



The University of Fiji

(An Entity of Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji)

Press Statement

Sunday, May 22, 2022

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Fiji Professor Shaista Shameem said that the educational curriculum in Fiji needed serious revision so that young people could learn the values of compassion, integrity, advocacy for the public good and respect and consideration for others while studying subjects like English, Maths, Sciences and other traditional subjects at school.

Speaking as Chief Guest at the 2022 Arya Convention and 105th Annual General Meeting of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji (APS) at the Lautoka Arya Samaj School on Sunday May 22nd, Professor Shameem said it was important to remember that the Sabha was the only community organisation in Fiji that offered education from pre-school, all the way to University.

Professor Shameem said the Sabha's Gurukul Primary School at Saweni Lautoka was the first substantive school for the children of girmitiyas. It was established in 1918 and coincided with the formation of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji.

The concept of Gurukul education taught in the first APS schools was the epitome of the ancient Indian philosophy of learning where students lived among their mentors and received not only formal education but also human values and life skills under their guidance, Professor Shameem said.

The human values that Gurukul taught were humanity, love, consideration and empathy which were offered to students simultaneously with subjects such as language, science, mathematics, humanities and arts. In the Gurukul system of education self-learning was emphasised, along with discipline and critical thinking. This unique combination in Gurukul made students mentally and physically fit and helped in personality development by increasing confidence, mindfulness and intellect, Professor Shameem said.

She said that the type of education that was represented by Gurukul was much needed by the world today in the face of pandemics, natural disasters, climate change and conflict. For that reason the University of Fiji had decided that it would focus on Gurukul principles and methodology of learning in all its programmes and courses. Professor Shameem said that students needed to combine gurukul with conventional subjects in the 21st century in order to graduate and lead fulfilling lives with a sense of social responsibility.

In its Strategic Plan 2022-2026 the University emphasised holistic education as a journey by also embracing the Drua canoe voyage. A combination of Gurukul with Drua Voyage represented the new focus in learning at the University as a journey in holistic education.

Professor Shameem said the APS Community had the responsibility to ensure that the students who entered APS primary schools would learn values that would allow them to see the APS educational system all the way to University as part of the same continuum of enlightened education which was rigorous at the same time.

This unique perspective would allow young people to acquire a fully rounded education as a form of resilience despite any shortcomings and disparities in the education structure as a whole.

Future Ready