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A Feminist Analysis of Vivah ke Geet(Wedding Songs)

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AFEMINISTANALYSISOFVIVAHKEGEETWEDDINGSONGS

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A Feminist Analysis of Vivah ke Geet (Wedding Songs)

Vicky Vishal Shandil

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I. Introduction

It is because some texts bear messages which work on us in a way of which we are not necessarily aware that I feel it is important to analyse texts carefully in terms of the systematic language choices which have been made. Close analysis may help the reader to become aware of the way that language choices may serve the interests of some people to the detriment of others.[2]

It is this quote from Sara Mills that becomes the rationale for the following chapter in that folksongs are being treated as pieces of discourses. This chapter will present an analysis and a close reading of folksongs sung at *Sanatani* Hindu weddings in Fiji to identify those features of Indo-Fijian that perpetuate hegemonic gender discourses. The songs that are analysed here are those that reflect gender hierarchy, normative heterosexual relationships, gender stereotypes, kinship norms and gender subversions. I have directly translated the songs into English from *Fiji Baat* and their depictions and portrayals have been kept consistent with the original songs (which are provided in the appendix) to support the analysis. Indications are also made of the rituals and occasions that the particular songs narrate as contexts of performance influence the meanings in songs. The focus is on exposing within these *Vivah ke Geet* the repeated acts and images that validate gender expectations. The songs prove that while female singers/performers generally conform to such norms, there is a strong, if often untapped, potential for subversion of stipulated standards.

Subversive acts are favoured in Butler's theoretical construct as a means of freeing societies from biased gender notions. The Indo-Fijian society has by default always assumed a heterosexual existence. All vital social aspects have been designed on this very foundation including beliefs, values, family as well as economic and political enterprises. Butler problematizes heterosexuality and the identities formed through and within its ideological parameters. She suggests that heterosexual identities cannot be depicted as authentic as these are also constituted through repeated performances.[3] If heterosexuality was the natural type set human attribute then it would have no need to be enforced on individuals. To ensure its embodiment most if not all Indo-Fijian individuals growing up in conservative Hindu homes are surrounded with heterosexually aligned discourses. The most important feature of such discourse is its portrayal of specific gender identities mainly in a polemical binary divide which is followed by lists of social expectations on conduct and attitude. Butler insists that 'to understand identity as a *practice*, and as a signifying practice, is to understand culturally intelligible subjects as the resulting effects of a rule-bound discourse that inserts itself in the pervasive and mundane signifying acts of linguistic life'.[4] Pre-sexed agents are made to comply with these guidelines by structuring esteemed human institutions like history, culture, education and religion to reinforce the same ideologies through their practices and theoretical framework. Drenching social discourses with sanctioned notions is vital to maintaining compliance to heterosexuality as this would ensure that heterosexual oriented ideologies form constant points of reference for individuals.

Lia Litosseliti and Jane Sunderland claim that 'discourse in a social practice sense is not only

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[1] For more information on wedding songs see (Shandil, Vicky. 2017. "Performing the Subversive: Analyzing the Subversive in IndoFijian Folklore.: *Diaspora Studies 1-15.* http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09739572.2017.1331610 and Shandil, Vicky. 2016. "The Gender Agenda in IndoFijian Wedding Songs." *South Asian Diaspora* 8 (1): 63-77. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19438192.2016.1141460.)

[2] Sara Mills, *Feminist Stylistics*(London: Routledge, 1995), 1.

[3] Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Subordination,' 313.

[4] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 184.

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representational but also constitutive'.[5] What they imply is that discourses do not merely display cultural and social knowledge and practices but they also embody the capacity to influence social construction. While being links to the past, discourses are devices that can impact future realities in all aspects of humanity, gender ideologies being one of them. Butler iterates for instance, that heterosexuality survives through constant repetitions and its survival is pivotal to the preservation of the patriarchally inclined gender hierarchy.[6] Surya Munro notes that 'patriarchal systems also underpin the institution of heterosexuality; which depends on the normalisation of opposite sex couples, and is reinforced by particular notions of the family, legitimacy and inheritance'.[7] Therefore, it is through the interplay of various asymmetrical ideologies that the Indo-Fijian patriarchy has perpetuated a gendered society. Mills claims that 'ideology is often characterised as false consciousness or an imagined representation of the real condition of existence'.[8] From a feminist perspective the image and status of women depicted in these ideologies are biased. However, due to their prevalence in discursive practices they have been internalised as natural by both males and females. By problematizing heterosexuality, a large part of Indo-Fijian belief system (including marriage) can also be problematized if not altered. The cause for this transformative resistance lies in the fact that conservative ideologies persist in social discourses through traditionally utilised means like folklore. While they successfully communicated sanctioned social norms in the past, they have now evolved into modern forms to continue fulfilling the same task in the contemporary society where they are being challenged by more progressive notions.

It must be noted that where subversion has created counter narratives on gender the existence of complicity and conformity especially in the case of females have reinforced orthodox values. A close reading of the following songs of Indo-Fijian wedding singers reveals their gendered discursive characteristics. Since gender is an act that is performed repetitively, the singing of these songs are gendered performances that occur in a social context, more specifically, Hindu *Sanatani* wedding functions where both singers and listeners converge within an intersection of cultural, religious and social practices. Katie Normington asserts that 'any performance by women is merely the portrayal of a set of learned gestures, a fictitious act. In other words, women are never present upon the stage, instead the spectator views a representation of womanhood'.[9] In the case of the folksong performers what the audiences view is the depiction of Indo-Fijian womanhood as determined by the Indo-Fijian patriarchal systems which regulate the signifying practices that eventuate into gendered identities. This portrayal is meant to act as points of reiteration for other individuals being gendered.

Collette Harris explains ritualised subversive practices as acts that solidify the place individuals hold in society. She states that:

The power regimes that form human subjects may also force them into displays of characteristics other than or, perhaps more accurately, beyond those that have been internalised, in order to be accepted within their own communities, that is to say, people do not necessarily internalise everything that is supposed to constitute their (gender) identity.[10]

While Harris recognises how society coerces people into certain positions it can also be noted that it is within these restrictions that the performative nature of gender is highlighted through gender performances that are below or beyond the set parameters of individual gender assignment. When women subvert within the confines of cultural practices and rituals, they sustain sanctioned femininity and men momentarily forego their regulation of women's conduct only to assume it with more consciousness of their privileged gender position.

The lengths of *VivahkeGeet* are arbitrary because they are composed to be performed. This gives the singer the prerogative to repeat certain verses or omit them from their performances depending on the context and time. In the past, weddings songs were sung mostly by a group of women who only had the *dholak* accompanying their performance. Shallini reports that 'in olden days 20 or so women would just sit in a and sing the songs at the weddings'.[11] Most singers today prefer to do individual performances and have three to four different musical instruments in their groups. Singers also use sound systems including microphones and loudspeakers which permit the singers to sing solo whereas in the past women had to sing in groups to be able to remain audible when many guests were present.

The continuous performances of these songs prove that they are not mere strings of words tied together poetically to a recreational end or they would have been abandoned at the advent of modern entertainment forms. It is evident that *VivahkeGeet* transact a higher function that necessitates their survival as Agya points out that 'today folk-singing has advanced so much that so many people's livelihood

[5] Litosseliti and Sunderland, 'Gender Identity and Discursive Analysis,' 13.
[6] Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Subordination,' 313.
[7] Munro, *Gender Politics*, 16.
[8] Sara Mills, *Discourse*(London: Routledge, 1997), 32.
[9] Katie Normington, *Gender and Medieval Drama* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 35.
[10] Harris, *Control and* Subversion, 22.
[11] Shallini, 2013.

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depends on it'.[12] However, as this thesis has aimed to depict the Indo-Fijian gender situation is also manipulated through this medium. Fundamentally, these songs embody power discourses; they represent social norms, gender stereotypes and specific images that signify people's beliefs, conditioned values and ideologies. These songs personify hegemonic discourses and allow them the corporeal position from which to impact society. Via the gender performance in their songs, the singers either reinforce the ideas of womanhood or reflect subversive tendencies. In either case it is patriarchy that is the actual beneficiary. Ruth Wodak notes that 'patriarchal inequality is produced and reproduced in every interaction' mainly in a social setup where even subversive behaviour is ingeniously instrumentalized to produce approved genders.[13] The importance of these songs is emphasised in Sholin's comments that 'these songs are not jokes, they have a significant place in the entire ceremony. People need to know that this is not about money and that when people want to come into this field they should realise and recognise the religious, cultural and traditional value it holds'.[14]

The language that is used in the wedding songs is gendered. Even though the songs are performed through women's voices, the language largely fails to embody the specific qualities to be potentially subversive of phallic ideologies as women perform what is expected of them rather than transcendent images. The seemingly subversive songs in reality reinforce the asymmetrical gender standards rather than causing an inversion of the androcentric status quo because the women mostly perform non-normative behaviour momentarily and such performances are categorised as norm or *just for fun.* To break out of such profiling women singers have 'to prove themselves possessors of intellectual and powerful voices, not just beautiful voices suitable for emotionally expressive speaking (or singing)'.[15]

II. Songs Portraying Males/Grooms are Ritually Superior

Songs 1 and 2 in the appendix are sung at the groom's home a day before the wedding and at the arrival of the groom at the wedding venue respectively. The first song is a jovial song and is reflexive of the mood of the groom's female relatives. While female family members, mainly cousins and friends, apply oil and turmeric paste to the publicly exposable bodily parts of the groom (face, upper torso and legs), they make fun of each other and the groom. These are more of pleasant exchanges of witty taunts, not genuine insults. The apparent discomfort of the groom due to being surrounded by many females is exploited by the singers. Grooms become uncomfortable because the restrictive spaces between males and females are temporarily suspended for the performance of this ritual. Traditionally Indo-Fijian society strictly prohibits the mingling of opposite genders where touching and unnecessary conversations transpire. Thus, the scenario where females are allowed to physically touch a man in most parts of his body is only permissible as a socio-cultural practice.

Folksongs continue to be sung that describe the groom and praise him mainly by comparing him to *Rama*. The singers also assume the point of view of various family members and narrate their emotions. In this case the mother's view has been taken. She is full of pride for her son for his marriage. Since she stands close to him, she also becomes the centre of attraction and adoration of the crowd. The song emphasizes the importance of the groom and how everyone finds significance by being related to him. It must be noted that the other titles of relatives that are substituted with *mother* have to be in relation to the groom, for instance, *fua* (his father's sister), jija (his sister's husband). In a patriarchal society mapping relation around male relatives especially fathers and patrilineal ancestors is mandated.

The third line of the song narrates how the groom's mother is standing behind her son and then the next line pronounces that 'now *everyone is adoring'* her. This demonstrates the idea that the mother is adored as the mother of a son rather than as an individual in her own right. She finds prominence in that social space by being associated with the groom. Her physical positioning is also symbolic as she stands '*behind'* the groom (man), thereby representing the subordinate position of most women in a patriarchal society. Gangoli notes that it is through the conformity of 'women within patriarchies' to 'relevant patriarchal norms of female behaviour' that women gain social acknowledgement and in the *adoration* given to the mother of the groom in the wedding ceremony we see a reward for conforming to motherhood.[16] Lateef adds that at a 'later period of the life cycle a woman reaps the benefits of having endured the hardships of being a young wife and daughter-in-law in a strange and sometimes hostile environment'.[17] Hence, weddings in effect are social events in Indo-Fijian Hindu life where women redeem the favours accumulated by aligning with patriarchy.

Song Two also depicts the significance given to the groom. The husband is always portrayed as more

[12] Agya, 2013.
[13] Ruth Wodak, introduction to G*ender and Discourse,* ed. Ruth Wodak (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 13.
[14] Sholin, 2013.
[15] Judith Bean, 'Gaining a Public Voice: A Historical Perspective on American Women's Public Speaking,' in *Speaking Out: The Female Voice in Public Contexts*, ed. Judith Baxter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 27.
[16] Gangoli, *Indian Feminisms*, 50.
[17] Lateef, 'Wife Abuse Among Indo-Fijians,' 227.

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dominant of the couple and this notion is applied to the marriage rituals to confirm this hierarchy. Hindu custom implies the groom and his procession has to be treated with utmost reverence throughout the ceremony.[18] The song narrates the event when close family members of the bride present *jeona*to the groom. The song instructs that the groom be served in vessels made with gold. He is to be given water from Ganges and Indus which are spiritually significant rivers for Hindus. Serving the groom in golden utensils and giving him water from the holy rivers is indicative of his higher status in relation to in-laws. The treatment he receives is comparable to a king's and nothing less is acceptable. While reflecting good values this also indicates the high esteem in which the husbands are to be perceived by wives. This custom sets the precedence for the bride and her family to always continue with such conduct for the husband. To clarify the groom's standing, the song describes that his rest area is decked with flowers (line 7). This is significant because Hindus use flowers as items of worship presented to god during prayer and here the groom gets the same honour. Even during the ritual where the bride's father officially and through religious rites *gives away* his daughter in marriage, he has to view the groom as Vishnu, an important Hindu god. The father offers his daughter, who has to be decked in gold, as an understanding, devoted, pure and healthy virgin. Such rituals combined with years of submersion in androcentric discourses compel women to resign to their given roles. Irigaray states that women begin to perform these roles 'so perfectly as to forget she is acting out man's contra phobic projects, projections and productions'.[19]

Therefore, songs that use the choicest adjectives to praise the groom are not idle words since they reflect the hegemonic hierarchy of genders in Indo-Fijian society.

III. Songs Portraying Female Stereotype in the Specific Role of Fua

The ritual of popping rice involves frying raw rice in oil in the *mandap* or the altar constructed within the shed/hall at both the bride and groom's home. This ritual is observed on the night before the actual wedding. The bride and groom's *Fua*[20]using some broom sticks as spoons fries the rice, and the popped rice is later used in the actual wedding ceremony. In cases where there may be more than one *Fua* priority is given to the eldest or the one who is seen to best fulfil social expectations. One of the privileges of being a female who conforms to social norms is the opportunity to participate in such rituals. In this case being the groom's or bride's *Fua*qualifies one to take up the central role in this ritual. However, the woman who is chosen to do this task must not be a widow or a divorcee or someone with poor reputation. While the role belongs to the paternal aunt any woman who wants to assume this traditional role in the ritual has to meet up with other specific conditions. Since there are punitive consequences of deliberate and irrefutable subversion, women who fail to exemplify sanctioned femininity and womanhood are denied access to such forms of public honour. In such ways a woman with a questionable repute is often ostracised by society. Allowing such women's participation in significant religious and cultural rituals would warrant the expression of displeasure from the wider social circles. Moreover, the union between two families through marriage is only approved after careful scrutiny of family members on both sides. Thus, distancing from relatives who do not comply with social conventions has been more of a norm with Indo-Fijians.

The chosen woman dresses up in full cultural attire and is positioned inside the *mandap,* in full public view. The attire also includes accessories like vermillion that is placed in the hair parting to depict her marital status. She is constantly being commented on and praised by other women and relatives as she performs this task. As the groom's (or bride's) paternal aunt performs her rituals in the *mandap* the wedding singers direct songs like songs three and four describing her actions, appearance and also taunt her in good humour. For example, *'sitting in the mandap the sister looks extremely bright'* (Song 4 Line 1). If she is playful enough to respond to the singer's comments through her gestures or facial expression then this leads to the singing of more songs, some of which could assume a subversive and suggestive nature.

Song three is an example of the type of songs that are sung as a narration of the *Fua*'s actions and the emotions of others in relation to this ritual. In this song her brother-in-law's heart is shown to be beating heavily, '*Listen listen to the brother's heart beating against his chest as his sister pops the rice'* (Song 3 Line 1). The assumption is that the brother is overwhelmed by the amount of money he has to pay the sister as is the custom during this ceremony. Male relatives are required to place *neg* (monetary gift) for her effort. On the same note, it must be added that the woman who is at the centre of this ritual playfully demands money to be placed beside her as she pops the rice. This role has become stereotyped, and the seemingly subversive demands for money are culturally scripted. The money itself does not mark her independence but exhibits kinship ties of dependence between the families. This also becomes an example of redeeming accumulated favours for conformity to social obligations along kinship and gender expectations.

[18] Mayer, *Peasants in the Pacific: A Study of Fiji Indian Rural Society,* 1961, 67.
[19] Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, translated by Gillian Gell, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 53.
[20] Paternal aunt of the marrying individual.

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Through witnessing countless repetitions of such performances by other women, girls grow up internalising such roles as inherently mandatory. They in turn perform the very same acts when they arrive at those junctures further justifying this role's existence to the next generation of females. The point to note here is the portrayal of a specific femininity that entails love for material goods and desire to look culturally fashionable.

Such qualities are perceived as gender norms depicting women as seeking opportunities to buy new clothes and dress up for social functions. Butler emphasizes that gender is 'a regulatory norm'[21] and are actualised through actions and these repetitive actions 'congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being'.[22] This implies that the sister's choice (song 4) of copying the performances of sisters from other weddings causes this image to become part of Indo-Fijian culture's image of femininity. In that sense, culture itself is both a portion of and the outcome of the process of gendering.

Song 4 narrates the sister's role in the wedding which appears to revolve around the customary goodwill payments. She is depicted as unsatisfied by any other gifts except money. Lines 3, 5 and 7 of Song 4 repeat the lyrics *she wants more dollars*. The point of interest in this scenario is the refusal of the gifts by the sister. Even though the items being offered are typical materials associated with women, the sister appears to prefer money to them. In one sense this action reflects the power of choice that a woman has even in a traditional context. The fact that she understands that choosing money permits her more options in purchasing whatever she desires instead of settling for what she is given, depicts her comprehension of basic economic principles. This can be interpreted as an improvement of women's status from the post-*girmit* period when they were economically dependent on men as the prevalent notion was that women could not cope with 'tiresome and physically demanding work on cane farms'.[23] This coupled with security concerns due to the attitude of certain men against women as a result of the poor reputation women had been given during the indenture period, women opted for protection and economic support through marriage. The continuation of this practice in many ways resulted in the adoption of domestic work for women and all economic activities for men. The naturalisation of this ideology was also one of the main reasons for denying women education as it was perceived that they had no need for it when managing households. Lal also mentions that 'Indian Indentured Women stood accused in the eyes of their own community as well as those of the official world'[24] which led to a regulation of their femininity and sexuality. Such negative reports and the lack of female political representation meant that little if any protests were made against such conventions by the women who were most affected by them. Thus, the economic naivety and dependence of women became the official status quo.[25]This song however, portrays a woman who understands the value of money and publicly demands it rather than succumbing to the lure of items.

Another stereotype depicted in the song is the sister's compliance with a certain outward appearance. As the song claims, she looks *'extremely bright'* in the central position she occupies. In one sense the woman in such a position experiences that empowerment and attention that one finds deficient in a patriarchal set up. This could also be interpreted as a clever patriarchal ploy to release the build-up of gender and power related tensions. The experience of being in a central position in a public sphere distracts women from the underlying asymmetries that affect their daily lives. Other women can also look forward to such occasions when they would once again assume significant positions publicly, even if temporary. The mention of money and gifts is also pivotal because materiality has often been used as a method of ensuring conformity by women. Indo-Fijian women have historically been kept economically dependent upon men. This has been a deliberate attempt to ensure that men could use money and goods as leverage to sustain their submission. Lateef pronounces that one of the main characteristics of the Indo-Fijian community has been 'male dominance and female subordination, males as economic providers and females as the economic dependents, spatial and social confinement of women' as well as 'male inheritance of family property'.[26] It is conclusive that Lateef notes the close reciprocity between female subordination and their economic depravity as one leads to the other within a vicious cycle. She clarifies that by restricting women to the domestic realm they are 'denied access to the labour market; consequently they are rendered economically dependent on males'.[27] Even in cases of violent marriages women are forced to tolerate such treatment chiefly because relying on social welfare benefits and aid from charitable organisations after divorce or separation remains an effective disincentive.[28]

[21] Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 53.
[22] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 43.
[23] Lateef, *Indo-Fijian Women-Past and Present*, 6.
[24] Brij Lal, 'Kunti's Cry: Indentured Women on Fiji Plantations,' in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 22, No. 1, (Delhi: Sage Publications, 1985), 58.
[25] See (Biman Prasad and Nalini Lata, Institutions and Gender Empowerment in the Fiji Islands,' in *Institutions and Gender Empowerment in the Global Economy*, Kartik Roy, Hans Blomqvist and Cal Clark (eds.), (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2008), 223-240).
[26] Lateef, 'Wife Abuse Among Indo-Fijians,' 218.
[27] Ibid.
[28] For more specific data on women's social and economic in Fiji can be attained from the following sources: WadanNarsey, *Gender Issues*

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The women in this song are performing a certain gender script as discursively created by society. The repetitions of these acts have over time established these behaviour patterns as normative. Furthermore, the song promotes heterosexual relationships by emphasizing relationship titles within binary oppositions along gender lines, for example, father/mother, brother/sister-in-law.

Even though people have the potential and freedom to act, their actions are controlled by social norms and their acceptance of these regulations is what consequently validates these norms. Using gender performativity as a theoretical construct it can be concluded that any alteration any individual initiates could lead to wider social transformations. For example, the sister in the context of this song could decide to act out of the socially expected mode of behaviour by not requesting *neg* or dressing differently thus discontinuing 'the repeated stylization'.[29] This could potentially lead to the normalizing of the alternate behaviour into culture. The issue, nonetheless, is that most women in such contexts act complicitly as it offers them substantial privileges and attention.

IV. Songs Portraying the Groom in Marriage

As stated earlier, weddings tend to reflect patriarchal values at work, mainly in the legalized and sanctioned exchange of women. Songs 5 and 6 are focused on the attitude of typical grooms and their procession who enjoy a culturally elevated position when compared to the bride's cohort. In the case of Song 5 the singer narrates the arrival of the *samdhi*(the groom's father) with the wedding procession at the wedding venue. The point of view adopted here is that of the bride's father because he calls the groom's father *samdhi* and he is also the one in charge of welcoming the guests. Madhu clarifies that 'even though I am the one who is singing, it is understood that these words are actually of the bride's father and mother'.[30] The actual ritual that occurs during the welcome includes the bride's father washing the groom's feet and the prayer offerings by the priest. This song also takes a turn towards gender subversion as the female singer calls the groom's father '*naughty*' (Song 5 Line 5). In the Indo-Fijian culture guests are accorded highest respect and in conservative families, women veil their faces as a sign of this respect. While uttering such words cause subversion of the codes of hospitality it must also be noted that within sanctioned femininity an Indo-Fijian woman it is unorthodox cannot pass such comments at important guests. In the list of expected visitors to the residence of a family with daughters, moreover, their daughters' grooms and grooms' fathers would appear right on the top in terms of importance. The female singer oversteps her social limitations to publicly insult the most important guest by calling him names and falsely suggesting that he is *winking* at other women.

However, it would be totally inappropriate to suspect any malice on the part of the singers. This is because the singer is performing a role that is part of the general custom and ritual of weddings. The female singer also subverts her role by publicly insulting the groom's maternal uncle or '*Samdhi's brother-in-law'* (Song 5 Line 8) and this time associating him with the bride's mother. She insinuates that the groom's uncle is eyeing the bride's mother, but this is highly unlikely due to the reverent relationship that is implied between these two as a result of the marriage. The female singer, who should be respectful and silent in public due to the expectations of her gender, assumes the authority to speak publicly. However, she not only speaks (through her songs) she utters insults and invectives towards significant male personas within that social context. Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulation which 'is to feign to have what one doesn't have'[31] fundamentally explains the women's position in this situation. Culturally endorsed regulations are pre-instated to curtail or modulate the subversive acts so patriarchal authority is never threatened as Baudrillard asserts that 'pretending or dissimulating leaves the principle of reality intact'.[32] However, he goes on to clarify that within pretence hides a more subtle fact in that the mere act of faking problematizes reality. In this specific case when women can assume a subversive role depicts the potential for this pretence to develop into an actuality.

Song 6 is a conversation between Rama who represents the groom and his mother. It narrates the groom's departure to his bride's hometown for marriage to participate in the marriage contest to win Sita. In the 3rd line, Rama (the groom) is confidently asserting that '*I will break the bow, mother'* and win the contest. In other words, the groom implies that he can achieve everything with his ability. In the following lines he goes on to state that he will destroy the pride of the other great warriors who will come to marry Sita as well. He concludes that he will definitely bring her back as his bride. At every level this song depicts male supremacy as it emphasizes Rama's prowess as a warrior and his confidence as a ruler and Sita becomes the objectified

in Employment, Underemployment and Incomes in Fiji(Suva: Vanuavou Publications, 2007., United Nations Population Fund, *An Assessment of the State of Violence Against Women in Fiji 2008*(Suva: UNFPA Pacific Sub Regional Office, 2008)., Asian Development Bank, *Country Gender Assessment: Republic of the Fiji Island*(Manila: Pacific Regional Department and Regional and Sustainable Development Department, 2006)., Judith Shaw, *Fiji Country Report* (AusAid, 2008): 39-59, accessed November 19, 2013, http://www.ausaid.gov.au/Publications/Documents/fiji_study.pdf.

[29] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 43.

[30] Madhu, 2013.

[31] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 4.

[32] Ibid.

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trophy that validates this. At no point in this song is Sita's choice reflected, however, it should be clarified that according to legend she also desired marriage to Rama.

The above song is from an album by DayaWati, a popular wedding singer, whose songs are played in many weddings around Fiji. This particular song is from an album produced specifically with songs sung for the groom. Interestingly, nine out of the ten songs in this album parallel the groom with *Rama*, the Hindu God. As a reincarnation of the supreme Hindu God, he was the crown prince and an acclaimed warrior. From a purely narrative point of view he could be seen as a ruler and a powerful one at that. He in fact personified patriarchy, being the most central character in a male dominated tale in the *Ramayana*. Analysing Rama as a character in a literary text from a feminist perspective, he can hardly be classified as an ideal husband. This is because he succumbed to societal pressure and rumours and doubted his wife's chastity after she had been in captivity of an evil king (Ravana) for a certain period of time. Sita, his wife, had to endure a fiery trial to prove her purity as a faithful wife. This serves as a typical example of victim blaming which still persists. The UNFPA report states that 'ideas and attitudes on traditional gender roles are so engrained in Fiji that cases of sexual harassment and abuse are often not thought of as criminal offenses, particularly if the woman's character or modesty is considered questionable'.[33]

The portrayal of women in the same epic is mostly negative, as it is Rama's step-mother who got him exiled and there is another female character Surpanakha who is the villain's sister. She was a widow and tried to entice Rama and his younger brother but failed. Her jealousy led her to Ravana where she heaped praises of Sita's beauty before him, leading him to kidnap Sita to force her to marry him. Eventually, this series of events leads to war and the absolute destruction of Ravana's kingdom. Much of Hindu life and art are dominated by the teachings of this holy book and undoubtedly the portrayal of women here does have an influence on how women are viewed generically in society. The tradition of singing *Vivah ke Geet* was adopted from the Ramayana and even songs today continue to be based on the themes and characters from it. Similarly, the images of women and men and the expectations of both these genders are also influenced by the images portrayed in the Ramayana and are discursively enforced through the songs. Bascom iterates that folk art has traditionally been used in most societies as a social control mechanism whereby their exhibitions have been wielded to make individuals assimilate or reject certain attitudes.[34] In a patriarchal society these songs would definitely carry male centred ideologies, thus providing constant justification of the male dominated social structures. Weddings songs can simultaneously patronise as well as discourage unacceptable attitudes. Brennis and Padarath who carried out a research focused on Indo-Fijian folk songs also emphasised that 'the subject matter of the songs often illuminates moral and social issues which are important'.[35]

V. Songs Narrating the Farewell of the Bride (Sentimental)

The farewell of the bride at the conclusion of the wedding is depicted as emotional in Songs 7, 8 and 9. Shallini clarifies that 'I am adamant that at two instances it is mandatory to shed tears to flow and that is at a funeral and at the farewell of a bride … if a bride departs without crying, in my view she is immature and that she is too modern'.[36] More often than not, the singer herself would shed tears and her voice would adopts a painful tone. Madhu adds that 'I have seen brides breaking into tears after listening to my songs as they actually go around the fire or is being seen off'.[37] Even in commercialized audio albums, singers sing these particular songs sentimentally and this is sensed in their voices. This is because in the traditional sense, this moment marks the severing of all the rights the bride has in her natal family. Traditionally daughters lose all legal rights to their father's property as well upon marriage. This was mostly because fathers would accumulate as much money, jewellery and other gifts of furniture and clothes as was right for a daughter and present it at the moment of *Kanyadaan.* In many circumstances, daughters could not ask for any further financial help from her father's family after the performance of this ritual. Her husband's home becomes her new home and family and regardless of what she experiences it is part of her duty to adopt and adjust her life to that environment. Shallini explains that at times singers assume the viewpoint of brides' mother to tell the bride that

> What was pardoned at her natal household may not be pardoned at her in-laws, so she has to adjust to their way of life. The mother must make it very clear that she has to consider her husband's parents as her parents, and she should not run back to her mother for any form of advice or help. She no longer belongs here.[38]

It is mostly unheard of that married daughters take care of their parents in case of the absence or unwillingness of other siblings. In such cases the son-in-law and his immediate family's consent was what

[33] UNFPA, *An Assessment of the State of Violence*, 19.
[34] Bascom, *Folklore and Anthropology*, 33
[35] Brennis and Padarath, 'You and Who Else,' 57.
[36] Shallini, 2013.
[37] Madhu, 2013.
[38] Shallini, 2013.

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influenced the eventual decision of whether the parents could live with her married daughter's family. It should be noted however, that parents would exhaust all options before they would even consider living in such an arrangement. This is simply because of the stigmatisation such situations could create in social circles.

Even though there are instances of Indo-Fijian couples settling with the bride's family, these arrangements are sometimes tenuous, especially if the bride has other siblings living in the same house. In rural settlements this was always highly unorthodox and was discouraged. Any woman returning to her natal household with or without her husband became the target of gossip. The situation of any man who accompanied his wife in such a situation would be worse. Gossip and insinuation may seem as feeble punishment for non-conformity to social norms.

However, one only has to understand the workings of an average Indo-Fijian community to grasp how effectively gossip is used as a social control in regulating behaviour of individuals.[39] The post *girmit* society was mainly acephalous both politically and socially, thus communal discourses were instrumental in forming and maintaining social conventions. Indo-Fijians have been extremely cautious of becoming the topic of discussion in social circles and this fear to a great extent impacts their decisions. Even though this mentality is gradually losing its hold, in most rural settings and to a substantial level in urban Indo-Fijian societies, it continues to influence people's perceptions. To prevent becoming the centre of any critical discourse people keep themselves in check and this is in itself evident of the social order that is discursively sustained.

Song 7 also portrays the departure of the bride to her husband's home permanently at the conclusion of the marriage ceremony. It is sung at a slower pace and some singers do employ a voice that depicts pain. The words and tone of this song makes one feel that the bride feels compelled to let go of her past and embrace her future. Social expectations imply that she removes the memories of her life with her natal household as it may interfere with her new life. Rubin states that 'more constraint is applied to females when they are pressed into the service of kinship than males'.[40] The singer in line 6 is using the narrative viewpoint of the bride who states that '*I have to set my heart'.* This implies that regardless of her personal stance social norms surrounding the act of marriage demand that she coerces herself into submitting her life to another man.

The patriarchal nature of Indo-Fijian society dictates that a woman moves to her husband's household after marriage and that all that she possesses or may attain in the future becomes her husband's as well. Line 8 is also symbolic because the bride will be '*decorating'* her husband's home which in a sense portrays her as an object of attraction.

Nonetheless, before she can contribute to her marital life she first has to instate '*the desire for my husband'* in her heart. Marriage has created a false imposition to act out the role of a wife and submit to the husband and fulfil the subsequent roles. She also has to assume the husband's surname and name her children after his family name. Rubin goes on to write that 'a woman must become the sexual partner of some man to whom she is owed as return on a previous marriage'.[41] This she claims to be the means of maintaining the 'the flow of debts and promises'[42] among men. The departure of the bride may seem as a minor occurrence to a bystander not privy of its real significance. But within Hindu rituals this is a symbolic act that represents the subduing of a woman's natal ties and pre-marital life by the expectations of her married life.

Song 8 is sung at a slow pace for emotional effect. The fact that in this song the singer draws upon the relationship between the mother and the daughter is in one sense the recognition of a mother's contribution to the process of transforming a girl into a woman worthy of a man. Verse 1 briefly focuses on the father's role where he is shown as the provider who owns the '*compound'* in which she was nurtured. He is also shown as the strong man who is able to place his daughter on his '*shoulders'* (line 6). This act portrays the father's protection over his daughter whereby he keeps her away from situations where things that could harm her chastity exist. The mother, on the other hand, is portrayed as gentle and delicate throughout the song.

She sings '*sweet lullabies'* an act that is repetitively mentioned in the song and she fulfils all the essential duties of a primary caregiver. The last verse shows that the mother '*taught me and made me literate, gave me education, made me worth marriage'* (Verse 5). It basically points to the fact that the rationale behind availing literacy and education to girls was to make them better wives and mothers rather than making them independent. The fact that the mother was at the centre of all this grooming and preparation also depicts how women play a significant role in getting other women to conform to gendered social expectations. The close connection between mother and daughter as depicted

[39] See; (Donald Brenneis, 'Grog and Gossip in Bhatgaon: Style and Substance in Fiji Indian Conversation,' *American Ethnologist* 11, No. 3 (1984): 487-506, accessed December 23, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/644628.,
Andrew Arno, 'Fijian Gossip as Adjudication: A Communication Model of Informal Social Control,' *Journal of Anthropological Research* 36, No. 3 (1980): 343-360, accessed December 23, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3629529.)

[40] Rubin, 'Traffic in Women,' 182.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

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in this song validates the notion that Indo-Fijian girls also recognise the immense contribution of their mothers to their overall nurturing into sanctioned femininity.

At certain points the song becomes very personal and specifies the intimate details of a mother's nurturing. For example, the song relates in verse 4 that '*From wet beddings She lifted me out, with her delicate hands She bathed me'*. While in one sense the song rekindles the warm memories, the bride has of her mother, in another sense the song exalts the role of motherhood. In the Hindu beliefs the concept of motherhood is second only to that of a wife. Thus, the song channels young women's minds towards motherhood by enshrining the vital position it occupies in a family and in the life of an individual. More interestingly, meanwhile, verse 2 line 6 states '*she would hide me in her veil'* which points to Lateef's idea of *purdah* as mentioned in her work *Purdah in the Pacific: The Subordination of Indian Women in Suva, Fiji.* The word *Purdah* in its direct translation into English means curtain but in the context in which it is used by Lateef it signifies veiling or enclosing. In this metaphorical sense the song is suggesting the responsibility of a mother in protecting her child from dangers in the outside world.

At the same time the *purdah* performs a dual role of filtering and controlling the learning experiences of the child to ensure that she only learns and practices what is socially approved and sanctioned. While Lateef believes in a recreation[43] of gender roles Butler also asserts the absence of any essentialist or inherent gender. If their views hold true than there is every possibility that Indo-Fijian women can also perform gender roles and embody gender identities that differ from the stereotypes conventionally enforced. The fact that most do not, confirms the power and efficiency of patriarchal discourses that still achieve their aim of producing conforming females who in turn advocate the very same values that render them complicit when seen from a feminist perspective. Wedding singers and their songs form a vital link in the sustenance of these discourses.

Song 9 while belonging to the category of emotional farewell songs is different in one key sense. When in the other three songs the bride appeared to have passively negotiated with her situation, in this song she assumes an accusing tone. The singer narrates the bride's emotions where she questions her removal from her natal home. The choice of words is of interest as the vernacular word used by the singer is *'nikaal'* which in direct translation means '*being removed'* (Line 2). Instead of stating that she is being *sent* or married the singer opts to use *removed* which connotes coercion on the part of the bride's family. This is interesting as the bride is not expected to question such patriarchally motivated traditions where women are mandated to live at her husband's home. In fact, most females witness over time many women going through the very same process. It is through such processes that women get to comprehend the social mechanisms that govern them and direct their lives as gendered social beings. Despite the prevalent discourse however, it seems that the bride presumed in this song finds a need to rationalise what is transpiring with her. What makes the song more emotive is her debating with her parents. She questions that if her parents were to let her go eventually then '*Why oh mother did you give me birth, Why oh father did you wait on me'* (Verse 1). In one sense she is subverting her gender expectation by questioning her separation via marriage by feeling betrayed. It is highly unlikely that she was unaware of this eventuality as the overpowering and ubiquitous gender discourses that mandate a woman to marry in order to fulfil all her stipulated roles is successfully in operation. This debate, however, problematizes the notion that females are inherently and unconditionally aligned towards marriage and separation from their natal households.

In line 7 and 8 the bride questions '*What was my mistake oh father*' that *'from my home I am being removed?*' Was her error being born in a patriarchal society or being born with a body that was deemed inferior at birth for having certain biological traits that are less esteemed? Or was her '*mistake'* her own complicity and compliance with social norms that endorsed asymmetrical manipulation of normatively gendered individuals? Adinkrah notes that:

> The weight of patriarchy appears to exact a particularly heavy burden on Fiji Indian females, commencing at birth and continuing to the end of the lifecycle. From the day she is born, her presence is treated as a melancholic occasion, and she is openly resented for not being born male.[44]

Accordingly, the bride calls on her parents to '*open your mouth'* (line 9) denoting that she wants them to explain their role in materialising this scenario.

However, there is not much complicit parents can say as they are also burdened by social regulations. While they have to fulfil their own specific roles as parents, they also have to ensure conformity in their daughter as society holds them responsible as custodians of culture and social values. The song, nonetheless, is not void of meaning and the utterances made through it are definitely reflections that exist in some quarters of society. It is possible that such rigid traditions have come under scrutiny and need to be rationalised for those women who perceive themselves independent and well able to economically support themselves, their husbands and families. Women in such circumstances, see no cause for the compulsion

[43] Lateef, *Purdah in the Pacific*, 103.

[44] Adinkrah, 'Patriarchal Familial Ideology,' 288.

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home permanently for her in-law's residence. The composition and performance of such a song reflects that folksingers who, though normally complicit to hegemonic patriarchal notions of gender and culture, are also aware of the changing social situations and rising female consciousness that births contention against out-dated practices. This song is an insight into the ever-growing female awareness of their empowerment both economic and social. Tara proves this change when she concludes that 'nowadays even the brides do not cry as much as they used to before'.[45]

VI. Conclusion

This paper has analysed some of the *Vivah ke Geet* commonly sung in Fiji, some of which are also available in music albums. The song lyrics are indicative of the gender situation in the Indo-Fijian Hindu society. They expose the gender scripts that individuals have to act out corporeally as part of their daily lifestyle, even though the songs concentrate specifically on the wedding context. The wedding singers depict the gender expectations of society through their songs. This makes them an important part of the discursive network which creates, sustains and regulates gender. While most of the songs depict stereotypical images of women and men, there are also songs that are subversive of gender expectations and social norms regulating gendered individuals but are void of power to question society as it is.

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Appendix

SONG 1	TRANSLATION
(Chorus) *More beta ke lagi hai hardiya ,* *Shenayi baje bajna.* (Verse) *Ab maiya khaḍi hai dulha ke piche,* *Ab sab lagaye maiya ke najariya,* *Shenaiyi baje bajna.*	(Chorus) With tumeric my son will be anointed, With the sounds of trumpets and musical instruments playing. (Verse) Now his mother* stands behind the groom, Everyone adores the mother now, The trumpets are playing.

**mother* can be replaced by other relational titles (for example, father, uncle, aunt) and the same lines can be repeatedly sung.

SONG 2	TRANSLATION
(Chorus) *Sone ki thali me jeona paroso,* *Jeona jeo lo kripani dhaan.* (Verse 1) *Ganga Jamuna se jalmangao,* *Keḍuwa gundh lo kripanidhaan.* (Verse 2) *Longa ilaichi ke vera jodhwo,* *Wirwa kunch lo kripanidhaan.* (Verse 3) *Phool newari ke sejh bichao,* *Sejia soe lo kripanidhaan.*	(Chorus) Serve jeona* in a golden plate, Accept the jeona oh merciful. (Verse 1) Get water from Ganges and Indus, Accept this drink oh merciful. (Verse 2) With clove and cinnamon prepare the eateries, Accept the eateries oh merciful. (Verse 3) Set the bed with flowers and foliage, Sleep on the prepared bed oh merciful.

- *jeona* is a collective term for all the eateries and sweet meat offered to the groom but this could also include other gifts like jewellery or clothing. This is to show him respect throughout the ceremony and especially when he arrives at the venue to keep the word of marrying the bride
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SONG 3	TRANSLATION
(Chorus) *Ke sunn sunn bhaiya ke dhaḍke chatiya jab bhaini lawa bhuje na.* *Na mano toh bhabi se pucho,* *Bhiya ji kehaal ho.* (Verse 1) *Haal me gaḍbaḍ, chal me gaḍbaḍ,* *Kaisa hai yeh kamaal jab bhaini lawa bhuje na.* *Na mano toh Sali se pucho,* *Jija ji ka haal ho.* (Verse 2) *Haal bhi patka, chal bhi patka,* *Kaisa hai yeh kamaal jab bhaini lawa bhuje na.*	(Chorus) Listen, listen, to the brother's heart beating against his chest as his sister pops the rice. (Verse 1) Ask sister-in-law if you don't believe me, Her husband's condition. (Verse 2) Odd in feeling and in conduct, Amazingly, as his sister is popping the rice. (Verse 3) Ask the *younger sister** about her brother-in-law's condition, He feels shaken and his conduct is also shaken, Amazingly, as his sister is popping the rice.

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- The *younger sister* in this case is *Sali.* This term refers to the younger sister of the wife. In Indo-Fijian culture the younger sister of the wife can joke around with her new brother-in-law but respectfully and within social limits.

SONG 4	TRANSALTION
(Chorus) *Maḍo me bhaiti bhaini lage nais bola,* *Lawa jo bhuje bhaini mange dola dola.* (Verse 1) *Maiya aur baba ab neg deo bhaini ke apan saḍi deo.* *Saḍina mange, mange dola dola.* (Verse 2) *Bhiaya aur bhabi ab jaldi se aao,* *Bhaini ke apan challa mangai do.* *Challa na mange bhaini mange dola dola.* (Verse 3) *Mama aur mami ab jaldi se aao,* *Bhaini ke apan kajra mangai do.* *Kajra na mange bhaini mange dola dola.*	(Chorus) Sitting in the *mandap* the sister looks extremely bright, While popping rice sister wants more dollars. (Verse 1) Mother and father give some *neg* now, give your (referring to groom) sister a new *Saḍi**. But she does not want *saḍi,* she wants more dollars. (Verse 2) Brother and sister-in-law quickly come and give your sister a ring. But she does not want a ring, she wants more dollars. (Verse 3) Uncle and aunty quickly come and give the sister a bouquet of flowers, But she does not want a bouquet, she wants more dollars.

- *Saḍi* is traditional Indo-Fijian female attire. It is basically a length of brightly decorated cloth that is wrapped around the body. Depending on decorations and colour, these can be very expensive, thus, good gifts. In occasions like weddings women are stereotypically expected to be dressed in expensive *saḍi*s which should be accompanied with jewellery and make up. This behaviour is now taken as a social norm.

SONG 5	TRANSLATION
(Chorus) *Aye gaile aye gaile aye gaile,* *Samdhi baraat liye dekho aye gaile re.* (Verse 1) *Jet me na aae ghasita na laye,* *Samdhi baraat liye dekho aye gaile re.* (Verse 2) *Noti noti samdhi dekho hai ayaa,* *Mare najariya, mare najariya,* *Samdhi ke paseena bahaye gaile re.* (Verse 3) *Samdhike sala sajhdhaj ke aaye,* *Samdhin ke dekho nihare laga re.*	(Chorus) Arrived arrived arrived, With the wedding procession *Samdhi** has arrived. (Verse 1) He did not come by jet he brought no *ghasita*,* With the wedding procession *Samdhi** has arrived. (Verse 2) Naughty**Samdhi* has arrived, He's winking, he's winking, While his sweat pours. (Verse 3) Fully dressed *Samdhi's* brother-in-law has also arrived, He is already eyeing the *Samdhin.*

- *Samdhi* is the title that defines the relationship between the fathers of the groom and bride. While the English vocabulary does not have an equivalent word, Fiji Hindi uses this term to represent this particular relationship. On the other hand, the mothers are given the title *samdhin.*
- *Ghasita* is the name of a carriage made from wood that was used as a transport vehicle in cane farms and rural areas. It had no wheel and was simply dragged on the ground by a horse or bullock using ropes. This song is sung in urban areas as well even though *ghasita* is not used here and has not been used by most of the contemporary urban generation. This proves the fact that folksongs have retained themes and content from the past. Most of Fiji's Indo-Fijian population actually share the common history of indenture and cane farming.
- While the adjective *naughty* is actually what the singer means, her pronunciation is *noti*. She uses the English adjective in a song which is pre-dominantly sung in Fiji *Baat.*

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SONG 6	TRANSLATION
(Chorus) *Jaibe Janakpur,* *Maiya hum beyahun ko.* (Verse 1) *Dhanushwa thoḍan dege more maiya,* *Wahi re Janakpur,* *Baḍebaḍe yodha hai,* *Darshan unke hi karbe more maiya.* (Verse 2) *Wahi re Janakpur maiya,* *Garbh bhirwanwa hai,* *Hum unhike garbh mitaheb.* (Verse 3) *Wahi re Janakpur maiya,* *Sita kuhari hai,* *Hum unhise vyha rachiye.*	(Chorus) I will go to *Janakpur**, To get married mother. (Verse 1) I will break the bow my mother, There in *Janakpur*, Great warriors will be present there in numbers, I will meet them as well mother. (Verse 2) There in *Janakpur,* There is a lot of pride, I will wipe off their pride mother. (Verse 3) There in *Janakpur*, Sita is still single/virgin, She is the one I will marry.

- *Janakpur* is the name of Sita's maternal kingdom. It is coined using the name of Sita's father *Janak.*

SONG 7	TRANSLATION
(Chorus) *Choḍ babul ka ghar mujhe pi ke nagar aaj janaa paḍa.* (Verse 1) *Sang sakhiyo ke bachpan bitati thi mei,* *Vyha guḍiyo ki has has rachati thi mai,* *Sabse muh moḍ kar,* *Kya bataun kidhar,* *Dil lagana paḍa.* (Verse 2) *Yaad maeke ki dil se bhula kar chali,* *Preet saajan ke man me sajaye chali,* *Yaad karke yeh ghar roye ankh magar,* *Mujhe janaa paḍa.*	(Chorus) Leaving my maternal home I have to go to my spouse's street today. (Verse 1) My childhood was spent here with my friends, We married dolls to each other once upon a time, However turning my face away from all, How can I tell you where, I have to set my heart. (Verse 2) I am removing the memories of my maternal household, Decorating my heart with the desire for my husband, My eyes do shed tears by reminiscing this house, But I have to go.

SONG 8	*TRANSLATION*
(Chorus) *Janam liya hai maiya ke godhi,* *Maiya meri palan jhulai hai,* *Aur loriya gayi.* (Verse 1) *Choti thi mai nanhi bachi,* *Pita ke angan kheli,* *Kandhe chadkar pita ke kheli,* *Ungli bakad kar maiya,* *Maiya humko chote se paali,* *Ingli pakad ke chalaayi,* *Maiya meri palan jhulai hai,* *Aur loriya gayi.* (Verse 2) *Haatho se apne bhojan khilaya,* *Godi me bidha ke,*	(Chorus) In my mother's lap began my life, She cuddled me to sleep always, And sang sweet lullabies. (Verse 1) A tiny innocent girl I was, Playing in my father's compound, Playing on his shoulders, Taking me by my finger, My mother nurtured me through childhood, She cuddled me to sleep always, And sang sweet lullabies. (Verse 2) With her hands she fed me, Sitting at her bosom, When I would cry my mother,

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Jab mai rotii amma meri,
Mujko toh hasati,
Godh me lekar maiya meri,
Achal me chuphai,
Maiya meri palan jhulai hai,
Aur loriya gayi.
(Verse 3)
Maiya mujhko gale lagati,
Kaheti hai re btita,
Tum ne humko jiwan di hai,
Tum ne humko pala,
Girte girte dhokar khate,
Maiya humko bachai,
Maiya meri palan jhulai hai,
Aur loriya gayi.
(Verse 4)
Gilye gilye bistar se,
Maiya humko uthati,
Apne nazuk haatho se,
Humko toh nehlati,
Kaise bhulun apni maiya,
chote se woh paali,
Maiya meri palan jhulai hai,
Aur loriya gayi.
(Verse 5)
Mujhko padaya aur likhaya,
Sikhcha humko dini,
Shadhi ke mai yog ban are,
Dulhan mujhko banayi,
Kaise bhulun apni maiya,
Anchal me mai kheli,
Maiya meri palan jhulai hai,
Aur loriya gayi.

Would make me laugh,
Taking me in her lap,
She would hide me in her veil,
She cuddled me to sleep always,
And sang sweet lullabies.
(Verse 3)
Mother would hug me,
Saying 'oh dear child',
She gave me life,
She nurtured me,
When I fell or stumbled,
She protected me,
She cuddled me to sleep always,
And sang sweet lullabies.
(Verse 4)
From wet beddings,
She lifted me out,
With her delicate hands,
She bathed me,
How can I forget my dear mother,
Nurtured me from childhood,
She cuddled me to sleep always,
And sang sweet lullabies.
(Verse 5)
She taught me and made me literate,
Gave me education,
Made me worth marriage,
A bride she made me,
How can I forget my dear mother,
Within her veil I played,
She cuddled me to sleep always,
And sang sweet lullabies.

SONG 9

(Chorus)
Jehi ghar janam liyo more baba,
Yanhi se den nikaal ho baba.
(Verse 1)
Kyun maiya mohe janam diyo hai,
Baba kyun kiin dedaar ho Rama.
(Verse 2)
Kyun bhaiya humme sung khilayo,
Bhaoji kyun kiin dedaar ho Rama,
Kaon chukh aab bhaeo more baba,
Gharwa se det nikaal baba.
(Verse 3)
Baba kuch bolo maiya mueh kholo,
Bhaiya kyun khade chup chaph oh Rama,
Kahe bhauji tuh jhup jhup roye,
Sunlo kuch humor oh baba.
(Verse 4)
Madawa bhi jhuta garwa bhi jhuta,
Jhute sab sakhiya humar ho Rama,
Jehi bhaiya ke mae bhandh rakhiya,
Yehin se hot niyaar ho baba.

TRANSLATION

(Chorus)
In this home I was born,
From this very place I am being removed.
(Verse 1)
Why oh mother did you give me birth,
Why oh father did you wait on me.
(Verse 2)
Why oh brother did you include me in your childhood,
Why oh *bhabi*(brother's wife) did you wait on me,
What was my mistake oh father,
That from my home I am being removed?
(Verse 3)
Father say something mother open your mouth*,
Why brother are you so quiet and reserved,
Why *bhabi*do you secretly weep,
Hear me also oh father.
(Verse 4)
My past is left behind with this home,
Left behind are the company of my girlfriends,
This is the brother I had tied *rakhi** to,
He turns his face away oh father.

- *(muhkholo)*meaning open your mouth is an idiomatic phrase in Fiji *Baat* that means to speak out.
- *rakhi* is a uniquely Hindu tradition where a sister ties a stringed bend on her brother's left hand during a specially marked time of the year. It was a symbol of the sister's appreciation and acknowledgement of her brother's presence. This practice is more commonly known as *Raksha Bandhan* (literally translated as bend of protection) because that is exactly what the brother had to do. He had to offer protection to his sister. From a feminist

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perspective this can be seen as female acknowledgement of their weakness and the power of protection bestowed on males in a patriarchal society. Unfortunately in this song the brother cannot offer any form of escape to his sister who is now in the process of assuming the most important role attributed to her gender, that of a Hindu wife.

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