Subramani’s Fiji Maa: A Book of a Thousand Readings
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Abstract
The spread of English is like the spread of the plague of insomnia in Márquez’s One Hundred Years of Solitude. At first it is convenient; English (and insomnia) frees one to work more and improve connections, but soon one realises that they are losing memories of their past and unable to have dreams of their future. Living in a present with no ties to the past and no hopes of a future, one becomes an alien, speaking an alien language. To counter this erosion of memories, one has to write, label common household objects and describe their function in black and white. Márquez’s character does so, and so does Subramani in his upcoming book, Fiji Maa: Mother of a Thousand. Subramani recreates the world of Girmitiyaas and their descendants; a world lost long, long ago is made alive in front of the reader’s eyes with the power of his magical words. Reading this book will be like starting a journey back towards the grandparents’ village. This book, yet to be published, encapsulates the history of a time which will never return. The descendants of Girmitiyaas have migrated to far off places and have lost all ties to their collective memory. Fiji Maa: Mother of a Thousand will remind them what they were before the ‘plague’ of the foreign tongue. This paper proposes that Subramani’s upcoming novel should not only be supported and celebrated by the present generation but also be gifted to the coming generations by the present generation. The paper highlights the literary resurrection of a bygone culture in Subramani’s novel which makes it a book of a thousand readings, ritualistic reading for the people of today and for the people to come. Fiji Maa: Mother of a Thousand is about digging up the long lost Girmit memory. Additionally, the paper analyses the dialects and local varieties of Hindi, especially the Fiji Hindi spoken in the northern part of the Fiji Islands which is used in the novel.

Keywords: Girmit, Diaspora, Collective Memory, Language Archive, Fiji Hindi, Subramani

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Years from now when Fiji Hindi ceases to be a living tongue, when patois English or an Indo-Fijian language supplants it, scholars will look back at Subramani’s creative output in the Fiji Hindi demotic, Indian plantation culture’s singular subaltern language, as the great archive of the language and its people.¹

There are a thousand ways to read Fiji Maa: Mother of a Thousand,² Subramani’s upcoming novel written in Fiji Hindi. This will be Subramani’s second novel in Fiji Hindi after Dauka

¹ Vijay Mishra, Endorsement of Fiji Maa: Mother of a Thousand (Subramani, Manuscript 2018).
² Subramani, Fiji Maa: Mother of a Thousand (forthcoming 2018).

Puraan.3 Fiji Maa: Mother of a Thousand has been in gestation for more than a decade and Subramani has exhausted all of his personal memories and literary acumen to meander through the lifetime of the protagonist Vedmati. The novel follows Vedmati from her early childhood, schooling and married life in a rural Labasa village to her widowed old age in urban Suva. Like a cat, Vedmati has more than one life to live. As she recounts her story, sitting by a bank on the busy streets of Suva city as a beggar, she is called Fiji Maa by Joy (another character). Subsequently, the readers get to know her names during the different stages of her life. She has been called Ved, Vedmati, Mohaniya, Lekhraaji, Goat girl, Sanka Devi and there is a story associated with each name. These narrations of her life story are scattered with histories of a no-longer-existing rural life and its people. The novel can be explored using various themes, including women’s emancipation, subaltern history, the global extension of Mother India, lost rural life of the remote islands, Indian culture in a foreign land and the trauma of forced migration. This article analyses the novel as a rich linguistic archive.

Fiji Hindi has journeyed from being a necessary tool of communication to becoming the tool of literary creation. Between 1879 and 1916, about sixty-thousand Indians were brought to the Fiji Islands by the then British colonial government in India and Fiji. These people were brought as indentured labours to work in plantations of sugarcane, copra and cotton. As these Indians were from various parts of the diverse Indian subcontinent, they needed a common tongue to communicate. Gradually, the caste system dissipated among Fiji Indians4 and Fiji Hindi emerged as the mother tongue.5 Scholars termed Fiji Hindi as a unique linguistic entity of Fiji Indians, developed by mixing various varieties of Hindi, with borrowed English and the native Fijian language iTaukei.6 7 The varieties of Hindi like the Awadhi and Western Bhojpuri along with the Hindustani had maximum influence in supplying the Fiji Hindi with linguistic attributes.8 However the uniqueness and distinguishing factor of the Fiji Hindi from the Standard Hindi and all its Indian varieties lies in the situational factor (indenture and plantations) and linguistic interaction with the native Fijian language iTaukei and English.9 The uniqueness and distinction of Fiji Hindi was being noticed as early as 1929 when W.J. Hands wrote that ‘A form of Hindustani, hardly recognised by the newcomer from India, is becoming the common language of Hindu and Tamil alike.’10 The efforts to do research work and document Fiji Hindi started with Moag’s basic course on Fiji Hindi at the Australian National University in 1977.11

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3 Subramani, Dauka Puraan (New Delhi, India: Star Publications, 2001).
11 Moag, Fiji Hindi.
Siegel wrote two books on the linguistic features of Fiji Hindi in 1977 and 1987 (Say It in Fiji Hindi\textsuperscript{12} and Language Contact in a Plantation Environment: A Sociolinguistic History of Fiji).\textsuperscript{13}

However, despite the research and scholarly work done in Fiji Hindi, it remained a preliterate vernacular.\textsuperscript{14} The education and formal work is still done in Standard Hindi, despite the fact that Fiji Hindi, not the Standard Hindi, is used outside the classroom. Although there was a time when Fiji Hindi was discarded as a slang, as a newspaper article proclaimed that ‘There is no such language as Fiji Hindi’,\textsuperscript{15} now Fiji Hindi has more acceptance in fourth and fifth generation Indians in Fiji. Fiji Hindi has become a sign of national identity.\textsuperscript{16} The literary creation in Fiji Hindi was done using English alphabet by Raymond Pillay (Adhuraa Sapna),\textsuperscript{17} and Daukaa Puraan\textsuperscript{18} was the first literary work to use Fiji Hindi in Devanagari script. The reaction to Subramani’s Daukaa Puraan is the epitome of the Fiji Indian community’s reaction towards Fiji Hindi. In the same journal issue of Fijian Studies, a Journal of Contemporary Fiji (1.1), one reviewer terms the use of Fiji Hindi as ‘a collection of slang and vulgarity’\textsuperscript{19} and another reviewer hails the novel as a commendable feat in Fiji Hindi.\textsuperscript{20} The place of Fiji Hindi in the Indo-Fijian community is changing as more and more people are using Fiji Hindi (in Devanagari script) for literary creation. Recently a short story collection written in Fiji Hindi Devanagari script was published.\textsuperscript{21} As Fiji Hindi is getting recognised as a language of literary creation, the publication of the second novel by Subramani Fiji Maa: Mother of a Thousand would be another milestone in the journey of Fiji Hindi.

There are a thousand stories of a language’s struggle to survive, to exist. The way one talks over dinner with friends or family, the way one tells bedtime stories to their children is different from the way the Queen speaks. If one loses this distinct, familial way of speech, one loses something very personal: the culture associated with the language. James Kelman, the 1994 Booker Prize winner, said in his acceptance speech, ‘My culture and my language have a right to exist.’\textsuperscript{22} Just because his novel, How Late it was, How Late, was written in working class Scottish dialect, one of the judges, Rabbi Julia Neuberger, avowed, ‘Frankly, it’s crap.’\textsuperscript{23} Another critic, Simon Jenkins, declared the award to Kelman’s book an act of ‘literary vandalism’.\textsuperscript{24} The novel was awarded for its experiments

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
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\bibitem{Siegel1987} Siegel, Language Contact (1987, re-issue 2009).
\bibitem{Adam1988} Hazrat Adam, Letter to editor, Fiji Sun (26 March 1988).
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\bibitem{McDowell2004c} Mcdowell, ‘James Kelman.’
\end{thebibliography}
with vernacular speech and internal monologue, but this natural vernacular sounded ‘monotonous, unpunctuated, and foulmouthed’ to other critics. Kelman’s use of Lowland Scots and Glaswegian dialect, different from ‘received pronunciation’ or ‘educated speech’, was derided by elite critics. The elite declared Kelman ‘an illiterate savage’. Sir Kingsley Amis in his book, The King’s English, calls it ‘the last and least of the big fuck-novels’.

The rant about Kelman’s work is similar to the kind of treatment Subramani received from the purists when he wrote his first novel in Fiji Hindi. Dauka Puraan has been called a tragic mistake as it tries to elevate slang as a language. On the other hand, Brij Lal called the publication of the novel in Fiji Hindi ‘an important event in the literary and cultural history of the Indo-Fijian community in particular, and of Fiji in general’. What the purists miss is the motive of the writers of dialects and vernaculars. Writers like Kelman and Subramani want to preserve a way of life; they want to keep a record of the fast eroding or already eroded ethos of a people in their own language. Kelman writes about ‘the class into which he was born in 1946: about bus conductors, street sweepers, night-shift workers, the unemployed, small-time criminals, men waiting for scrawny unemployment checks and hopeless job interviews’.

Similarly, Subramani’s choice of language also stems from the kind of people he portrays, people ‘of unremarkable social pedigree, unpretentious, certainly not among the movers and shakers of society’. Subramani’s decision to use the Fijian variety of Hindi is guided by his desire to portray life within the subaltern section of Fijian society.

If Kelman and Subramani are the contemporary examples of this attitude towards subaltern languages and dialects, Mark Twain is the classical example of this purist and elite crusade. Now there are Mark Twain Centennial celebrations all over the world and books written on his literary genius and use of dialects, but there was a time when his books were banned from libraries. The Concord (Mass.) Public Library, just after the publication of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn in 1885, banned the book, saying that ‘with a series of experiences not elevating, the whole book being more suited to the slums than to intelligent, respectable people’.

In his introduction to The Annotated Huckleberry Finn, Michael Patrick Hearn writes that Twain ‘could be uninhibitedly vulgar’. However, much later, the world realised that it was Twain’s use of dialect which enabled the readers to experience the novel as a living literature. This use of dialect made Ernest Hemingway proclaim that all modern American literature comes from this one book, Huckleberry Finn.
What Philip Larkin\(^{35}\) has said about the preservation role of the arts in general could be applied to the writers of dialect and the vernacular. Accordingly, the decision to use a dialect or to write in the vernacular arises from the natural human instinct to preserve what is dear, to safeguard what might disappear in the future. Subramani is guided by this human instinct. Most of the writers of dialect and the vernacular are waging a war against memory loss and extinction. Dialect is the language used by the people of a specific area, class, district or any other group of people.\(^{36}\) Upon this dialect, this personal, contextualised use of language, when a language in its purest form is forced, it acts like the plague of insomnia in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez (1991). At first the lingua franca is convenient. The plague of insomnia frees up the night time to work more. The enforced Master’s language connects globally; it replaces specific, personal and contextual with the universal. But soon one realises what the plague takes back from one hand when it gives in another. The victims of the plague of insomnia have a lot of time to work but they start forgetting their past. They lose the sense of time and things. The victims, without the memories of the past, sink into a kind of idiocy. Márquez has described this state as:

... when the sick person became used to his state of vigil, the recollection of his childhood began to be erased from his memory, then the name and notion of things, and finally the identity of people and even the awareness of his own being, until he sank into a kind of idiocy that had no past.\(^{37}\)

The lack of sleep is similar to the lack of one’s own language. With the loss of attachment with the language, one also loses all the conversations one has had in that language, and all the dreams one has seen in that language. With fading memories of the past and no hope for the future, one’s present becomes a long, boring day which has no end. As the characters in Márquez’s novel start forgetting the names and uses of things, they start creating a primitive encyclopedia with entries about each and every thing. They paste labels on everything: ‘table, chair, clock, door, wall, bed, pan’.\(^{38}\) However, soon they realise that the signs have to be more explicit. To hold fast to the reality that was slipping away, one character hangs a sign on the neck of the cow that reads, ‘This is the cow. She must be milked every morning so that she will produce milk, and the milk must be boiled in order to be mixed with coffee to make coffee and milk.’\(^{39}\)

Subramani is also trying to find remedies for this erosion of memories because of the lack of a language. When the purists thrust a very formal Hindi in his throat, trying to choke the voices in his head, he writes, he labels things in his own dialect, lest he forgets. Otherwise the generation to come would forget what a cow is, the meaning of the word ‘अजी (grandmother), and all the memories associated with it:

38 Marquez 48.
39 Marquez 48.
The grandmother does not let the sparrow roam around on the veranda. Whenever the bird would try to venture into the veranda, she would use guava tree’s stick to hit the sparrow. The bird would fly to the thorny bush by the well and make a horrendous cry from there as if it is scolding the grandmother. Sometimes the sparrow would start chirping angrily as soon as the grandmother would get up in the morning. The grandmother would also give a fittingly angry reply to the sparrow. The entire morning would be spent in this verbal dual between the grandmother and the sparrow.

_Fiji Maa: Mother of a Thousand_41 is also a precious collection of the peculiarities of the people of a long-gone era, so that in the future, it shall become a document of immense historical and sociological importance as the rituals, practices and customs of the rural society would be found only here. There was a strange belief associated with breech birth in the Indian and Indo-Fijian communities that a back pain or stomach ache can be cured if the patient gets a kick from somebody who has had a breech birth. The following passage from Subramani’s novel captures the nuances of such a belief:

The back pain would not be cured after visits to Hindu and Muslim healers. Somebody suggested to get a kick on the back from Tyagi’s daughter as she was born in breech position.

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40 Subramani, _Fiji Maa_ 179.
41 Subramani, _Fiji Maa: Mother of a Thousand_ (forthcoming 2018).
42 Subramani, _Fiji Maa_ 182.
Anybody who has nerve pain or back pain would come to me for getting a kick. I would also give a kick to them happily. The persona after getting the kick would not turn back and look at me; they are supposed to head back home after getting the kick. Next day, the messenger would come and inform us about the relief the person got after the kick and how they were blessing me for the relief.

In Fiji there has been a ‘dramatic decline in the growth rate of the Indian component of the population after 1966’.43 Even the Fiji Bureau of Statistics calls it ‘the exodus of Indians from the rural sector of Labasa Tikina’.44 The sugar cane farming and the culture and lifestyle associated with it have been on the verge of extinction. Internal migration, that is, from rural to urban within Fiji, and external migration to the USA, the UK, Australia, New Zealand and other first world countries, have shaken the community’s roots. Subramani’s novel is an effort to save something for the coming generations. The former Labasa boy Brij Lal highlights the importance of the past in the context of Girmity history in Fiji: ‘Perception of the future is always fortified by knowledge of the past.’45 As time will pass these urges to have knowledge of the past will become stronger and stronger. For now, Lal says that ‘the quest often remains unrealised’46 due to lack of information and relevant literature. *Fiji Maa: Mother of a Thousand* is a storehouse of answers for anybody looking for a sense of the long-gone era. Snippets of the village life of the northern part of the Fiji Islands can be found in the novel. One such passage is quoted below:


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44 2007 Fiji Census of Population and Housing Analytical 36.
Our school is at half-an-hour’s time from our home. After crossing the sugarcane farm, one has to tackle the hill’s treacherous way. The sugarcane cutters live by the road in shanties. Further to the shanties of the sugarcane cutters is a wooden bridge. Under the big Naibi (Tahitian chestnut or Polynesian chestnut) tree’s shade, the water would seem darkened. To look at the water would be frightening. The entire body would start shaking the moment one would step on the bridge. The wooden planks on the bridge are at considerable distance. During heavy rains, the bridge would disappear in water and we would stay at home. The school is at a distance of time minutes walkway from the bridge. Our father told us that earlier the school was made of grass. At that time one had to write in the sand using their finger. During our father’s schooling days, the teacher was a monk from India. We laugh whenever our father tells us about the teacher from India teaching sums and English by writing in the sand with fingers. Now the school is made of tin-shade and wooden planks. The grounds at the front and back of the school are levelled and numerous, large trees of flowers are planted around the school. In the morning when we would reach the school, it would be a very pleasant sight of flowers laying on the grounds around the school. It seemed as if we have reached a new village.

Further, the styles of fictional naturalism like Plato and Aristotle’s theory of mimesis and Dryden’s Dryden: An Essay of Dramatic Poesy also govern this choice of language. The kind of characters and settings Subramani has in his novel would sound very unnatural and odd if they are written in the Queen’s English or Standard Hindi. However, in order to join the winning band of the Queen’s English, more and more critics and creative artists are abandoning this naturalism of language. The film Slumdog Millionaire is a perfect example of the unnatural use of language. In the film, beggars and other such uneducated persons speak immaculate English in perfect British accents. Despite this incongruity, the film won eight Oscars including the Best Picture, Best Director and Best Screenplay. But all these awards did not stop critics from pointing out the ‘profoundly dehumanizing view of the poor’ in the film. One aspect of this dehumanisation is the use of English in conversations between people who could not have used English in their humanised life. Smitha Radhakrishnan says that the film is full of slip-ups ‘of which the most glaring was the language. … it is highly implausible that they would come out of that experience speaking perfect British English’.

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47 Subramani, Fiji Maa 191-92.
However, in the world of written words, there has been an inclination towards using language according to the region, social class and background of the character. In fact, in a number of books, the special use of vernacular and dialects render the text’s worth. James Joyce’s *Ulysses* is celebrated for its use of phonetic spellings, Irish idioms and literal translations from Gaelic into English. The Irish dialect has been celebrated in numerous books. Rodney Edwards wrote his book *Sure, Why Would Ye Not?: Two Oul Fellas Put the World to Rights* about the Irish community and lifestyle in Irish dialect. For him the native tongue and dialect is part of its rich culture and diverse heritage. It has to be written in the Irish dialect as the book is written to the Irish people about growing up, about the family life and Irish country ways. The distinct Southern culture has been reflected in many books written in Southern dialect including Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*. Eudora Welty’s *Delta Wedding* and William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* are some more examples of the use of Southern dialect. If Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* was written without the subtle touches of the Southern uneducated white community’s way of speaking, and if Harper Lee had used pure, Queen’s English, the novel might not have become a classic.

Similarly, the contextualised and local form of English in the literature produced in South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean are dialects of English in their own right. The writers who live far away from the land of Queen’s English approximate the English language according to their context and usage. Creole in these countries is often a mix of modified English and local languages. The approximation is done by modifying the rhythmic pattern, being playful with the words and spellings, fusing words, coining new words by transliteration. In this way, as Mitul Trivedi suggests, ‘contextualization of English language in art makes the language more exotic to its context-based usages’. New literary terms have been coined for this linguistic phenomenon. The newly invented language, with heavy influence of the vernacular and local dialect, has been called acculturation/appropriation/nativisation/domestication of Standard English. Salman Rushdie in his book *Midnight’s Children* calls it chutnification of English. Rushdie does this with the perspective that, ‘The language like much else in the newly independent societies, needs to be decolonised, to be remade in other images.’ This ingenious use of English language won *Midnights’ Children* the prestigious Booker Prize and the best all-time prize winners in 1993 and 2008 to celebrate the Booker Prize 25th and 40th anniversaries.

The culture has a recognisable impact on the creative use and experiments with the language in the literary texts. The author has a liberty to customise the language lexically, syntactically, semantically and stylistically to present their culture, the time, age, class (and so on) in their text. In fact, in the post-colonial era, literary authors have been acknowledged and acclaimed for their

54 Edwards, ‘A Quare Spake.’

experimentation with the Standard English language according to their contextualised worldview.

However, if a writer like Subramani tries to do the same kind of experimentation with Standard Hindi for the representation of his contextualised worldview, his experimentation is not accepted. Writers like Rushdie are praised for experimentation in English language as he ‘has liberated Indian English … from its false Puritanism, its fake gentility’.59 (160). Agnes Scott Langeland claims that Rushdie’s impure English ‘helps to establish a wider ethnocentric base for the English language by creating a magical and humorous Indian blend of English’.60 Midnight’s Children (2010) might not have been as successful if it was written in standard Queen’s English. The use of dialect and vernacular is guided by the writer’s desire to bring the text closer to the people about whom the writer is writing. Because of this primary logic languages have dialects, and because of this desire writers like Tulsidas choose Eastern Hindi or Awadhi instead of Sanskrit or Standard Hindi when they retell a story. Dialects and vernaculars are used to give the standard, formal language a personal touch. The 2001 Census of the Government of India records at least 50 dialects of Hindi. Prominent among them are Awadhi, Bagheli, Bhojpuri, Bundeli, Haryanavi, Kaniuji and Khari Boli.61 All these dialects share the Devanagari script. These dialects are named, generally, after the region in which they are spoken and yet all these dialects use the lexical, semantic and syntactical features of Standard Hindi.

The beauty of Fiji Maa: Mother of a Thousand lies in the fact that Subramani dexterously captures the nuances of the dialect spoken in the northern part of the Fiji Islands. As Rushdie has widened the ethnocentric base for English by inventing a magical and humorous Indian blend of English, as Tulsidas has brought the Ramayana narrative closer to the common people by using the people’s dialect instead of the Vedic Sanskrit or literary Hindi, so has Subramani done the same and more for Hindi by reproducing the dialect of the northern Fiji Islands. In the process of recording the dialect, Subramani has shown that dialects ‘develop alongside standard varieties, not apart from them’.62 He uses the script and basic lexical, syntactic and semantic rules of Standard Hindi while writing his novel in Fiji Hindi. Varieties and dialects of language have been defined not as bastardisation of the standard language but as variations upon the basic plan of the language.63 In the extracts quoted below from Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children, Tulsidas’s Śrī Rāmacaritamānasā and Subramani’s Fiji Maa, the use of Standard English and Standard Hindi is visible, which shows that the variations of the language are respecting, following and celebrating the standard, formal language but in a personal, contextualised way:

I stay, my sirs. Here I know names of birds and plants. Ho yes. I am Deshmukh by name; vendor of notions by trade. I sell many so-fine thing. You want? Medicine for constipation, damn good, ho yes. I have. Watch you want, glowing in the dark? I also

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63 McWhorter ix.
have. And book ho yes, and joke trick, truly. I was famous in Dacca before. Ho yes, most truly. No shoot.64

जड़ चेतन गुन दोषमय विच्य कीन्ठ करतार ।
संत हंस गुन गहाहि पव परिहरि बारि बिकार ।।
jaRa cetana guna došamaya bisva kĩnha karatāra,
sahita harīsa guna gahahī paya parihari bāri bikāra.65 (11).

God has created the universe consisting of animate and inanimate beings as partaking of both good and evil; swans in the form of saints imbibe the milk of goodness rejecting water in the form of evil.

जानत हयु हम अधिकारी के हिंया अंगना में बढ़ा अधिकारी हममे भिक्तर बुलाइस। एक बक्सा के रकम मसीन धरान बोले ऐसे सुनो। चांभी अंडितु ससुरा बक्सा बताय लगा कहून कहां मरू आज के मासम का हूँ कब घाट पे जहाज लगी। हम तो सुन के चकडिआय गवा। हद होई गयु बक्सा सारा सव खवर वाट। अधिकारी समझायस यही के बोले रेडियो। हम तो सोचा बक्सा के भिक्तर कोई लुका बढ़ा है। अधिकारी खूब हंसित बाट हमार सुन के। वाङ्सितार के कमाल तो देख हिंया पता नई अउर का का होय वाला है। साउत एक टेम आई चांभी अंडितु याना टेबल पे।66

Do you know, I was sitting in veranda at Adhikari and he called me inside. He asked me to listen to a box like machine. He turned some nob in the box and it started to tell who died where, what would be today’s weather and when would the ship dock at the port. I got confused after listening to the box. It was too much, now the box would spread the news. Adhikari told me that the machine was called a radio. I suspected somebody was hiding inside the box. Adhikari laughed a lot when I told him about my suspicions. I have seen the wonders of telegraphy. What new inventions are going to happen, nobody knows. Maybe one day one will twist a nob and food would be served at the table.

Even a casual reading of the extracts shows how the writers are inventing off-shoots of formal, standard versions of the language (English and Hindi) for their special literary and linguistic needs. TulSIDAS retold the tale of Ramanayana written in Sanskrit in a more live and conversational language Awadhi; Rushdie used every possibility to bring the local colours in his

64 Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 372.
66 Subramani, *Fiji Maa* 496-97.

narrative through an inventive use of language; and Subramani’s *Fiji Maa: Mother of a Thousand* is also written in Fiji Hindi, the language of the novel’s characters and primary readers, of whom many are living in Fiji.

On this relationship among languages and their varieties, especially for Hindi, Mrinal Pande writes that ‘like the Ganga River, Hindi language too picks up local colour and character as its several tributaries flow, branching out into streams, constantly evolving as they assimilate local dialects – Urdu, Farsi and even English – into their own flow’. The evolving dialects of Hindi showcase the democratic nature of the language. Unlike Sanskrit, ‘a stereotyped literary language which has not been allowed by grammarians to grow and multiply and bring forth children’, Hindi has a vast family tree with branches spreading in all corners of India and the globe through diasporic writing. The Standard Hindi would always be promoted in the formal usage and practice. However, as local varieties of Standard Hindi flourished in India, producing texts and a rich oral literature, Fiji Hindi should also be accepted and encouraged alongside the Standard Hindi for its cultural, social and literary value.

However, as local varieties of Standard Hindi have flourished in India, producing texts like *Padmavat* and *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa* and a rich oral literature, Fiji Hindi should also be accepted and encouraged alongside the Standard Hindi for its cultural, social and literary value. The culture has a recognisable impact on the creative use and experiments with the language in the literary texts. The author has a liberty to customise the language lexically, syntactically, semantically and stylistically to present their culture, the time, age, class (and so on) in their text. In fact, in the post-colonial era, the literary authors have been acknowledged and acclaimed for their experimentation with the Standard English language according to their contextualised worldview. If in English, experimentation, contextualisation and localisation are accepted and appreciated, why not in Hindi?

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68 Pande.


