

# FIJI:

## Student President apologises to Governor-General

by Suresh Khatri

'GOD IS WANTING to use the Pacific, having kept it as a reservoir of faith and grace. Nations will come here to find what they have lost. We must now share and not keep God's blessings to ourselves.' This is what Dr Hawea, respected Tongan Principal of the Pacific Theological College in Suva believes.

To help in realising such a vision for the Pacific, a Moral Re-Armament team from six countries has just spent three months in Fiji. They were guests in homes of the different communities of the island, and amongst many occasions spoke and sang at 19 schools and colleges and the University of the South Pacific in Suva.

Before they left, they met both the Prime Minister and the Governor-General of Fiji. Included in these meetings with Fiji's leaders were a dozen others who had begun experimenting with the ideas of MRA in their own lives.

Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara told them, 'It was at Oxford that I met Moral Re-Armament nearly 30 years ago. There are so many people looking for an answer to materialism, especially young people. I believe MRA has a role here.'

'In our way of life we are taught to respect authority and not think too much of ourselves even if we are well educated. (But I have a built-in superiority—with my six-foot-five-inches, I naturally look down upon most people!) I am more and more aware that God knows every thought of mine. So I have to think twice before I entertain evil about someone. I don't know how you have managed, but it took me 50 years to come to this point.'

He told the visitors that he had been encouraged by his meeting with them. 'Let us

hope that the next time you come, there won't be enough room for you all here.'

'What matters most is to do the correct thing each time,' said Governor-General HE Ratu Sir George Cakobau. Commenting on one of their songs about a huge boulder moved by common effort, he said, 'There are so many boulders that need shifting. The boulder of the break-up of families is one you are shifting.'

Many of those who were present at these visits are now raising a sum of A\$5,000 so that they and others can attend the international MRA conference for the Pacific in Brisbane, Australia, in January. In this issue we print some of their experiences and convictions.

**TEBURORO TITO**, Gilbert Islands, the Student President of the University of the South Pacific.

'When His Excellency the Governor of Fiji received our group I had an apology to make. When in mid-1976 he came to our campus with the Governor-General of New Zealand, Sir Dennis Blundell, I organised a demonstration against New Zealand's sporting ties with South Africa. We created a lot of inconvenience for them and the programme had to be curtailed.'

My decisions on behalf of the students centred on selfish interests. In order to be a big hero I'd make a big noise over a small issue, to the extent of interfering with the well-being of the University. MRA strengthened my conviction that this was wrong and I was very ashamed.

Now I find that MRA helps me very much in my leadership. It challenges an individual to live by standards expected by God. It is

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# NEW WORLD NEWS

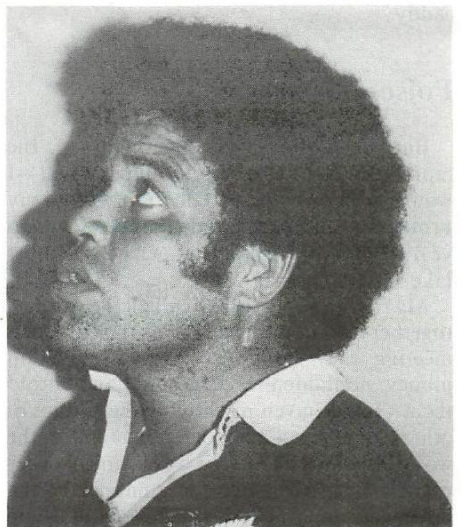
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Teburoro and Keina Tito



Joel Lui



Ropate Qalo

Photos: Suresh Khatri

The Prime Minister of Fiji receives the group.





**Is the direction of the inner voice practical?  
Can honesty work on a farm?  
What makes a successful co-operative?**

**Here Vijitha Yapa from Sri Lanka tells what he found when faced with the need to rebuild the derelict family estate.**

## From typewriter to tea

I COULD hardly recognise her. She had grown thin, her face was lined, her hair had begun to turn white. It was years since I had seen my mother.

After working abroad with Moral Re-Armament for ten years, I returned to Sri Lanka in October 1975. The sprawling garden where we played as kids was a mass of weeds. A flower was the exception, where once people flocked to view our beautiful garden. The house had not seen a coat of paint for 13 years. The roof was leaking. I later learnt that one day a large section had collapsed.

Our land had been reduced to 50 acres due to Government take-overs and sales to pay creditors. The existing land was heavily mortgaged. Two brothers were unemployed, an elder sister was not yet married. My father had left in frustration and was 200 miles away, cultivating chillies on someone else's land.

I had much good advice to give the family. But the crunch point came when my elder brother said to me, 'You speak so much about MRA. Why don't you try your ideals out here, on this bankrupt, unproductive land?' He was a Communist. Experiences among white people in Britain, where he was educated, had made him bitter, and he turned to Marx and Engels for a way out.

His challenge kept singing in my ears. The next day, as I sat listening to direction from my inner voice, the thought came, 'Take on the estate for two years.'

'But I don't know anything of agriculture. I am a journalist. I know nothing of tea or paddy.'

### Poisonous insects

But the more I argued with myself, the more I felt that this was the Divine will—I would be shown what to do. 'OK,' I told my brothers, 'I'll take on the estate for two years. But at the end of that period you must take it on.' They agreed.

My first thought was to call all the workers together—40 in number. It was the first such meeting they had ever had. 'I have no money, no hidden resources, no land,' I told them. 'I have given my life for the service of others, to create a new society, to remake the world. I get no income as a full-time worker of MRA. I live under the guidance of the inner voice and believe this bankrupt estate can be transformed. I know nothing of

agriculture, but I am willing to learn from you. Let us have a moment of quiet and see what thoughts we get.'

After a few minutes of silence, the workers spoke. They had not been paid their full wages for three months. Their dwelling places were in a terrible state. They would have left long ago except that with a million unemployed work was not easy to come by.

But we decided together to do what we could. As a policy, I decided no weed-killer would be used—manual labour meant work for empty hands.

My heart sank at my first sight of the estate. Eight-foot-high weeds hid the tea bushes. Pluckers were frightened to go among them for fear of snakes and poisonous insects. Many tea bushes had died, starved to death by the ubiquitous weeds.

### Seeing men made blind

I wondered if I had taken a foolish decision. But an inner compulsion urged me. 'He who has put his hand to the plough and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God.'

There was no attitude of boss or worker. We worked together. We partook of the same food, drank the same tea. Vicious red ants stung us. But neither leeches sucking us nor the cruel, tropical sun draining our strength deterred us. We worked on.

But a new fear gripped me. My attempts to raise money had come to nought. 'Where will I find the money to pay these workers?' The inner voice was my comfort—for a moment. 'Don't worry. The money will be found.' 'How?' I asked. 'Sell all your professional equipment.' 'What?' I exclaimed. 'It is all the security I have.' My pleadings were in vain. 'You are not meant to have any security,' the inner voice said.

So, painfully, reluctantly, I sold my Hermes typewriter, which had served me faithfully during my three years with the Indian newsweekly *Himmat*. Also went the radio which had informed me of world events, the cassette-recorder which had recorded many interviews, the camera which had taken many pictures. Later I sold clothes, restricting myself to a suit, three shirts, three pairs of trousers, underwear and a pair of shoes. Amazingly, after this relatives offered loans on generous terms, and the bank loaned £1,700 with no security because the



By bamboo ferry to the estate. Vijitha Yapa on left.

manager was impressed by my determination and sacrifice.

Gradually, the tide turned. Within six months production had increased 300 per cent. (Tea is harvested round the year, every five days.)

Though our house was badly in need of repair, I decided not to touch it till the workers had good dwellings. We all worked to create them. When the housing was completed, the Hindu Tamil workers decided to have a Buddhist ceremony to bless the homes. The Buddhist Sinhala workers organised a Hindu *pooja*. A collection was taken and a meal was cooked by the workers to feed the visitors. I wept with joy.

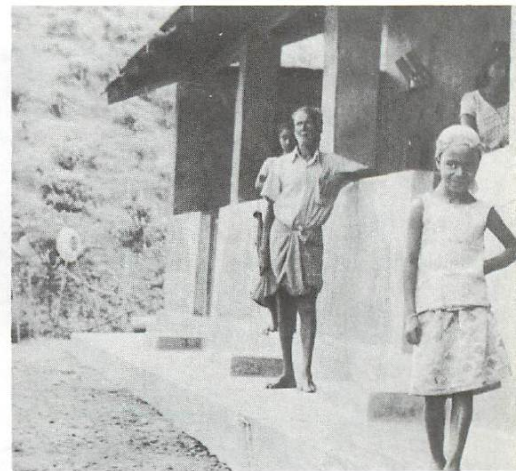
One of Sri Lanka's pressing problems is the relationship between the majority Sinhala Buddhist people and the minority Tamil Hindu people. Our estate workers were evenly divided between the two.

Later, when communal riots broke out in Sri Lanka, the Sinhala workers protected the Tamil workers on our estate, while on neighbouring estates homes were looted and people harassed.

I was shocked to see how frequently the workers went to the hospital for medicine. Inquiries revealed the problem. The workers were paid the Government-stipulated 50p a day, but this was paid at the end of the month. Running short of cash, they had to get credit from the local shops. Some traders were charging up to 30 per cent extra on goods given on credit. Malnutrition was evident among the children.

Once the workers got their pay, they

The new homes for the workers





would either go to a gambling den to try and increase their wealth, or they would pay off their debts with the heavy interest and begin the cycle again.

I called the workers together and asked what we could do. After our usual time of quiet, Krishna, his shining eyes demonstrating his eagerness to participate, said, 'Why don't we start a co-operative?' And so was born our estate store. Goods were available to the workers up to 25 per cent cheaper than in local shops since we had no overheads.

With the store came a new system of pay, which was revealed to me during a time of quiet meditation. The wages would be paid weekly. Twenty-five per cent could be taken in cash, 50 per cent in food from the store, and 25 per cent would be left till the end of the month. If the 50 per cent was unused, it could be collected at the end of the month. The health of the workers and children improved and visits to the hospital are now rare.

I made many mistakes. One concerned the £370 per acre subsidy for planting high yielding tea. Five acres of land had been cleared. Since the Government took over three months to send an inspector, I confidently wrote saying the land was ready. Unfortunately, the monsoon was a failure. A few showers meant I was able to put new plants on four acres, but an acre remained—and the inspector had announced he was coming the next week!

Young tea plants are put in the ground and then covered with bracken to protect them from the hot sun. 'Why not instead put the shoots of any plant and cover them with bracken? The inspector cannot examine 30,000 plants.' Desperately short of cash and not keen to waste the plants growing in our nursery, I told the workers to come without fail on Monday.

Next morning, a Friday, the inner voice spoke loud and clear. 'Is this your absolute honesty?' But what could I do? I ignored the inner voice. For the next three days, the question persisted. Attempts to get the inner voice to help guide me on other matters proved futile. It was like a record stuck in a groove.

Finally, I said, 'OK, I'll abandon my evil plan.' But then came the uncomfortable

thought, 'Apologise to your workers.' 'But they don't know about my plan. I never revealed it to them,' I argued.

'By telling them to come on Monday morning, you have already made them accomplices. Even the thought is sin.' It was the most difficult thing to do, but the workers respected me for it.

When the Inspector arrived, thoughts of the Bible where blind men were made to see made me wonder if a miracle would happen and this seeing man would be made blind. No such luck. He headed straight for the unplanted acre and asked, 'What's this, Mr Yapa?' I told him the story. He was silent, then said, 'Please inform me when you've completed your work.' There was no fine.

Next week the rains came. I was able to complete the planting and inform him by post. Two weeks later the cheque arrived. He had trusted my word and did not come to check.

Since I took over the estate, the yield of tea has increased 700 per cent. Our rice yield has increased from one bag to 21 bags, using high yielding varieties of rice and scientific methods. A brother is already taking responsibility. I have been released from my contract early to return to full-time work with MRA and accept an invitation to the Philippines.

### Communist meditates

Today my brothers are employed, my sister is married, my father has returned home permanently. My mother is in good health. And I have found a wife who wants to work with me to create a new society based on absolute moral standards. The workers have homes and our house is repaired, though still not repainted. The workers were given a bonus for the Sinhala and Tamil New Year. The next stage is a 1,000 per cent increase in production, and a plan to run the estate on a co-operative basis.

We have started a scheme where a five-acre plot of tea is allocated to one family. They are paid on a sliding scale according to the weight of tea leaves supplied to us. They have to weed the area, pluck the tea, apply fertiliser. Then we buy the tea leaves. It has been a great success and we plan to extend it to other areas.

My Communist brother, challenged by my decision to sell my material things to give employment to the workers, has become a socialist. He is employed in a Government department and meditates for 30 minutes before starting work in a local Buddhist temple.

Having come straight from college to work with MRA, many of my ideas were theory. Now I know it works. If we care enough and share enough, and do what the inner voice tells us, we can create a society where empty hands will be filled with work, empty stomachs with food and empty hearts with an idea that really satisfies. I have seen it with my own eyes, felt it with my own heart, worked at it with my own hands—and it is a practical reality.

### Fiji contd from p1

now going to be a new force in the Pacific. It will enlighten and put into practice the teachings of the different religions we have in the area.'

KEINA TITO, wife of Teburoro and first year student in Administration.

'I have a natural suspicion of leaders, but your meeting with the leaders here has interested me. I am interested in the quality of what the ordinary person is given. We, the 40 Gilbertese studying at the University of the South Pacific, will be the first indigenous people to run our Government administration. So MRA will be important for us. It deals with what is inside, and gives direction.'

ROPATE QALO, Fiji rugby international and teacher at Suva Grammar School.

'I tore up a vengeful report I'd written about the Principal to the Education authorities. It all blew up after I had struck a boy in class. I heard the song, 'When I point my finger at my neighbour, there are three more pointing back at me'. I accepted that I was responsible for the whole incident in the first place.'

AHMED ALI, fifth-former at Indian High School, Suva.

'As a Muslim I have realised I can work with people of different religions to help people. There are many like me, fallen on the wayside. I was lifted.'

MANASE TAFEA from Tonga, second year at the Pacific Theological College, Suva.

'My father died when I was four. My mother looked after eight of us. Without the voice of a father in the home we did what we liked. I was at my worst at high school with my gang and my beer group.

I have decided to answer the lack of a father in the family. I changed.

The power of starting with yourself is a strong thing—it affects the family. From then on I began to be regarded as the father of the family.'

SAKENASA ROKOTUNIDAU works with the Housing Authority, Fiji.

'As a Methodist lay preacher, I've been preaching something and not living it. For the first time in my life perhaps I'm being truly honest now.'

JOEL LUI, Papua New Guinea, an exchange student in Economics at the University of the South Pacific.

'After trying out the ideas of MRA

- I quietly returned karate books I had stolen from a Suva bookshop.
- I returned six books to the University of the South Pacific library.
- I apologised in a letter to my parents for all I did wrong.
- I wrote to a friend in Papua New Guinea who had lent me money. Before coming to Fiji I avoided him so that I would not have to pay him back.

The four moral standards are a must for a university student. They have made me freer and happier and set me on the right road. That is the best way to live.'



Vijitha Yapa



# Ambassador's wish

by Gordon Ashman

THE DEAN OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS in Canberra, JL Forace, and KE Beazley, a former Australian Minister for Education, together sponsored a unique showing of two films in the Australian National Library. Mr Forace is High Commissioner for Malta.

*Not to Lose You My Language* and *Choice for an Impatient World* were seen last month by more than 200 people, including diplomats from 23 countries, 13 of them Ambassadors or Heads of Mission, members of the Australian Schools Commission and educational leaders of Canberra, representatives of the Aboriginal community, civil servants and trade union officials.

Mr Forace and Dr Beazley together welcomed the guests to a buffet reception and later introduced the films.

*Not to Lose You My Language* portrays the programme for teaching Aboriginal children in Australia's Northern Territory in their own languages, an innovation of Dr Beazley's when he was Minister for Educa-

tion. The former Minister told the audience that when he took office he had the thought concerning the Aboriginal people, that 'to deny a people an education in their own language, if they want it, is to treat them, as a conquered people'. Accordingly, his department set about creating primers and story books based on Aboriginal legends in tribal languages. The film shows how, with patience and care, this is being done. Already experts from other nations have come to see what is being worked out.

Dr Beazley then introduced *Choice for an Impatient World*, the film taken during the London MRA Assembly in May, portraying a kaleidoscope of men and women at grips

with events in their countries. 'It is pleasingly free from the useless self-righteousness with which industrial and race relations are usually discussed,' he said. 'We usually think of race relations, diplomatic relations and industrial relations as problems in institutions. Much more basic than the structure of institutions is the question of motives, which determine how any institution will be used. This conference in London came to grips with motives.'

He quoted part of the UNESCO charter, 'Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed', and concluded, '*Choice for an Impatient World* touches the defences of peace because it touches the defences of integrity and straight motives, which alone will be effective in producing peace in the world.'

Afterwards a Middle-Eastern Ambassador said he wished there were people from the Middle East who could say the sort of things that the people from Southern Africa had said in the film.

## at a glance

### PROFESSOR FINDS OUT

LAST MONTH 90 young people from many parts of France converged on the farming town of Bourgueil in the valley of the Loire. They had come to participate in a weekend conference with the themes 'What am I living for?' and 'Am I ready to give everything for my country and the world?' Also taking part were people from *Indochina, Algeria, Tunisia* and other European countries.

The conference was held in a fifteenth century *abbaye*. The nuns had never accommodated more than 60 guests before, but extra mattresses were found and other delegates were welcomed into families in the town.

The conference was initiated by Frederic Chavanne, a student at Tours University, who last year took time from his studies to gain further experience with Moral Re-Armament. He was part of an MRA 'mobile force' that went to Southern Africa. Now back at the university, Frederic says, 'To

The conference participants at Bourgueil



stand for what I believe in is the second half of the experience.' Several fellow students and one of his professors took part in the conference. One girl said, 'I noticed such a change in Frederic when he returned this year that I decided to come and find out about it.'

A group of young people from Bourgueil made the arrangements and hosted the conference. One of them, Claude Bourdin, a young vine-grower, spoke in the opening meeting of his recent decision to give his life unconditionally to God. He said, 'I hope each one here will discover how to listen to his inner voice and find out how his life can be used for the world.'

Each person left the conference considering the final question posed by Frederic Chavanne:

'Are there experiences in my life that I can use to help those around me? If not, is it not time to make the experiment of seeking God's guidance in quiet, comparing my life against absolute moral standards and seeing what needs to change?'

### SENTENCED TO LIFE

*SENTENCED TO LIFE*, a play by Malcolm Muggeridge and Alan Thornhill, is expected at the Westminster Theatre early next year.

The play is a tragi-comedy on euthanasia. It was written, the authors say, because the question of euthanasia is going to be the next great moral controversy to be fought out in our times. 'Are we heading for the human factory farm, or for the human family, where we are all brothers and sisters because God is our father?' they ask. 'That is the great ideological issue underlying all other issues.'

The play was launched at a lunch at the Royal Commonwealth Society given by

Aldersgate Productions, who will produce it. Dr John Gibbs, Chairman of Aldersgate Productions, and a prominent Methodist, chaired the occasion, and both authors spoke.

Reports were carried in four national newspapers following this lunch.

### TINS RECYCLED

'ANYONE CAN AFFECT the future' was the theme for an evening of dialogue in Karlstad, Sweden, last month. It was one of a series of evenings arranged by the action group of Moral Re-Armament there.

Among the speakers was Miss Sylvia Bohlin, who is responsible for providing employment in the county of Aelvsborg, West Sweden. For the past 30 years she has been active in the Social Democratic Party. 'We must get a new evaluation of different jobs,' she stressed. 'Everyone knows that dustbins must be kept clean and that the china in a restaurant must be washed up. There are no bad jobs.'

Actress Vendela Loeffgren told how she had 'experimented with various ways of life' and then realised that she herself was 'part of the problems in Sweden. When I stopped searching for what I could get out of life and started to live for others, I found a fresh inspiration on stage.'

Alfred Nielsen, former Chairman of the Employers of the Danish wood industry, told how in his town of Silkeborg a voluntary initiative to recycle paper, glass and tin cans led to the City Council deciding to take over the activity. As a result new jobs have been created.

In the ensuing discussion, the Mayor of Karlstad, Mrs Gullan Lindblad, commented on the 'faith in the future' which was a thread throughout the evening.