Journal of Migration Affairs
Vol. IV(2): 34-45, March 2022
DOI: 10.36931/jma.2022.4.2.34-45

Roots and Routes: Tracing the Trends of Indo-Fijian Fiction

Khemendra K. Kumar and Subashni Lata Kumar

Abstract

Fiction emanating from the Fiji Islands is as varied as its people. In the pantheon of Fijian Literature, there is expatriate and local writing, *iTaukei* writing in English and Fijian language, writings from the island of Rotuma and works of Indo-Fijians. Indo-Fijians or Fijians of Indian Origin have added colour to Fijian literature with their creative writing in English, Hindi and Fiji Hindi. From the onset, Totaram Sanadhya's testimonia highlights the *Girmit* ordeal. Later Kamla Prasad Mishr and other descendants of *girmitiyas* wrote in Hindi to promote 'Indianness' and expose diasporic angst. The 1970s onwards saw western-educated Indo-Fijians like Raymond Pillai, Subramani and Satendra Nandan writing in English. They revealed the effects of colonisation, imperialism, and the labour trade – The Indenture System. On the contrary, Jogindar Singh Kanwal wrote in Hindi from a migrant's point of view. The new millennium saw another shift when Subramani persevered to write in Fiji Hindi, a plantation language of the Indian indentured labourers. Through their writing, the writers answered Gayatri Spivak's fundamental question – Can the Subaltern Speak? With its roots firmly grounded in diasporic consciousness, Indo-Fijian writers took various routes to express their shift of the double movement of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. Therefore, the routes and trends are rhizomorphic. As such, this paper seeks to trace and discuss the various trends set by Indo-Fijian writers from colonial to postcolonial Fiji.

Keywords: Indo-Fijian fiction, *Girmit*, migrant, diasporic consciousness, rhizomorphic.

Indo-Fijian fiction emanates from a small group of Indian immigrant/diasporic bodies living in Fiji and the Pacific Rim countries. There is a widespread view in Oceania that the "cultural differences between the Indians and the indigenous Pacific Islanders are great" (Crocombe

Khemendra K. Kumar is a Lecturer, College of Humanities and Education, Fiji National University, Fiji.
Subashni Lata Kumar (Subashni.kumar@fnu.ac.fj) is a Lecturer, College of Humanities and Education, Fiji National University, Fiji.
Corresponding author: Khemendra K. Kumar. E-mail: Khemendra.kumar@fnu.ac.fj.

1981, 7). The same holds in the case of the Fiji Islands. Even though the *iTaukei* (native Fijians) and Indo-Fijians have lived in the same country for more than 140 years, little assimilation and integration have occurred so far. The initial divide between the two groups was of colonial design where indentured labourers were contained in the coolie lines and the *iTaukei* in their communal village setup. Crossing the threshold of the village or the coolie lines was a punishable act by law during the Indenture period. An attempt to reduce the status of Indian labourers as coolies further deepened the divide. *Koli* means a dog in the Fijian language and is homonymous with the word coolie. This similarity and the negative animal imagery further stereotyped the Indians in Fiji. The *iTaukei* considered the Indian indentured labourers as lower-class, fit for slave labour and mere agents of colonial machinery who would eventually leave once Fiji became economically stable. But the *iTaukeis* were unaware of the hidden agenda of the colonial administration who were more interested in retaining the indentured labourers.

The British colonial administration saw Indians fit for sugar cultivation more than any other labourers stating, "[f]or all purposes connected with sugar cultivation… the superiority of the Indians had been recognised" (Gillion 1958,184). Unaware of the hidden mechanics of the colonial operations, the *iTaukei* Fijians, from the inception of the Indenture System, considered the indentured labourer as a *vulagi,* meaning a visitor. Today, the label of a *vulagi* is further extended to Indo-Fijians, the descendants of the indentured labourers. But Indo-Fijians, born and bred in Fiji, do not consider themselves visitors anymore or people who desire a return to India. The differing view has kept the two major communities at bay without much assimilation. As a result, the lifestyle, culture, customs, religion, world view and many other aspects of *iTaukei* and Indo-Fijians differ. This difference is also manifested in English, Hindi, and Fiji Hindi literature.

The descendants of Indian indentured labourers from British India carry many tags and various ethnic profiling that lead to numerous misperceptions. Fijian of Indian descent, Fiji Indians, Indo-Fijians, Indians, Asians and Hindustani are some tags for the Indians who live in Fiji. The transformation of the early indentured, *girmitiya* or coolie Indians into 'Fiji Indian' with the identity of Indian ancestry took almost nine decades. After independence in 1970, they were variously called Fiji-born Indians, Indo-Fijians, Fiji"Indians and so forth (Naidu 2017, 11-26). Danika Coulson found 14 different ethnic labels in her research on Indo-Fijian identity formation. Out of all the various ethnic labels, 'Indo-Fijian' as a term/label is popularised by historian Brij Lal (2004) and scholars Adrian Mayer (1963), Robin Cohen (2008) and others.

Writers and critics in Fiji and abroad have used 'Indo-Fijian' far more often than any other tag or profile. *The Indo-Fijian Experience* (Subramani 1979), *Shifting Location: Indo-Fijian Writing from Australia* (Subramani 2009) and *Bittersweet: The Indo-Fijian Experience* (Lal 2004) are just a few of the many texts and scholarly articles carrying

'Indo-Fijian' in their titles. Vijay Mishra accentuates the hyphenated identities of authors and their works. He reasons that

> [t]he hyphen – Indo-Americans, Indian-Americans, Hindu-Americans, Muslim-Britons – signals the desire to enter into some kind of generic taxonomy and yet at the same time retain, through the hyphen, the problematic situating of the self as simultaneously belonging 'here' and 'there'. (Mishra 2007, 185)

Vijay Mishra explains that the 'hyphen' indicates both the positive and the negative aspects that a diasporic writer experiences through diaspora: the transformative value of cultural assimilation and the pain, trauma and uncertainty produced by the new diaspora (ibid., 188). This hyphenated identity explicitly lights upon the immigrants who face two simultaneous identities. Thus, they could not root in either of the countries, which works as an invisible backdrop of rootlessness. Danika Coulson's study *Drifting Identity Formation: A Disaggregation of Indo-Fijian Ethnic Labels* (2016) supports Mishra's assertion. Coulson found that the ethnic identity of the Indo-Fijian immigrant population and their descendants is hard to distinguish while considering the cross-cultural influences of both Indian and Fijian cultures.

Indo-Fijian fiction brings to light the struggles of the Indenture System or the *Girmit* experience. Vijay Mishra, in a seminal essay titled "Indo-Fijian Fiction and Girmit Ideology", argues that Indo-Fijian fiction has to be evaluated against the ideological "base" of the 'Girmit Ideology' (Mishra 1979, 171). The Girmit Ideology results from a "consciousness moulded from the experience of some forty years of servitude" (*ibid*, 171). Later on, Indo-Fijian writers explored issues regarding diasporic consciousness. The Indo-Fijian writers have explored the 'old' diasporic narrative highlighting the ills of migration, the indenture system, land lease expiry, and issues relating to the equal citizenry in Fiji. Third-class treatment, discrimination in recruitment/selection in government scholarship scheme and civil service, effects of coups and land lease expiry, internal and external displacements, and effects of modernisation on the Indo-Fijian community formed central themes. The twice-displaced writers expounded on homeland host land construction, landlessness and rootlessness, plights of Indo-Fijian immigrants in a foreign land, double/multiple dis/locations, discrimination abroad, search for individual and collective identity, diasporic angst, differing views of first and second-generation migrants, loss of their cultural identity and so forth. The 'new' narrative explores the broken psyche of the immigrants, differences and diversity, celebrating hybridity, plurality, cosmopolitanism and other contemporary issues. Very aptly, Subramani and Teresia Teaiwa in "A Dialogic Introduction" alludes that Indo-Fijian writing is about "experiences of the diaspora" (Subramani and Teaiwa 2014, 7).

The writing emanating from Indo-Fijians encompasses primary and secondary migration or (dis)locations. The primary migration was from India to Fiji through the Indenture System of

labour between 1879 and 1916. Free migration beginning in the late 1920s overlapped with the indenture movement resulting in a common identity. Vijay Mishra qualifies the arrival of Indians during this period as "old diaspora" (Mishra 2007, 1). Push and pull factors have led to secondary migration amongst Indo-Fijians. Many were swayed by the pull factors of 'greener pasture' and 'bright city lights' of the first-world countries for migration. In contrast, the push factors have been predominantly the political instabilities caused by the coups in 1987, 2000 and 2006. Non-renewal of land leases since 1997 has also contributed to migration. The secondary migrants are part of the "new diaspora" (ibid., 14).

The secondary migration or second shift Indo-Fijians form a larger diaspora group in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States of America and other countries. Their migration also extends to the nearby island nations such as Tonga or other Pacific Rim countries. Internal migration within Fiji also constitutes a second shift. Evidently, the Indo-Fijian diaspora has shifted their locations through forced and freewill migration. Dis/locations affect migrants in physical, socio-economic, psychological, or political ways. In such contrary conditions, the Indo-Fijian diaspora has managed to survive the adversities of new locale and culture in their host nations.

Indo-Fijian fiction includes writers residing in Fiji and those writing from abroad. Major readers of their writing include the Fijian public and anywhere the Indo-Fijian diaspora exists or those interested in Indian migration, indenture, and diaspora. Their writing is about Fiji or remnants of Fiji and their experiences in their new locale. Diasporic communities live outside the country of their origin but maintain strong ties with their homeland. As much as these communities wish to assert their identities, they are subjected to social, emotional, political and cultural alienation, gender bias, race, ethnicity and space problems, which results in nostalgia or diasporic consciousness. Indo-Fijian diasporic writers are therefore compelled to express these traumatic emotions and experiences in their writings. The writings of these writers achieve a unique stature revealing the conflict between cultures, identity and their host nation/countries. Engaging their consciousness, they exhibit their cultural linkages or attachments by presenting their homeland's tales, traditions, rituals, dialects, ethics and myths. They also exhibit in their writing the concepts of space, exile, identity, homeland, dislocation, transplantation and alienation. The present circumstances of the host land are also explored. The writers problematise their state between "home" and "homelessness," their position as exiled and uprooted persons.

The first Indian writing in Fiji dates back to 1914. Totaram Sanadhya's *Fijidwip Mein Mere Ikkis Varsh* (1914), later translated as *My Twenty-One Years in the Fiji Islands* (1991), exposes the evils of the indenture system in Fiji and appeals to the Indian leaders in India for help. Sanadhya's short story "*Bhut Len Ki Katha"* ("The Story of the Haunted Line") (1922) describes indentured life personally, giving insights into *girmitiya* suicides and social

relations in the coolie lines and relations between the Indians and the native Fijians. For Sanadhya, life in Fiji was no better than hell or *narak*.

After Sanadhya, Pandit Kamla Prasad Mishr is an important name who emerged as the National Poet in Hindi in Fiji. *Mulk Ki Rachnayain* (1972), a collection of poems, is his most prominent work. In his poems, Mishr explores the collective traumatic experiences of fellow Indians. In 1975, Mishr was honoured by the Government of India for his contribution to Hindi Literature in Fiji. Mr. Morarji Desai in 1979 had immense praise for him. In 1936, Pandit Ram Chandra Sharma wrote *Fiji Digdarshan*, a book about Fiji's socio-cultural, economic and political state. Gyani Das' *Fiji Galipika* (1948) and Pandit Kamla Prasad Mishr's *Bhooli Hui Kahanian* (1950) are short stories collections on *girmit* experiences. Jogindar Singh Kanwal, the most prominent Hindi novelist in Fiji, wrote *Savera* (1976), *Dharti Meri Mata* (1977), *Karwat* (1979) and *Saat Samundar Paar* (1986). His novels explore the *girmit* experience and land issues faced by current generation Indo-Fijians. Emergent Hindi writers in recent years are Utra Guru Dayal, Sueata Chaudhary, Jainendra Prasad, and others.

Fiji Hindi soon established itself as a language of literary expression. It inspired many creative minds in Fiji to express themselves in their mother tongue. Raymond Pillai and Subramani began writing in Fiji Hindi: a plantation language derived from Bhojpuri, Braj bhasa, Urdu, Rajasthani, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Fijian and English. Raymond Pillai is credited for writing the play *Adhuuraa Sapnaa* (2001). Although the script is Roman, the language is Fiji Hindi. The play explores the bittersweet relationship between the Indo-Fijian and native Fijian communities. The high-headed protagonist Sambhu believes that the only way to clamour a proper claim of Fijian citizenry is by 'reincarnating' the *girmit* experience. For Sambhu, sweat and toiling land would replace shedding blood for his country. Vijay Mishra alludes that nations demand blood libations; those unable to offer them will be doomed to impartial belonging, never fully "owning" the nation. According to him, Indians will remain in the diaspora because they cannot die for a cause (Mishra 2007, 37). From a farmer's point of view, sweat is equal to blood, and Sambhu intends to claim his share of land through toiling and tilling. But Sambhu's plans are unrealised and eventually his millennial dream is shattered. Pillai points out that no efforts to renew the past would change the outcome of the past.

It is Subramani who has explored and unlocked the full potential of Fiji Hindi. In his two novels, he has used the Hindi Devanagri script. In his first novel *Dauka Puran* (2001), Subramani traces the journey of Fiji Lal, the protagonist. Fiji Lal is a vagabond who is in search of his mythical king. While traveling from one village to another or one town to another, we see the 'everyday' lived experiences, current trials and tribulations, and memories of Indo-Fijian communities. In the second novel *Fiji Maa – Mother of a Thousand* (2019), a beggar woman Vedmati narrates the national events. Here Subramani gives voice to subaltern Indo-Fijian women who are otherwise silent participants of national affairs.

Just like many other postcolonial writers, Indo-Fijian writers have used the language of their colonisers to 'write back'. As a result, Indo-Fijian fiction also flourishes in English. Raymond Pillai, Subramani and Satendra have been prominent twentieth-century writers in Fiji. These writers reflected 'Girmit ideology'. Later on, their writing scope expanded to include "Diasporic Imagination". The 'Diasporic Imagination' is theorised by Vijay Mishra in his seminal text *The Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorising the Indian Imaginary* (2007). In his lecture "The Diaspora Imaginary and the Indian Diaspora" at the Asian Studies Institute, Victoria University of Wellington, Mishra expounded that "All diasporas are unhappy, but every diaspora is unhappy in its own way" (Mishra 2005, 1). The fictional works of these writers focus on the life and time of the Indo-Fijians and their ancestors who went there as indentured labourers more than a century and a half ago. As treasures of history, culture, philosophy and politics, Indo-Fijian fiction has aroused immense interest among historians, critics, scholars and academicians.

Raymond Pillai is considered Fiji's finest short-story writer. *The Celebration* (1980) and *The End of the Line* (2008) are his collections of short stories. The stories revolve around the 'everyday' lived spaces of the Indo-Fijian community in Fiji and abroad. Major themes explored are ethnic differences, homing desire, political tensions and migration and making a living. Stan Atherton (1981) claims that Raymond Pillai's fiction reflects Indo-Fijian society. Pillai manages to capture the inner lived experiences of ordinary people, those hidden from view, beneath the surface, beyond the range of official statistics and influence. To add on, prominent historian Brij Lal writes, in the blurb of *The End of the Line*, that Pillai made a vanished world come alive, full of good humour but also simple, unaffected humanity.

Raymond Pillai's fictional world reflects inter-cultural conflicts in Indo-Fijian society. In "To Market, To Market" an affair blooms between Hindu girl Meena and a Muslim boy Salim. Due to religious differences, the two lovers are unable to unite. In "Brief Skirmishes" Vincent, a young school teacher, desires to marry Parvati. This time the Hindu and Christianity religion card foils their intentions. In "Muni Deo's Devil" the differing views of North Indians (*Kurwi)* and South Indians (*Madraji/Madrassi*) are brought forward. Pillai highlights the acute religious differences amidst the Indo-Fijian community. In "The Celebration" Rama wishes to slaughter a goat on Christmas day. For Indo-Fijians, Christmas as a celebration is associated with feasting and drinking liquor. But Rama's mother resists Rama's wish because they are yet to conduct the annual prayer (*Salina*) for her deceased husband. The conflict in "The Celebration" is from the effect of acculturation and mimicry.

In "The End of the Line," Pillai recollects Shiva and Mani's childhood days in a village farthest away from the Colonial Sugar Refinery mill. They are now "disperse(d) across the globe" (Pillai 2008, 7). They recall Tangavelu, a Tamilian, who happens to be the oldest man in their village. Tangavelu relays to them why his father chose to sign *girmit* –"[w]e were very poor. My father heard stories about a place where people could get rich. So we sailed

from Madras" (*ibid*, 6). In "One Step at a Time", young independent Dominic from a South Indian Methodist Christian background is in love with Esther – a part Polynesian and part European girl. She is a "half-caste" (*ibid*, 22). Both negotiate the subtle differences in their way of life, such as cooking food and washing dishes. Both restrain from committing to each other because of the "race thing" (*ibid*, 22). Dominic feels not good enough for Esther. He voices how the Indo-Fijian community is viewed, "we Indians have been here for 95 years, almost a century, but we are still *vulagi* – treated as outsider" (*ibid*, 22).

In his two volumes of short stories, Pillai expresses the 'everyday' lived spaces and experiences of the Indo-Fijian community in Fiji and abroad. Major themes explored are ethnic differences, homing desire, effects of coups and migration, and making a living. He explores the lives of sub-sections of the Indo-Fijian community and brings out the inter-cultural and religious differences within the Indo-Fijian community.

In a pluralistic view of the Fijian society, Subramani deals with the lives and experiences on the plantation, immigrants' experiences, struggle for collective and individual identity, multiculturalism and colonialism. "Tell Me Where the Train Goes" is a story of Kunti, a *girmitiya* woman, and her son Manu facing abuse and violence in the coolie barracks. Both decide to escape from this dreadful life, but Kunti and Manu have "nowhere to go. They were simply shipwrecked in the barracks" (Subramani 2017, 25). In "Sautu" Dhanpat – like many other time expired indentured labourers, had "nowhere else to go". Dhanpat laments on "past order" – the suffering of indenture and nurses "new anguish" – the departure of his son Sumo (ibid., 12). The trauma of such an experience leads to dementia. Subramani, in "Marigolds", stresses the struggles of the marginalised in the metropole Suva. Protagonist Chetram's house marks the end of legal housing plots and the beginning of a squatter settlement. He vents his existentialist angst "all [my] life I had lived according to other people's expectations" (ibid., 65). He brings out the *girmitiya* collective unconsciousness "[t]here is no alternative life: a hundred years of history on these islands has resulted in wilderness and distress" (ibid., 67). Hence Subramani, through Chetram, voices the struggles of hundreds of descendants of *girmitiyas* and epitomises the *girmitiya* collective unconsciousness.

The most prolific writer and poet emerging from Fiji is Satendra Nandan. Nandan's writings reflect the process of migration and express the pain, trauma and suffering that a migrant undergoes during the separation from one's homeland. His writings reflect '*girmitiya* consciousness', which constitutes pain, suffering, servitude, sacrifice, and his ancestors' struggle. Almost all his books echo the eclectic experiences (individual and collective) of forced migration (first of his ancestors from India to Fiji and then his banishment from Fiji to Australia after the 1987 coup). His writings - poetry, prose and fiction - "address the same large themes of India, Fiji, diaspora, exile; they map the same intersecting vectors that affect private lives and social conditions" (Harrex 2000, 197). Nandan's diasporic imagination

engages with the issues and themes of identity, alienation, displacement, homelessness and rootlessness, and Fiji's cultural and political crisis. Within the boundaries of the present crisis, Nandan imbues his work with myths and memory of the motherland (India).

Inarguably, Nandan is a writer of diasporic imagination and *girmit* sensibility par excellence. His poems represent the agonies and longings of *girmitiyas* by blending their past (India) and present (Fiji) through memory and myths. According to Sudhir Kumar, Nandan's poetry and fiction deconstruct the very notion of a fixed "*des/pardes* (nation/host-nation)" axis by foregrounding the traumatic yet hitherto untold narratives of dispossession, re-location, recognition, and continued repression in the so-called *par-des* of the diasporic community of Indo-Fijians in present-day Fiji (Kumar 2005). At the same time, Vijay Mishra adds that Nandan's imaginative world is constructed around his collective ethos of the Indian fragment in Fiji and his personal experiences of banishment and homelessness. It "grows out of the special predicament of this Indian fragment in Fiji. It is built around an intuitive grasp of the Girmit ideology, which Nandan occasionally blasts open, often parodies, but invariably enters into through a process of self-dialogisation" (Mishra 1992, 79-84).

Nandan's *Faces in a Village* (1976) is a collection of his poems with themes ranging from childhood celebration to nostalgia, education and travelling, India and its influence, and the Indo-Fijian predicament in Fiji. His poem "My Father's Son" best captures Nandan's transition from Indian *girmitiya*, his grandfather's arrival from "The passage of one life into another", the acculturation into native culture "But the smell of grog was in the corner/ Where I used to serve the taukei", death of a generation of *girmitiyas* "He died in his sleep/ He was so old- no one knew his age", land lease expiry "His land, on which his wife was buried/ Was 'reserved' two weeks ago", the sad state of Indo-Fijian predicament "But around me there was only death and decay", and his return to Australia "And I flew back to my retreat" (1976, 1-5). In "Voices in the River", Nandan compares Nadi (a river) to the Ganges. A visit to the Nadi river brings childhood memories when he plays a "*bansoori* like Krishna dreaming of Radha's passion" and is later exiled from his country — "I have been flung like a fish". Nadi river had acted like a swivel door to the two communities living across intermittent acculturation, letting teens play together and adults indulge in "*talanoa*" (yarn) and "*yagona"* (drinking grog) (1985, 14-16).

Recently we have witnessed prominent writers such as Sudesh Mishra, Kamlesh Sharma, Mohit Prasad, Kavita Nandan, Anurag Subramani, Shalini Akil, Sunil Bhan, Satish Rai and many more who are plying their art with relative success. Their writings encompass the pathos of the Old and the New Diaspora, responding to colonialism, displacement within the country as well as to other countries, rural to urban shifts, social issues, the challenges of modernity and other contemporary issues.

The works of Kavita Nandan and Pranesh Prasad are used here as exemplars of recent writers. The central theme of Kavita Nandan's novel *Home After Dark* (2014) is home. Kavita takes the readers through a melancholic tale of a young woman – Kamini, and her struggles to find marital bliss. The novel is set in Fiji, Australia, and India. While in Delhi, Kamini cherishes her maternal roots. In Fiji, she recalls her childhood with her paternal grandparents at the farmstead. But her fond memories are overshadowed by the traumatic experience of the 1987 coup when her father was held hostage for six days. While trying to reconcile her past, Kamini suffers mental breakdowns on many occasions. In the end, she realises that her 'home after dark' is with her family.

Pranesh Prasad's *The Ultimate Laugh* (2010) is set in the "Funky Isles"- a fictional country consisting of African and Indian descendants. Prasad's novel lampoons the Fijian polity. The novel introduces us to violence instigated by the 'descendants of Africans' and reciprocal fear by the 'descendants of Indians.' As a result, many 'descendants of Indians' migrate to Australia. Michael, the protagonist, faces discrimination based on his ethnicity thus migrates to Australia in search of 'greener pasture'. In the Funky Isles, he lived a "life of a colonial pretension and had harboured in him some of the prejudices that had been the domain of Macaulay's children and the imperialists alike". However, Michael was "shaken to the core of his existence when he realised in no uncertain terms that for newcomers, Australia had been, was and would continue to be a difficult country to be accepted to, for it was a land with a deep notion of resentment running in its psyche" (2010, 125). Like many other immigrants, Michael finds himself unsuccessful and depressed.

A Half-Baked Life (2013) is Pranesh Prasad's extension of his first novel. Just like Michael in *The Ultimate Laugh*, Sid, the protagonist, leaves "the three hundred islands which made the country [he] was born into…" (2013, 103). Like Michael, Sid carries strong resentments toward his homeland – "you must naturally be aware of the disadvantages of birth in such a place as the islands…" (2013, 103). With a conviction that "[a] fulfilled life is only possible in the west" and "the greener pastures lay on the other side of the fence" (2013, 123). Sid prepares himself for life abroad but could not prepare him "to live as an immigrant" (*ibid*, 102). When he finds that the "other side of the fence did not have the type of pasture" (*ibid*, 123) he had sought, he yearns for the order of the past. Then again, he did not wish to return to the "old country as a failure" (*ibid*, 123).

Sid migrates to Australia to find success as an artist of international acclaim. His high hopes diminish soon as Sid struggles to fulfil his dream. He suffers degradation of self as he is forced to live in the interstices and intestinal spaces of the metropole Sydney that causes "suffocation" because his "room had so quickly and unexpectedly turned into a prison. I wanted to escape but had nowhere to run to and no one to turn to" (*ibid,* 14-15). Sid moves from one dwelling to another in search of a "cheaper and a much quieter and personal abode" (*ibid,* 44). In Sydney, he encounters "crime: stabbing, robbery, assaults, vandalising

and slayings. And preying by those on beats: in public toilets, showers, and changerooms. Sydney had it all" (*ibid,* 45). He changes many jobs and ends up as a "shift supervisor at another fast food outlet in the city" (*ibid,* 46). He is "stuck in [his] role" where he "no longer see(s) beyond the sundaes and ketch-up packets" (*ibid,* 47). In *A Half-Baked Life*, Sid represents the thousands of immigrants who struggle to attain their desires. Pranesh also shows the struggles of an individual in search of his talent and individual identity.

The trajectories of Indo-Fijian fiction prove that it is rooted in Girmit Ideology but has taken many routes. Totaram Sanadhya started the tradition of writing in Hindi. The tradition is still alive. The 1970s saw writers choosing English as their language of expression. Most Indo-Fijian writers wrote as a reaction to postcolonialism. Fiji-Hindi branched out from the Hindi language. While the routes are different, it can be concluded that writings coming out of Fiji by the marginalised Indo-Fijians reflect the process of migration and give expression to the pain, trauma, and suffering that a migrant undergoes during the separation from one's homeland. Indo-Fijian writings reflect '*girmitiya* consciousness' that constitutes suffering, servitude, sacrifice, and struggle of their ancestors. Some echo the eclectic experiences (individual and collective) of forced migration. Major themes explored are diasporic imagination engaging with the issues and themes of identity, displacement, homelessness, rootlessness, alienation, myths and memory of motherland (India) and Fiji's cultural and political crisis. It is true that the Indo-Fijians do not have 'literary giants' like V.S Naipaul to validate the writing that already exists. But it is also true that Indo-Fijian writers have created and cleared space for Indo-Fijian fiction. It brings to light the intrinsic qualities of Indo-Fijian fiction. These intrinsic qualities emerge from many different voices and locations; the works emerge from specific histories and postcolonial spaces. For this very reason, Indo-Fijian fiction is unique in its own way.

References

Atherton, Stan. 1981. "Raymond Pillai, The Celebration." *International Fiction Review* 8 (1): 73. https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/IFR/article/view/13492.

Cohen, Robin. 2008. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. 2nd ed. London and New York: Routledge.

Coulson, Danika. 2016. "Drifting Identity Formation: A Disaggregation of Indo-Fijian Ethnic Labels." Honours diss., Oregon State University.

Crocombe, Ron. 1981. "Foreword." In *Pacific Indians*, edited by Ron Crocombe, 7-9. Christchurch: Institute of Pacific Studies.

Gillion, K.L. 1958. "A History of Indian Immigration and Settlement in Fiji." PhD Diss., Australian National University.

Harrex, Syd. 2000. "Afterword." In *Fiji: paradise in pieces: writing ethics-politics*, by Satendra P. Nandan. The Centre for Research in the New Literatures in English, Flinders University.

Kumar, Sudhir. 2005. "Some Reflections on Pravasi (Diasporic) Imagination: Reading Satendra Nandan's Lines Across Black Waters." *Dialog* 13: 97-106.

Lal, Brij V. 2008. 'Blurb'. In *The End of the Line*, by Raymond Pillai. Lautoka: Fiji Institute of Applied Studies.

——. 2004. *Bittersweet: The Indo-Fijian Experience*. Canberra: Pandanus Books.

Mayer, Adrian C. 1963. *Indians in Fiji*. London: Oxford University Press.

Mishra, Sudesh. 2003. 'From Sugar to Masala: Writings by the Indian Diaspora'. In *An Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English*, edited by Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, 276-294. New Delhi: Permanent Black.

——. 2006. *Diaspora Criticism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Mishra, Vijay. 1979. 'Indo-Fijian Fiction and the *Girmit* Ideology'. In *The Indo-Fijian Experience*, edited by Subramani, 171-183. Queensland: University of Queensland.

——.1992. "*Satendra Nandan, The wounded sea." Span: Journal of the South Pacific Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies* 32: 79-84.

——. 2005. *The Diasporic Imaginary and the Indian Diaspora.* Asian Studies Institute Occasional Lecture 2, 29 August 2005, Victoria University, Wellington.

——. 2007. *The Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorising the Indian Imaginary*. London and New York: Routledge.

Naidu, Vijay. 2017. 'From Indian Coolies to Fijians: Culture and Identity Change among Indo-Fijians'. In *Fijian Studies: Special Commemorative Issue: Girmit* 15 (1): 11-26.

Nandan, Kavita. 2014. *Home After Dark*. Suva: USP Press.

Nandan, Satendra. 1976. *Faces in a Village*. Suva: Viti Publishers.

——. 1976. "My Father's Son." In *Faces in a Village*, 1-5. Viti Publishers.

——. 1985. *Voices in the River*. Suva: Vision International Publishers (Fiji) Ltd.

——. 1991. *The Wounded Sea*. NSW: Simon & Schuster.

Pillai, Raymond. 1980. *The Celebration*. Suva: Mana Publications and Pacific Creative Arts Society.

——. 2001. *Adhuuraa Sapnaa* [Shattered Dreams]. In *Beyond Ceremony: An Anthology of Drama from Fiji*, edited by Ian Gaskell, 191–316. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies and Pacific Writing Forum, University of the South Pacific.

——. 2008. *The End of the Line*. Suva: Fiji Institute of Allied Studies.

Prasad, Pranesh. 2010. *The Ultimate Laugh*. New Delhi: Pustak Mahal.

——. 2013. *A Half-Baked Life*. India: Frog Books.

Sanadhya, Totaram. 1991. *My Twenty-One Years in the Fiji Islands & The Story of the Haunted Line.* Translated by John Dunham Kelly and Uttra Singh. Suva: Fiji Museum.

Subramani. 1979. *The Indo-Fijian Experience*. Queensland: University of Queensland.

——. 2001. *Dauka Puran*. New Delhi: Star Publications.

——. 2009. *Shifting Location: Indo-Fijian Writing from Australia*. Sydney: Casula Powerhouse.

——. 2017. *Wild Flowers*. Suva: The University of the South Pacific Press.

——. 2019. *Fiji Maa – Mother of a Thousand*. Suva: The University of the South Pacific Press.

Subramani and Teresia Teaiwa. 2014. 'A Dialogic Introduction'. In *Fijian Studies* 12 (1&2): 5-12.