Militarism and the Moral Decay in Fiji

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Abstract

Social ills in Fiji have escalated since the country's first military coup in 1987. The rise in domestic violence, rape, child abuse, incest and suicide signal a major threat to social integrity in the country. This paper looks at the trends in these variables and suggests that these problems have now reached a stage where they show a moral decay in the country. The paper also suggests that militarism is a key factor leading to the moral decay in the country. This paper is an extract from a longer study on militarism in Fiji, found in the author's forthcoming book titled Militarism in Fiji (Fiji Institute of Applied Studies, 2003).

In the last decade, the Fijian public's attention has increasingly been drawn to the growing epidemic of domestic violence, rape, incest, child abuse, suicide and other related forms of violence and physical and mental abuse of individuals. The extent and depth of such problems indicates that the country is going through a deep social and moral crisis. The concern at what has become the moral decay, was recently articulated by journalist Sainiana Waqainibete's report on the outcome of a multi-cultural gathering of the Satya Sai Service Organisation of Fiji. Waqainibete reported:

> There has been a notable increase in social ills in the country and now is the time for Fiji to come to terms with its problems and question its direction. Child abuse and incest, drugs, alcohol, suicide, domestic violence, family break-ups and a weakening family unit are increasing ailments more so in Fiji than ever before (*The Sunday Post – May 19, 2002: 2*).

In the same public seminar, Fiji's Prime Minister, Laisenia

Qarase stated that such problems confronting Fiji are conse-
quences of the 2000 coup. This certainly is so. But the floodgates
of violence and immorality were opened earlier by the military
coups of 1987. The coups of 1987 and of 2000 are both linked in
their contribution to Fiji's social and moral ills. Their prevalence in-
dicates the intensity and the extent of the disconnection within
the very fabric of human society in Fiji. The rise of militarism, as
against law and order, has a significant bearing on the trend to-
wards the moral decay in the country.

MILITARISM

Militarism as an area of academic study emerged in the 1960s
(Johnson, 1962: v). There are numerous definitions of militarism
(see, for example, Thee (1982), Barkat (1982), Permutter (1977),
Janowitz (1964), and Horowitz (1971)). The definition provided by
the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the
World Council of Churches is found to be relevant here. It states:

> Militarisation should be understood as the process whereby mili-
> tary values, ideology and patterns of behaviour achieve a
> dominating influence on the political, social, economic and ex-
> ternal affairs of the state and as a consequence the structural,
> ideological and behavioural patterns of both the society and the
> government are 'militarised'. Militarism should be seen as one
> of the more perturbing results of this process. It must be noted
> that militarism is multidimensional and varied with different
> manifestation in various circumstances dependent on historical
> background, national traditions, class structures, social condi-
> tions, economic strength, etc (1982: 5).

This approach sees militarism is an outcome of the process of
the evolution of third world nations.

In Fiji, the rise of militarism is intricately linked to the quest by
the ruling class to perpetuate its rule over Fiji. The focus on
militarising the society after independence in 1970, emerged after
the defeat of the then ruling Alliance Party in the April 1977
national election. The election defeat of the Alliance Party for the
first time showed that the ruling class could lose its power,
position and privilege in the country. This formative class,
comprising the business, political and traditional elite of Fiji, had
rapidly been taking over, and entrenching itself in, the position
occupied by the British colonial-CSR (Colonial Sugar Refining Co)
ruling class which controlled Fiji until independence in 1970. The
treat to the intent of the emergent ruling class was not through
any revolutionary means, as was the case in many post-colonial

societies; rather it was through that very foundation of democracy, the ballot box.

The Alliance Party came back to power in a snap election in September 1977. It immediately began focussing on the military as the ultimate guarantor of its intent and position. Within a year, it more than doubled the military budget. Military training of the youth and young chiefs came to acquire a central policy focus of this government. Reliance on the bullet to provide the ultimate safeguard to ruling class interest became a clearly understood possibility. In 1987, the possibility became a reality when the military was used to dislodge a duly elected government, albeit one which was left-leaning. Since then, Fiji has not turned back from running on the path of militarism.

In this process, a new ruling class began to emerge. Comprising elements from the chiefly hierarchy, the military, the business community, the clergy, bureaucracy, and the academia, the new ruling class changed the course of Fiji forever. The impact of militarism on the society has been wide-ranging. One major impact has been on social integrity within Fiji. Militarism contributed significantly to the moral decay within the nation.

MORALITY

Morality has received much attention in literature. A definition of morality from The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy can serve as a starting point for our discussion. It defines morality as 'an informal public system applying to all rational persons, governing behaviour that affects others, having the lessening of evil or harm as its goal, and including what are commonly known as the moral rules, moral ideals, and moral virtues' (Audi, 1999: 586).

The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Sociology approaches morality from a sociological angle. Of relevance is the definition of 'moral community'. This term was used by Emile Durkheim 'to describe traditional rural communities, in contrast to cities. The moral community is characterised by social integration (extensive and intimate attachments) and by moral integration (a set of shared beliefs about morality and behaviour)' (Marshall, 1996: 341). This definition of morality highlights the important dimension of the relationship of morality to the environment. 'Your morality - in the sense of your ideals, values, and aspirations - involves, among other things, your understanding of human nature, tradition and society; your proper relationship to the natural environment; and your place in the cosmos' (Shaw and Barry 2001: 17).

Morality, therefore, is about human relationship to oneself, to

others and to the world around us. The common thread is that an individual does not live in isolation. Moral issues arise from the way relationships are translated into action. Differences occur in relation to the interpretation and emphasis placed on the relationship in each context.

But the question is: whose morality and for whom? This question addresses the centrality of relationships to the issue of morality. Some schools of thought place the emphasis for an understanding of morality on rationality or belief systems. Some argue that morality constitutes values which contribute to the coherence of a society.

Fiji is a pluralistic society in the sense that there are numerous philosophical and religious foundations which inform the practices and cultures of the people. In terms of religion, one finds Christians, Hindus, Muslims and aethiests in the country. Morality is integral to the belief system of most of the mainstream religions.

Christian morality is grounded in the belief in a Creator God to whom humanity and the rest of creation owe their origins. From this perspective, morality is defined in terms of a relationship demonstrated and revealed by Jesus Christ. Morality is a particular way of life modelled by Christ. To translate this revealed love of God into reality requires a response that is measured by how one relates to others, the world and God. The embracing of 'others' as neighbours is born out of the belief that each person is made in God's image. The theological implication is that each person is an embodiment of God's love. Fundamental to Christian ethical and moral understanding are issues of how one's life expresses that love of God and neighbour and the world. 'Living as God's image-bearers involves God's loving concern for all creation. Above all, however, this mandate includes seeking to develop loving relationships with others, so that in our attitudes and actions toward all people we reflect God's love' (Grenz.1997: 261-262).

Hindu morality is based on the foundation of *karma* or deeds which people do. Bad *karma* not only eliminates the chances of the soul being reborn as a human being, but it also is to be shunned in this life. Over centuries, elaborate sets of codes of conduct were developed by Hindu saints which regulated life in a Hindu society. These codes were later merged with modern law.

In like manner, Islam also developed its own code of conduct, which formed the foundation of Islamic morality. As in Hindu and Christian beliefs, in Islam as well morality and God are inseparable. The Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights, underscores the point that Muslims believe in the God as the sole source of all law.

The merger of the religious codes of conduct and law, for most

religions, has been, despite minor controversies, unproblematic since law, like the various religions, prescribes nothing more than what is good for the society.

SOCIAL ILLS

In most countries the victims of social ills are invariably the powerless and the weak. In Fiji women and children have been affected most by the breakdown in social order since 1987. In a report compiled by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre on the impact of the 2000 terrorist coup on women, it argued that women's lives were changed due to 'a multitude of factors; job loses, pay cut, fear and insecurity, sexual assaults, domestic abuse, family tensions, land issue and emotional trauma' (2001: 1). Statistics show a marked turning point in the incidence of social ills since the 1987 coups.

At the end of 2002, Aisake Casimira, the Director of the Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy, made public his organisation's evaluation of the assumption that declaring Fiji a Christian state, and hence legislating Christianity, will lift the moral standards among the indigenous Fijians. 'Recurrent issues, in the main' stated Casimira, 'concern the perceived decline of moral standards among the indigenous Fijians' (*The Fiji Times*, November 30, 2002: 7). He highlighted an important dimension to the disconnection of principles and reality. Those who advocated a Christian State in Fiji had failed to provide results. Advocating the notion of a Christian state does not automatically, or logically, argues Casimira, lead to a higher standard of moral conduct. This reality as manifested in the social and moral concerns, is now haunting Fiji.

Moral issues are manifested differently according to place, time, circumstance and context. However, our common humanity presents a certain commonality in some moral concerns. This paper provides an exploration of recent trends in a few selected issues concerning morality, in particular, of domestic violence, rape, child abuse, incest and suicide. The intention is neither to provide an in-depth coverage of issues concerning morality, nor is it to provide an in-depth study of the causes and consequences of these problems, which no doubt would require in-depth microstudies; the intention here is to begin to place these problems within the context of militarism in Fiji.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence can be generally defined as any violence or threat that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm to any member of a family by another member. The third regional meeting of the Pacific Women's Network on *Violence Against Women* went a step further and defined domestic violence as including assault within the family as well as violence perpetrated or condoned by the State (2001: 20). Domestic violence means many things; its manifestation depends on circumstances and contexts. Cromwell and Burgess argue that domestic violence includes 'murder, rape and sexual assault, physical assault, emotional abuse, battering, stalking, prostitution, genital mutilation, sexual harassment, and pornography' (as quoted in Sharma, 2000: 21).

Figure 1 shows the trend in domestic violence in the country.

Figure 1: Domestic Violence
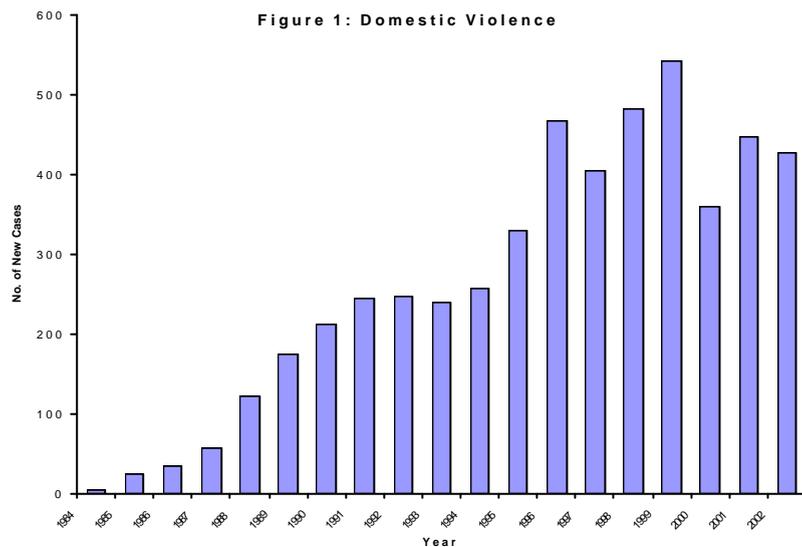
The figure shows the rapid escalation of new cases of domestic violence since 1987. The possibility of an increase in the incidence of reporting of domestic violence to authorities or counselling organisations, needs to be kept in mind in interpreting statistics on domestic violence as these would also be reflected in the

massive rise in reported cases.[1] Nonetheless, the entire increase can not be merely attributed to a better-informed society more willing to report such cases. The fact remains that there has been an escalation of domestic violence in Fiji.

To understand the extent of the incidence of domestic violence, it is imperative to locate it in the broader frame of the socio-political, economic, psychological, religious and cultural terrain.

The incidence of domestic violence on the one hand, and the military coups of 1987, the terrorist coup of 2000, and the 2000 mutiny at the army camp on the other, are not unconnected. It is suggested here that these events have the same root cause: militarism.

Militarism produces, *inter alia*, two outcomes. First, it weakens the economic strength of the nation, thereby creating stress within the family unit. Second, it leads to a breakdown in law and order, which in turn impacts on the outlook which the more powerful in the society have of law and order and their own relative abilities to assert power, irrespective of whether such assertion is lawful or not.

The first impact is well recognised. In 2001, Susan Boyd, the Australian High Commissioner to Fiji, for example, informed a meeting discussing domestic violence in Fiji: 'It is the women who, in times of economic crisis, are the first to be laid off work, for they occupy the lower paid jobs and, because of their duties at home and family care, they are so often those in part time or casual employment who are the first to let go' (2001: 4). The closure of many garment factories in Fiji as consequences of the 2000 coup has had its toll on many families, especially those in the low income brackets. Women have certainly been the first victims of this. After the 1987 coups, and again after the 2000 upheaval, many hotels also laid off thousands of workers, and reduced the working hours for those remaining on their jobs. This again had a disproportionate impact on the females. Ultimately it was the female in the family which bore the brunt of the impact of layoffs and lower family incomes. A similar situation characterised other industries as well. Women are the ones who shoulder a greater burden of looking after the family when the male-breadwinner loses his job. They pick up the slack in the reproductive economy.

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[1] There is no official statistics on domestic violence, and other social ills in Fiji. The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, which was established in 1984, began compiling data on domestic violence, rape, and more recently, child abuse and suicide. Data on the social ills used in this paper – shown in Figures 1-4 - are from this source. Since the Centre began compiling statistics only from 1984, and since its early scope of data coverage was neither nationwide nor exhaustive, one needs to show care in interpreting the trends shown by the data.

Women in Fiji have historically depended heavily on their husbands, or on other male members of the family, for financial support By not being able to contribute to financially supporting themselves and their children, women are economically trapped. This trap can provide a major cause for abusive relationships and violent home environments. From such traps women and children have very grim hopes of emerging unscathed. Children who are brought up in a violent context run the risk of continuing abusive habits in their relationships with others. They grow up with fear, anger, hate, depression and violence. In short, innocent children are influenced by disfigured psychological attitudes not of their own creation.

The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre argues that culture and some religious bodies condone physical abuse including slapping, hitting and other physical injuries. Husbands who assault their wives are almost seen as normal. The victims' concealment of the physical assaults by telling lies on the extent of injuries does not help the situation. The Centre asserts that 'a large percentage of women (74 percent) hit by their partners neither sought medical attention nor reported to Police. The most common reason given for not seeking medical attention was that the injury was not serious' (nd: 42).

The Centre also argues that disobedience was cited as a justification for violence against women, demonstrating 'the ingrained notion that women are meant to obey men. The notion of men being the head of the household and women being in a subservient position was still very strong, even among women' (nd: 40). Militarism strengthens this ideology in that military violence against others, perpetrated invariably in Fiji by male soldiers, is seen as a legitimate exercise of power, particularly against those taken to be showing disobedience to military authoritarianism. Scarcely acknowledged by policy makers is the link between domestic violence and the socio-economic and political crisis in the country, especially the link between the breakdown in law and order and domestic violence, as well as the consequences of militarism.

Political unrest in Fiji adversely affects the very institution which ensures the maintenance of law and order. The police force's ability and capacity gets compromised for various reasons.

First, after the 1987 coups, the Fiji Military Forces' budget rocketed to the disadvantage of police (see Appendix I for the police and military expenditures for the years 1970-2001). In the entire 1970's, for example, the police budget was at least twice that of the military's budget. In 1987, however, the military budget went up to stand at more than twice that of the police budget.

While in subsequent years the police budget was increased, it has remained between $10m to $15m less than the military's budget.

The relatively lower budget for the police meant that not only could the police not effectively carry out its main function of fighting crime, but it also meant that the police was unable to carry out other necessary functions required for preventing crime, or reducing the psychological impact of crime, for example providing counselling on domestic violence. The absence of counselling in Fiji Police Force is directly due to the constraints in the Government's allocation of funds to the police force.

Second, since 1987, police force salaries have remained at almost the bottom of the country's public service levels. This has led to a considerable deterioration in the morale of the police force, with a consequent lack of interest in addressing the problem of law and order in general and domestic violence in particular.

Third, the non-improving salaries and working conditions have tended to discourage relatively better-educated and more informed youth from joining the police force.

Fourth, the general breakdown in law and order following the coups has tended to see domestic violence placed much lower on the police force's priorities, since there were always more 'serious' cases of violence and other law and order problems to tackle first.

Fifth, numerous police officers themselves have been exposed as committing crimes, including domestic violence offences. It is, then, small wonder that the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (2001: 26) states that the 'reputation of the Police Force is at a low following a spate of cases of rape, assault, robbery, domestic violence and murder – all committed by police officers'.

With police embroiled in lawlessness, and its ability to police society seriously compromised, the demonstration effect is significant. Accompanied by the demonstration effect of the military getting away with illegalities, and police officers easily escaping for their crimes, tends to foster the view that one could escape the full brunt of the law if the law was broken.

Domestic violence intensifies in this type of an environment. The Fijian High Chief, Ratu Jone Madraiwiwi argues that the effects the violence [of the coups and the mutiny] had on the younger generations in recent days have 'been worrying', and that 'the violence has depicted that it is a way to solve problems and to get what one wants' (*The Fiji Times*, November 21, 2000:3). This is the second, and more sustained, result of militarism in the country.

Militarism as a way of life imposes a model which reinforces the view that the members of the male gender can continue to use violence as a way of achieving their goals. Domestic violence in Fiji, in its different forms and degrees, is a manifestation of, inter alia,

militarism.

But underpinning the incidence of domestic and other forms of violence in the turbulent context of Fiji lies something deeper. It is the patriarchal system. The patriarchal system is an embodiment of a cultural construction devised, protected and honoured mostly by men and imposed on the rest of the community, since time immemorial, for male advantage. The system is further strengthened by militarism.

The moral issue lies in a cultural construction of gender roles sanctioned by a particular religious interpretation which conditions women to take a subservient status. This alone triggers a fundamental moral issue. On top of this, the military is coerced into being an outward expression of this control. The various manifestations of violence in Fiji, including domestic violence, are rooted in the patriarchal system, which is strengthened by the doctrine of militarism. Such violence is immensely costly; other than the cost to the psyche and the soul, the direct economic costs of violence against women is estimated by the Reserve Bank of Fiji at around $300 million per annum (*The Review*, January 2003:18).
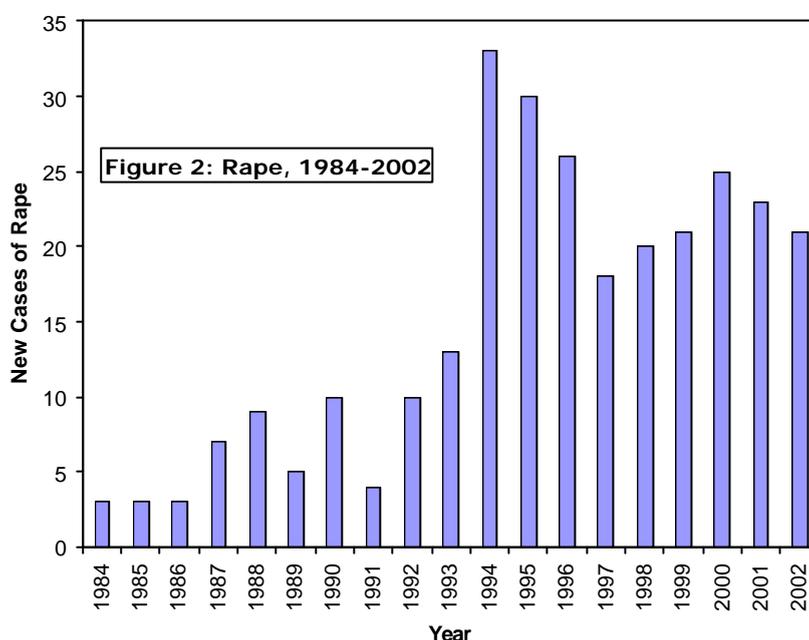
Rape

Like domestic violence, the incidence of rape and sexual crimes in Fiji have also escalated since 1987. Figure 2 shows the trend in cases of rape reported to the police. It shows the steady increase in reported rape cases since 1987. While rape is a feature of all societies, and has been a problem in Fiji for long, the marked increase in its incidence since 1987 does suggest a link between rape and the 1987 coups.

The trend in rape indicates an alarming situation. Even Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase recognised it as a major problem emerging from a violent culture. In his speech at a workshop in 2002, Qarase said: 'The perpetrators of violence against women are unchristian, their behaviour is inhuman and uncivilised. They are guilty of moral failure. They need to understand that might is not right' (*The Fiji Times*, November 23, 2002:16).

It is a well-accepted fact that violence breeds violence. The coups initially generated and modelled violence at the political level. This quickly spread to other levels of society. Racially motivated violence, which was common during the height of the May 1987 coup as well as during the 2000 terrorist upheaval, contributed to the moral decay in the country. Such violence contributed significantly to sexual violence in society and to rape specifically.

In the Fiji society rape is often concealed from authorities.

Indo-Fijians particularly do not report rape cases on account of shame and possible social ostracism of the victims and their families. When rape takes place outside of marriage, including rape at work places or by work mates or employers, some women tend to hide this from their husbands. Some withhold the pain from the family for the sake of their own positions within it and the status of the family in the society. Hidden trauma includes emotional confusion, fear, deep anger, and depression.

Figure 2: Rape, 1984-2002

A particular post-1987 feature is gang rape. Not only have gang rapes in Fiji increased, but they are taking more horrific forms. A November 2002 case of a gang rape of a woman by three masked men, in front of her husband and two children, is an example of this trend. In response to this incident, the *Sunday Post* stated: 'This rape once more highlights gender inequalities and how women have had to suffer in silence too long over uphill battle they face to achieve proper recognition by society. They too are human' (November 17: 6)

Another serious dimension of sexual abuse in Fiji is the significant incidence of this within the extended family. Results of surveys of sexual violence show that 'the majority of sexual assaults were committed by persons who were known to the victim' (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, nd: 56). Included are victims of relatives. Sexual violence within the extended family in Fiji also includes the notable cases of brothers raping their sisters or sons raping their mothers[2].

While the general phenomena of a preponderance of sexual violence being perpetrated by people who are known to the victims is found in other countries as well, Fijian authority's claim that it values extended family and places fundamental significance on communal living, culture and tradition, does not allow for any easy reconciliation between this supposed national characteristic and sexual violence. In this context, the trend in sexual violence within the extended family could have explanations which may be different from those found in other countries. The prevalence of such violence within home boundaries indicates the intensity of the tragedy currently crippling Fiji. The break down of social and moral integrity is now within the womb of the extended family system. The institution for the formation of a community is threatened. Fiji society is damaged at its very core.

The increase in sexual violence within the extended family, as well as the rapid rise in more brutal forms of sexual violence within the society, are manifestations of a society becoming increasingly gripped by a culture of violence. Militarism contributes to this culture of violence in no small way.

Child Abuse

Recently the *Fiji Sun* wrote: 'Here in Fiji not a day goes by that we don't hear, read and see on radios, newspapers and television, cases of children being molested and raped. And of all people by their fathers, relatives and close family friends. With such cases becoming more and more a common occurrence, people are coming to question the effectiveness of our justice system in deterring these sick slaves of lust' (21 November 2002:10).

Child abuse has been defined by Mike Lew as ranging from child neglect to physical violence; it 'includes torture, beatings, verbal and psychological maltreatment, child pornography, and sexual abuse (ranging from seductive behaviour to rape)' (1990:

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[2] See: http://www.fijiwomen.com/news/2002/march/26a.htm; and
http://www.fijiwomen.com/news/2002/feb/01/01b.htm for media coverage of such cases.
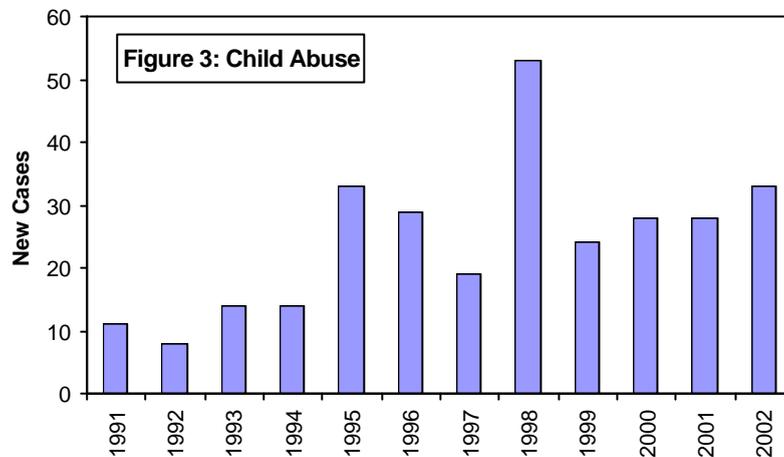
13). Freda Briggs defines child abuse more narrowly, in its sexual form as 'the use of children's bodies to provide sexual pleasure or sexual relief for adults using force, threats or by gaining the child's uninformed consent' (1986: 8). Included in both these definitions would be incest.

The increasing incidence of incest, accompanied by violence, is a phenomena which has become a major concern in Fiji in recent years. The general definition of incest in the framework of sexual activity within family blood relationships, does not embrace fully the impact of the issue in a Pacific context. The term 'family' in the Pacific is broad and is not limited to blood relationships. A Pacific extended family applies to those who are in a household; this includes those who enter the household as friends or by reason of other links to the family. The reality of belonging to an extended family in this context, is wider than just mere blood relations. Thus, Lew's view – that incest 'is a violation of a position of trust, power, and protection' (1990: 16) - is more meaningful.

Cases of child abuse perpetrated by the father in the family raise serious questions in relation to the father figure. The role of the father figure in many families involves a sense of safety and security. When a child is abused by the very person whom she trusts, the child is confused and her trust is betrayed by a sexual imposition the effects of which will remain with her for the rest of her life (Briggs 1986: 28). To betray trust is to hinder the development of a person. 'Incest differs from other forms of sexual abuse in that the perpetrator is assumed to stand in a protective (parental) role to the victim. The very person that the child should be able to turn to for care, comfort, and understanding violates that trust by sexualising the relationship' (Lew, 1990: 46-47).

There is a relative dearth of comprehensive information on child abuse in Fiji. Even the Fiji Police Department, even as late as 2002, did not have comprehensive information on sexual abuse of children. The only data on child abuse which is available is from the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre. This is given in Figure 3. The Centre began to focus on child abuse relatively more recently, thus its information is limited in scope. But despite this, the data shows the significant incidence of child abuse prevalent in Fiji in the 1990s. Given the lack of information compiled by the police department, sexual abuse of children can be considered more extensive than what is publicly known about this problem. There are significant cultural obstacles that hinder addressing child abuse. Incest tends to remain hidden because the discussion of sexual activity is often regarded as taboo. The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre states that child sexual abuse is a big concern in the Pacific, and that cultural taboos make talking about sex and reporting of child abuse

very difficult, adding that there is also a social stigma attached to the victims of sexual abuse which also inhabits reporting (2001: 38). The attitude of the Church to child abuse does not help either. The media report of a Methodist Church Minister Reverend Iliesa Naivalu's belief that 'the rise in social problems, particularly child abuse, in the nation is a curse from the Almighty God' (*The Fiji Times*, 25 November, 2002:3), is an example of the attitude of some within the Church community.

Figure 3: Child Abuse

New Cases (by year):
- 1991: 11
- 1992: 8
- 1993: 14
- 1994: 14
- 1995: 33
- 1996: 29
- 1997: 19
- 1998: 53
- 1999: 24
- 2000: 28
- 2001: 28
- 2002: 33

Most cultures in the Pacific are silent in relation to physical abuse of children in the home. The cultural context of Fiji is not different from most Pacific situations. Child sexual abuse involves shame, secretiveness and embarrassment. Protecting the status quo in most cases is to the disadvantage of the victims and the powerless.

In the absence of more comprehensive data on child abuse, what one is left with is the fact that child abuse, including child sexual abuse and incest, has frog-leapt after the 1987 military coups. The general breakdown in law and order, and the lack of the primacy of moral concerns in the Fijian society, is a feature which cannot be ignored in any analysis of the causes of such degradation in the country.

Suicide

Suicide, or 'self-inflicted death', is a problem which exists in all societies. Suicide is regarded as an attempt by people to escape from the problems of life. Coggan, Dickinson, Rimm, and Cherrington identify the relationship of this particular behaviour and the day to day reality of life. 'Suicidal people', they argue, 'are preoccupied with plans for escape from stresses in their life. The prospect of dying is seen as less threatening than ongoing torment' (1999: 7). Financial hardship, substance abuse, cultural or religious imposition, unresolved love, unemployment and loss of dignity, uncertain future, depression and psychiatric disorder contribute to severe stress and the incidence of suicide. Those who are affected most tend to be the marginalised and those whose inner integrity is not honoured.

In the context of Fiji, Adinkrah and Chand argue that in order of priority, the causes of suicide are financial hardship, poverty, unemployment, domestic problems, and young people's love relationships (1996: 14). The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre also argues that the major factors contributing to suicide cases are finance, family tension and partnership issues. Likewise, the Pacific Network on *Violence Against Women* found that violence and abuse, arranged marriages, unintended pregnancies, neglect within a family, failure in schools/jobs, financial stress, alcohol and drug abuse, communication breakdown, and relationship problems are major causes of suicide in Fiji (2001, 40).

Data shows that the majority of the actual suicide victims in Fiji have been males though more females attempted suicides. In 2000, for example, women constituted 41% of suicide victims and 63% of attempted suicide cases. An important factor which contributes to a high risk of suicide or attempted suicide is the notion of shame.

Shame is a cultural and religious construction in the Fiji society. When certain values that are associated with manhood are destroyed (for example, employment, land lease expiring, failing to cater for the family), a deep sense of shame emerges. To loose face because of disasters not of their own creation is interpreted by the potential victims as robbing them of the purpose of life.

In 2000 there were 223 cases of suicide and attempted suicide. Figure 4 shows the incidence of suicide during 1995-2000.

The bulk of the suicide victims have been Indo-Fijians. The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre argues that these figures are an indication that many people in Fiji 'are in situations that they are finding totally unbearable' (2001: 27).

Figure 4: Gender Breakdown of Suicides and Attempted Suicides (1995-2000)

Source: Fiji Womens Crisis Centre
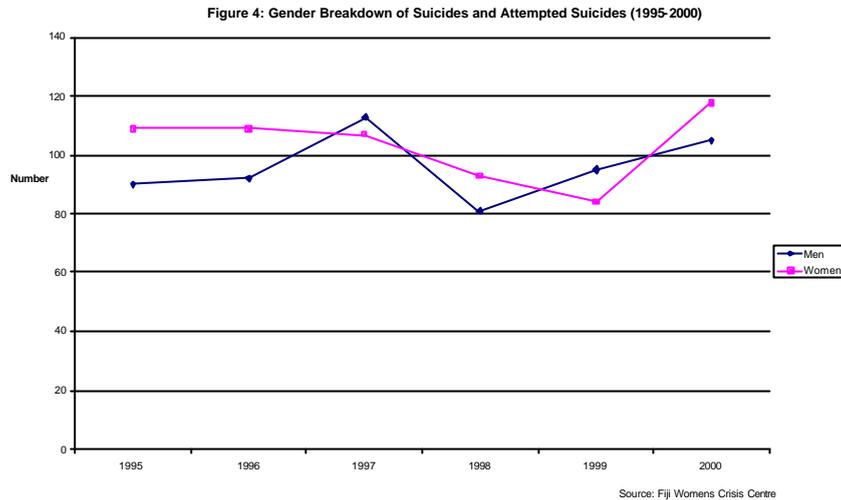
Most of the issues identified as causes of suicide in Fiji have become more pronounced since 1987. The break-down of law and order, strain within families due to financial hardship, the break-down of the family, the uncertainty of jobs and increased unemployment, poverty and corruption are all interwoven.

The political crisis in 1987 altered the social climate of the country. Change, which defined some as 'belonging' and others as 'not belonging' to Fiji, resulted in a new form of stress. For those who are excluded, their hope for the future and the hope of the future of their children and grandchildren are shattered. The educated and wealthy have choices, including migration to other countries. The majority of Fiji's people are poor and have no such choice. This category includes the victims of the recent non-renewal of agricultural land leases. They, and thousands more who will face land lease problems, are potential victims of multiple psychiatric disorders, including stress and shame, as well as medical disorders like high blood pressure, diabetes, etc. These factors contribute to a high suicide rate in Fiji.

THE EYE OF THE HURRICANE

Crucial to a new way of understanding morality is the finding of a new language that will do justice to the complexity of the Fiji context today. The social and moral ills identified and discussed above demonstrate the extent of physical, emotional and psychological violence as well as cultural, religious and domestic abuse in Fiji. The combined incidence of crimes against women and children signal the tidal wave of the degeneration of morality which has plagued Fiji since 1987. Domestic violence, child abuse, rape and sexual harassment alone shot up from about 120 cases in 1986 to well over 1000 cases annually in the early 2000's.

The above, combined with other ills, some of which have been discussed above like suicide, and some which have not been discussed here (like abuse of trust, particularly fiduciary trust, in many cases by employees and/or trustees of churches, schools and other community organisations, perjury, etc.) reflect the depth of the moral crisis in the country.

It is important to examine the root causes of the moral crisis in Fiji. To do this, the concept of the 'eye' of the hurricane is put forward. Fiji is a part of the Pacific. Here everyone knows of a hurricane or tropical cyclone from ones experience. The first stage in the development of a hurricane is the formation of the winds. This is called cyclogenesis. At this stage tropical disturbance becomes a topical depression. Then the winds develop into a tropical cyclone. At this stage, the winds get their momentum by blowing clockwise towards the centre or the 'eye'. The 'eye' of the hurricane relates not only to the mature but also the dangerous stage of the tropical cyclones. When a tropical cyclone reaches a stage of maturity, it becomes a hurricane. The 'eye' is a curved band in the centre of the wall of the intense activity of the winds. The concentration, intensity and the devastation of the force of the winds are located in the wall of the 'eye' of the hurricane.

The problems in identifying and analysing the moral tragedy in Fiji and exploring relevant moral directions for Fiji lie, in part, in our inability to move beyond the outcome of hurricanes and to identify the 'eye' of the hurricane. The concentration on the consequences of the hurricane rather than identifying the 'eye' conceals more important and urgent issues at hand. The consequences of hurricane, as in the extent of the devastation, are visible measurements of the intensity of the 'eye' of the hurricane.

In 1987, Fiji was devastated by a particular form of socio-political, economic, cultural and religious hurricane. It is suggested in this paper that the moral crisis which is evident today in Fiji are linked to the 1987 hurricane. It is further suggested that one can-

not eliminate the social and moral problems which disadvantage the majority and the powerless, by addressing only the consequences of the hurricane while the 'eye' of the hurricane remains concealed.

The 1987 and 2000 political hurricanes are not a formation of winds and depressions but rather destructive human constructions. A month after the 1987 coup, the editor of the *Islands Business* magazine, echoed the engrained belief behind the coup as one of the indigenous Fijians' desire for paramountcy in the country. He stated that the 'reason for the coup is a peculiarly Fijian one: a desire to preserve the paramountcy of the interests of the Taukei, a Fijian word meaning the people, or owners, of the land, over another section of society regarded frankly by most Fijians as simply intruders' (June 1987: 3). But what does the paramountcy of the indigenous Fijians mean in concrete terms? Does this mean that the welfare levels of the indigenous Fijians has been elevated? Does this mean that there is a greater unity within the indigenous Fijians? Does this mean that there is a more strengthened communal way of life? Does this mean that the *vanua* is now in a better position than what it was earlier? Does this mean that the moral strength of the indigenous Fijians is higher now?

The facts do not support any of the above. What they do show, to the contrary, is that the welfare levels of the indigenous Fijians is lower than before. Poverty levels have escalated in the country, adversely affecting, among others, an increasing proportion of the indigenous Fijians. It is also apparent that the indigenous Fijians are now divided and fragmented as a racial group as they never were. It is also a fact that the communal way of life is far weaker now than what it was two decades ago. The moral crisis gripping the country, and the indigenous Fijians in particular, is at its heights. The *vanua* certainly is not only fragmented, but is suffering as never before.

At the same time, a new class of indigenous Fijians has emerged which has all the privileges of western living at its disposal, which continues to benefit from western lifestyle, but which continues to sing the song of the virtues of communal living and the *vanua.* This class also leads the charge of indigenous Fijian supremacy. It is this class which constitutes the 'eye' of the hurricane in Fiji.

An urgent moral issue to be addressed is the inability on the part of many people in Fiji to transform the unjust system which allows the few who are the 'eye' of the hurricane to continue disfiguring the majority of the people of Fiji for their own ends. The observation by Ormerods that the most terrifying feature of evil is that it usually comes disguised as good (1995:v), tends to show

relevance here. A new system of exploitation has emerged in Fiji; I call this *turagaism*.

It is argued in this paper that the 'eye' of the hurricane in the context of the Fiji 1987 coups comprises the dominant class in the new *turagaist* society. The May 2000 coup, and the July and November 2000 mutinies were off shoots of the 1987 hurricane.

The Fiji Council of Churches made the very pointed and relevant observation when it stated:

> Indigenous Fijians rights was the motive behind the two Rabuka coups of May and September 1987. They were claimed to be "the only way" to protect and advance the interests of the indigenous Fijians. In the years that followed, there were many pro-Fijian policies put in place - positive discrimination in favour of Fijians. Loans were given, scholarships were handed out, land rights addressed....The coups of 1987 and 2000 indicate that if you can't get what you want lawfully, then take it any way you can!' (*Fiji's Sunday Post*, July 30, 2000: 2).

The grab, so to say, was and continues to be, to advance the dominant class in the new *turagaist* society. This class consists of the elite comprising influential indigenous Fijians colluding with like minds from other ethnic groups, in their bid to continue accumulating wealth, power and privilege, all to the disadvantage of the *vanua* and the ordinary indigenous Fijian. In order for the system of exploitation to be sustained, an ideology of indigenous paramountcy is imperative. Such a system was devised to generate policies to acquire the necessary wealth, power and privilege. Thus the role of the individuals who for their own ends manipulate key sections of the institutions of the military, the civil service, the chiefly system, the academia, the Church and business is pivotal in the whole enterprise of exploitation. The abuse of power by individuals whose offices were bestowed with trust to take care of the welfare of all those under their wings, plays a critical role in such a regime. A consequence of this has been the degeneration of the institutions of virtue within the indigenous Fijian society. The *vanua* itself has been transformed significantly. The moral crisis gripping Fiji is an expression, a manifestation, of such a transformation and degeneration.

Appendix I: Police and Military Expenditures, 1970-2001

	Expenditure ($M)		% of Total Expenditure	
	Police	**Military**	**Police**	**Military**
1970	1.52	0.41	2.71%	0.74%
1971	1.84	0.52	3.06%	0.86%
1972	1.93	0.65	2.68%	0.90%
1973	2.34	0.87	2.37%	0.88%
1974	3.12	1.09	2.97%	1.04%
1975	3.73	1.67	2.66%	1.19%
1976	5.22	2.47	3.06%	1.45%
1977	6.36	3.34	3.11%	1.63%
1978	7.31	6.17	3.32%	2.81%
1979	8.53	8.01	3.47%	3.26%
1980	8.75	8.47	3.06%	2.96%
1981	9.30	9.71	2.91%	3.03%
1982	10.41	13.93	2.95%	3.94%
1983	11.37	15.35	3.15%	4.25%
1984	12.93	16.88	3.29%	4.29%
1985	13.23	16.16	3.29%	4.01%
1986	14.16	16.52	3.31%	3.87%
1987	14.64	31.25	3.30%	7.04%
1988	12.80	35.26	2.57%	7.08%
1989	16.77	43.14	3.07%	7.90%
1990	20.22	42.64	3.44%	7.26%
1991	22.44	47.93	3.48%	7.43%
1992	24.00	45.80	3.36%	6.42%
1993	26.20	49.40	3.20%	6.03%
1994	26.67	49.29	3.32%	6.13%
1995	29.47	48.81	3.64%	6.03%
1996	32.00	51.18	3.34%	5.34%
1997	31.47	44.93	3.14%	4.48%
1998	32.71	44.91	3.35%	4.59%
1999	38.59	46.89	3.75%	4.56%
2000	43.30	75.80	3.79%	6.64%
2001	52.20	79.30	4.32%	6.39%

(Source: Budget Estimates, various years)

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