

Prologue

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please. They do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given or transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.

Karl Marx

The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte

He had been unwell for some time. Ever since suffering a mild heart attack in February 1968 while conducting a murder trial at Labasa on Vanua Levu, Ambalal Dahyabhai Patel had lived on borrowed time. But A.D., as he was known to the public, was not one to give in to intimations of his impending mortality. Much work was still left to be done, and he was determined to remain in harness to the last, much to the anguish of friends and colleagues who pleaded with him to slow down and delegate more responsibility to subordinates.

They pleaded in vain. This was the 1960s, a decade of profound change in Fiji's political history, and Patel was at the centre of the changes, indeed, a principal moving force behind them. His uncompromising opposition to British colonial rule in Fiji, and his demand for independence based on democratic principles and non-racial franchise, forced the pace of constitutional change already tentatively under way as Great Britain sought to shed its remaining colonies in the Pacific and elsewhere. Fiji was granted its independence on 10 October 1970, 96 years after it became a colony of the British monarchy.

The demand for independence was not the only thing that preoccupied Patel in the 1960s. He was also at the centre of important developments in the colony's sugar industry. In 1969, after nearly two decades of persistence by cane farmers, the colonial government agreed to appoint an independent arbitrator, Britain's Master of the Rolls, Lord Denning, to decide the terms of a new contract between farmers and the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. As founder and leader of the Federation of Cane Growers, and the chief instigator of the British arbitration of the dispute, Patel naturally became the principal advocate of his group before the arbitration. This was to be his last fight with the CSR, he told his colleagues, prophetically as it turned out.

For farmers, the results of the arbitration could not have been better. Lord Denning was deeply impressed with Patel's plea on behalf of the farmers. Of all the advocates who appeared before him, including a future Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia (Sir Gerard Brennan), Denning wrote privately, Patel

‘was intellectually the most brilliant, as a character the most honourable, and as an advocate, the most persuasive. Quick in mind, fluent in speech, he stood out above all.’¹ It was Patel’s ‘persuasive advocacy,’ said Denning, ‘that led me to my report which was in favour of the growers and against the millers.’ Denning’s report led to the Company’s withdrawal from Fiji in 1973, after nearly a century of economic dominance in a classic colonial setting.

The strain of a hectic public life took its toll on Patel, who suffered a heart attack on 3 September 1969. He was rushed to the Nadi hospital and the following day transferred to the better-equipped facility in Lautoka. There he remained for three weeks while doctors worked to determine the cause of his ailments, which included, besides diabetes from which he had suffered for nearly a decade, high fever and pneumonia. While recuperating, Patel kept himself informed of the arbitration proceedings concerning the sugar cane industry, received messages and continued to consult with colleagues about the confidential constitutional talks underway in Suva, concerning Fiji’s impending independence.

Sir Derek Jakeway, the Governor, was sufficiently concerned about Patel’s role in the political transition then underway to remind the ailing Patel of his crucial role in the political transformations that lay ahead. The Governor suggested that as a diversion Patel read Puisne Judge Ronald Knox-Mawer’s book, *Right Hand Court*. The Chief Justice, Sir Clifford Hammett, an old and trusted friend, similarly asked Patel to ‘rest and get well for [his] counsel and advice and wisdom and restraint [would] be in much demand in the coming year, and [he] must be fit to meet the demands that [would] be made on [his] physical resources.’² Dr Charles Gurd, chief medical officer of the colony, and another longstanding friend, offered an optimistic prognosis, but urged Patel to take a long vacation and complete rest, preferably in a faraway place such as Hawaii. Forget about Fiji for a while, he urged.

Discharged from the hospital, Patel returned to his home in Nadi, where more tasks awaited him. He wrote soothing letters to his distraught children in England. He urged them to do well in their studies, and told them not to worry about his health. The centenary of Mahatma Gandhi’s birth was in 1969, and Patel was invited, as he had often been on similar occasions in the past, to speak at a public celebration of the event at Suva’s Old Town Hall. The Mahatma was Patel’s idol, and he could not decline the invitation. His speech was a sombre reflection on the state of the world and an eloquent, touching tribute to the Mahatma. Despite all the progress made by modern science and technology, Patel wrote, man still lived in a state of moral and physical pollution, was still

1 This quote is from Lord Denning’s letter to me, dated 20 January 1990.

2 From the private papers of A.D. Patel. Unless otherwise stated, all the unacknowledged quotes are from this source.

unable to control his destiny: 'The machine,' Patel said, 'has become the master and man its slave.' The speech was entitled 'Hail Deliverer' and published posthumously in the local press.³

On 1 October, shortly after drafting this speech, Patel suffered a second heart attack and died that night, a tired and lonely man. He was 64 years old. As news of his death spread the next day, thousands of grieving men and women, most of them simple rural folk, streamed into Nadi from all parts of the country on foot, in trucks and hired cars and buses, clogging the dusty sugar town as rarely before. The last time Nadi had seen such a large number of people was during the height of the Pacific War. Shops, schools, and public offices closed as people poured in to pay tribute to the man whose body lay in state at the Nadi Civic Centre, a man who had symbolized their hopes, fears and aspirations for such a long time that many had come to regard him as an enduring fixture of their political lives. Four days later, as a crowd of some 15,000-20,000 people watched, many crying openly, Patel's body was cremated at Wailoaloa Cemetery. The funeral pyre was lit by his two young sons, Atul and Dhimant, who had flown to Fiji from England for the occasion.

His family was swamped with messages of condolence from the great and the humble alike. *The Fiji Times*, never a friend of Patel or of his party, now praised Patel's integrity and unwavering commitment to political principles he believed in. Patel would 'long be remembered as a national figure,' the newspaper said, albeit a 'controversial figure' whose 'impact on the land of his adoption was such that he will not be forgotten.' Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, Chief Minister and leader of the Alliance Party, noted similarly that while there had been deep political differences between himself and Patel, the Federation leader 'had personal qualities deserving of the utmost respect,' among them 'sincerity', 'dedication' and 'devotion to the causes in which he believed.' Patel, Mara added, 'was an eloquent and forceful speaker skilled in parliamentary procedures,' a man who 'set a standard of dignity and courtesy worthy of the highest parliamentary traditions.'

Ratu David Toganivalu, a leading light in the Fijian Association, and something of a Fijian nationalist in the 1960s, expressed a similar sentiment. 'The political differences which divided us,' Toganivalu said of himself and Patel, 'cannot cloud our respect for him as a man of great ability who has played an important part in the development of political parties in Fiji and in the processes which led to the development of a political form of government.' Siddiq Koya, Patel's lieutenant and eventual successor, was equally fulsome in his praise. Patel had great courage and vision, Koya said, who saw clearly the changes that had to

3 It is included in the Appendix.

come to Fiji. 'We are extremely fortunate that a man of his calibre elected to come to Fiji, and make his home here.' The public life of Fiji, Koya continued 'was considerably enriched by his contributions.'⁴

Q.V.L. Weston, former District Commissioner Western and in 1969 the Chief Secretary of the Government of Nauru, wrote similarly of Patel, whom he had opposed on many occasions: 'A.D. was a fine man,' Weston observed, 'stubborn, sometimes too much for comfort;' but, he added, 'it was through his stubbornness that he got his way.' 'Mixed societies such as Fiji contain a lot of inborn prejudices, which get out of tune with the times and take leader of the quality and convictions of A.D. to shift.' When the tale is told by historians, Weston continued, 'it will be usually accepted that his way was right.'⁵

This prophecy has not yet been fulfilled. Thus far, the verdict of written history of Fiji, with a few exceptions, has been variously unkind and uncharitable to Patel. It has generally portrayed him as an ambitious politician who cynically exploited the fears of ordinary Indo-Fijians for his own personal gains or for those of his cultural sub-community, the Gujarati. Some historians have even omitted his name from the gallery of those public figures who had a hand in achieving Fijian independence and shaping the course of late 20th century Fijian history.⁶ There was no mention of Patel's role in and contribution to the anti-colonial struggle in the official celebrations which accompanied independence in 1970. It was as if he had never existed, as if his name had to be extinguished from the pages of recent history to avoid embarrassment to those who had acquired power after a lifetime opposing independence.

This historical amnesia is not altogether surprising. Throughout his public life, Patel was an uncompromising — 'stubborn,' Weston said — advocate of social and political equality of all people within Fiji, and of democracy and independence for Fiji itself. Patel's vision and the political action its logic dictated, questioned the very foundations of colonial rule in Fiji and thus the role of every vested interest which sustained that rule. 'One Country, One Nation, One People' was the motto of the political party he founded. Political integration was his goal, while the foundations of colonial Fiji rested on the idea of racial compartmentalization and on the kinds of institutionalized political and social inequality that compartmentalization dictated. Because the foundations of independent Fiji were built essentially on the political structures and ideological premises bequeathed by the departing imperialist power, it is easy to see why Patel's place in the making of modern Fijian history has not been fully appreciated or even acknowledged.

4 *National Federation Party Annual Convention Magazine*, 1970.

5 From Weston's letter to S.B. Patel, 24 October 1969.

6 See Dr Ahmed Ali's Foreword in Scarr, 1984.

Nonetheless, in the history of colonial Fiji, A.D. Patel stands with Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna as one of two outstanding figures who did much to shape the course of events at critical junctures in Fijian history.⁷ It has often been remarked that what Sukuna was to the Fijian people, Patel was to the Indo-Fijians. There is some truth in the comparison. The two men were more alike than appears at first glance. Both had cultivated intellects, magnetic personalities, style, strength of character, and unwavering commitment to strongly-held principles. In their vision of Fiji, however, they stood poles apart. Ratu Sukuna, an aristocratic chief, soldier, and loyal civil servant of the colonial government—indeed its chief authority on indigenous Fijian affairs—was essentially a traditionalist. That is, he saw in the colonial regime a means of preserving native Fijian hierarchies and thwarting the potential political influence of the Indian half of the population. Democracy, for Sukuna, meant unmitigated disaster for native Fijians, for whom, he believed, social, political or racial equality would mean the loss of control of Fiji to the Indians. Sukuna thought, on balance, British colonialism had therefore been and continued to be good for Fiji; it had certainly benefited the Fijian community. Colonialism, Sukuna said in 1934, ‘gave us a common loyalty, and through a common loyalty it gave us unity. That great gift outweighs any faults there may have been in these sixty years of British rule.’ That gift was not inconsiderable, the unification of previously fractious and warring groups competing for political supremacy in the islands under the overarching umbrella of British colonial rule with, as Sukuna saw it from his chiefly vantage point, minimal disturbance to the traditional way of life.

Patel disagreed completely. Though a patrician of privileged social background, Patel was an ardent champion of democracy, individual rights, and personal freedom. Colonialism and all it entailed—racial inequality, European superiority, petty discrimination—was for him an unmitigated evil that had to be eradicated whatever the cost. Its destruction was to him a prerequisite for the harmonious co-existence of the two main ethnic groups in Fiji. And he worked tirelessly toward that goal, to bring the two races together on the basis of equal and common universal franchise. There would be no peace in Fiji unless the two major communities learned to cooperate with each other across the racial divide. A nation was an ‘imagined’ community, Patel said to those who emphasized the primacy of primordial values of race and ethnicity. Nationalism ‘is a question of the mind, it is not a question of the colour.’ Fiji was covered with the ignorance of racialism and sectarianism. ‘Remove the cover and the nation is there.’⁸ On the economic front, as Gerard Brennan accurately recalled, Patel was ‘passionately

7 Ratu Sukuna’s life is captured in Scarr, 1980.

8 It is included in the Appendix.

devoted to a change in the quality of life for the people of Fiji—a change which no doubt included economic improvement but which he extended beyond this to an assertion of what he regarded as human dignity.’⁹

Patel’s vision and political philosophy, as well as the manner in which he pursued them, continue to provoke controversy. His perceived vanity and stubbornness, as well as his personal charm, self-assurance, and political astuteness, still arouse debate. To begin with, there was his intellectual brilliance, of which Denning spoke, an almost uncanny ability to get to the heart of an issue before any of his contemporaries. Denning called Patel a ‘great advocate,’ while Chief Justice Sir Clifford Hammett recalled Patel as ‘a born advocate of fluency and force [with] few to equal his persuasive skill at the bar.’ In a rare departure from tradition, the full Supreme Court of Fiji paid its respect to Patel on 8 October: ‘He was a model of what a counsel should be. He fought his cases hard; he fought them well; but throughout he was most courteous not only to the court but to his opponents and to everybody else associated with the case.’¹⁰ Sir Kenneth Maddocks made a similar point in a private note to me: ‘He struck me as very capable, quick-witted and experienced advocate, determined to press his case forcefully and inflexibly.’ For Sir Kenneth, the emphasis was on inflexibility.

People who attacked him in public often praised him in private. Sir Malcolm Trustram Eve wrote disparagingly of Patel’s conduct in the 1960 sugar cane strike but privately admired his tenacity and ability, and later became a friend. Patel, he said, had done the Middle Temple proud. Professor C.Y. Shepherd, who conducted an inquiry into the sugar industry in 1943, following a growers’ strike led by Patel, made the obligatory public remarks about the selfish intentions of strike ringleaders, but in a confidential hand-written note to the Colonial Office, praised Patel’s ability and urged his appointment to the Sugar Board whose creation he recommended in his report.¹¹ The colonial government would not, and in the circumstances understandably could not, oblige. R.W. Robson, the conservative publisher of the *Pacific Islands Monthly*, and no friend of the Indo-Fijians, attacked Patel more bitterly than probably any other print journalist of his time, but privately he ‘had learned to respect him for his ability and integrity’ Andrew Deoki, the Suva lawyer-politician whom the Federation Party had defeated in the 1966 election, said that Patel had done more for the cane farmers ‘than any other individual in Fiji.’¹² Sir Vijay R. Singh, who had fought many a battle with Patel, beginning with the sugar cane strike in 1960, recalled: ‘Mr Patel was one of the most eloquent speakers of this country, and it was a

9 Brennan to R.D. Patel, 19 November, 1969.

10 Hammett to R.D. Patel, 2 October 1969.

11 Shepherd to Caine (Colonial Office), 31 August 1944 in Colonial Office File 69/2/12-1.

12 In *Pacific Review*, 9 October 1969.

pleasure for me to hear him expound his views in his own persuasive inimitable style. We admired the eloquence, the clarity, and the occasional emotion as well as the ready wit that he brought to bear during debates.’¹³

Patel’s brilliance is evident in the eloquence with which he articulated his social vision. Sir Robert Sanders wrote: ‘From time to time I listened to him in the Legco [Legislative Council] where he could unfold a complicated case with scarcely a note and in a quiet and mannered way. I particularly remember the way he would put his head on one side and adopt an air of guilelessness as he made a telling point.’¹⁴ Ratu William Toganivalu, himself no mean orator, and among the best on the Alliance benches, once said how he always listened carefully whenever Patel spoke in the Legislative Council, for he always learned something new. ‘There is magic in his delivery,’ Toganivalu recalled. If Patel were ‘to put up a case to say that this roof was painted black’, referring to the roof of the Legislative Council Chambers, ‘they would believe him as I have often believed him.’¹⁵ It was a touching tribute. Patel had once admonished Toganivalu for raising the spectre of racial confrontation between Indians and Fijians, advising him to ‘stop playing the part of Don Quixote, fighting windmills for the hand of fictitious Dulcinea.’ Ratu Edward Cakobau spoke of Patel’s ‘inimitable and infectious persuasion.’¹⁶ Ratu Tiale Vuiyasawa, Fijian nominated member of the Legislative Council, said in August 1945, after listening to Patel on the thorny problem of land tenure: ‘It was like listening to a speech made 30 or 40 years ago in the House of Commons when the late Lord Carson and the late Lord Oxford used to cross swords.’¹⁷

A tilt of the head, a strategic pause, an apt phrase, vivid imagery effortlessly invoked: these were elemental parts of Patel’s rhetorical repertoire. Villagers, especially those in the cane belt, often travelled miles and waited hours to hear Patel explain his policies or to expose, clause by clause, deficiencies in the draft contracts offered by Colonial Sugar Refining Company. At these meetings, Siddiq Koya recalled in 1970, Patel ‘would lend his own brand of humour, and keep us guessing till the last minute as to how he would put his message across.’ When Patel spoke of the CSR as the tyrannical mother-in-law and the colonial government as its dutiful daughter-in-law, the Indian people understood him perfectly as they did when he dismissed government policies as solid, smooth, round and attractive but like a pumpkin hollow inside. His political opponents in the Indian Alliance or the Kisan Sangh he dismissed as crows among swans, trainee carpenters criticizing the architecture of the Taj Mahal (the policies of the Federation Party) or as mischief-making *dhobi* (launderers) of the Ramayana,

13 Ibid. Ratu George Cakobau’s quotation which follows is also from this source.

14 Sir Robert Sanders, personal communication, 1 February 1990.

15 Legislative Council Debate, 8 May 1969.

16 Legislative Council Debate, 9 July 1969.

17 Legislative Council Debate, 31 August 1945.

who attempted to soil Sita's reputation. King Canute and Kalidas, as well as Shakespeare and the Hindu scriptures, all provided grist for Patel's rhetorical mill. Patel believed in the power of reason and intellect. If he could argue his case with reason supported by facts, he could see no reason why people would not listen to him. Not everyone agreed. Ratu Mara, for one, believed that context and circumstances were just as important. As he said during the 1970 constitutional conference in London, 'We in Fiji are perhaps more sensible to atmosphere than subtle argument.'

Patel's message, whether at mass rallies or in private conversations with elite critics, was always the same. At the heart of his political philosophy was a repudiation of colonialism, and thus of the colonial state's image of itself as a benevolent, neutral entity, above politics, an impartial referee between competing ethnic groups and economic interests. The colonial state, Patel argued throughout his political life, was not the solution to Fiji's problems; it was instead the cause of those problems. Colonialism, Patel believed, was inherently racist, oppressive, divisive and elitist, the enemy of ordinary Fijians of all races in the colony. His criticism of colonialism remained undimmed despite the united opposition of most Fijians and Europeans and a section of his own community. His opposition to monopolies in sugar and gold mining industries, his support for localization of the civil service, for removal of racial and gender discrimination in public employment, a system of social security for the poor and the needy, and for the right of workers to strike or have recourse to compulsory arbitration—all these he pushed with vigour and unwavering conviction throughout his life. Patel was the first public figure in the country to advocate the use of 'Fijian' as a common name for all Fiji citizens. He died before many of his causes came to fruition (though they are being revived forty years later by the military regime in power in an undemocratic manner that would have been completely unacceptable to him).

Since the middle of the 20th century a healthy, though unequal, contest has raged between those with contrasting visions of Fiji. The one vision, represented by Ratu Sukuna, seeks sustenance in the traditional political order and the values that sustain that order. The other, personified by Patel, challenges traditional ways and the barriers of racial separation those traditional ways rested upon. After nearly two decades of tussle, the traditionalist, exclusionary vision emerged victorious, with the help of two military coups in 1987. A nation was torn apart, and a constitutional structure imposed by decree that effectively reinforced the pillars of ethnic separation, engendering feelings of ethnic exclusivity and chauvinism. The Indo-Fijian community was rendered politically impotent, forced to live on the sufferance of the taukei, the original

owners of the land. For them, a new *girit* appeared on the horizon, limited not to five years but one that might last the rest of their lives and into those of their children.

But history is not the privileged terrain of victors only. This book is an attempt to preserve the history of a failed effort to point Fiji in a different direction. What the outcome might have been had this failed effort succeeded is a matter best left to conjecture. The purpose here is not to speculate on what might have been. It is instead to tell the story of this failed effort. I have avoided the tendency to dwell on the sensational and the trivial. I have not discussed Patel's private life, as a man, as a father, as a husband. Such an approach would serve little purpose for this project. The principal focus here is on A.D. Patel as a public figure. In any case, I am not inclined to probe the private life of individuals. For me, the public actions of an individual are more important than the private thoughts which precede or inform them.

In this book, Patel speaks in his own voice, to explain his thoughts and his stance on issues. My editorial (and interpretive) intervention is indirect and limited. My interpretation of the history of Fiji in the 20th century and of the events in which Patel himself participated is in my book, *Broken Waves: A History of the Fiji Islands in the Twentieth Century* (1992). There the reader will also find the broad political context for the story related here as well as a guide to the historical sources used, some of which have a direct relevance to this text. This work is principally constructed from Patel's own speeches, letters and notes, archival material, interviews with people who knew Patel or are knowledgeable about the recent history of Fiji, and letters from senior colonial civil servants who worked with him. A fully documented text will be made available to anyone upon request. I have included in a companion volume a representative selection of Patel's main speeches and writings. It is a small selection, but it does help to illuminate Patel's vision and the eloquence with which he articulated it.

I never met Patel. He died when I was still in high school, but his name was legendary, even in remote, rural villages of Labasa. Our neighbour in Tabia, Mr Ram Dayal Singh, was nicknamed Patel, which was the name by which we all knew him. Years later when I asked why, I was told that it was because of Mr Singh's much-feared ability to dredge up obscure facts or make a telling point at village meetings to clinch an argument that he was named Patel, after A.D. Mr Singh was the only Patel I knew as a child. It was not until I began serious research into 20th century Fijian history in the 1980s that I encountered the man in the text. I admired Patel for his style and his intellect and the unwavering consistency and passionate conviction with which he articulated his vision. It is better for me to be upfront with my readers than to hide behind the façade of false objectivity and pretended detachment.

A.D. Patel dared to dream an alternative future for this divided nation. He was a well-read man with refined sensibilities. He took stands on issues—on the common roll and in the sugar industry—and his refusal to compromise or acquiesce in the face of enormous pressure and in the most adverse of circumstances, commands respect. Patel was a man of foresight and vision, often far ahead of his time. In 1968, Patel argued that Fiji should become a republic with an elected Fijian head of state. Now, some 30 years later, that idea is gradually gaining ground. So, too, is the view that a common roll, with one person, one vote, one value, is the only way to build the foundations of a genuine, representative democracy in a multiracial society such as Fiji. He had talked about the need to provide social security to the needy in Fiji in the 1940s; it became a reality two decades later. The Fiji National Provident Fund was started when Patel was the Member for Social Services, as also was a country-wide library service. He had advocated the localization of the colonial civil service in the 1940s; the colonial government adopted localization as a policy in the 1960s. Patel had talked about the need for a university in Fiji in the 1950s; the University of the South Pacific was established in Fiji in the late 1960s. He had talked about an Agricultural Bank for the primary producers of Fiji, but that vision has not yet materialized. One can disagree with Patel on tactics and strategy, but on the fundamentals, even his staunchest opponents conceded, he was essentially correct. This book offers one perspective on the life of one man during an important period in Fiji's history. Inevitably, it is partial, a record of one person's views. For all that, it is a record well worth preserving.

Many people have assisted me in completing this project. First and foremost, I must thank members of A.D. Patel's family. They have been extraordinarily generous with their time, hospitality and friendship. Mrs Leela Patel gave me complete and unrestricted access to her husband's papers, and patiently answered sometimes intrusive questions about her husband's life and work. It is a great tribute to her that neither she nor any family member once said a word about what I might or might not write. For this complete freedom, I am more grateful, in particular, to Mrs Patel, Vasantika and Amita than I can say or they will ever know.

Scores of people in Fiji shared with me their impressions of Mr Patel. Among them were his great admirers as well as his bitter critics. In addition, a number of retired colonial officials, including a Governor (Sir Kenneth Maddocks), wrote to me about their impressions. I was particularly fortunate to have Lord Denning's personal appraisal of Patel's role in the 1969 arbitration. It would be invidious to list names of people who granted me interviews and supplied information; some of them in any case may wish to remain anonymous; but I must thank Mr R.D. Patel, A.D.'s brother, for filling me in on the family background, Mr Bal Govinda for material on the 1930s, Mr H.M. Lodhia, Mr Andrew Joseph and

Mr M.K. Pillay for their personal reminiscences, the late Swami Rudrananda and Mr Karam Ramrakha for their taped recollections, and the late Ratu David Toganivalu, Mr Doug Brown and Sir Ronald Kermode for their insights into Fiji politics in the 1960s and Patel's role therein. The late Mr Setareki Tuinaceva and his staff at the National Archives, especially Matai Labaibure and the late Masud Khan, as well as Margaret Patel, have my thanks for granting me access to records in their custody. Tui and Masud were good friends and great professionals, and they will be missed by all users of the Fiji archives. Many cane farmers spent much time discussing the byzantine intricacies of sugar politics, providing rare insights into that industry as only they could. All these people and many more, I suspect, will have occasion to disagree with aspects of what I have written. That is inevitable, and probably as it should be. A.D. Patel was a controversial figure, and he would be surprised, disappointed even, at a unanimous verdict on him. But they all have my sincere thanks. I should add that they are in no way responsible for the use I have made of their insights and information. To Lila Lingam Moorti I am indebted for assistance in getting the manuscript ready for press.

Ganesh Chand, Aubrey Parke, Peter Read and Deryck Scarr read the manuscript with care and saved me from numerous embarrassing errors. Aubrey, who worked with A.D. Patel as his Secretary for Social Services in the mid-1960s, went through the entire manuscript painstakingly, line by line, and provided advice and made corrections which have helped the text. Idus Newby, my former colleague in the History Department at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, did his best to teach me how to write fluent English. I leave the success of his efforts for the readers to judge for themselves. At the production stages of this volume, Maree Tait at the Australian National University's National Centre for Development Studies was a much appreciated source of support and encouragement. Debra Grogan provided practical advice and help getting the manuscript to press and Tikka Wilson read the manuscript for consistency. Mr Jayanti Patel of Suva helped defray the cost of publication for which both the publishers and I are truly grateful. For this edition, I am grateful for the assistance of Sandra Davenport.

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I also wish to thank Mr Jai Ram Reddy, currently Fiji's Leader of the Opposition, and himself a successor to Mr Patel as the leader of the National Federation Party and consequently of the Indian community, who nominated me to serve on the Commission to Review the Fiji Constitution. This experience afforded me the opportunity, among many other memorable things, to observe the inner workings of Fiji politics, to assess peoples' fears and aspirations in an uniquely privileged way. The experience made me appreciate more keenly the battles that Patel had to fight, and which his successors and other democratic leaders are fighting now.

My last words of thanks are reserved for my peripatetic family, Padma, Yogi and Niraj, who have suffered long enough from my preoccupation—obsession they call it—with Fiji, and for putting up with the, alas, all too common occupational hazards of modern academic life: long periods of absence in the field and, more unforgivable, long bouts of grumpy absentmindedness at home. I readily plead guilty, with affection and gratitude; but they know as well as I do that, whatever happens, for the remaining years of my life, Fiji will be my spiritual home, my passionate obsession, my lifelong *girmit*, and always a haunting reminder of my own inescapable, existential in-betweenity.

Brij V. Lal, Suva, Fiji, 1996