

## **Crisis of Truth**

The University of Fiji hosted an International Seminar on the topic of Human Values on September 6, 2018. The speakers at the seminar included Mr. Neville Fredericks who spoke on the topic “What Does the Public Expect from the Professions”; Professor Pal Dhall spoke on the topic “Human Values in Practice” while Professor Subramani of the School of Humanities and Arts deliberated on the topic “Crisis of Truth”.

Speaking at the seminar, Professor Subramani highlighted that there was no crisis of truth.

“Truth is ever present within you and without you; it becomes existential dilemma only when we conceal truth from ourselves. And of course when the media and the political community combine to befuddle us and make us believe that there cannot be any agreement on truth. When the country that calls itself the greatest nation of earth begins to say that ‘truth isn’t truth’, and that there are ‘alternative facts’, and some virtue in ‘the art of the lie’, then something has truly gone awfully off-centre on this planet,” he stressed.

Stressing this point further, Professor Subramani said that the unfortunate story of our universities is that academics feel quite comfortable with the rhetoric of ‘alternative facts’ and ‘alternative truth’ both in the liberal humanities and the empirical sciences.

“The older universities didn’t have these dilemmas; the ancient universities did not anguish over having truth as the heart of their syllabus; nor did they have problem with holistic structuring of life. Traditionally universities expressed their central pursuit in plaques in form of telos meaning purpose or inviolable goal. So we have universities whose ultimate goal is truth, and others whose goal is social justice or morality. There is also Heterodox Academy that has mixed goals,” he explained.

Furthermore, he stated that we find it safe intellectually to accept that there is no agreement on what is Truth nor on any single notion of good.

“The reason is truth is not verbal but existential. The arguments and counter arguments in academic discourse don’t produce truth. Therefore the great teachers knew truth cannot be asserted directly or aggressively; they have to allure, seduce, and persuade their disciples. The modern university that has to manufacture in hurry manpower to sustain its country’s economy, has little patience for inconvenient or unsettling truths to be told through these subtle methods,” he argued.

The seminar was attended by academics, corporate people, students and staff of the University as well as the general public.