



Pundit Dewan Chand Maharaj

Chairman of Trustees for Sanatan Dharm Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji

It is an honour and privilege as a Past President and Chairman of Trustees to convey my appreciation to our National President Sarju Prasad, Secretary Virendra Lal; Office Staff Veena; Roshni with Cuvu Branch for organising the 57th Annual Convention. Ram Ram to you all participants; Ladies and Gentlemen.

In a few weeks and days we will be celebrating our 57th Convention. The Sanatanis came to Fiji about 131 years ago and Sanatan Pratinidhi Sabha was formed 78 years ago. While writing this message I looked back and for my 7 years as a National President. The things together we built Sanatan to move forward.

If you will allow me to touch on the Sanatan history, very briefly, as a base for where we all go to from today. The Sanatan Dharm Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji founded on November 29, 1958 and whilst the Sanatan Dharm has a long and honourable history in India, we in Fiji honour our forbearers, especially those who came and suffered under the hardships of indenture system.

The Sanatan faith provided the spiritual strength against hardship, and also provided the hope of rising from the grip of poverty after indenture – to freedom – through hard work, a strong community commitment and sharing whatever we could, to build temples, schools and community centres.

That legacy, I know is what you possess and what you will take with you when you leave the 57th Annual Convention here in Cuvu Sanatan College. The preparation in education that you have undertaken in these formative years will lift you up, in whatever career or profession you choose. If you also choose to be a farmer, be the best farmer you can be, or if you leave school and get married, be the best partner and parent you can and remember that you must retain the Sanatan Culture with you and speak in Hindi for it's the most powerful word for Sanatan and to our children who will be the future of the Hindi speaking language and also retain Sanatan.

The future of our children lies in your hands. Our grandparents and parents are no longer here but they have left Sanatan to our younger generations. We are indebted to Bainimarama government for declaring Fiji as a Secular state and thus allowing us to continue worshipping and practicing our religion. I urged parents and children to speak, read and write Hindi so that we don't lose our identity. As my very close friend Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi said while opening that Lautoka Teachers College in 2005 and I quote "**Education is the most important means of transforming the country. It is how value is added to the most valuable resource any nation has – its human resources**".

My best wishes for the 57th Sanatan Annual Convention.

Dewan Chand Maharaj

Past President and Chairman of Trustees