

## Gurukul Primary School Centennial Celebration



Ambassador, Mr. Kamlesh Arya and his wife, Mrs. Urmila Arya with staff and students of Gurukul Primary School.

Gurukul Primary School, the first formal school for Fijians of Indian Descent in Fiji, celebrated 100 years of existence on May 24, 2018.

The keynote speaker at the celebrations, the Registrar of The University of Fiji and Ambassador Kamlesh Arya, expressed his emotions for the 60,553 Girmitiyas who toiled the Fijian soil and were able to conceive the idea that the future lay in education.

“We appreciate the hands that put the blocks together, carting the building materials on wooden sledges from the supply depot to the building site. Their determination is overwhelming. The seed they sow in the form of the Gurukul saw mushrooming of schools throughout the Colony over the last 100 years by various faith based organisations. The Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji is part of that community of educators,” he emphasised.

Mr. Arya noted that when the idea for establishing the Gurukul was mooted, the backdrop in the feelings of ecstasy would be the words from attributed to the then authorities, in the book *Our Indian Work in Fiji*, written by Methodist Missionary Reverend J. W. Burton, the colonial administration is quoted to have advised that “It would be better use of time to instruct the field mules. The “coolies” might be spoilt for labour, if they were taught by missionaries.” Ambassador Arya quoted.

“We are independent of servitude and enjoy a dignified and respectful status in today’s Fiji, thanks to the founding fathers of Gurukul Primary School and hundreds of other schools around Fiji. Today, as we stand to celebrate the Centennial of Gurukul Primary School, and partake in the electrifying gaiety of this momentous milestone, we all need to be resolute in our drive to improve ourselves and those who are integral part of our diverse society,” he concluded.

The University of Fiji is grateful to be associated with the Gurukul Primary School and owes its origin to the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji who began its fight to promote education over 100 years ago.