



# The University of Fiji

## The University of Fiji Press Inaugural Publication.

The University of Fiji Press has released its first publication- a monograph written by eminent Professor of the University of Fiji, eminent writer and philosopher, Professor Subramani.

Titled '*Pandemic, the Wheel of Suffering, Higher Learning and its Discontents - A Manifesto for Reform*', the monograph brings together four compelling contemporary issues: Coronavirus, suffering as a fact of the human condition and both reminding us of another subject, the failed promises of higher education, its many discontents, and finally the subject of reform.

The monograph was written by Professor Subramani in the middle of the pandemic as the nation faced lockdown in 2020. It holds the view that unhappy academics have got used to living with numerous frustrations without taking any bold step to reform higher education. The pandemic has enforced upon these academics the need to reflect seriously not only about educational changes but also about life on this endangered planet.

Professor Subramani says the dissatisfactions are too many, for example, the betrayal of the exalted goals of higher learning which forces universities to operate like business corporations (armed with all its marketing strategies); the adoption of the Western mentality of 'publish or perish', promoting thoughtlessness, egoism and competition, in the end causing academics to become over-worked and burnt-out; and treating students like clients, grading them using numbers without educating them for life-long learning in an unpredictable future that will be governed by more diseases, disruption in weather, uncertainty of work, and artificial intelligence. The list that Professor Subramani sets out is sufficient to cause alarm to anyone concerned about the future of education.

He says that an institution like the University of Fiji that is made to live with less each year must find a radically different vision of the future. It has to take into consideration the 'discontents', and find a new learning culture in the concept of 'a peoples university' with emphasis on service, and building communities broken by various disorders generated by human beings and nature. At the same time, it ought not to ignore the Arya Samaj ethos, and words of the eminent Founder, "He is good and wise who speaks the truth, acts on the dictates of virtue, and tries to make others good and happy."

The main message in this publication is that dialogue on reform must begin in earnest straightaway. It must begin now.

The University of Fiji Press is destined to become a major publisher; it has already announced its next publication, a book on the state of reading in the country that will be published in 2022, and must generate a great deal of discussion.

The newly appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of Fiji Professor Shaista Shameem said Professor Subramani's monograph, released as the inaugural publication of the newly-launched University of Fiji Press, set a very high standard for future publications of the Press. The University's Publications Committee invited submissions from all academics in Fiji's Higher Education Institutions for books and monographs to be published about matters of interest to Fijian intellectuals. In the current environment, where Covid-19 posed serious challenges to education, the Press served as a platform for the publication of new ideas and opinions in pursuance of academic freedom which was protected by section 40 of the University of Fiji Act.

*'Pandemic, the Wheel of Suffering, Higher Learning and its Discontents - A Manifesto for Reform'* is available from the University of Fiji Enlightenment Bookshop at Saweni Campus.