakeba Street, Samabula, Suva. The Headquarters are part of a complex of buildings which include the Jame Mosque, a Library, the Head Office of the Fiji Muslim Youth Movement, and the Zanana Muslim League Kindergarten. The Headquarters' postal address is: P.O.Box 3990, Samabula, Suva, Fiji. Its telephone numbers are: 384566 and 385881; its fax number is: (679) 370204; its telex number is: FJ2279; and its cable address is: "Islam" Suva. All communications with the League should begin politely with the salutation: "In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful...."
queries as to whether any Shi'a Muslim groups were established in Fiji, mentioned not a word about the Ahmadiyya, even though an Ahmadi mosque was visible from outside the building within which we spoke, three hundred yards further along the same street. The Ahmadiyya, of course, are not viewed, either by themselves or by their non-Ahmadi fellow Muslims, as a Shi'a sect; so our Fiji Muslim League informants were not dissembling. But we have never been able to shake off the feeling that the general thrust of our inquiries should have alerted our Muslim League friends to an interest on our part in ascertaining the range of Muslim types present in Fiji, and that such a discernment on their part should have, at their initiative, interjected the word "Ahmadi" into our conversation. But the word was not disclosed.

Our knowledge of the Ahmadi saga had to be learnt from other sources. It is a story about which, probably, few of our readers are familiar. Earlier, we promised to provide an explanation as to the origins of the Ahmadiyya, and for their division into two opposing groups. It is now time to do so.

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86 The reader will recall that this query was answered in the negative (see Chapter Four, p.268 above).

87 The mosque in question was the Fazle Umar Mosque, owned and managed by the (Ahmadi) Muslim Association of Fiji. Adjoining rooms house the Ahmadi "Headquarters for Fiji and the South Pacific." The mosque is located at 82 Ratu Mara Road, Samabula, Suva. Its telephone number is: 382221. Displayed prominently on the front of the mosque-headquarters complex is an Arabic phrase and its English translation: "La ilaha illalla Mohammadur Rasoolullah: There is none worthy of worship save Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah." This is a statement with which no Sunni Muslim could posit theological fault. Perhaps we see here an effort by the Fiji branch of the Ahmadiyya to keep open the prospect of Sunni-Ahmadi reconciliation.
The Ahmadiyya movement originated in the religious teachings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (circa 1839-1908) of Qadiyan, a village located in Gurdaspur district, in the eastern Punjab. Ahmad was the son of Mirza Ghulam Murtaza and his wife Charagh Bibi. Ahmad's birth and early years coincided with a momentous change in political arrangements in the Punjab, and not a few of his many biographers have portrayed the two events in terms of cause and effect.

The very birth of Ahmad, the illustrious reformer of the world, blessed his parents and his family in a wonderful manner. Light came and darkness vanished. The days of adversity were turned into peace and prosperity. They had a two-fold reason for gratification: they were restored to peace and they came to enjoy religious freedom.

The restoration of peace and the introduction of religious freedom mentioned above were ramifications of the British conquest of the Punjab. This was effected in four hard-fought Anglo-Sikh wars, beginning in 1842, with a British advance across the Sutlej, for long the demarcation line between British India and the Sikh states, and ending in 1849, when the British established a new frontier at the Khyber Pass.

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88 Since accurate birth records are not kept in the villages of the Punjab and in view of the differences between the Muslim and Western Christian calendars, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's date of birth is a matter of conjecture. Some sources put the date as early as 1835, others place it as late as 1839. The official Ahmadi version maintains that their founder was born on 13 February 1835. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, in an article in the Encyclopaedia of Islam (second edition, Leiden, Brill, 1960) supports the 1839 date. For the purposes of our study, we shall employ the 1839 date, the same year that saw the death of Ranjit Singh (1780-1839), the "Lion of the Punjab" (militabat circa 1818-1839).

In retrospect, Ahmadi political interpretations served them true. In 1947, when the British marched out of the Punjab, the "days of adversity" which, prior to Ahmad's birth, according to the prophet's biographer, had been the lot of the Muslims of the eastern Punjab, returned. For with independence-with-partition, the Ahmadiyya, like all Muslims living in the eastern Punjab, were subjected to a particularly nasty example of what in that bourgeois-dominated era was euphemistically termed "population exchange," but for which our own age is indebted to the proletarian poetics of aroused Serb and Croat nationalists for the more graphic phrase "ethnic cleansing." The Ahmadi refugees relocated in the western Punjab, within the frontiers of the newly-minted Indian Muslim nation-state of Pakistan. There they founded a new city: Rabwa -- an event and choice of name inspired by Koranic verse. But while Pakistan served as a refuge for the main body of Indian Muslims, it was something less than that for the Ahmadiyya. For ever since their arrival in Pakistan, the Ahmadi Muslims have been the object of religious persecution, something insisted upon persistently at the social level by Pakistani Sunni Muslim enthusiasts and piously, if only intermittently and somewhat inefficiently,

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90 Koran, sura 23, verse 50: "And We made the son of Mary and his mother a sign, and We gave them refuge on a lofty ground having meadows and springs"; see Maulana Muhammad Ali (translator) The Holy Qur'an: Arabic Text, Translation and Commentary, Lahore, Ahmadiyyah Anjuman Isha'at Islam, 1951, p.670. In Arabic, rabwa means "a hill," translated here as "a lofty ground." Maulana Muhammad Ali, the translator of this English version of the Koran, was the leader of the Lahori sect of the Ahmadiyya, from the original split in December 1914 up to his death in 1951.
put into effect by the Pakistani state. In response to this oppression, many Ahmadi Muslims fled abroad. Since 1984, Hasrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, entitled Khalifatul Masih IV, the Ahmadi leader and fourth successor to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, has lived in London, where the Ahmadi world headquarters and official archives are now located.

What is it about the Ahmadiyya, we hear the question asked, that seems to bring out the worst in the Sunni Muslims? The answer is to be found by contemplation of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s chosen career. And this is an inquiry that relates directly to Fiji Indian history; for the negative reactions which occurred, in this respect, amongst Sunni Muslims in Pakistan occurred also amongst Sunni Muslims in Fiji, albeit without any attendant persecution by the colonial state.

For the first forty or more years of his life, Ahmad did little which stood out from the Muslim norms of the era. He entered adult life, made his way as a minor government clerk, married, had children, and participated in the affairs of his village community. He did, however, acquire a reputation as an outspoken defender of Islam, especially in public debate with missionaries of the Arya Samaj, an organization which, as we have already pointed out, had a remarkably high profile in the Punjab.91 We could speculate that, in a social milieu shaped in part by the mystical ethnic enthusiasm of the Aryas,

91 For a reminder of our theory of the Punjab and Fiji as Hindu frontier, and of how this might explain the unusually high level of Arya activity seen in the two places, see Chapter Three, pp.151-152 above.
some mystical beliefs of an Islamic type gained an entry, by a process of methodological osmosis, into the innermost psyche of the Ahmadi founder? In any event, as something of a development of his activities on the public stage, Ahmad, in 1889, experienced something which intimated a vocation which no Muslim, since the days of Muhammad, is ever meant to embrace: he received, or at least claimed to receive, revelation from Allah.

In effect, Ahmad, by none-too-subtle implication, laid claim to prophethood. And just for good measure, Ahmad later professed, quite directly, that he was the Promised Messiah (Ar. al-Masih Maw‘ud) -- that is, the Mahdi or rightly guided leader who, sacred text had long affirmed, was to come in the last days to save the Muslim community, from whatever perils it might feel it needed deliverance. And, while the Muslims of Ahmad’s acquaintance were digesting these weighty disclosures, the budding prophet also had some momentous tidings for the local Christians and Hindus. For further revelation established that Ahmad appeared in the likeness or "spirit" of Jesus of Galilee (circa 4 B.C.-A.D.29), and

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92 The Promised Messiah and the Mahdi, Ahmad claimed, were not two separate people but two divinely appointed offices held, so it had turned out, by the same person: himself.

93 According to Ahmadi theology, Allah revealed to Ahmad not only that Jesus was not alive in heaven, as both Christians and Muslims believe, but that he survived crucifixion, escaped the Romans by taking flight to Kashmir, died there, and was buried in a tomb in Khan Yar Street, Srinagar. Moreover, Ahmad claimed that, during his sojourn in Kashmir, Jesus was called the Masih, Arabic for "Traveller." Masih is one of the titles of the Ahmadi leader, as expressed by the title of the present Khalifatul Masih IV, which translates "Caliph Traveller the Fourth."
that he was also an avatar of Krishna. In all, Ahmad chalked up a formidable list of providential and theophanic admissions.

In the main, neither Christians nor Hindus showed much interest in Ahmad's pronouncements, either in acceptance or repudiation. A few local fellow Muslims, however, accepted his claims. They formed the core of his eventual following. But most Muslims within Ahmad's social orbit denounced him as a charlatan, one who had taken a decisive step into heresy, distancing himself from the ways of Islam. For the Koran is quite definite on this point: that Muhammad was the last of the prophets, "the seal" (Ar. khatam-um-nabiyeen), no less, of that exalted species.94

It would outrage the terms of our study for us to provide an explanation of the many theological niceties which underpinned or, so his adversaries insisted, invalidated Ahmad's prophetic status.95 It is sufficient for our purposes to mention the subtle distinction made by Muslim

94 Koran, sura 33, verse 40: "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the prophets"; see Maulana Muhammad Ali (translator), The Holy Qur'an ... 1951, p.812.

theologians between those who receive revelations about new truths and those who receive advice about needed reform of the old. For in 1914, six years after Ahmad’s death, his followers split into two factions over this issue, the main body of the Ahmadiyya subscribing to the rather provocative view that the founder was a fully qualified prophet (Ar. nabi) entrusted by Allah with a new message for mankind, the smaller following holding to the, for Muslims, less outrageous belief that Ahmad was a reformer, one who explained more fully the ancient truths of Islam. The first and larger group was identified as the Qadiyani, named after Ahmad’s village where, for the duration of the Raj, the main body of the Ahmadiyya continued to be based, while the second and smaller group was called the Lahori, named after the capital of the Punjab where they established their headquarters.

The Ahmadiyya who established themselves in Fiji were of the Qadiyani persuasion. When first they arrived in the colony, they comported themselves socially in generic Muslim guise. As long as they maintained this discreet front, it proved an effective cover -- and indeed, the year of their arrival and the course of action in which they first put down roots in Fiji Indian society are items which have defied our research. So we cannot pronounce on the progress of their early years in the colony -- not, that is, until they declared their hand and made their entry onto the public stage. When they did go public, however, the furor their declared presence
set off in the Muslim community at large cautions us to view their earlier clandestine existence with some understanding. But now, with the veils removed, let us view them in action.

In 1938, the Ahmadi Muslims formed the Muslim Association of Fiji. A press report of November 1938 provides us with a glimpse of an early response by the Sunni Muslim community to the realization that heresy was abroad in the land.

[C]rowded meetings of Muslims [have been] held simultaneously in the Mosques of the various districts of Ra, Tavua, Ba, Lautoka and Nadi on the occasion of the Jumma-tul-Wida (i.e. the last Friday during the month of Ramadhan) on November 18 after the Friday prayers.96

It seems that these meetings had unanimously passed certain resolutions, the gist of which varied little from a certain serial form.

This annual congregation of Moslems assembled in this Mosque solemnly resolve that a handful of persons in Fiji calling themselves as the Ahmadiya community otherwise known as the Mirzai community are definitely held by us in conjunction with the whole Islamic world as outside the pale of Islam. It is further resolved that [the] Hon. Mr S. Hasan be requested to approach the Government with the above resolution and respectfully impress the Government that the said Ahmadiyas ... in no way represent either the Moslems or Islam even if they style themselves [the] Muslim Association of Fiji.97

That was the pattern of response in Pakistan too: for opposition to the Ahmadiyya to be expressed first at the social level and for the state to be petitioned to take action

96 FTH, 21 November 1938, p.3.

97 Resolutions passed at mosques throughout Viti Levu, 18 November 1938; ibid.
against the heretics -- with the significant difference that in Pakistan the measures urged on the authorities were usually decidedly more drastic than was the case in Fiji. This was a difference, we think, which was determined by the anticipated official reception of the Sunni Muslim remonstrance, there being a general understanding in colonial Fiji that the administrators of the British Empire, unlike those of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, did not regard enforcement of religious orthodoxy as an activity lying within their purview.

The campaign by the leading elements of the Sunni community to publicly discredit the Muslim credentials of the Ahmadiyya elicited a speedy rebuttal. The day following the report of the anti-Ahmadiyya resolutions, a letter from M. Hanif Akbar, Secretary of the (Ahmadi) Muslim Association of Fiji, appeared in the correspondence section of the Fiji Times and Herald.

We wish to state that the Muslim Association of Fiji represents Muslims of all sections and shades of opinion, and, consequently represents the members of the Ahmadiyya Society as well.... It is quite incorrect to say that there was any such thing as an "Annual congregation of Moslems" in any part of the Colony on last Friday. The annual congregation of the Muslims will be held on next Thursday (24th inst.), which is known as Id-ul-Fitr.... If Mr Hasan wished to see the regard in which the Muslim Association of Fiji is held he should have been present at the crowded meeting organised by this body at Samabula on the occasion of the visit of Dr. Kunzru.98

The Dr Kunzru mentioned by M. Hanif Akbar in his letter to the editor was none other than Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru who,

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98 M. Hanif Akbar to Editor, FTH, 22 November 1938, p.7.
in 1938, was the President of the Servants of India Society and a member of the Viceroy's Council of State. For many years a close associate of V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, who had been President of the Servants of India Society before him, it was Kunzru who, in New Delhi on 2 February 1927, had introduced a motion on the floor of the Imperial Legislative Assembly for the adjournment of the House to discuss the adequacy of the elected representation proposed for Indians in the Fiji Legislative Council. 99

Despite the confident assertion of public acceptance of things Ahmadi sounded by M. Hanif Akbar, Secretary of the (Ahmadi) Muslim Association of Fiji, in the passage quoted above, the main body of the Sunni Muslim community of the Rewa district did in fact take the opportunity of the Id festival, held to commemorate the ending of Ramadan, the (lunar) month of fasting, to express its opposition to the Ahmadiyya. On 24 November 1938, the press reported that "[o]n the occasion of the Id-ul-Fitr a huge congregation of the Muslims of the Rewa district assembled in the Nausori Mosque and after prayers the following resolutions were unanimously adopted." 100

The Muslims of the Rewa district ... solemnly resolve that a handful of Mirzais calling themselves the Ahmadiya community are definitely held by us ... as outside the fold of Islam.... It

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99 For an account of Kunzru's role in advancing the interests of the Fiji Indians from his position of influence in Indian subcontinental politics, see Gillion, The Fiji Indians ... 1977, pp.79, 97, 161 and 173-174.

100 FTH, 24 November 1938, p.4.
is further resolved that the Muslims are solidly behind the Hon. Mr Said Hasan and fully support him in the steps he has taken.101

The resolution was endorsed by the signatures of an impressive lineup of prominent Muslims of the Rewa area: Maulvi Abdul Kadar, Imam of the Nausori Mosque; Maulvi Rahamatullah Khan, Imam of the Koronivia Mosque; Abdul Gani, President of the Nausori branch of the Muslim League; Sardar Khan, Secretary of the Nausori branch of the Muslim League; and Mahbub Khan, Assistant Secretary of the Nausori branch of the Muslim League.102 From this show of Sunni Muslim opposition to the Ahmadi presence in Fiji, it was clear that the Ahmadiyya faced an uphill struggle in their efforts to find a niche within the Muslim compartment of Fiji Indian society.

Perhaps enough has now been shown to illustrate the problems which attended Ahmadi Muslim efforts to stake out a place, other than a clandestine place, for their kind in Fiji Indian society, problems the source of which were to be found in the intolerance exhibited, not by Aryas or sanatani Hindus or Fiji Europeans or native Fijians or British colonial officials, but by the Ahmadi Muslims’ Sunni fellow Muslims. On this note we shall turn from the Muslims to consider instead the South Indians. But before we proceed thus, let us review our chapter findings.

101 Resolutions passed by a Muslim gathering, Rewa district, 24 November 1938; ibid.
102 See FTH, 24 November 1938, p.4.
In its early years, we observed that the Fiji Muslim League served the Muslim community primarily as a social organization. When the League did venture voluntarily into politics, it focused on issues such as prohibition -- issues which did not involve communalist strife or threaten the interests of any Fiji Indian communal or occupational group. Unhappily, occasions arose when resort to political action, instead of being voluntary, was forced upon the League, as when aroused non-Muslim communalist groups raised a furor over the slaughter of cattle, commotions calculated to serve their instigators as demonstrations of political strength, but which, at the social level, threatened the livelihood of Muslim butchers. Yet even on these occasions, the League’s response tended to be low-keyed and restrained.

But there was nothing restrained about the news from India. In respect to Hindu-Muslim relations in Fiji, the effect of the reports in the press of the communalist mayhem in the subcontinent could have been none other than entirely negative, the example of communal relations in India proper exercising a baleful influence on the Fiji Indians. And this observation prompts us here to give expression to one of the most profound beliefs which has taken hold in our mind during the course of this study: that, invariably it seems, the Fiji Indians managed their affairs better when left to their own devices, and stumbled into conflict and impasse only when, unwisely, they acted on the summons from distant India, or on
inspirations derived from the subcontinental experience, or at the direction of political cadres of the Indian nationalist movement sent to the colony to extend the reach of Indian politicians already committed, for reasons which had nothing to do with Fiji, to anti-Imperial action. In our view, the Fiji Indians were a little too tardy in, so to speak, cutting the umbilical cord attaching them to Bharat Mata (Mother India), a connexion which, as we saw, Shriman M. Jaimani, the itinerant Arya communalist propagator, and his ilk could use in their efforts to spread to their imagined Greater India the ethnic and religious enthusiasms of India proper.

In respect to the mode of political representation which best suited Fiji Indian circumstances, we witnessed the leaders of the Muslim League stealing a march on the Westminster-style Indian elected representatives in the Legislative Council. For when the Indian Muslim ladies of Suva, meeting in Toorak, had a problem which they wished to address to the colonial authorities, they preferred to employ the services of the Muslim League to convey their petition to the appropriate officials.\textsuperscript{103} And when the government responded positively to the ladies' request, the Indian elected M.L.C.s, Hindus all and Aryas predominantly, were not, it seems, made privy by their Muslim constituents to what had transpired. On this issue, Vishnu Deo and the other two Indian elected M.L.C.s, we observed, needed the services of

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{103} For a reminder of this incident, see Chapter Four, pp.293-297 above.
\end{quote}
British officialdom in order to connect with their own fellow Fiji Indian, but Muslim, compatriots. In the late 1920s and early 1930s at least, there were distinct limits to the much-trumpeted secular Fiji Indian political identity.

The manner in which the issue raised by the Muslim ladies was settled pointed to a wider pattern of Anglo-Muslim political relations in colonial Fiji. The Muslim League leaders were quite effective in breaching the European-Indian racial divide, in crossing the racial barrier and making common cause with elements of British officialdom and the Fiji European leadership. We observed several instances of Anglo-Muslim fellowship\(^{104}\) -- and we further observed that instances of Anglo-Arya fellowship were something noteworthy in our sources only for their absence: their absolute absence.

Our comparison of Muslim and Arya proficiency, unfavourable to the Aryas, in reaching out across the racial divide in colonial Fiji caused us to contemplate that if the leaders of the Muslim League had been nominated to represent the interests of the Fiji Indians as a whole, in place of the leading lights of the Arya Samaj, the political history of Fiji, in fact so tragically polarized along racial lines, might have taken a very different course. The Westminster-style, first-past-the-post electoral process which the British established in Fiji elevated Aryas and Arya-inspired types as

\(^{104}\) To recall two such instances, see Chapter Four, pp.301-303 and 314-315 above.
representatives for the Fiji Indians. These were precisely the section of the Fiji Indian elite most inhibited by an ideology which glorified their own racial type, and who, in consequence, were the least capable of reaching out to make common cause with people different from themselves: Indian Muslims, Fiji Europeans, native Fijians or whoever.

The last section of this chapter brought us to the encounter between the two main branches of the Fiji Indian Muslim community, Sunni and Ahmadi. While the Sunni Muslim leaders had acted with circumspection in their earlier dealings with the powerful political elements of colonial Fiji, British and Hindu, they were less than impressive when they addressed themselves to the issues raised by the presence, in their midst, of the small Ahmadi Muslim community. Their dealings with an entity weaker than themselves brought out the worst in the Sunni Muslim leaders.

While this was, in main part, a happy chapter, it did finish on a rather sour note. Perhaps our account of the next set of communal leaders will repair the setback. Animated by this hope, let us now turn to consider the South Indian and Indian Christian communalist contributions to Fiji Indian politics.
Chapter Five

South Indians, Christians and Secularists

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?\(^1\)

\(--\) Psalms 137.4

By 1930, the year which marks the end of the first decade of our period of study, almost thirty per cent of the Fiji Indian community was neither Aryan Hindu nor Muslim. This large minority was composite in its make-up, comprising an amalgam of South Indians, Indian Christians, Sikhs, and other constituent communal parts.

The Fiji Indian Christian community comprised the oldest-established segment of this combined minority communal grouping. While in relative demographic terms the Fiji Indian Christian community was quite small,\(^2\) it was nonetheless a politically significant segment of Fiji Indian society. We have already seen that it was a Fiji Indian Christian, John Grant of Suva, who ran a reasonably close second behind Vishnu Deo as a candidate for the Indian Southern Electoral Division seat in the 1929 Fiji Legislative Council election.\(^3\)

The Fiji Indian Christian community had come into being during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, in part

\(^1\) Psalm 137, verse 4; Book of Psalms, King James version.

\(^2\) According to the 1936 Fiji census figures, Fiji Indian Christians numbered 1,665 out of a total Fiji Indian population of 85,002 -- a figure which computes at just under two per cent.

\(^3\) To recall our account of the 1929 Fiji Legislative Council candidacy of John Grant, see Chapter Three, pp.198-202 above.
as a result of Christian missionary proselytization -- that is, through the conversion to Christianity of ci-devant Hindus and Muslims from northern India, drawn from the body of Indian labourers who had been brought to Fiji during the early years of the indenture system. However, in a democratic political setting, it is relative numbers which count; and, by the turn of the century, the Christian mission to the Fiji Indians had largely exhausted its vigour. As the new century dawned, the North Indians of either Hindu or Muslim confessional allegiance still comprised, in aggregate, as high as ninety-eight per cent of Fiji Indian society.

But the early decades of the twentieth century saw a significant drop in this combined Aryan Hindu and Muslim percentage figure, from the high nineties down to a little over seventy per cent. By 1930, the greater part by far of the non-Aryan Hindu and non-Muslim section of the Fiji Indian community was comprised of settlers who had migrated to the colony since the turn of the century. These newcomers had arrived in two separate waves, distinct both in time and ethnic type. They came to Fiji during either the last fourteen years of bonded migration (1903-1916) or the years following the end of the Great War, up to the end of the 1920s (1919-1930). The earlier of these periods of migration saw the arrival of nearly fifteen thousand indentured labourers from South India, most of whom were Tamils, while the later period brought to Fiji's shores much smaller numbers of free
Indian migrants from the Punjab and the Gujarati-speaking region of western India.

There is one other group of Fiji Indians which we have yet to accommodate. We have devised a further distinctive category of Fiji Indian political type which does not belong as an entry in any exactly-defined racial or ethnic typology. This is a group of Fiji Indians which we categorize as "secularists"; a group which was very active on the public stage in colonial Fiji. The word "secularist" suggested itself as an appropriate descriptive term for them because, in their efforts to politically mobilize the Fiji Indians, they explicitly disavowed the use of religion, sect or language -- which is to say that they were not communalists. However, we must either include them in our study or leave them aside; and as we have chosen the former of these options, it is here, in this chapter, that they must be assigned their place.

Let us proceed to an examination of the political organizations of the South Indian community of Fiji, by far the largest part of the non-Aryan Hindu and non-Muslim minority communal grouping resident in the colony.

**South Indian Sangams**

South Indians comprised around twenty-five per cent of the indentured Indians who migrated to Fiji. They began arriving in the early years of the twentieth century, a generation after the arrival of the first shipments of indentured labourers from northern India.
South Indians also were a few years late, relative to their North Indian compatriots, in organizing themselves in communal associations. The earliest moves to establish a South Indian organization occurred in early 1926, moves which were made privately, largely unknown to the general public of Fiji. However, in May 1926, the readers of the *Fiji Times and Herald* were provided with an intimation that something was afoot amongst the South Indian community. A brief statement contributed by an Indian subscriber was printed, under the perhaps rather mysterious heading "Then India Sanmarka Aikiya Sangam" (a phrase which, in its essentials, translates as "South Indian Society"). The statement in part read:

> Within a short period of four months the Mission of this Sangam originating from Raki Raki on the 10th January, 1926, has reached Kavanagasau and contemplates holding its general meeting within a short time. That this Sangam should be permanently established and carry [out] its Mission faithfully and successfully is the prayer of the writer.\(^4\)

The writer's hopes were apparently soon realized. In the months which followed the publication of his letter, the South Indians of the northern and western districts of Viti Levu brought together the resources necessary to establish the first permanent South Indian organization: the Then India Sanmarga Ikya Sangam. Its headquarters were set up in Nadi.

This first effort to organize the South Indians of Fiji had been made up-country from Suva. It was not long, however, before the South Indians in and around the capital followed

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the example of their north and west coast compatriots. Early in 1928, the *Fiji Times and Herald* published a report contributed by an Indian reader. Under the title "Madras Maha Sangam," the report stated:

An enthusiastic meeting ... [of] the South Indians of Suva, Rewa and Navua, was held at Flagstaff, Suva, under the Chairmanship of Mr. V.M. Pillay, on the 26th December [1927]. There was a large gathering. The striking feature of the meeting was that all prominent sections of the Indian Community were represented.... [T]he Chairman welcomed Dr. Beattie, Messrs. S.B. Patel, H. Din, Shree Krishna, Chowla, Deoki, Deo, D. Prasad, Ram Samujh and Chetty.... The Chairman opened proceedings ... with an address indicating the urgent necessity of forming a Sangam for the South Indians of Suva, Rewa and Navua.5

There were many big names at the gathering, the Fiji Indian social elite of the Suva area no less, including many with whom we are already familiar: Hakim Din, Sant Singh Chowla and Vishnu Deo to point to but three -- respectively, a Muslim, a secularist and an Arya, sitting down together in the seats reserved for prominent guests.

There was a sharp contrast here between the slow build-up of events, centred around no prominent individuals whom we have been able to identify, by which the Then India Sanmarga Ikya Sangam was established, with its headquarters eventually being sited in Nadi, and the "big-bang" social event in Suva which attended the formation of the Madras Maha Sangam.

The stated purpose of the new Sangam was to "organise and unify the Madras Indians," to "better ... [their] general

5 Contributed article, *FTH*, 7 January 1928, p.7.
conditions and encourage social service" and to "establish a central school for [the] primary education of Madras children." 6 The announcement of these laudable aims set the scene for the meeting to resolve: "That a Sangam should be formed for Suva, Rewa and Navua with its headquarters at Suva, and called [the] Madras Maha Sangam." 7

The formation of this second South Indian organization did not, however, recommend itself to everyone -- especially to certain South Indians living in the western districts of Viti Levu, up-country, that is, from the capital. This was made apparent to the readers of the *Fiji Times and Herald* on 17 January 1928, by the contents of a letter sent in by V.R. Jam, writing from Lautoka on 11 January 1928. Jam wrote:

> Having gone through the contents under "Madras Maha Sangam" I am led to think, when an association in the name of the "Then India Sammarga Ikya Sangam" is existing in this small island, should it be necessary to establish another "Sangam" by a different name?... We are all the natives of one presidency and immigrants of this island and as such, is it not essential to be in Union? Unless we are in union, we couldn't do anything, we will be ever in utter hopelessness. 8

In view of the communalist confrontations then taking place in Fiji between the various North Indian groups, V.R. Jam's misgivings were quite understandable. Yet when it came to relations between the South Indians of Fiji, such qualms,

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6 Ibid.

7 Resolution passed by the South Indians of Suva, Rewa and Navua, meeting at Flagstaff (Suva), 26 December 1927; cited ibid.

8 V.R. Jam to Editor, 11 January 1928; *FTH*, 17 January 1928, p. 8.
perhaps, were unfounded. For P. Garunaya, the Secretary of the newly formed Suva-based Madras Maha Sangam, quickly responded to the criticism from Lautoka in a letter to the editor published on 24 January 1928. Garunaya wrote:

I wish to make ... clear that the objects of [the] "Madras Maha Sangam" are similar to those of [the] "Then India Sanmarga Ikya Sangam" with which we wish to co-operate whole-heartedly.9

It was a conciliatory response, the spirit of which seems to have been reciprocated by the leading lights of the Nadi-based sangam; for evidence of open rivalry between the two sangams is something which is largely absent from our sources. It appears that whereas the leading members of the South Indian community in the Suva-Rewa area refused to countenance their submergence into a sangam led by their up-country compatriots, once their separate institutional existence had been successfully asserted they did not carry their rivalry with their country cousins to extremes, and that instead a live-and-let-live tolerance characterized relations between the two sets of South Indian leaders.

So, after December 1927, there were two South Indian sangams on Viti Levu, and today there still are two.10 We have traced the formation of both, and observed how, during their first mutual encounter, they related one to the other.

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9 P. Garunaya, Secretary of the Madras Maha Sangam, to Editor; FTH, 24 January 1928, p.6.

10 In 1936, the Madras Maha Sangam changed its name to the Then India Valibar Sangam (South Indian Young Men's Society). The Nadi-based Then India Sanmarga Ikya Sangam, however, has kept its original name.
We emphasize the institutional duality which obtained at the political level amongst the South Indians because, in some historical works, the impression is given that the South Indian section of Fiji Indian society established a sangam: singular. We can appreciate why this is so as, even armed with the knowledge of the existence of two sangams, we ourselves occasionally chance upon a sangam in our primary sources and discover to our chagrin that we lack the research calibrations with which to establish its precise identity.

Once launched, the Madras Maha Sangam swung into action, especially with a view to put into effect the resolutions passed at its inaugural meeting. During the second half of January and continuing throughout February, March, April and May 1928, an appeal for funds to accomplish the Sangam’s first objective was featured in the Fiji Times and Herald. Typically, as determined by Fiji Indian priorities at this stage of the community’s history, this first objective was the establishment of a school. The appeal, dated 9 January 1928, was signed by V. Guruwala, Secretary of the Madras Maha Sangam of Suva. In part, it read:

On the 26th day of December, 1927, a Representative Meeting of the South Indians of Suva, Rewa and Navua was held in Suva and the Madras Maha Sangam was formed. It has been decided to establish a school near Suva. The number of [South Indian] children in the districts named warrants the establishment of a school without further loss of time.11

11 Appeal for funds by V. Guruwala, Secretary of the Madras Maha Sangam, 9 January 1928; FTH, 15 February 1928, p.7.
By 15 May 1928, the appeal had raised £200/6/6 and was continuing.12

The leaders of the newly established Madras Maha Sangam did not confine their activities to the school-building project. Within a few weeks of forming the Sangam, its representatives opened direct communication with the colonial authorities. The Then India Sanmarga Ikya Sangam, though established earlier than the Madras Maha Sangam, had not yet registered its public presence through an approach to government. As far as access to officialdom was concerned, there was a distinct advantage, so it seems, to being based in Suva rather than in Nadi. Language, the cultural element which most distinguished South Indians from the main body of the Fiji Indian community, provided the issue. The readers of the Fiji Times and Herald were alerted to the arrival of a new South Indian communal organization on the Fijian political stage.

[T]he third meeting of the Madras Maha Sangam was held at Samabula -- 3 mile post -- on the 12th [of February 1928] ... at the Temple premises.... It was decided at the meeting to approach the Secretary for Indian Affairs with a request to recommend to the Government for the appointment of a Madrasi Interpreter for the Rewa District, wherein a large number of Madrasis have been settled.13

The Madras Maha Sangam, this press notice intimated, was off to a flying start.

12 For a list of the subscribers to the Madras Maha Sangam appeal, including the amounts each subscriber had given, see FTH, 15 May 1928, p.2.

13 FTH, 14 February 1928, p.6.
Just a few months after the Madras Maha Sangam announced its intention to build a school near Suva, and possibly inspired by its rival's example, the Then India Sanmarga Ikya Sangam also became active in promoting Indian education -- as we have said before, a field of endeavour that was given high priority by most Indian communal organizations in Fiji. The first intimation which alerted the public to a new move afoot amongst the South Indians was an appeal for contributions, dated 6 August 1928, conveyed in the pages of the Fiji Times and Herald in mid-August 1928. The appeal was authorized by T.L. Aryalu Naidu, Secretary of the Then India Sanmarga Ikya Sangam, Nadi. The text of the appeal hinted at a desire on the Sangam's part to avoid confusion in the public mind between its own newly asserted South Indian sub-ethnic basis of operation and the more familiar religio-sectarian communalist mode.

An agreement has been made between Mr M.N. Naidu and Mr A.H. Marlow, the contractor ... for erection of a school building on behalf of the "Then India Sanmarga Ikya Sangam," Nadi, at a cost of £1,925.... [T]he school, which is a non-sectarian and non-denominational one, is to give higher education to the boys ... in these parts, and is intended to rear them up irrespective of caste or creed.14

The initial effort in August 1928 by the Then India Sanmarga Ikya Sangam to raise funds was sufficiently successful to get the intended school-building project

14 An appeal for funds for a school-building project, authorized by T.L. Aryalu Naidu, Secretary of the Then India Sanmarga Ikya Sangam, Nadi; FTH, 13 August 1928, p.5.
underway. In January 1929, T.L. Aryalu Naidu again addressed himself to the contributing public. This second time, Naidu, writing from Nadi, arranged for an appeal for funds to be displayed on the front page of the Fiji Times and Herald. In part the appeal read:

An agreement has been made ... for erection of a school building on behalf of the "Then India Sanmarga Ikyia Sangam," Nadi, at a cost of £1925. On July 30, 1928, the foundation celebration was held, on which day Mr Pearson, the Secretary for Indian Affairs, laid the foundation stone by his own hands, amidst the exceeding joy of the visitors. Since the school ... is a non-sectarian and inter-denominational one ... I ... appeal to all for a donation.15

The South Indians of the western districts of Viti Levu were at last registering in the politics of the colony in that most basic activity of Fiji Indian communal groups: providing the schooling facilities for the transmittal to youth of their particular sub-group’s cultural identity.

The school-building effort by the Then India Sanmarga Ikyia Sangam met with censure from some quarters. One example of such condemnation was conveyed in a letter to the editor written by a local Fiji European. Let us see what our Fiji European correspondent had to say.

I am one of many European settlers in this country who view with alarm the general development of the young Fiji-born Indian.... A crop of so-called schools has sprung up all over the country, many following some religious sect in India, and others whose main platform is to teach each child its mother tongue.... All of us who for years have

15 Appeal for funds by T.L. Aryalu Naidu, the Secretary of the Then India Sanmarga Ikyia Sangam, Nadi; FTH, 29 January 1929, p.1.
worked amongst the Indians know that in a generation or so, the so-called mother tongue of the 101 languages will die out in Fiji.... Fiji is a very small place and there is no room for a multitude of languages.16

It was an expression of an attitude towards the rich crop of Indian languages spoken in Fiji which we suspect was widely held amongst the Fiji Europeans. And this perspective had a wide currency also in British official circles. For "A Country Resident" was able to bolster his argument by citing a passage from the Report of a Commission on Education which, two years earlier, had deliberated the issue at hand.

[T]he non-European child in Fiji has to secure a working knowledge of English in reading and speaking at least, and that makes a heavy demand upon school time. A second language ... may easily become an intolerable burden and may result in very low standards of work in all other subjects.17

Continuing with his letter to the editor, "A Country Resident" referred approvingly to the presence in Nadi of a government-supported "model Indian school," one where, in accordance with government policy, only English and Hindi were taught. Then he mentioned another school open for business in Nadi, the school that the Then India Sanmarga Iksya Sangam had built.

[W]e have lately seen within half a mile [of the government-supported "model Indian school"] a £2,000 school put up, funds for which were mainly contributed by the cry, "We will teach your mother tongue." This school employs three teachers for 150 pupils and teaches children in Tamil, Telugu,

16 "A Country Resident" to Editor, FTH, 8 December 1928, p.5.

17 Report of the Commission on Education in Fiji, 1926; cited ibid.
Malayalam, Urdu, Hindi and English and any other tongue required.\textsuperscript{18}

Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam, of course, are three of the four main Dravidian Indian languages.

Having thus stated the case against the new South Indian school, "A Country Resident" ended his letter to the editor on what, let us assert, was a malicious personal note of censure, with the complaint that J.R. Pearson, the Secretary for Indian Affairs, had laid the foundation stone for the new school and that, in the pages of \textit{Rajdut}, the government paper for Indians, Pearson had waxed in support of the project.\textsuperscript{19} The reader will, of course, by now be familiar with this political pattern, the dominant political pattern of colonial Fiji: with the Fiji Indian party active at one end of the political spectrum and the Fiji European party reacting unfavourably at the opposite end, and with British officialdom, so to speak, walking the tightrope between, often buffeted by the opposing forces.

School-building was not the only activity undertaken by the leaders of the South Indian community in Fiji. In the late 1920s, several prominent South Indian community leaders made their first attempt to advance their community's claims to separate representation in the high politics of the colony. As we have already related, in late 1927, the colonial

\textsuperscript{18} "A Country Resident" to Editor, \textit{FTH}, 8 December 1928, p.5.

\textsuperscript{19} See ibid.
authorities decided to change the representative balance within the Fiji Legislative Council, increasing the Indian representation from one nominated to three elected members. This advance of the democratic principle in Fiji's political arrangements had much the same effect on the Fiji Indian community as similar democratizing reforms had earlier had amongst the Indians of India proper: it stimulated Indian minority claims to separate representation. V.M. Munsami Mudaliar of Wailailai in the Ba District was one of the first South Indians to publicly advance the case for South Indians. On 10 December 1927, the Fiji Times and Herald published his letter.

Indians here are very thankful to His Majesty's Government for the [increase in the number of Indian representatives].... They must[, however,] be able to fully represent [all] Indian[s] ... in the [Legislative] Council.... We expect the public to elect one Madras representative out of the three, for the South Indians, and we hope the Government would advocate the same. Many South Indians here do not know Hindi or Hindustani well.... Surely they deserve a man of their own. I hope that all the [Indian] members will not be Northerners nor will His Majesty's Government overlook the South Indians.20

But the colonial authorities failed to respond positively to the appeal for a government move to guarantee the presence in the Legislative Council of a South Indian representative. As we have earlier observed in regard to the Fiji Indian Muslims, we see again, this time with respect to the South Indians, an

20 V.M. Munsami Mudaliar (misspelt in the source as "Mumsawhy Mudhiyar") to Editor, FTH, 10 December 1927, p.7.
unfailing feature of British rule in colonial Fiji: an inability or, at the very least, an unwillingness to choose their required Indian participants in government from the communal groups most likely to respond positively to the experiment in representative government. If, in October 1929, a mild-mannered South Indian leader such as V.M. Munsami Mudaliar had occupied a seat in the Legislative Council, rather than one of the ethnically aroused Aryas who actually did, the Anglo-Indian parliamentary encounter of that session would probably have been, for all parties concerned, a lot less dysfunctional in its political consequences.

Our allusion to the Aryas brings to mind that we should consult with Vishnu Deo and Babu Ram Singh, hard at work inside the head office of the Fiji Samachar, as to the Arya response to the efforts of the two sangams to assert a separate South Indian sub-ethnic identity amongst the Fiji Indians.

The two Arya pressmen went into action against the South Indian communal separatists active in Fiji in the October 1928 issue of the Fiji Samachar. An indirect angle of approach was employed, one provided by Sir T. Vijayaraghavachari, an India National Congress party member and Madras Province notable, in a lecture he delivered at the Hindu High School in Triplicane, Madras. In his address, Vijayaraghavachari recommended the adoption of Hindi as the all-India national language, a cause much favoured by most Indian nationalists. The Fiji Samachar
reprinted a report, selected from an unnamed organ of the Indian press, of the text of Vijayaraghavachari's lecture. "[T]he place of Hindi in Indian education must be compulsory," Vijayaraghavachari was reported to have harangued his listeners, that "[i]t ought to be a compulsory language in school, college and university."21 Vijayaraghavachari went on to explain the reasoning behind his advice.

[W]e are all eagerly looking forward to the day when we shall all be Indians first and Madrasis or Bengalis next. That day will be hastened if Madrasis, who are the worst offenders in this respect, begin to learn Hindi in larger numbers.... Surely if we have real love of India as we have of our respective provinces, we would all learn Hindi without delay and avoid the humiliating spectacle of carrying on our proceedings in the popular assembly, i.e., the All-India Congress Committee, predominantly, if not often wholly, in English.22

We are, from quite a different source, already familiar with Vijayaraghavachari's message. Although premised on an assertion of historical inevitability rather than on Vijayaraghavachari's Indian nationalist aspiration, it is much the same message as that advanced by "A Country Resident" in his letter to the editor, as published in the Fiji Times and Herald just a week or so after Vishnu Deo and Babu Ram Singh reprinted the text of Vijayaraghavachari's lecture.23

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22 Ibid.

23 For a reminder of "A Country Resident's" censure of South Indian efforts to keep alive the various ancestral languages bequeathed to the South Indians settlers in Fiji, see Chapter Five, pp.341-343 above.
The campaign conducted by the Arya press to discredit the South Indian effort to promote the teaching of Dravidian languages in the colony's schools did not deter the leaders of the two South Indian sangams. In particular, the effort to recruit from the subcontinent accredited teachers of Tamil and Telugu was an activity with which they long persevered. On 14 May 1937, an article contributed by a reader appeared in the Fiji Times and Herald which announced the current state of play of the on-going search. In part, it read:

In response to a long-standing and pressing invitation from the South Indian Association of Fiji, the authorities of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission have deputed Swami Avinasananda to visit Fiji. It has been a matter of some difficulty to find a suitable person for this purpose, as the conditions demanded by the Association were that the person deputed should possess a knowledge of Tamil, Telugu, Hindi and English.... [W]e hope that our countrymen in Fiji ... will be able to utilise his stay in their midst, in the most advantageous manner possible.24

This particular event warrants mention in our pages because, after his visit to Fiji, Swami Avinasananda had some interesting comments to make concerning the main features of Fiji Indian lifestyle -- a way of life which struck the good Swami as a distinct advance on the social norms which prevailed in the subcontinent.

After his return to India, an article by Swami Avinasananda appeared in the pages of the Ramakrishna Home and Schools Magazine, in the March 1938 edition. Three months later, the

24 Contributed article, FTH, 14 May 1937, p.8.
Swami’s article was reprinted by the Fiji Times and Herald. It seems that the Swami was an acute observer of the social mores peculiar to Fiji Indian society, especially as seen from a standpoint determined by how things were done in India proper. In his article, he made a set of observations which intimated just how far the Indian settlers in Fiji had developed their own distinctively Fiji Indian social norms.

There is no caste in Fiji, no difficulty for widows re-marrying; if you talk about inter-dining, people will laugh at you, because they can’t believe in the possibility of any such problem existing anywhere; anybody can be found worshipping in the temple.25

On the happy note provided by the good Swami, one which pointed to the growing cultural self-sufficiency of Fiji Indian society, we shall end our brief encounter with the South Indian community of Fiji. It has been an uplifting experience. But the time has now come for us to examine another community which was not part of the Aryan Hindu and Muslim majority segment of Fiji Indian society: namely, the Indian Christian community.

Indian Christian Society

Certain problems attend the task of portraying communal activism as it occurred in the ranks of the small body of Fiji Indians allegiant to Christianity. It could be said that the Fiji Indian Christian mode of political mobilization tended

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more towards the episodic than the sustained. Although a few prominent Fiji Indian Christians were often present, in one capacity or another, on the political stage, organized group activity by the main body of the Fiji Indian Christians usually took place only when a major political event was approaching or in progress.

The Fiji Legislative Council election of 1929 was one such major political event which roused the Fiji Indian Christians into action. This was signalled on 9 August 1929 by the formation of the Indian Christian Society of Fiji. A press report of the inaugural meeting which established the Society provides us with a roster of the names of those prominent at the time in the Fiji Indian Christian community.

Mr W. Miller Caldwell ... [was] unanimously elected President; Messrs Deoki and N.B. Singh, Vice-Presidents; Mr Sewak Masih, Secretary; and Mr R.H. Ram Narain, Assistant-Secretary; Messrs D. Singh and Rev. Ishwari Prasad, Members of Committee of Management; and Mr David Dudley, Auditor. Mr Deoki consented to act also as Treasurer.26

We met W.M. Caldwell, a civil servant of Indian extraction, earlier in our study. Caldwell had presided at the public meeting in Suva on 27 July 1922, the very first time the Fiji Indians gathered to choose Indian community representatives. Two days later, we observed Caldwell and Mahraj jostling for front place to deliver the welcoming address to V.S. Srinivasa Sastri at the reception organized in Sastri’s honour, on the occasion of his visit to Suva on 29 July 1922.

26 FTH, 13 August 1929, p.6.
According to the press report, the Indian Christian Society, the inaugural meeting had decided, was to be a society formed "for the benefit of all Indian Christians ... irrespective of ... denomination."\(^{27}\) We note with interest that the small Fiji Indian Christian community, comprising scarcely two per cent of the wider Fiji Indian society, itself was divided by Christian sect.

The founding members of the Indian Christian Society had high hopes for their new creation. This was apparent when, from the floor, "the formation of a ladies' department and the publication of a monthly magazine ... were advocated."\(^{28}\) Moreover, it was decided that local branches of the new Society "were to be formed in Lautoka, Ba, Labasa and Levuka."\(^{29}\) And, no doubt with an eye on the approaching Fiji Legislative Council election, it was spelt out that the formation of the new Society was "intended to counteract [the idea] ... that the [Indian Christian] community was a negligible quantity in Fiji and hardly to be taken into account in any matter of ... legislative, educational ... or social [consequence]."\(^{30}\)

The formation of the Indian Christian Society did not pass unnoticed in the Arya press. One month following the

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\(^{27}\) Ibid.

\(^{28}\) Ibid.

\(^{29}\) Ibid.

\(^{30}\) Ibid.
inaugural meeting of the founding members, the Fiji Samachar featured a contributed article on the new organization— that is, it claimed the article was contributed although, from the similar wording, the suspicion could take shape in an uncharitable mind that the article was lifted from the Fiji Times and Herald’s 13 August 1929 issue (p.6). We wonder if, as we have already observed in regard to certain events occurring within the Fiji Indian Muslim community, Vishnu Deo and his fellow Aryas depended on the English-language press also to keep abreast of events taking place within the Fiji Indian Christian community? In any event, the Fiji Samachar had this to say as commentary on the formation of the Fiji Indian Christian communal group.

It is gratifying to note that an Indian Christian Society has been formed in Suva.... In our opinion the Society ought to have been formed years ago.... We are really glad to see a Society, wholly independent of others, being formed; the very step to form it goes to show that our Indian Christian friends are not lagging behind.32

In their effort to undermine Fiji Indian Christian communal separatism, the Arya pressmen demonstrated great creativity. Indeed, in their admonishment of Fiji Indian Christian separatism, the editorial management of the Fiji Samachar scaled new heights of Fiji Indian journalistic sophistication.

This achievement was heralded in the pages of the Fiji Samachar’s October 1929 issue. The pièce de résistance of the

31 See FS, September 1929, vol.3, number 9, p.10.

32 FS, September 1929, vol.3, number 9, p.11.
presentation was the script of a conversation, or perhaps it was a supposed conversation, between the *Fiji Samachar* and "an Indian Christian," a conversation which, the introductory commentary suggestively asserted, "shows the tendency of the people concerned." The conversational script read in part:

**Reporter:** "How is it that the Majority of Mohamdens ... [and] Christians said to have openly been opposed to a certain candidate?"

**Christian:** "Because we Christians and Mohamedans had made up our minds not to vote for him. If these non-Christian ... [and non-]Mohamedan members elected prove detrimental to our cause we will ask the Government to grant us separately a member of our own."

**Reporter:** "Don't you think it will bring disaster to the Indian cause in Fiji? And also divide all the Indians in various groups?"

**Christian:** "It may ... but I must see that a member of my own should be in the Council...."

**Reporter:** "[S]ome one suggested that there should be in Council a Hindu, a Mohamedan, [and either] a Christian or Madrasi, is it true?"

**Christian:** "Yes. I suggested that and told the people to select one from each religion so as to save [?] avert?] dissention.""34

The "certain candidate" the reporter was referring to was undoubtedly Vishnu Deo himself, candidate for the Indian Southern Division Legislative Council seat. The extraordinary exchange of views expressed in the (supposed?) interview was rounded off by a direct comment from the editor which, on the matters raised in the interview with the unnamed Fiji Indian Christian leader, brought the reader right up to date.

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34 A (supposed?) conversation between a Fiji Indian Christian and a correspondent of the *Fiji Samachar*; quoted in *FS*, October 1929, vol.3, number 10, p.7.
We have since heard that the same gentleman is endeavouring to move the Mohamedans and Christians to demand [a] separate electoral Roll on religious grounds.35

This exchange of political views in the pages of the Arya press suggested that the Arya leaders, themselves enthused Indian nationalists, took the Indian Christian separatist threat seriously, that they devoted a great deal of time and creative effort to working out a novel mode of rebuttal, and that they understood the need to meet the Indian Christian separatist threat with an intelligent and persuasive argument -- one which posited the primary claim of Indian nationalism over the claims of Fiji Indian religious sectarianism.

This last point was one which the Arya pressmen wanted to make sure was clearly imprinted in the minds of their readers. So a second article was published which spelt out the same message, but this time more directly. It was entitled "Is Present Dissention Solved?" As with the first article, the second one also took the form of a conversational script.

Another Indian Christian's advice to an Indian member of the Legislative Council is as follows: "When you go into the Council take up the matter of the Mohamedan ... [and] Christian first, then these fellows will have nothing against you to say.... M.L.C: You and your friends have misunderstood me. I am an Indian first, Indian next and Indian last. Whatever I have to put before the Council will be from the Indian point of view and not that of the Hindu, the Mohamedan ... [or] the Christian."36


The "Indian member of the Legislative Council" which the writer of the article had in mind was undoubtedly himself -- that is, Vishnu Deo, editor of the *Fiji Samachar*, had in mind Vishnu Deo, newly elected member of the Legislative Council. And with that observation, suggestive of a rather polymorphic quality possessed by the same body of men who comprised the Arya communal leadership, who controlled the main Fiji Indian press organ, and who provided the majority of the elected representatives of the Fiji Indian community, we shall end our consultation with the *Fiji Samachar* over the issues raised by Fiji Indian Christian separatism.

We ended our section on the South Indians with an item of social commentary, provided on that occasion by Swami Avinasananda. Let us end our moment of communion with the Fiji Indian Christians on a similar note, one which enlarges upon the same social concerns. This time, however, instead of entering into consultation with a Swami recently returned to India after a visit to Fiji, we shall take counsel with one of the Fiji Indian Christian denominations in conclave.

During the period between the Fiji Legislative Council election of early September 1929 and the Council sessions which began sitting in late October 1929, life at the social level carried on as usual. While Vishnu Deo and his Arya confreres were planning their strategies, other Fiji Indians were engaged in more everyday employ, in matters more basic to the general well-being.
The opening session of the Indian section of the Methodist Synod commenced on Monday, October 19. The chairman of the Fiji District, the Rev R.L. McDonald ... welcomed the representatives from the different parts of Fiji.... Thursday [24 October 1929] ... was set aside to hear the reports of the Church's various institutions operating in Fiji.\(^{37}\)

The Indian Methodists were evidently very active in the fields of education and child welfare.

The reports of the Dudley Orphanage and Junior Boys' Orphanage at Dilkusha and that of the Jasper Williams Boarding School operating at Lautoka for the welfare of the Indian girls and boys showed a year's satisfactory work. A notable feature of this work was the influence of good practical domestic and other training upon the girls growing into womanhood. The effect of this was evident in the superior type of home created and maintained by the trainees marrying from these institutions. They also have a broader outlook upon life.\(^{38}\)

If you uplift the lady of the house, the current aid theory goes, you uplift the whole family of which she is the centre.

While Swami Avinasananda's commentary, with which we closed our account of the South Indians, served to herald the fact that the Fiji Indians had developed a reformed and more modernized body social than that of India proper, the report of the proceedings of the Indian section of the Methodist Synod of October 1929 draws our attention to a group of Fiji Indians working at the very cutting edge of that same process of Fiji Indian social reform. In contemplating the two passages in juxtaposition, we wonder whether we have stumbled, in a manner quite unforeseen, upon an explanation for the

\(^{37}\) FTW, 26 October 1929, p.4.

\(^{38}\) Ibid.
evident Fiji Indian aptitude for pioneering and effecting Indian social reform. Perhaps the Fiji Indian Christian community pioneered for the wider Fiji Indian society of which it was part those very items of fundamental Indian social reform listed above by Swami Avinasananda for the edification of the Indian reading public.\footnote{For a reminder of the items of Indian social reform listed by Swami Avinasananda, see Chapter Five, p.348 above.}

We cannot end our account of Fiji Indian communalism of our period, not without a loss of understanding of what things were all about, without examining the role of at least one more group. We must now turn our attention to consideration of the secularists, another group of Fiji Indians whom we include, in this case without being able to posit any ethnographic or racial grounds, in the minority segment of Fiji Indian society -- that is, amongst those groups of Fiji Indian political activists whose rationale for public action was based on neither Aryan Hindu nor Muslim ideological imperatives.

Secularists

At the beginning of the previous section, dealing with the Fiji Indian Christians, we mentioned that prominent individual Fiji Indian Christians were often active on the public stage in other, non-Christian capacities.\footnote{For a reminder of our statement in this respect, see Chapter Five, pp.348-349 above.} More often than not,
a secular political rationale provided the leading elements of the Fiji Indian Christian community with their alternative entrée onto the public stage.

In this alternative secularist capacity, the Fiji Indian Christian political activists often found themselves working in combination with leading individuals of other Indian communities, individuals who also wanted to ascend the public stage but who, for whatever reason, preferred to eschew a confessional communal basis of political mobilization. The most easily identifiable type of socially prominent Indians likely to be so motivated were Indian members of the civil service, most of whom were North Indians, either Hindu or Muslim. In colonial Fiji, civil servants who got involved in politics nearly always took the secular route. It seems that working for a secular colonial state did not go well with the confessional mode of political mobilization.

One very good reason for the apparent reluctance of Indian civil servants in Fiji to combine state employment with communal activism is easily observable: the British preference for the adoption by the Fiji Indians of British norms of political behaviour. We have already noticed that the British colonial authorities, when faced with political feedback from sections of Fiji Indian society which preferred to make their approach to the government through the good offices of one or other of the communal organizations, tended to redirect their Indian charges towards the standard Westminster-style channel
of communication between state and society -- that is, towards the Indian parliamentary representatives, men elected on a secular set of political axioms.\textsuperscript{41} We have also observed, of course, that such redirection was likely to be received without enthusiasm by the sizable body of Fiji Indians whose primary political identity was religious, not secular.

There was an area of overlap between the activities of the Fiji Indian secularists and their Christian compatriots. The two groups, in fact, were often organized and led by individuals who, either concurrently or in close succession, were active in both camps. One example will suffice to demonstrate just how much overlap could obtain. We have seen W.M. Caldwell first acting in a secular mode when, in July 1922, he led the Fiji Indian welcoming delegation on the occasion of V.S. Srinivasa Sastri’s visit to Suva,\textsuperscript{42} then acting in a communalist mode when, in August 1929, he was elected President of the Indian Christian Society of Fiji;\textsuperscript{43} and we can usefully remind ourselves that, during the 1920s and 1930s, Caldwell was a civil servant, starting as a clerk

\textsuperscript{41} The reader will recall that the Muslim ladies of Suva, meeting in Toorak on 2 November 1928 with Sakeena Sahoo Khan in the chair, preferred to entrust the conveyance of their requests to government to the good offices of the Fiji Muslim League; and that the British officials, while responding positively to the ladies’ petition, advised the Muslims to approach their Legislative Council representatives, none of whom were Muslim, with a view to advance a motion on the floor of the chamber, thereby to effect the desired measures (see Chapter Four, pp.293-297 above).

\textsuperscript{42} To recall Caldwell’s leading role in the events leading up to Sastri’s visit to Suva, see Chapter Two, pp.85-89 above.

\textsuperscript{43} To recall the occasion of Caldwell’s election to the leadership of the Fiji Indian Christian separatists, see Chapter Five, p.349 above.
in the Colonial Secretary’s Office (Indian Section) and rising eventuallly to the estimable position of District Commissioner. Let us now turn our attention to the organizations established by Fiji Indians on an at least ostensibly secular basis. The Indian Reform League and the Fiji Indian National Congress were the two main organizations which, during the late 1920s and early 1930s, expressed the secularist point of view.

The Indian Reform League was founded in October 1924. The advent of the League occurred twenty years after the founding of the Fiji chapter of the Arya Samaj, but two or three years earlier than the formation of either the Fiji Muslim League or the two South Indian sangams. In order to see the Indian Reform League in action, and with a view to familiarize ourselves with the Fiji Indians, some of whom we have already met, who were included in its front ranks, let us drop in and attend the occasion of the League’s fourth anniversary, celebrated in October 1928.

The Indian Reform League celebrated its fourth anniversary with a concert in the [Suva] Town Hall last night. The hall was crowded, Indians being in the majority, but Fijians, Samoans and others were present. Among the Europeans were Mr Pearson, Secretary for Indian Affairs, and his wife. They were accompanied by Major and Mrs Joske. Mr S.S. Chowla, President of the League, and Pandit Durga Prasad, the Secretary, assisted by Mr M.S. Buksh and many others, organised a most enjoyable and varied programme.... At the close of the concert, before the [singing of the] National Anthem, Mr Buksh, on behalf of the League, thanked those who had attended.44

44 FTH, 25 October 1928, p.4.
We are familiar with many of those present, especially Pearson, Chowla, Prasad and Buksh. And it was a happy occasion, so it seems, with all of the major racial groups of colonial Fiji represented in the gathered throngs.

Here we have chanced upon a feature which distinguishes the Indian Reform League from its main rival organization of the period, that is, the Fiji chapter of the Arya Samaj. Public meetings hosted by the latter group, we have repeatedly observed, were focused usually, and rather intently so, on ideological posturing, and never, that we have observed, on the promotion of inter-communal, let alone interracial, goodwill. But with S.S. Chowla and his fellow secularists at the helm, we witness the gathering of an audience reasonably representative of the racially mixed population of Suva. And indeed, from our reading of the literature on the subject, we can testify that, of all the Fiji Indian groups we have studied, the Indian Reform League, in its membership, activities and general ethos, adopted the least exclusive attitude towards the colony's racial and communal diversity. Social reform, of course, and not the assertion of an ethnic nationalism, was the League's principal goal, and perhaps it was this consideration which permitted it to be the least enclosed and least exclusive of the Fiji Indian groups.

As something of a ramification of the relative openness of the ethos of the Indian Reform League, certain of its leaders occasionally assumed the role of providing the wider Oceanic
region of which Fiji was a part with their interpretation of the state of affairs in the colony. In just such a vein, we witness Pandit Durga Prasad, the general secretary of the Indian Reform League, speaking in late 1929 in Sydney. A Sydney correspondent cited the Pandit’s words.

"Fiji is becoming more and more an arena for conflicting racial jealousies. Unless the grievances of the Indian community meet with some sympathy," he says, "there may be serious developments."\(^45\)

Mindful, no doubt, that the Australian public would likely stand reminding of the circumstances of life in Fiji, Prasad provided his interviewer with a useful synopsis.

"In Fiji," said the Pandit, "there are some 85,000 Fijians, 5,000 Europeans, and 70,000 Indians. The Indians ... are the chief producers of sugarcane, cotton, copra, and pineapples.... They control ... motor transport, and many of them are store-keepers."\(^46\)

The Pandit went on to indicate that, in Fiji, the demand for "full and equal franchise" was the chief subject of contention, along with the exclusion of Indian children from the Grammar School at Suva and the Public School at Levuka, and that there was "also much dissatisfaction with the system of land tenure."\(^47\) It was an accurate summary of the main issues of Fiji Indian politics of the time, and delivered in a matter-of-fact manner, unburdened by needless polemics.

\(^{45}\) Durga Prasad, in interview, Sydney, December 1929; cited in FTH, 27 December 1929, p.4.

\(^{46}\) Ibid.

\(^{47}\) Ibid.
Not long after the Indian Reform League celebrated its fourth anniversary, the Fiji Indian National Congress was formed. This occurred in mid-May 1929, on the occasion, the reader will recall, of the public holiday which A.W. Seymour, the Acting Governor of Fiji, declared so as to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the first Indian arrival in Fiji.\footnote{To recall the events leading up to the fiftieth anniversary holiday of 15 May 1929, see Chapter Two, pp.128-132 and 136 above.}

As in the case of the two South Indian sangams, the advent of the Fiji Indian National Congress was a double-barrelled affair, with two separate congress groups being formed, one at each end of Viti Levu, in Lautoka and Suva.

[The Indians of] Penang, Ra, Tavua, Colo North, Ba, Lautoka, Nadi, Nadroga and Colo West held a ... representative meeting at the Lautoka Tilak Hall where 150 representatives were present.... [T]hey passed unanimously that the 15th May [1929] be observed as a mourning day.... [A] Fiji Indian National Congress was formed, with Barrister Ambalal Patel as President and Mr A.R. Sahu as Secretary [and] with many prominent Indians as members. In Suva some Indians have celebrated the day as [a] day of rejoicing and have formed an Indian National Congress, President of which is Mr John F. Grant and Secretary Mr Sahodar Singh.... We were much grieved to find that the Editor of the Fiji Times and Herald in his leader disliked the idea of giving a public holiday in Fiji on the 15th May [1929].... We heartily thank the Government and those who got the holiday granted.\footnote{FS, May 1929, vol.3, number 5, p.4.}

That was how the Arya press reported the event, emphasizing how widely representative was the meeting in Lautoka which formed the first congress, but how only "some Indians" met in Suva to form the second. We might add that Ambalal (A.D.)
Patel was a newly arrived secularist lawyer-politician from India, whereas John Grant was an Indian Christian, whose family had for many decades been resident in Suva.

Let us see how the English-language press reported the formation of the two Fiji Indian National Congress groups. It seems that, of the two events taking place, one in Lautoka, the other in Suva, only the Suva meeting attracted the attention of the Fiji Times and Herald.

The National Congress of Indians was formed on this evening of the 14 instant in the Suva Town Hall. The following office-bearers, with a committee, have been elected: Mr John Grant, president; Mr H.S. Singh, secretary; Messrs Ilahi Ramzan Khan and Ratu Ramsamujh, vice-presidents; Mr Gaya Prasad, assistant secretary; and Mr Deoki, treasurer. 50

The Fiji Times and Herald report included an additional item, prefaced with the statement that "[i]t was decided ... to send the following cable to India": 51

Pandit Motilal Nehru, 13 New Road, Allahabad. Congress formed Suva. Letter following. Grant president, Singh secretary. 52

Motilal Nehru (1861-1931), father of Jawaharlal Nehru, independent India's first Prime Minister, was a leading light of the Indian National Congress. It seems that the men of the Fiji Indian National Congress saw themselves in some way as affiliated with the original Congress party in India proper.

50 FTH, 16 May 1929, p.4. For a government report on this event, see C.S.O.1837/1930.

51 Ibid.

52 Fiji Indian National Congress, Suva Branch, to Motilal Nehru (cable), 14 May 1929; cited FTH, 16 May 1929, p.4.
And, as a general rule of thumb, it is true that, more so than in the case of any of the religious or sub-ethnic Fiji Indian communalist groups, the Fiji Indian secularist groups were more directly connected with their counterparts in the subcontinent. This observation of ours is new to Fiji Indian historiography, a distinction between things secular and things communalist which has never been made before.

As the Fiji Legislative Council election of September 1929 neared, the Fiji Indian communal groups formed coalitions around the various candidates. In the race for the Indian Southern Electoral Division seat, the reader will recall, Vishnu Deo and John Grant, an Arya and a Christian, faced each other on the hustings. Vishnu Deo, of course, was supported by his fellow Aryas and, so we have already calculated, also by a clear majority of the sanatani Hindus. For this chapter, however, it is more germane to the task at hand to note the communal groups which combined in support of John Grant.

We chanced upon a list of some of Grant's supporting groups in the pages of the Arya press, in a letter to the editor from a reader who signed himself "Kai Rewa," a reader who complained that the Fiji Samachar was providing extensive coverage of Vishnu Deo's campaign events but was largely ignoring Grant's efforts at canvassing support. With a view

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53 For a reminder of our analysis of communal voting patterns in the Fiji Legislative Council election of September 1929, see Chapter Three, pp.201-202 above.
to impress on the editor that Grant enjoyed wide support in the Fiji Indian community, "Kai Rewa" referred to a Hindi-language notice the Grant campaign had distributed in which the names of eleven prominent Fiji Indians were entered as supporting Grant's candidacy. M.S. Buksh, civil servant, was one name on the list. The names of the presidents of the Indian Reform League and the Madras Maha Sangam were also listed. Indeed, by the action of their respective general secretaries, the Indian Reform League and the Madras Maha Sangam, at the very beginning of the election process, had nominated Grant as a candidate for the Indian Southern Division seat.54 It was an interesting amalgam of political types: a Muslim civil servant, the main Fiji Indian secularist group, and the local South Indian sangam. And to this list of Grant's campaign supporters we can confidently add Grant's co-religionists of the Indian Christian Society and the secularists of the Suva-based Fiji Indian National Congress. The first of these two groups would have claimed Grant as one of their religious own, while the second had recently elected Grant as its president.

To "Kai Rewa's" accusation of biased press coverage, the Fiji Samachar, in reply, protested that "our columns are open to one and all."55 The lack of balance in its election

54 See "Kai Rewa" to Editor, after 10 August 1929; FS, September 1929, vol.3, number 9, p.19.
campaign coverage, the *Fiji Samachar* went on to explain; had arisen because, as it picturesquely phrased it, the "Samaj walas send us invitations, and they send especially cars and provide all the conveniences for our reporter to get their reports."56

Once the election was over, with Vishnu Deo securely in possession of the Indian Southern Division seat, the loss of a sense of purpose seems to have affected the group of Fiji Indian Christians and secularists who had formed the Suva-based Fiji Indian National Congress. And, after the three Indian M.L.C.s had staged their historic withdrawal from the floor of the Fiji Legislative Council (*decessit* 5 November 1929), the continued existence of two separate and opposed congress groups seems to have become seen, in the eyes of the Fiji Indian social elite, as a political configuration no longer supportable.

In any case, John Grant evidently decided to follow up on Vishnu Deo’s retirement from the floor of the Legislative Council by staging a retirement of his own. Grant announced his decision at the very same public meeting called to provide the three Indian M.L.C.s with an opportunity to explain their grounds for withdrawal from the Council.

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56 Ibid. The term "wala" (sometimes spelt "wallah"), plural "walas," is a commonly used word in Indian subcontinental English. The closest equivalent term in standard Antipodean English would be "fellow" or "chap." As used in the passage quoted, "Samaj walas" means "Arya Samajis" or "Arya Samajists" or, as in our own preferred usage, "Aryas."

In India, the British could refer to infantry soldiers as "jawan walas," anyone can refer to street sweepers as "bhangi walas," and a train on its way to or from Delhi can be called a "Delhi wall."
On the 6th November, 1929, in the Suva Town Hall a public meeting of Indians was held under the Chairmanship of Mr S.B. Patel. Mr J.F. Grant informed the meeting that the Suva [Indian National] Congress had amalgamated with the Lautoka [Indian National] Congress and therefore there was now only one body throughout Fiji.... Messrs V. Deo, P. Singh and Ramchandra Maharaj explained why they resigned.... They expressed their deep regret to have found the Fijian member against the motion. They thanked the gathering for their continued support and encouragement. The Branch of the Lautoka [Indian National] Congress under the name and style of the Suva [Indian National] Congress Committee was established with Mr H. Sahodar Singh as Chairman.57

So the Lautoka-based Fiji Indian National Congress had appropriated the name of its former Suva-based rival and set up a branch office with its own type of men in charge. While John Grant himself remained active in the new Suva Congress and served on its management committee, little else remained of the Indian Christian character of the old Suva Congress. On the six-man management committee alone, Christians (one) were now outnumbered by Aryas (two). One of the latter was Babu Ram Singh, elected as general secretary.

As soon as the originally Lautoka-based Fiji Indian National Congress leaders had, so to speak, established a branch office in the capital, at the first opportunity they opened up communications with the colonial authorities. In late-November 1929, the arrival in Fiji of Sir Murchison Fletcher, the new Governor, provided the Congress leaders with an opening. They asked the new Governor for an audience.

57 FS, 4 January 1930, vol.4, number 1, p.6.
Fletcher promptly obliged. Five of the six members of the Suva Congress Committee of the Fiji Indian National Congress attended the audience with the Governor: H. Sahodar Singh, the new president; John Grant; J.P. Maharaj, the prominent Arya leader; Ratu Ram Samuj; and X.K.N. Dean, a Muslim League leader. Babu Ram Singh, owner of the Fiji Samachar and Secretary of the Suva Congress Committee, was the sixth member of the committee, that is, the member not present at the meeting with the Governor.

In a prepared statement, the Suva Congress leaders drew to Fletcher's attention two main issues. The first of these dealt with the educational needs of Fiji Indian children. The second addressed the issue of Indian political status in the colony. According to the Congress' interpretation of things, however, the second of these two issues was given a clear priority. Citing from an earlier government policy statement, the Congress delegation told Fletcher:

We would refer also to the fact that the pledges to make our position "equal to that of any other class of His Majesty's subjects resident in Fiji" are still unfulfilled, and we fervently hope and pray that Your Excellency will see that the realisation is attained by us at an early date.58

At the hands of the Congress delegates, the issue of Indian education was worked into the rationale of the demand for a common electoral role, for they complained to Fletcher that the attitude of the European M.L.C.s towards "the long

58 Address to the Governor by the Suva Congress Committee of the Fiji Indian National Congress, late-November 1929; FTH, 30 November 1929, p.2.
expected development of ... education for Indian children ... vindicates our claim for a Common Electoral Roll on a common franchise." It was an approach to the current issues which suggested that the Congress leaders saw their organization as something of an umbrella grouping, a body representing the broad interests of the Fiji Indian community.

Our appraisal of where the Fiji Indian National Congress fitted into the mosaic of Fiji Indian politics is further substantiated by the concluding passage of the Congress delegation’s statement, as addressed to the Governor. One of the recurring themes of our study, as it has by now developed, is the belief that much of the material which inspired the configuration of Fiji Indian political activism of our period was provided by the example, and sometimes even the personnel, of Indian subcontinental politics, and that when this material was propagated from the public stage in Fiji it was often advanced in terms of a nationalism focused on a projected Greater India. In just such a vein, the Congress delegates told the new Governor:

We hope that under your prospective regime ... we the children of Great Mother India may progress and fall into line with the rapid strides at which she is advancing towards self-government, self-respect and moral and commercial prosperity.  

In the aftermath of the three Indian M.L.C.s’ withdrawal from the floor of the Legislative Council, the Fiji Indian

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59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.
National Congress continued awhile to provide the umbrella type of service we have described above. It is interesting to note how this broad representative role of the Congress was dealt with in the Arya press. It seems that, in its reports of Congress activity, the Fiji Samachar adopted an evenhanded approach, a mode of reporting with which regular readers of the Arya press would have had few opportunities to familiarize themselves. Of course, Babu Ram Singh, owner of the Fiji Samachar, the reader will recall, was also the Secretary of the Suva Congress Committee of the Fiji Indian National Congress. In any event, the following passage gives us an indication of the tone of things in the Arya press when Congress matters were aired.

The Congress is getting fair help from the public. So far from various sources it has ... £184/9/3. Mr J.F. Grant gave a Picture night on Sunday [5 January 1930] ... and realised £14/5/1.... We understand that the Sikh Guruwara Committee of Suva is going to donate to the Congress a handsome amount.  

A prominent Indian Christian and a group of Sikh leaders working for the same purpose and being praised by the Arya press for their efforts! This remarkable passage quoted above illustrates conclusively the umbrella nature of the Congress in the Fiji Indian political scheme of things.

Let us remind ourselves that the Fiji Indian National Congress was modelled, in its exterior appearance if not necessarily in its internal make-up, on the pre-eminent

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political party long established at the cutting edge of the Indian nationalist movement. And not the Fiji Indian National Congress alone. During the late colonial era, most Indian overseas communities formed a local congress group.

The Fiji Indian National Congress occasionally exchanged messages with other overseas congresses. One such exchange of views occurred in early 1930. It took the form of a letter from A.M. Sahay, General Secretary of the Indian National Congress of Japan. Both the timing and text of Sahay's message to the Fiji Indians suggests that news of the three newly-elected Indian representatives' withdrawal from the Fiji legislative Council had reached Japan and that it seemed to the Japanese Indian leader that his fellow Indians in Fiji should have been pursuing rather more constructive goals.

I hope it will not be out of place if I suggest that the social reforms are as important and necessary for our national progress as political liberty itself.... There is no doubt that our societies need a thorough over-hauling. Our old customs have out-lived their utility and are most unsuitable for the present days.... [They] have been working against our interest.62

It is with some difficulty that we try to form a picture in our mind of what life would have been like for Indians living in Japan in the early 1930s. We feel sure, however, that, whatever advantages attended the Indian experience there, the right of entry into, let alone withdrawal from, the Japanese

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parliament was not one of them. This consideration may have informed what we think was Sahay’s veiled critique of the way the Fiji Indians were conducting their affairs. In any event, the view from Japan was an interesting one, an angle of approach which afforded an evaluation which shared some common ground with the observations of Swami Avinasananda.63

The Indian settlers in East Africa also formed a congress. In early 1930, the Arya press in Fiji published an item which mentioned that the "East African Indian National Congress held its session at Nairobi on [6-8 December 1929]."64 Mrs Sarojini Naidu, the celebrated Indian nationalist poetess, presided at the Nairobi meeting. In reference to the recent withdrawal of Indian members from the Fiji Legislative Council, the Indians of East Africa passed a resolution. In part, it read:

This Congress fully sympathises with the Indians in Fiji in their fight for equality of status with Europeans in that Colony and supports their movement in the direction of non-participation in the Legislature till their goal is achieved.65

This was an item which drew comment from the Fiji Samachar itself, a comment which, in the broader context of our study, can stand as a statement of our own -- that is, as an illustration of the Greater India mentality which informed

63 For a reminder of Swami Avinasananda’s commentary on Fiji Indian social reform, see Chapter Five, p.348 above.
64 FS, 15 February 1930, vol.4, number 7, p.10.
65 East African Indian National Congress resolution, 6-8 December 1929; cited ibid.
much of Fiji Indian politics, a quality especially in evidence in the activities of the secularists.

We heartily thank the Congress for their thoughtfulness and their sympathy with our movement in Fiji. If all of us remain united for the Common Cause of Indians throughout the World, we are sure to achieve our goal. We congratulate the Congress for their bold stand in Kenya and wish them to continue to fight for common Roll.66

On the optimistic note provided by this historic moment of communion between the Indian settler societies of Fiji and East Africa we shall end our inquiry into the role of the secularists in the Fiji Indian politics of our period.

The time is nigh for us to turn our attention away from events which illustrate how the Indian communal groups conducted themselves on the public stage in colonial Fiji to consider instead the fate of the communal groups when their brief moment in the limelight of Fiji Indian politics was over. But before we so proceed, we shall first review our chapter findings thus far.

We observed the formation, respectively in 1926 and 1927, of the two South Indian sangams: the Then India Sanmarga Ikyya Sangam and the Madras Maha Sangam. The first of these was established by a slow and accumulative process which took place, we noted with interest, up-country from the capital, as initiated by a group of not particularly prominent individuals who led the South Indians of the northern and western districts of Viti Levu. The second sangam, however, was

formed on 26 December 1927 at a public meeting at Flagstaff, Suva, of Fiji Indians of Suva and its surrounding districts. Present at the founding of the second sangam were many of the big names of Fiji Indian politics. With this run of events in view, we speculated that perhaps we had chanced upon a capital-versus-provinces dimension to Fiji Indian politics, a competitive relationship between the Fiji Indian social elite resident in Suva and their country cousins. Such competition between the two South Indian sangams, however, was not pursued by either party in a manner reckless of broader South Indian interests. The two sets of South Indian leaders avoided the rancorous exchanges which so often marred communal relations amongst the Fiji Indians, especially between Arya and sanatani Hindus, between Aryas and Muslims, between Aryas and secularists, and between Sunni and Ahmadi Muslims.

Once launched, the two sangams ventured to assert a South Indian presence in the politics of the colony. Their main activities centred on school-building, especially for the purpose of preserving the South Indian languages, and on petitioning the British colonial authorities for separate South Indian representation in the Fiji Legislative Council. While they failed to persuade government of the virtue of South Indian separatist representation, the South Indian leaders did establish schools. This latter accomplishment attracted opposition from certain quarters, most intriguingly from a Fiji European settler imprudent enough to unburden
himself, in a letter to the editor, of his antagonism towards the survival of distinctively South Indian cultural attributes, especially the several South Indian languages.

Yet when we turned to consider the reception accorded South Indian separatism in the pages of the Fiji Indian Arya press, we registered a surprise. We found the very views of our indiscreet Fiji European correspondent, though his were premised very differently, echoed from the public stage in distant India -- by Sir T. Vijayaraghavachari, an enthused Indian nationalist, one whose antagonistic views towards South Indian cultural separatism were conscripted into the pages of the Arya press in Fiji as a testimony for what the Fiji Indian Arya leaders themselves would have wanted to say.

The South Indians were unruffled by the opposition from all sides. They continued to pursue their culturally and politically separatist goals. One of their moves was to invite Swami Avinasananda of the Ramakrishna Mission to visit Fiji. This brought us into fortuitous contact with an astute observer of the peculiarities of Fiji Indian society, of those things which set off Fiji Indian social practice from the norms of behaviour which prevailed in the subcontinent. The good Swami's commentary on the Fiji Indian social ethos was a timely reminder that our society of study was, and still is, a unique construct, that an impressive range of inclusive and freedom-enhancing qualities sets off Fiji Indian society from the social formation of India proper.
The Fiji Indian Christian community provided us with our next focus of attention. We observed that group politics amongst the Fiji Indian Christians tended to be episodic, although prominent Fiji Indian Christian individuals were often active on the public stage in other guises. Some of the Fiji Indian Christian political activists who met in Suva on 9 August 1929 to form the Indian Christian Society were already familiar to us, they having appeared on the public stage on other occasions, usually in secular representation. The public career of W.M. Caldwell, a civil servant, provided us with an illustration of the protean quality many of the Fiji Indian Christian leaders seem to have mastered.

The secularists were the last type of Fiji Indian political activists that caught our attention. In terms of leadership personnel, we noted that there was considerable overlap between the secularist and Indian Christian groups. In order to act on the public stage, we observed that the secularists organized themselves into two main groups: the Indian Reform League and the Fiji Indian National Congress. The first of these two groups was dominated by civil servants and tended to eschew political in favour of social action. The second group draw its personnel from a wide range of political activists, including Aryas and Christians, although for the first six months of its existence there were two Fiji Indian National congresses, one based in Lautoka, the other in Suva. Indian Christians were prominent in the leadership of the Suva-based
congress, while Hindus, including some prominent Aryas, dominated the Lautoka-based congress. Unlike the case of the two South Indian sangams where the division between the two groups has persisted to the present-day, the division between the congress groups was ephemeral, with one congress soon succumbing to the other. For congress disunity was ended in the wake of the withdrawal of the Indian representatives from the Legislative Council, with the Suva-based congress voting itself out of existence in favour of the establishment in Suva of a branch office of the Lautoka-based congress. The united Congress went on to act the part of an umbrella organization for various combinations of Fiji Indian communal groups.

Of all the types of Fiji Indian political activists which we have observed, the secularists seem to have had the closest links with their ideological counterparts in India proper. Two reasons for this are evident. First, several of the secularist leaders were recent arrivals from India, men who had come out to Fiji with the specific intention in mind to provide political leadership of the established All-India National Congress type; and that meant politics based on a secular rationale. The second reason was that, in a competitive situation, with two congress groups confronting each other from each end of Viti Levu, a connexion with the All-India National Congress could provide a source of much-needed legitimation, giving one group an edge over the other. Thus we observed the Suva-based congress group dispatching a
cable to Motilal Nehru in Allahabad informing the prominent Congress leader of the formation of the group and the identity of its president, John Grant.

Closely related to the intimate connexion between the Fiji Indian secularist groups and their counterparts in India was another notable secularist characteristic: the commitment to a Greater India ideological stance. We observed a delegation of Fiji Indian National Congress leaders approaching the Governor of Fiji, urging him to shape his policy towards the Fiji Indians according to the standards that pertained in state-society relations in the subcontinent. Also in Greater India mode, we saw the Fiji Indian National Congress receive advice on the need for Indian social reform from the General Secretary of the Indian National Congress of Japan, and support for the withdrawal of Indian representatives from the Fiji Legislative Council from the East African Indian National Congress meeting in session. No other Fiji Indian group could boast of affiliation with such a far-flung network of political collaborators.

Having now reviewed our chapter findings on the activities of the South Indian, Indian Christian and secularists. And with these three groups thus accounted for, we can now end our study of the Fiji Indian communal groups. We have exhausted our research for the period of the 1920s and 1930s. This period has ended and a new age is dawning, one heralded by the march of army boots in East Asia, in the Rhineland, in
Ethiopia. Our attention must now switch to the global war which caught up our historical subjects in its meshes. Let us proceed to consider those aspects of the Second World War relevant to our topic.

War

The Second World War began as an Anglo-German dual in early September 1939, H.M.G. reading the articles of war in response to the German invasion of Poland. In stern array, marshaled by the rising of an ancient mood, most of the far-flung Dominions, colonies and other possessions of the British Crown rallied to the war. Fiji took its place in the firing-line, providing for the dispatch of volunteers overseas and conducting public war-fund drives.

The initial Fiji Indian response to the Imperial war effort was not necessarily unfavourable. But, quite early in the piece, the Fiji Indian leaders did demonstrate a tendency to subordinate issues of Imperial defence, which all other groups in the colony regarded as primary, to issues of Fiji Indian domestic import. Thus, the Fiji Indian leaders allowed the Fiji Defence Force’s Indian platoon, formed in 1934, to disband rather than permit the Fiji Indian soldiers to be paid at levels lower than that of Fiji European troops. At the level of the Fiji Indian rank and file, there were several

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67 For an account of the issues which arose to prevent a wholehearted Fiji Indian contribution to the Imperial war effort, see Gillion, The Fiji Indians ... 1977, pp.173-179.
positive aspects of Fiji Indian contributions to the war effort, such as contributing to the "Fiji Bombers Fund," the "Red Cross Fund" and the "Fiji Indians' Fighter Fund." And when an Indian Reserve Motor Transport Section was formed, it worked efficiently. But, at the top level of Fiji Indian politics, the pursuit of grievances, real and imagined, provided the main focus of activity.

The most important grievance over which the Fiji Indian leaders organized for action during the war years concerned the price of cane, as fetched by Fiji Indian tenant cane farmers, and the wages earned by Fiji Indian sugar mill workers. The issue unfolded around the Indian demand for an increase in pay and a higher return for cane and the rejection of such demands by the C.S.R. Company. What made this issue of greater moment than any other issue of the war years was that, from June 1943 to January 1944, the Fiji Indian leaders conducted a strike which brought sugar production to a halt. And the methods used by the strike organizers to enforce compliance from the cane growers were not always congenial. Something of a loss of innocence informed the way in which strike enforcement was carried out. The sources intimate several instances of the occasional grim little grotesque of rustic diablerie, tales of lone farmers approached in their fields by dark knots of men, of fields of ripening cane crackling nightly into fiery furnaces which illuminated shadowy figures slipping away into the bush.
In the main, the Fiji Indian leaders of the strike were not communalists. True, Vishnu Deo was involved in several instances of strike action, both in respect to the mobilization of the sugar mill workers of the Lautoka area and the encouragement of strike activity in the Suva-Rewa area. But Vishnu Deo, the sources indicate, was no longer the star performer. He neither initiated nor sustained the overall confrontation. Instead, it was Swami Rudrananda and A.D. Patel, the founders (in 1941) and helmsmen of the Akhil Fiji Krishak Maha Sangh (All-Fiji Farmers' Union), who were the two main leaders, both of whom were India-born and, again, both of whom were politicians of the mainstream secular All-India National Congress type -- a type we shall here classify as "neo-secularist." This term shall be used to highlight secularists of Indian National Congress ideological conviction. For it is useful for us to distinguish them from the more traditional secularists of the Indian Reform League and the Fiji Indian National Congress, secularists who intended their organizations to promote, respectively, Fiji Indian social reform and Fiji Indian inter-communal unity.

There would be little point in allocating any of our space to an exhaustive description of the various disruptive actions, of which the 1943-44 sugar strike was the most serious, taken by the Fiji Indians during the war years. Nor would it serve our study to spend time beating our breast in lamentation at the Fiji Indian actions. It is sufficient for
our purpose to register that, in respect to their actions taken during the war years, the Fiji Indian leaders failed their obligations to Fiji Indian society, that the public stance they adopted as the de facto representatives of the wider Fiji Indian community did not serve Fiji Indian interests, either in the short term or the long, and to ask the question why: Why did the Fiji Indian leaders adopt a confrontational instead of a neutral or even co-operative attitude towards a Fiji colonial polity at war?

The short answer to our question is that, during the war years, the Fiji Indian leaders took their political cue from the politics of the subcontinent, that Fiji Indian confrontation with the British colonial order was inspired by the Indian nationalist movement's confrontation with the same. We have observed time and again in the course of our study that issues generated in the nationalist matrix of Indian politics, be it the celebration of an asserted "Independence Day" or expressions of public mourning over the execution of Bhagat Singh or whatever, were often adopted as issues to be thrashed out on the public stage in Fiji -- usually much to the mystification of the Fiji European and native Fijian observers of their Fiji Indian neighbours' public behaviour.

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68 To recall how Gandhi's "Independence Day" celebration was adopted in Fiji, see Chapter Three, pp.239-243 above.

69 To recall how public mourning over the execution of Bhagat Singh and his two fellow terrorists gave Fiji Indian expression to subliminal hostility towards the colonial order in Fiji, see Chapter Three, pp.243-248 above.
In this respect, we should recall that Swami Rudrananda and A.D. Patel were precisely the kind of political leaders who, according to the Fiji Indian political group typology we have by now constructed, belonged to the group most intimately connected to and reflective of the political programmes of their counterparts in India proper, namely, our newly classified "neo-secularists," a sub-species of the group which we have termed "secularist."  

By late 1942, Swami Rudrananda and A.D. Patel, reflecting in Fiji the prevailing Indian nationalist attitude in the subcontinent, probably viewed British-Indian political relations as already in crisis, that there was nothing much of the two peoples' joint political assets left to preserve. It still remains, however, for us to explain how a set of leaders like Swami Rudrananda and A.D. Patel, both of whom were recent migrants from India, were able to persuade the Fiji Indians at large of the virtue of a programme of confrontational domestic politics, the general ethos as well as the timing of which was inspired from afar, an activist programme which accorded so poorly with the needs of the day in Fiji. Why were the Fiji Indians vulnerable to the allure of a policy so deeply flawed?  

From our reading, it seems to us that the roots of Fiji Indian misperceptions went deep. The Fiji Indian opinion leaders did not ignore incoming information, but they did tend

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70 To recall our appraisal of the secularists as the Fiji Indian group most intimately connected to their counterparts in the subcontinent, see Chapter Five, pp.377-378 above.
to twist reality to fit their preconceptions, and could not or would not accept evidence to the contrary. For example, Fiji Indian post-war adulation of Subhas Chandra Bose, at a time when the atrocities committed by the Nazis in occupied Europe and by the Japanese in occupied China and South-East Asia had become known, pointed to the hold in Fiji Indian minds of a rather peculiar process whereby they fashioned their world view. It seems to have been a process which required its subjects, from the interior of a rather enclosed world, to see and hear what they wanted to see and hear and to ignore the revelations occurring at the forefront of world tidings, at the Nuremberg and Tokyo war crime trials. Certainly, the sight of Bose’s picture, in Indian National Army military garb, on display in Indian shops in Fiji, as for many years it was, would have been a sobering moment for the homecoming Fiji European and native Fijian serviceman. On that melancholy note, one which confides grounds for deep-seated distrust between the principal races of Fiji, sufficient has now been said on the period of the Second World War. It is time for us to turn our attention to consider the role of communalism amongst the Fiji Indians in the post-war era.

Neo-Secularist Dominance

When we peered into the record of Fiji Indian leadership politics of the years following the war, it was clear that a changing of the guard had occurred during the war. It is an index of the intractability of Fiji Indian politics, or of the
depth of Indian grievance in Fiji, that Swami Rudrananda and A.D. Patel were not discredited by their leadership failures during the war years. For in the aftermath of the war, A.D. Patel moved effortlessly to the head of Fiji Indian politics, there to remain until his death in 1969. Perhaps A.D. Patel was assisted by the continuing march of events in the subcontinent. For the formation in British India of an Indian National Congress government \textit{(regni principium 2 September 1946)} and the resignation of the Raj \textit{(decessit 14/15 August 1947)} may have registered with the Fiji Indians and imparted to their own neo-secularist politicians an aura of anticipated success.

The dominance of the neo-secularists in Fiji Indian politics in the post-war era was not effectively disputed by the communalist leaders, even though some of them remained active on the public stage. Again, the march of events in the subcontinent may have had a say in this development, grievously impairing the public image of the communalist politicians. For communalism militant had led to the partition of \textit{Bharat Mata} (Mother India), so perhaps the communalist mode of politics was discredited in Fiji Indian eyes.

The dozen or so communal groups which continued to operate in the 1950s seem to have functioned in a manner which recalled their initial activities in the early 1920s, as vehicles of social projects, especially of the building and
management of schools. Thus we could say that, in these later years, the communal groups returned to their origins -- but with one important difference. The men who came forward to serve in the management committees of the schools in question were no longer men who saw this activity as the first step in a public career, as was often the case in the 1920s. Instead, they offered their services to help run the schools in order to ensure the good management of the schools. In other words, such activity was now an end in itself.

Our narrative has advanced a little beyond our period of study. So let us leave things where they now stand. For we have come to the ending of things -- the end, that is, of our research chapters. Our voyage to the ports of call of Fiji Indian communalism has finally brought us to harbour, to the final quayside, where, landing after winds long contrary, storm-driven, weather-beaten, we are faced with our last task: to report on the outcome of our journey.
Chapter Six

Conclusion

Fiji Indian politics of our period had something of a restless quality about it, a gnawing querulousness which informed political relations both between Fiji Indian communal groups and between Fiji Indian representatives and their Fiji European and native Fijian counterparts. Whether this was the product of an unquiet disposition native to the Fiji Indian collective psyche or merely an acquired counterpoint to the imperviousness cultivated by their British rulers we are reluctant to speculate. Perhaps it was a bit of both.

However, another factor must be considered. The 1920s and 1930s were the years in which Indian nationalism was moulded into its definitive shape, a momentous development recognized as such by contemporaries. No other episode in Indian history has been more fully documented by its participants. They seem to have known, while they lived it, that the Indian march to what they assumed at the time would be subcontinental nationhood was one of the great convulsions of history. The Fiji Indians were part of this historic movement, however incongruously the political ramifications of their Greater India allegiances occasionally conjoined with the politics of place in their South Pacific homeland. The Fiji Indian political activists could not slough off this Greater India ideological impediment, for each and every one of them
harkened to the events occurring in India proper and felt the hand of history heavily on his own shoulder.

Our study has been directed partly towards acquiring an understanding of the Fiji Indian leaders, a body of men whose intention to attain the political goals articulated by Sastri we have recorded but of whose failure to secure them we shall leave to the reader’s memory. Our study has brought to light a story essentially about misdirected effort. The Fiji Indian Hindu leaders seem to have convinced themselves, though quite mistakenly, that the Fiji Europeans comprised the colony’s regnant community; but that, if their own community’s greater numbers could be brought into play in a non-communal democratic political order, the Hindu vote would determine Fiji Indian representation, and the Fiji Indian vote would decide the majority of the Legislative Council seats. In this instance, the political instincts of the Fiji Indian leaders served them poorly. In truth, Fiji European participation in government was never more than a British Colonial Office courtesy. And, at the very beginning of our period of study, with the decision to extend elected representation to the much more numerous Fiji Indian community, the bell was already tolling for the political representative dominance of the Fiji Europeans, something acknowledged at the time by Sir Everard im Thurn, a former Governor of Fiji, and the Right Reverend T.C. Twitchell, the then (Anglican) Bishop of Polynesia.¹

¹ To recall the similar appraisals of im Thurn and Twitchell, expressed
And yet, even though, or was it perhaps because, the Fiji Europeans were already an ebbing political force, the Fiji Indian leaders focused their main efforts on achieving political objectives which promised to further undermine the already crumbling Fiji European position. Evidently, the Fiji Europeans presented a tempting flank, too tempting indeed for the Fiji Indian cavalry not to make a dash at it; and, unwisely, to persist overlong in the attack. Feeling the pressure from the Fiji Indian leaders, their Fiji European counterparts withdrew to the shelter of the native Fijian political stronghold where they sought accommodation, and eventually alliance, with the Fijian chiefly leaders. From the point of view of Fiji national politics, this Fiji European retreat into the native Fijian camp constituted a move from pluralism to dualism, from a political representative balance based on multiple power centres to one which was organized around only two. We shall return to this matter in our pages below and comment further.

In the late 1960s, in the run-up to independence, the Fiji Indian attack on the Fiji European political position eventually succeeded in attaining a decisive result, with Fiji European parliamentary representation being reduced to a fraction of the Fiji Indian. In a sense, the Fiji Indian representative triumph over the Fiji Europeans was altogether

separately in 1920, concerning an imminent Indian ascendence in Fiji, see Chapter Two, pp.73-74 above.
too complete. Well might the Fiji Indian leaders have heeded the counsel of Shingen Takeda.

A victory should be 60 or 70 per cent. An 80 per cent victory is already dangerous. A 90 per cent to 100 per cent victory may be the cause of a great defeat in the future.2

The protracted flank action conducted by the Fiji Indian leaders against the political position of the Fiji Europeans did not challenge the centerpiece of the colonial order, a structure whereby Fijian representation in the counsels of the colony was mediated through a Fijian chiefly class. This was the same Fijian chiefly class which, in the mid-Victorian era, had repeatedly, and eventually successfully, petitioned H.M.G. for Fiji's annexation into the British Empire -- the chiefly class which was the primary focus for British feelings of obligation towards things Fijian. The nemesis of this misdirection of Fiji Indian political energy was evident in 1970, in the terms of independence: essentially, a changing of the guard in the offices of the colonial state, from British officials to representatives of the Fijian chiefly class. Had he been so inclined, H.R.H. Prince Charles could have used the occasion of the independence ceremony to dust off his French.

L'Ancien Régime est mort! Vive l'Ancien Régime!

The old order was perpetuated in independent Fiji up until March-April 1987 when, in a scheduled general election, the

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governing party which had ruled Fiji since independence was turned out of office and a coalition of oppositional parties, drawing mainly though not exclusively on Fiji Indian electoral support, formed a new government. The end of the old order, however, was very soon overtaken by the ending of the new; for the momentous change which had occurred through the ballot box had the misfortune of provoking another change even more decisive. In May 1987, the end was reached of the British experiment with representative democracy in Fiji (durabat 1904-1987) -- this time an unscheduled and violent change, heralded by the tramp of army boots entering uninvited into the inner sanctum of the Fiji Parliament.

Old-line Fiji European parliamentarians and the community they had represented would have objected to the military putsch of May 1987; and, in view of their close relations with their counterparts in the other British settler societies of Oceania, their objections might have carried weighty consequences. But by 1987, Fiji European representation in the Fiji Parliament was a negligible presence. In their long-sustained effort to reduce the political representation of the Fiji Europeans, the Fiji Indian leadership, in the year or two leading up to independence, had won a ninety-to-one-hundred per cent victory -- just the sort of victory against the peril of which Shingen Takeda had warned.\(^3\) The putsch effected,

\(^3\) To recall Takeda's analysis of the danger which can attend a too complete victory, see Chapter Seven, p.390 above.
the Fiji Indian parliamentarians were left to voice their objections alone. Since 1987, the Fiji Indian politicians have had to face squarely the reality of things, no opportunity presenting itself to indulge instead their evident penchant for contest with shadows. And there we must leave them, together crowded, drove from each side, shoaling towards a still uncertain future.

In the Introduction to our subject of study, we set ourselves the task of investigating the racial dimension of Fiji politics -- this in lieu of class and gender analysis, the other two main options. To set the scene for our intended line of investigation, we observed that present-day historians are in general agreement that the establishment of a racially polarized political order has been the most distinctive element of the political legacy Fiji received from the colonial era. And although they tend to hint at it indirectly rather than to lay a specific indictment, most historians, we remind the reader, have indicated that this legacy was handed down from above, supposedly as the result of a divide et impera political strategy put into effect by one or other or some combination of colonial Fiji's ruling British, Australian and Fiji European elements: political,

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4 To recall the reasons for our choice of race, instead of class or gender, see Chapter One, pp.19-20 above.

5 To recollect the main line of reasoning which historians have advanced to explain Fiji's racially polarized political order, and our critique thereof, see Chapter One, pp.20-21 above.
social and commercial. The Fiji Indians, most historians imply, were a passive factor in this process. With this historiographical consensus in view, but with Nirad Chaudhuri at our elbow hinting at a promising alternative line of investigation, we asked ourselves the question: Might Fiji Indian social attitudes and political actions also have contributed some small part to Fiji's racial polarization?

With our study of this matter now completed, we think that we have provided sufficient evidence to support the conclusion that the Fiji Indians were not a passive but a dynamic factor in the process in question, that certain activist elements amongst the Fiji Indians made a significant contribution to the racial polarization of which we have written. Nirad Chaudhuri's notion of a compulsive Hindu quest for genetic purity providing the basis for the expression at the political level of exclusive Indian social attitudes seems to fit our historical subjects quite well, especially in respect to the Fiji Indian Aryas. To the query we raised as to the possible assignment of a quantum of Indian responsibility for Fiji's racial polarization, Arya political activity has provided us with the most promising evidence; and from this evidence we have been able to draw several affirmative answers.

More generally, it seems that the Fiji Indian social formation had a markedly enclosed quality about it, and that this trait had certain dubious social and political ramifications. We have noted already that no racially mixed
Indo-European or Indo-Fijian social groups have arisen to take a place beside the bourgeoning European-Fijian community. Moreover, within the scaffolding of the colonial state Fiji Indian political forces acted out their own quite unrelated compulsions, often inspired from India proper -- and often in a Greater India ideological direction, one contrary to the grain of Fiji national development. While it is difficult to gauge, some responsibility for the alienation in Fiji of things Indian from things non-Indian can be laid at the Fiji Indian door.

Of course, the argument we offer above is not intended to deny that other causal elements were also in attendance, especially factors arising from the fact that the Fiji Indians were vulnerable to manipulation from afar -- not only from the subcontinent, but also from London and Sydney, from the Colonial Office and the head office of the C.S.R. Company. Many disparate hands pulled the strings which made the Fiji Indians do many of the things they did: requiring the Fiji Indians to live in quarters separate from the Fijians, persuading Fiji Indian families to espouse their children only to others of their own kind, manipulating the sugar production and marketing process so as to work the cane farmers at a minimum rate of return, and encouraging Indian nationalist cadres to go to Fiji specifically with a view to organize the

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6 To recall our disclosure, expressed in an oblique manner, of the absence of a mixed Indo-Fijian or European-Indian community in Fiji, see Chapter Two, p.70, n.77 above.
Fiji Indians politically along Indian nationalist lines. Some of these external manipulating hands were British, others were Australian, still others were Indian, and one famous pair was Gandhian. It is not to be wondered at that, arising from the patterns of behaviour which developed, a lack of synchronization informed the Fiji Indian social and political experience, a lack of synchronization of Indian people with Fijian space. And this lack of synchronization came about through the actions of many people: British officials, Fijian European settlers and Indian nationalist cadres -- as well as home-grown Fiji Indian communalists and secularists.

With this said about the wider political configuration of things, we shall now narrow our view somewhat in order to consider the specifics of Indian activity on the Fiji public stage. So let us pass on to ponder the second issue we raised in our Introduction: the reason for the Fiji Indian failure to secure the political alliance of the native Fijians.

We attended respectfully upon the arrival in Fiji of the Letters Patent of 1929, which issued from the Palace on 9 February of that year, and, in the later months of 1929, observed with high expectation the coming into the Fiji Legislative Council of the first elected representatives of the Fiji Indian community.

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7 To recall the line of thought which led us to posit this issue, see Chapter One, pp.22-25 above.

8 To recall the circumstances under which the Letters Patent of 1929 received the Royal Assent, see Chapter Two, p.117, n.164 above.
All three Indian elected M.L.C.s were Hindu, two of whom were enthused Aryas. During their all-too-brief occupation of the seats assigned by royal decree to the Fiji Indians, the three Indian elected M.L.C.s gave no indication of an intention to seek common ground, let alone alliance, with the three Fijian nominated members. Indeed, the only occasion when a Fiji Indian M.L.C. addressed one of his native Fijian fellow members was when Vishnu Deo, with his relentless talent for the tactless, spoke disparagingly to Ratu Popi Seniloli, casting aspersions on the right of the Fijian chief to represent his own people, asserting that Seniloli did not "in any way represent the Fijian community." If, by this comment, Vishnu Deo meant the representation of native Fijian interests, we feel it incumbent upon us to point out that, historically, judging by comparative outcome, Seniloli and his fellow Fijian chiefs, working hand in glove with British colonial officialdom, did a much better job representing the interests of the native Fijians than Vishnu Deo and his fellow Indian M.L.C.s ever managed to do for the Fiji Indians. And the reason for this is not difficult to discover. It seems clear that the Fiji Indian leaders were more interested in serving the ideological cause of the Indian nationalist movement than the objective interests of the Fiji Indian community. By way of contrast, the Fijian nominated M.L.C.s

9 To recall Vishnu Deo’s denigration of Ratu Popi Seniloli’s representative status, see Chapter Three, pp.215-216 above.
were seeking Fijian objectives in a Fijian setting. Unlike Vishnu Deo and his Arya confreres, Seniloli and his fellow Fijian chiefs were not ideologically influenced from afar.

As it turned out, Vishnu Deo's assertion was not only impolite, it was also quite misleading. For when, in the early 1960s, representative democracy was extended to the native Fijians, the success of chiefly candidates in the ensuing general elections (1963) demonstrated irrefutably that, during the colonial interval, the Fijians had not drunk the waters of Lethe, that they still remembered and held true to their old tribal allegiances and loyalties, that they still regarded their traditional chiefs as a necessary component in the government of the land which, by right of eminent domain, had once been indefeasibly their own. Ninety years of British colonial rule evidently had not proletarianized the native Fijians, an outcome of empire, one favourable to the perpetuation of the traditional Fijian social structure, which Sir Arthur Gordon, the architect of the British colonial order in Fiji, had always intended.

While it was clear enough on any objective basis of analysis that the situation in the 1920s and 1930s called for the making of political alliances, this proved an achievement which forever eluded the Fiji Indian leaders -- that is, up until the mid-1980s, far outside our period. When we observed that the leaders thrown up in the inter-war decades were drawn from the Aryas, the most exclusive-minded and self-absorbed of
all the Fiji Indian groups, the Fiji Indian failure to secure the Fijian alliance was hardly a cause for wonder. The Aryas provided a set of leaders for whom the genetic dimension of traditional Hindu thought, roused to a new height of enthusiasm by the Indian fascination with the spirit of the new nationalism, provided the main plank of their quest for cultural and political authenticity. The Fiji Indians were unlucky that at the critical moment in 1929 when Fiji Indian elected representatives first entered the Legislative Council, the political leadership of their community had been entrusted to this set of religio-ethnic enthusiasts. Any other home-grown communal group, if similarly entrusted with Fiji Indian leadership, would have likely performed much better -- the South Indians, sanatani Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Indian Reform League secularists, to name the more likely. Only the India-born, recently-arrived neo-secularists of All-India National Congress ideological conviction might have performed in a manner even more injurious to Fiji Indian interests than did the Aryas -- at least, the spectacular failure of the neo­secularists' wartime leadership suggests that this would likely have been so, the curious totem of Subhas Chandra Bose, the be-spectacled totalitarian militant, peering out at us from his pride of place in the Indian nationalist pantheon confirming us in this belief.

10 To recall our earlier reference to the role of Bose in the Indian nationalist scheme of things, see Chapter Five, p.384 above.
This answers two of the three queries we raised in our Introduction. But now, before we proceed to address the third issue raised, we need to ask ourselves the question: Do we have a thesis? We remind the reader that we do not have a pre-constructed one: to be so equipped, we would have had to know where our study was leading us before we arrived there. This was never so. Our present point of arrival is for us new country. If we are to spell out the main purport of this treatise, we shall now have to glance back at our research chapters, observe the line of progress they trace out, and look for some theme of common measure.

We think we see something which will serve the purpose. There is a puzzle running like a thread throughout the course of our research chapters: the ability of the politically active elements amongst the Fiji Indians to be simultaneously in conflict at the inter-communal level over some issues and united at the national level in pursuit of other goals. Examples are legion. We have encountered this phenomenon (and occasionally recoiled from its seeming illogicality\(^{11}\)) several times in our study. The display of Hindu unity in protest at the government take-over of the Samabula Indian

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\(^{11}\) To recall instances when we have thus both encountered and recoiled, two examples will suffice: the instance when none of the disparate sets of communal leaders responded to the Returning Officer's invitation to nominate candidates to replace the Indian M.L.C.s who had resigned (see Chapter Three, pp.235-237 above); and the instance when Sir Murchison Fletcher, the Governor of Fiji, was able to persuade neither John Grant nor Abdul Karim, respectively Indian Christian and Muslim leaders, to break ranks with the Hindus over the issue of a common or communal electoral roll (see Chapter Three, pp.237-239 above).
School, even though Arya and sanatani Hindus had quarreled bitterly over control of the School’s management committee and the sanatani Hindu leaders, ousted from the committee by the Aryas, had previously requested the government action, provides one such example. 12 Fiji Indian community-wide support for the Arya-led Indian elected members’ withdrawal from the Legislative Council over the common electoral roll issue, even though prominent Indian Christian leaders had previously asked for a communal roll, and Muslim and South Indian leaders had asked for separate inter-Indian representation, provides another. 13

We could list many more such examples, but we have already established to the most exacting satisfaction this Janus-faced 14 quality of Fiji Indian political behaviour. Our task here is to answer the question: How did our historical subjects effect this remarkable ability to simultaneously wrangle divisively over one issue and act unitedly over another? How, for example, do we explain the unity of purpose over the common electoral roll issue effected by a Fiji Indian

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12 To assist recollection of our account of the more than two years of communalist confrontation (1927-1929) over control of the Samabula Indian School Management Committee, see Chapter Three, section entitled “Encounter at Samabula,” pp.176-198 above.

13 To recall our account of the show of Fiji Indian unity in support of the Indian elected members’ withdrawal from the Fiji Legislative Council over the common electoral roll issue, see Chapter Three, section entitled “Withdrawal and Boycott,” especially pp.218-229 above.

14 We do not mean two-faced, as in deceitful. Janus was the Roman god identified with doors and gates, represented artistically with two opposite faces, looking simultaneously in two opposed directions.
community which was at the very same time riven with communalist divisions, especially those communalist divisions which pitched Aryas against Indian Reform League secularists, Aryas against sanatani Hindus, Aryas against Muslims, and Sunni Muslims against Ahmadi Muslims? How did this pond-life of Fiji Indian communalist forces, even at the very moment when they were savaging each other, present a united front against opponents from beyond Fiji Indian social confines?

In seeking an answer to this question we, once again, need to step outside the established limits of Fiji Indian historiography. For, in respect to this quest, the most promising line of thought which suggests itself directs us towards consideration of the Fiji Indian Hindu collective character, something about which, as we have mentioned already, the existing literature is rather scant.

What we have in mind by way of an answer to this question concerns the phenomenon of multi-layered political allegiances which in present-day India, so certain prominent historians maintain, are, under the impact of resurgent communalism, increasingly informing the political order -- the phenomenon Ayesha Jalal calls "Multiple Identities" and "Layered Sovereignties." These phrases formed the title of a paper, the keynote address delivered by Ayesha Jalal at the South Asia Symposium held at the University of Hawaii in early March 1991. On that occasion, the full title and sub-title of Jalal's paper was: "Multiple Identities, Layered Sovereignties: Regionalism and Communalism in Modern South Asia."
is increasingly devolving downwards, from the previously dominant national level down to the middle-level regional and provincial authorities, and downwards even further to district and community leadership elites. In such a polity, the populace is involved simultaneously with different levels of authority, rendering fealty at any one time, on an assortment of issues, to a variety of leadership elites: communal, provincial, regional and national -- even though the different leadership groups, at the very same point in time, may themselves be in conflict.

It seems to us that this popular current theory of how the Indian national state is evolving was in many ways prefigured by the concept of the segmentary state advanced by Burton Stein (as borrowed from the original formulation of the term by Aidan Southall in 1953, in reference to the Alurs, an East African tribal society\(^ {16}\)) in a paper he delivered to the American Historical Association, meeting in New York in December 1971.\(^ {17}\) Taking the Chola kingdom of South India of the period from circa A.D. 846-1279 as his model, Stein posits that autonomous ethnic units (nadu), or clusters of such

\( \text{\textsuperscript{16}} \) See Aidan W. Southall, Alur Society: A Study in Processes and Types of Domination, Cambridge, W. Heffer, 1953.

\( \text{\textsuperscript{17}} \) See Burton Stein, "The Segmentary State in South Indian History" (Draft: Not for published quotation), University of Hawaii, (1971?). Building on his thesis of the segmentary state, which he first presented for public instruction in 1971, Stein went on to publish several additional works: Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1980; All the Kings' Mana: Papers on Medieval South Indian History, Madras, New Era Publications, 1984; and Thomas Munro: The Origins of the Colonial State and His Vision of Empire, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1989.
units, comprised the basic blocs from which the larger political system was developed. According to Stein, the larger kingdom exercised a mostly ritual authority, the credentials of rulership being bound up with the king's relationship with the Brahmins and with Brahminical institutions. The autonomous ethnic units did not depend on the larger political system, but a relationship of shared ritual sovereignty kept the two levels (or three levels, if the Brahminical institutions are included) of political authority in harmony.

This is not the place to present more than a broad outline of Stein's seminal thesis. It is enough for us to acknowledge our debt to Stein -- as he has acknowledged, very generously in his work, his own debt to Aidan Southall. Our task is to present instead a modified version of Stein's model, a version tailored to fit Fiji Indian political behaviour.

The central pivot of our version of colonial Fiji as a segmentary state would necessarily focus on the relationship between the Fiji Indian Hindus and the colonial authorities. Fiji Indian Hindus consist of two main types, Arya and sanatani; so in our model these two Hindu communal groups would serve as segments. And both the relationship between these two Fiji Indian Hindu segments and the relationship between Fiji Indian Hindus and the colonial state was brought into focus in Suva in the period 1927-1929, during the encounter at Samabula over control of the Indian School.
On that occasion, Arya and sanatani Hindus competed against each other at the local level for control of the Samabula Indian School Management Committee. But when the colonial state was drawn into the controversy and took possession of the School, the two Fiji Indian Hindu segments formed a united front in opposition to the government action. The functioning of two quite distinct levels of political identity is made evident when we recall that the sanatani Hindus had earlier initiated and fully participated in the dispatch of a request to officialdom, voiced jointly with Muslim and South Indian and secularist groups, to take the very action the authorities eventually took. Thus, operating at the communal sectarian level, the sanatani Hindus first asked the government to take control of the School; but then, operating at the pan-Hindu community level, the same sanatani Hindus opposed the government take-over of the School. 18

The manner in which the Fiji Indian Hindus operated at different levels of political allegiance was reflected in the behaviour of the other segments of the wider Fiji Indian community. Thus we saw Muslims, South Indians, Indian Christians and secularists competing with each other and the two Hindu groups at the local level for the prize of Indian elected representative status. But when the common roll issue developed into a crisis in which the Indian elected M.L.C.s

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18 To review the events concerning the Samabula Indian School referred to in this paragraph, see Chapter Three, pp.176-186 above.
were in confrontation with a combination of their Fiji European and native Fijian counterparts and British colonial officialdom, these other communal groups closed ranks with the Arya and sanatani Hindu groups as part of a pan-Fiji Indian common front.

This then is our model, modified from Stein's, of a multi-layered political structure, one which provides a framework of analysis by which Fiji Indian political behaviour can be explained. We have identified at least three levels of political identity: a pan-Fiji Indian level at the top, a pan-Fiji Indian Hindu level in the middle, and a communal-sectarian level at the bottom. And to these three active levels, we must add another: an hypothesized all-Fiji national level of identity, one which, historically, was never convincingly realized, not during our period of study.

The most significant departure of our model from Stein's is that there is no Brahminical aspect to it, no priestly class to dispense legitimacy to the leadership elite. Then again, perhaps we could assign the Brahminical role to the Indian nationalist leaders, for some, though not all, of our Fiji Indian leadership elites did, to some extent, derive their authority over the Fiji Indians by virtue of their association with Mahatma Gandhi, Motilal Nehru and others of their Indian nationalist kind. But we shall not pursue this line of thought. We do not want to unnecessarily complicate our model by inserting extra-Fijian component parts.
But before we leave our newly constructed segmentary model to embark on other tasks, there is one further component part, one not extraneous to Fiji, which we do want pointedly to include. We indicated in our pages above that, from the point of view of Fiji national politics, the Fiji European move into political alliance with the native Fijians, a move induced by the need to contain the pan-Fiji Indian political challenge to the Fiji European position, constituted a move from pluralism to dualism, from a political order based on multiple power centres to one which was organized around only two: the Fiji Indians versus the rest.\(^\text{19}\) We also intimated that we would return to this matter to comment further.

It seems to us that, in our segmentary state hypothesis, the Fiji European political presence in colonial Fiji constituted a ready-made segment -- of a like with the other segments: the Aryas, Muslims, sanatani Hindus, South Indians, Indian Christians and all. Moreover, the Fiji Europeans were a model segment, in that, from 1904 up to beyond independence, they possessed a guaranteed representation in the Legislative Council. If only, we here find ourselves lamenting, the various Fiji Indian communal segments had also achieved the same. The political pluralism which would then have informed Fiji politics would have been a more serviceable basis for inter-racial political co-operation than the one-on-one

\(^{19}\) To recall the point of view from which we interpreted this Fiji European retreat into the native Fijian political camp, see Chapter Six, pp.388-389 above.
adversarial system that actually ensued. Of course, the segmentary model would have still allowed the segments to coalesce over some pressing issue at the national level: like supporting the Imperial war effort, for instance. Yet, while all the necessary ingredients were at hand, this was not what actually happened. So we must ask the question: Why did political pluralism fail to take root in colonial Fiji?

The short, if not the best, answer to the question raised is that Fiji’s British colonial masters did not want, and perhaps would not tolerate, a pluralist system of representative government. The British colonial authorities intended unequivocally to instruct their Fiji colonial subjects in the mysteries of their own Westminster style of government, a system configured on political dualism, not pluralism. In Britain, democracy functions as an outgrowth of the parliamentary rationale, one in which, in regard to the resolution of each and every issue which arises to perplex the counsels of the realm, Her Majesty’s Government disposes to effect a certain policy and Her Majesty’s Loyal Opposition proposes that, should a change of government occur, they would effect another. In this adversarial parliamentary arrangement, the citizenry give their support to either the Government or Opposition, according to each citizen’s policy preference. It is a political system which, in order to operate efficiently and induce a sense of public participation, requires frequent changes of government —
something which, at the time of writing, is a cause for some concern.20

Yet the short answer, as we have already suggested, is not the best answer. It is an answer which might serve a study of British imperialism, of how the Empire was a vehicle for the spread of British governmental techniques and institutions, but it can never be more than subsidiary to a study of the political significance of Fiji Indian communalism. To arrive at an answer more directly serviceable to our study, we must find it in the workings of our segmentary model. Let us probe the mechanics of the model and see if we can find something, a flaw perhaps, or a dysfunctional component part -- something conducive to the development of the racially polarized political order which, historians never fail to lament yet have never succeeded in adequately explaining, arose to afflict late colonial, and on into present-day Fiji.

It seems clear that causation for the racial polarization problem which afflicted Fiji colonial politics was not to be found amongst the sectarian-communal segments at the bottom level nor with the all-Fiji national political forces operating at the top. The segments at the bottom level were not defined primarily by racial type. They reflected the religious and sectarian and linguistic diversity of the Fiji

20 The present British government took office in 1979, a seventeen-year period of administration unprecedented since the election in 1830 of the Whig government led by Charles, the second Earl Grey (vivebat 1764-1845; dominabatur 1830-1834).
Indian community and, as such, represented a healthy expression of political pluralism. And the all-Fiji national identity at the top level represented an equally healthy expression of Fiji national political unity -- again, a political identity non-racial in its definitional rationale.

The problem, as we see things, was at the middle level: the pan-Fiji Indian ethnic nationalist layer of identity. Inspired by the Indian nationalist movement’s example, the Fiji Indians developed an ethnic national identity of their own, a middle layer of political identity made up of an amalgam of the various Fiji Indian communal segments. But this middle-layer Fiji Indian ethnic nationalist amalgam outweighed the Fiji European segment. To stay in play on the stage of high politics, to prevent the Fiji Indian ethnic nationalist amalgam from consigning them to a position of marginal inconsequence, the Fiji Europeans also endeavoured to construct a middle-layer combination: a merger of themselves and the native Fijians, an effort in which they were successful. And, as it turned out, Fiji colonial politics froze into the mould of this middle-layer one-on-one confrontation: the Fiji Indians versus the European-Fijian alliance. Middle-layer Fiji Indian ethnic nationalism, not bottom-layer segmentary sectarian communalism, was the affliction which arose to affront Fiji colonial politics. This ethnic nationalism was the root cause of the racial polarization of Fiji national politics.
This, then, comprises the conclusion to our study: that the null hypothesis with which we commenced our study is indeed null. The ideology advanced by the poet has triumphed over that asserted by the politician. Communalism, we have finally resolved, and as Iqbal would have from the beginning anticipated, was an authentic expression of the political aspirations of the Fiji Indians, one, moreover, which promised a serviceable representative framework for the development in Fiji of competitive but nonetheless racially polite inter-communal pluralist politics. But, in the upshot, this natural form of Fiji Indian political expression was fated to be stifled by the interaction of two intervening forces, both of them remote to Fiji’s Oceanic setting: British Colonial Office advocacy of the British adversarial style of representative politics and the Indian nationalist movement’s promotion of its own brand of ethnic nationalism amongst Indians abroad.

This conclusion is not only decisive, it is aesthetically pleasing: things exogenous to Fiji, we hold, derailed what had promised to be a polite Fiji Indian home-grown form of public life which would have adorned, not warped, as Indian ethnic nationalism did, the wider politics of Fiji national life.

As we view the above few passages, we realize that, historiographically speaking, we have taken occupancy of a

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21 To recall the ideological positions on communalism advanced respectively by Jawaharlal Nehru and Sir Muhammad Iqbal, and the line of thought which led us to arbitrarily adopt, and thereby privilege, Nehru’s position as a null hypothesis, one attendant on our own study, see Chapter One, pp.16-19 above.
broad sweep of country all our own. We lift the telescope and
scan the horizon for movement. No other historian looms in
sight. Our possession there is none to dispute. Here we
shall abide. So let us proceed to stake out our squatter
holding.

In Fiji Indian historiography, the communalist is a species
universally despised. Starting with Coulter in 1942 and
continuing on to Gillion and Norton in 1977 and then on to Ali
and Lal and Howard, the Fiji Indian communalist is either
dismissed in a brief passage or two, or else ignored -- mostly
ignored.22 To the established historians, the Fiji Indian
communalist, when they unavoidably encounter him, is an
obstacle on the line of march, a hangover from a past age of
ignorance, a vexatious but nonetheless pathetic impediment,
certain to be brushed aside, his futile protests
notwithstanding, in the historic march towards the enlightened
present.

Assisted by our model of a segmentary Fiji colonial
political order, we have taken this historiographical
consensus and turned it on its head. Now, under our auspices,
the communalist, in each and every religious or sectarian or
linguistic segment, is the authentic expression of Fiji Indian
political aspiration. And instead, at our hands, it is the

22 The reader anxious to confirm for himself the absence of the Fiji
Indian communalist in many works can do so at little expenditure of effort
by looking, though often in vain, for the names of the communal
organizations in the indexes.
Fiji Indian ethnic nationalist who is now the figure of disrepute, a mimic of the Indian subcontinental nationalist kind, discordant in his Oceanic setting, unable to dispassionately descry the interests of the people he claims to represent. Now, at last, to the question, so central to our study, as to how the Fiji Indians, while at the same time at loggerheads amongst themselves over matters communal, forged a united front over the issue of a common electoral roll, we have a cogent answer: Indian ethnic nationalist mimesis.

This brings us to the last issue which, in our Introduction, we promised to address: to determine the Fiji Indian contribution to the general conditions, social and economic, of life in Fiji. Historians of things Fijian, we remind the reader, usually take up a position on this issue, and customarily this consists of espousing the one or the other of two mutually exclusive conclusions. In order to illustrate the two polar options on offer, we presented the views of J. Judd of H.M. Colonial Service and "Steve" of Lautoka. And we promised to employ the occasion of our study to make our own disinterested appraisal: to sanction one, and thereby reject the other, of the polar oppositional conclusions represented respectively by Judd and "Steve" as to

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23 To recall to mind the line of thought which led us to introduce this issue into our study, see Chapter One, p.25 above.

24 To recollect the respective views and manner of presentation of Judd and "Steve," see Chapter One, pp.26-27 and 27-29 above.
the Fijian Indian contribution to the general well-being of Fiji.

It is a promise we now regret. As our study has progressed, this is an issue on which our intellect and our self-interest have parted company. Our intellect instructs us that we should keep sentry beside Judd, but our nose for the main chance tells us that this would be a thankless gesture on our part, that it would better serve our interests to make common cause with "Steve." It will not be easy to make a choice between the two.

Our intellect inclines towards agreement with Judd because Judd’s assessment of the Fijian Indian contribution to the social and economic welfare of colonial Fiji was based on objective cerebration. When Judd was working out his approach to the question, we think it likely that he considered such things as sugar production levels, professional services, artisan skills, entrepreneurial drive, small business formation, investment judgement, labour supply and the like. When Judd applied each and every one of these items of thinking to the Fijian Indians, that community’s contribution to the social and economic development of Fiji would have registered positively in his mind. And Judd knew that his view of things was shared, in their rational calculations, by the main body of the Fijian Europeans -- including even the Fijian European M.L.C.s who, intent on securing a political alliance with the representatives of the native Fijians, were arguing
the opposing line in the Legislative Council’s July 1946 debate. For in previous decades, especially in the 1920s, it was axiomatic in Fiji European public opinion circles that an increase in the Indian demographic presence in Fiji meant a rise in the levels of economic development and general prosperity in the colony.25

With such a formidable set of references supporting an affirmative appraisal of the Fiji Indian contribution to the general prosperity of Fiji, furnished by a veteran British official and a broad range of Fiji European business and consumer interests, why are we reluctant to register our own confirmation? We are reluctant, no doubt, because the position staked out by "Steve" constitutes the rising political tide in Fiji.

While Judd’s assessment of the Fiji Indian contribution to Fiji was based on objective cerebration, "Steve’s" appraisal of Fiji Indian worth was based on sentiment: a fusion of emotions such as nationalist anger, socio-economic envy, ethnic hatred, and ideological zeal. Let us consider the Zeitgeist out of which "Steve’s" statement has issued.

From the very first glance, it is evident that "Steve" is a product of the modern age. "Steve" and his fellow native

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25 The best evidence of this Fiji European belief in the positive benefit for Fiji of an increase in the Indian population is the export duty of "five shillings levied ... on every ton of copra and sugar" they imposed on themselves in 1920 in order to build up an Immigration Fund, a measure intended to subsidize future schemes of Indian immigration to the colony (see Chapter Two, p.45 above).
Fijian ethnic nationalists, like the Fiji Indian ethnic nationalists before them, have been awakened to rage -- a modern development, the spirit of democracy having obtruded rudely on their previously quiescent traditional Fijian world, tribal and passively parochial. That traditional tribal world can no longer hold them, just like, earlier in the century, the traditional Indian world could no longer contain the Indian nationalists. Animated by the new spirit of nationalism, "Steve" and his like, now aggressively parochial, are endeavouring to separate their rage from the rage of others -- from, most immediately, their Fiji Indian neighbours, whose own nationalist rage, with the passing of the favourable colonial milieu and in view of the proximity of the new competition, is now somewhat inhibited.

"Steve's" message is simple -- in the sense that it is uncomplicated by any accompanying need for elaboration, or even thought. A forthright statement of nationalistic bias, it calls for response instead of thought, for action rather than meditation. And, unless one is looking for altercation, it need be an affirmative, not a negative, response. In "Steve's" world, those who are not with him are against him. "Steve's" statement is a summons issued on behalf of that compulsive spirit of conformity which is so much the hallmark of the modern age.

But to respond affirmatively to "Steve's" directive is easy enough: it requires only a rudimentary understanding of the
forces and parties involved, it being sufficient to know that there are Indians living in Fiji and that, in "Steve’s" eyes, they are a suitable object of collective denunciation and disdain. In our modern era, that is sufficient reason, depending on the opportunity, for insult, assault, expulsion, murder, annihilation, genocide. Moreover, "Steve’s" statement is a ready-made slogan, suitable for chant or placard, a message the import of which the crowd can readily command. And should the media be attracted to the hubbub, it could provide the gist of a serviceable twenty-second sound bite, something to serve up on the evening news, something to contribute to the information explosion, an item of profound knowledge about the situation in Fiji for people to take in with their sundowner. It is this last item listed -- the sound bite, not the whiskey -- with its intimation of technological determinism, which, perchance, has set the context for the other items, those indicative of modernity, listed above.

We declare a hung jury over the issue which divides Judd from "Steve." Having earlier dissuaded ourselves from keeping sentry with Judd, our cerebral confederate, we shall yet make no attempt to close ranks with "Steve," our preferred political affiliate.

We have come to the ending of things. Our journey through the mysteries of Fiji Indian communalism is ended. Through and around the perilous seas of British-Indian political
relations, foe-beleaguered, reef-encircled, we have brought our vessel safely to harbour.

Yet questions continue to baffle us. Have we made a contribution to Fiji Indian historiography? We have expounded on the reasons for the racial polarization of Fiji politics, accounted for the failure to realize the potential of Fiji Indian and native Fijian political alliance, and constructed a model of segmentary political identity which explains much of the peculiarity of Fiji Indian political behaviour. All of this is new to the profession. And we have elevated V.S. Srinivasa Sastri to what we see as his rightful place as one of the prime movers of Fiji Indian history, and brought J. Judd and Bhola, from absolute obscurity, into the historiographical light of day.

But deficiencies too are evident. As regards our trumpeted intention to chart the ethnographic dimensions of the British official presence in Fiji, we, for reasons which we have now forgotten, have given the ball only a half-hearted kick. It is not, however, in our interests to expand further in this direction. Of our other areas of failed endeavour, we shall leave to the reader's memory.
Appendix I

Queen Victoria's Proclamation
August 1858

.... We hold ourselves bound to the natives of our Indian territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to all our other subjects, and those obligations, by the blessing of Almighty God, we shall faithfully and conscientiously fulfil.

Firmly relying ourselves on the truth of Christianity, and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of religion, we disclaim alike the right and desire to impose our convictions on any of our subjects. We declare it to be our royal will and pleasure that none be in any wise favoured, none molested or disquieted, by reason of their religious faith or observance, but that all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the law; and we do strictly charge and enjoin all those who may be in authority under us that they abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of our subjects on pain of our highest displeasure.

And it is our further will that, so far as may be, our subjects of whatever race and creed, be freely and impartially admitted to office in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability and integrity duly to discharge.

We know and respect the feelings of attachment with which the natives of India regard the lands inherited by them from their ancestors, and we desire to protect them in all rights connected therewith, subject to the equitable demands of the State; and we will that generally in framing and administering the law due regard will be paid to the ancient rights, usages and customs of India....

When by the blessings of Providence internal tranquility shall be restored, it is our earnest desire to stimulate the peaceful industry of India, to promote works of public utility.

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1 Queen Victoria's Proclamation, August 1858 (from the text engraved on a marble tablet inset into one of the walls in the entrance hall of the Victoria Memorial, Calcutta); cited in N.B. Bonarjee, Under Two Masters, London, Oxford University Press, 1970, p.306, n.1.

The liberal spirit of the Proclamation was determined by Victoria, not by the cabinet of the day. Lord Derby, the Prime Minister, had forwarded a proposed text to the palace, but Victoria had complained that "it seemed to assert England's power with needless brusqueness." The Proclamation, the Queen wrote to Derby, "should breathe feelings of generosity, benevolence and religious tolerance, and point out the privilege which the Indians will receive in being placed on an equality with the subjects of the British Crown." The text was rewritten to gratify the royal pleasure. For the full text of the royal correspondence quoted, see Sidney Lee, Queen Victoria, London, 1902; cited in David Adamson, The Last Empire: Britain and the Commonwealth, London, I.B. Tauris, 1989, p.116.
and improvement, and to administer the government for the benefit of all our subjects resident therein. In their prosperity will be our strength, in their contentment our security, and in their gratitude our best reward. And may the God of all power grant to us, and to those in authority under us, to carry out these our wishes for the good of our people....

Appendix II

Lord Salisbury’s Despatch
24 March 1875

... Above all things we must confidently expect, as an indispensable condition of the proposed arrangements, that the Colonial laws and their administration will be such that Indian settlers who have completed the terms of service to which they agreed, as the return for the expense of bringing them to the Colonies, will be in all respects free men, with privileges no whit inferior to those of any other class of Her Majesty’s subjects resident in the Colonies....

Appendix III

Kilmer O. Moe’s Speech
27 August 1929

... In Hawaii ... there are 130,000 of Japanese ancestry, 60,000 Filipinos, 30,000 Portuguese, 27,000 Chinese, 8,000 Koreans, 5,000 Porto Ricans, besides 45,000 Hawaiians and Part-Hawaiians, together with an equal number of Americans and Europeans. The least common denominator in Hawaii has come to be the Anglo-Saxon social pattern and the Anglo-Saxon

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2 Robert, third Marquess of Salisbury (vivēbat 1830-1903), Secretary of State for India (fungebatur 1866-1867, 1874-1878), to Lord Northbrook, Viceroy of India, 24 March 1875; cited by Gillion, The Fiji Indians ... 1977, p.69; also partly cited by Vishnu Deo, Member for the Indian Southern Division, 5 November 1929; F.L.C.D., Sessions of 1929 (October-November) ... 1930, p.179.

3 Kilmer O. Moe’s address to the Luncheon Club, Pier Hotel, Suva, 27 August 1929; cited in FTH, 28 August 1929, p.6. Moe was an agriculturalist employed by the Kamehameha Schools, Hawaii.

4 Puerto Ricans, of course; but "Porto" Ricans was correct spelling at the time.

5 Evidently, Moe did not classify Portuguese as Europeans. His categorization may have accorded with perceptions current in Hawaii at the time.
Tongue.... Fiji must never be made a replica of India with her multiple languages, her caste-ridden social structure and her prejudices. The Indian in Fiji will become a powerful influence for good in the South Pacific, but he will do so only as he becomes a united people with one loyalty under one Flag and able to carry on in the English language....
### Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ahimsa</td>
<td>non-violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>akhand</td>
<td>united</td>
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<tr>
<td>anna</td>
<td>the sixteenth part of a rupee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aryas</td>
<td>lit. noble men; Aryans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arya Samaj</td>
<td>Society of the Aryans; founded by Swami Dayananda in 1875</td>
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<tr>
<td>ashram</td>
<td>retreat or home for community living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azad Hind</td>
<td>Free India</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bania</td>
<td>Hindu trader or shopkeeper, usually also a moneylender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bapu</td>
<td>lit. Father. Gandhi was addressed in this way by many of his more intimate Indian associates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhai</td>
<td>brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhajan</td>
<td>Hindu devotional song</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bhangi</td>
<td>sweeper or scavenger; considered the lowest of the Untouchables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brahmacharya</td>
<td>observance of celibacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>the highest, priestly caste among the Hindus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>charkha</td>
<td>spinning-wheel</td>
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<tr>
<td>crore</td>
<td>ten million</td>
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<tr>
<td>dacoit</td>
<td>brigand or robber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diwali</td>
<td>Hindu festival of lights</td>
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<tr>
<td>durbar</td>
<td>the court of a ruler, or a ceremonial assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>fakir</td>
<td>alt. faqir; lit. with the back broken. Poor, needy; thence Muslim religious mendicant</td>
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<tr>
<td>fatwa</td>
<td>a political opinion as enunciated by the leader of a Muslim religious congregation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>girmit</td>
<td>lit. agreement. A term for indenture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girmitiya</td>
<td>an indentured labourer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goonda</td>
<td>hooligan</td>
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<tr>
<td>gurdwara</td>
<td>Sikh temple</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gurmukhi</td>
<td>one of the scripts in which Punjabi is written; invented by Guru Nanak (see Sikh) and used particularly by Sikhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guru</td>
<td>spiritual adviser, religious leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harijan</td>
<td>lit. the people of God. A term coined by Gandhi for Untouchables. The title of one of Gandhi's weekly English-language newspapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hartal</td>
<td>strike; especially a shopkeepers' strike</td>
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<tr>
<td>himsa</td>
<td>violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>an Indo-Aryan language of the Indian subcontinent, spoken as a first language by over 250 million people (1991) and as a second language by perhaps as many again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindoo</td>
<td>Hindu: variant spelling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Id
izzat
jai
Jat
jihad
khadi
Khan
Khilafat
kirpan
Kiwi
lakh
lathi
lingua franca
Mahasabha
Mahatma
Maulana
Moslem
Muhammadan
Muselman
narak
Netaji
pak
Pandit
prakrit
puja
pujari
purdah
purna-swaraj

Muslim festival commemorating Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son (Ishmael)
honour, credit, reputation, character
victory
an agricultural tribe (caste) of north-west India, comprising people of the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh faiths
the religious duty of Muslims to strive to establish the sway of Islam; crusade
hand-loom cloth woven of hand-spun yarn; promoted by Gandhi so as to make Indians independent of British-produced textiles
lit. ruler, sovereign. Muslim title, commonly used as an adjunct to Pathan names. The titles "Khan Sahib" and "Khan Bahadur" were conferred by the Viceroy in the name of the British sovereign
the office of Caliph, the theocratic head of the Muslim world. The rallying cry of Indian Muslims who objected to Allied dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire at the Paris Peace Settlement, 1919
a small dagger, a religious item of the Sikhs
a flightless, almost blind, Antipodean bird (genus Apteryx); a New Zealander
one hundred thousand
a wooden stick, sometimes bound with iron rings
an additional (often compromise) language adopted by speakers of different languages as a common medium of communication (pl. lingue franche)
lit. Great Assembly. Political party based on militant Hinduism
Great Soul; a Hindu title of great respect
learned Muslim
Muslim: variant spelling
Muslim: variant spelling
Muslim: variant spelling
hell, often used by Fiji Indians to describe their indenture experience
lit. Leader. The title by which Subhas Chandra Bose became known
pure
honorable term applied to a learned Brahmin
Hindi for vernacular or mother tongue
Hindu religious ceremony
one who performs puja
lit. veil or curtain: the Muslim practice of keeping women in seclusion
complete independence
Quaid-i-Azam: lit. Supreme Leader. The title by which Jinnah became known amongst Muslim Leaguers
Raj: kingdom, rule or sovereignty
Ramadan: Muslim month of fasting (during hours of daylight)
Ramanama: the name of Rama or God
rupee: the Indian and Pakistani unit of currency
sabha: association; society; organization
Sardar: alt. Sirdar; lit. chief, leader. Title borne by Sikhs, sometimes also by Hindus and Muslims. The titles "Sardar Sahib" and "Sardar Bahadur" were conferred by the Viceroy in the name of the British sovereign. In Fiji, Sirdar was the term for an Indian overseer
satyagraha: lit. truth force or soul force. A term coined by Gandhi to denote his technique of asserting truth so as to effect political change
satyagrahi: participant in satyagraha
Scheduled Castes: Untouchables
Sharia: Islamic law
Shi'a: lit. party, sect. Muslims who believe that Ali, cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad, was the prophet's rightful successor
Sikh: lit. disciple. Follower of Guru Nanak (vivebat 1469-1538), the first of a line of ten gurus who formulated the Sikh faith. Under Gobind Singh (vivebat 1666-1708), the tenth guru, the Sikhs acquired a formidable military reputation
Sunni: from sunnah: "way," "practice," "example." A Muslim who follows the practice of the prophet Muhammad
swadeshi: lit. of one's own country. Denoted the economic doctrine of preferential use of the products of one's own country
swaraj: self-government
taukie: native Fijian landowner
ulema: persons versed in Islamic religious law
Urdu: from the Persian zaban-i-urdu (lit. language of the camp). An Indo-Aryan language of the Indian subcontinent, written in a variant of the Perso-Arabic script, closely related to Hindi but with a more heavily Persianized and Arabicized vocabulary, spoken as a first or second language by about 130 million people (1991), especially Muslims
vakil: lawyer
zoolumraj: tyranny
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