CHAPTER-III

THE IDEA AND IMAGE OF INDIA IN THE MAJOR WORKS OF DR. SATENDRA NANDAN

When I set out on my journey to India, I had no idea of either my history or India’s. It was a leap into my grandparents’ palmist world which I had glimpsed only darkly through the myths of the Ramayana, enacted in Ramlila on Votualevu grounds, and a few Hindi films from Bombay.¹

India, the land that haunted their imagination with her protean myths and heroes of the freedom struggle.²

India is a human country: it grows upon you like love in an arranged marriage. After the first few months, India began giving me an immensely tender sense of belongingness. The next three and a half years passed in friendship and love.³

All the three epigraphs are taken from Dr. Satendra Nandan’s autobiography, Requiem for a Rainbow: A Fijian Indian Story. The first epigraph reveals the initial image of India on the writer’s mind. It also reveals that what he knows about India is mainly due to the stories from the Indian epics, which his grandfather used to tell him. But last two epigraphs are different in the sense that in these epigraphs he conveys a profound image of
India, after his stay in Delhi and other Indian cities. These epigraphs are the evidence of his close attachment with India and its culture.

India always creates a charismatic image on writer’s mind. It is a land of social, religious, regional, linguistic, cultural and geographical diversities. It is a mystical land of myths and legends, stories and shastras. It is a land of the Himalayas, the Ganges and temples. From the earliest times, India has captured the imagination and expression of many writers, Indian and foreign. Many writers attempted to encompass the profound image of India in their writings. India’s diversity, rich cultural heritage inspired and influenced many great writers of the world. No doubt, Indian writers can have the benefit to look India from close quarters, but the foreign writers also tried their best to comprehend and delineate Indian subcontinent in their writing. Diasporic writers have the capacity and capability to recreate the image of India in their works through their consciousness and imagination. Though living in their adopted land, in alien surroundings and different cultural make ups, they reconnect themselves with their matrubhumi - India. Living in different spaces for years, far from their roots, separated from the seven seas, diasporic writers strongly feels their traditional and cultural linkages with India. Scholars from Max Muller to Rudyard Kipling and from Koestler to Afanasii Nikitin tried to comprehend the contemporary India in their writings. Eminent writers living abroad like V.S.Naipaul, Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, M.G.Vassanji, Sudesh Mishra, Vijay Mishra, David Dabydeen, Jhumpa Lahiri, Nirad Chaudhary, Cyril Dabydeen, Rohinton Mistry, Suniti Namjoshi, Attia Hosain etc. living in different corners and cross cultures of the world, depicted India through the eyes of an outsider. Though they are not living in India, their narration and depiction of India are accurate, life-like and real. In their fiction and poems, their diasporic consciousness makes their narration about India, a real presence. Prof. S.D. Singh writes in this context:
The descendents of this (Indian) Diaspora have also inevitably produced great works of literature illustrative of their history and heritage, of their own awareness of their society and its problems, its achievements, its limitations and frustrations. Some of them have turned their attention to India to assess and understand the nature of their relationship with the land of their ancestors. They have probed and explored their own Indian-ness in its uniqueness; its new geo-political and social context; its separation from the forces and factors that changed the face of India in the years following the emigration of their ancestors.

For the diasporic writers there is an immense value of ‘home’, ‘homeland’ or ‘Motherland’. Here in this chapter, there is an endeavour to discuss the idea, concept and image of India which Nandan presents through his writings. Dr. Satendra Nandan, a versatile genius and prolific expatriate writer, is involved in emotional relationship with India and Indian culture. In his novel, essays and poems we can see Nandan’s strong attachment and his concern for India. He is very critical of Fiji’s politics and racial tendencies and puts before us an ideal picture of Indian democracy. Like all expatriate writers, Nandan has anguish and bitterness towards Fiji’s racial discriminations of the Indians. Nandan remembers India in the midst of insecurity, chaos and threat. He strongly believes that Fiji’s racism will led the country into the world of corruption and fragmentation. India, at the same time is an excellent example of a country which invites everyone irrespective of his race, religion, class and caste. It is in India’s culture that every Indian believes in the motto - *Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam* – the whole world is a family. His views and image of India is deeply rooted in his psyche. To him, India is a constant source of harmony, religious integration, peace and non-violence. The people of India have still preserved their culture, traditions and myths even in the age of globalization and modernization. The image of India which was built during his stay in Delhi further develops on his arrival in India in the year 1963. Nandan’s vision of India formed through his frequent visits to India. Nandan got many opportunities to visit India during his academic career. He first went to India on the government of India sponsored scholarship to study at Delhi for his higher
education. He got the early opportunity to look India’s hectic life, palaces and ruins, public and politics and fascinated seeing the vast human ocean. No doubt, he is a child of Indian indenture parents but India provides him a golden opportunity to peep into her ever flowing cultural and traditional river. Though he lives in South Pacific region, he presents unique images of India and provides glimpses of modern India, through his writing. Nandan has so far produced three poetry collections; Loneliness of Islands, Voices in the River, Faces in a Village, three essay collections; Between The Lines, Fiji : Paradise in Pieces, Beyond Paradise : Rights of Passage and a novel, The Wounded Sea all of which reexamine the concept of home and nation from diaspora point of views. It is impossible to read Nandan’s works without explaining his life, career and character. As we know, Dr. Satendra Nandan is a politician, professor, a poet, and also a novelist, with debut novel, The Wounded Sea in 10th March 1991. He was born into an Indian family in Fiji and migrated to Canberra, Australia in 3rd December, 1987. The novel tells us the story of a boy and his family, following the Indian culture and traditions. Nandan, the protagonist lives Fiji to study in India and his experience in India reminds him his roots and culture. Again in the month of June, 1963 he travelled back to Delhi for his wife Jyoti. He lived in India from 1963 to 1965, in the blissful atmosphere of Dehra Dun and these events marked an indelible impression on his heart and mind. This gave Nandan a peculiar attachment and attraction for India. Due to the coup of 1987 when he left Fiji he remembers the freedom and peace which he enjoyed in India. In India, he was free from any racial discrimination or religious suppression. He writes in his autobiography:

\[
\text{India, especially Delhi, had given me a sense of belongingness. Caste, clan and communalism remained the beats of a distant drum. The white man’s superiority had disappeared with the passing parade of the Raj.}\]

In this sense, India gives him a reason and vision to fight against the unjust practices of racism and communalism. In the same chapter, he vehemently asserts his mission; “One of my commitments in life has been to fight racial,
Indian culture is a kind of rediscovery of his ancestral heritage and legacy. Immersed in this rediscovery, he explores his own character and identity simultaneously as the Fijian, India and Australian. With the help of his Indian identity and Fijian character, and the hold that his Indian past has on him, he undertakes his journey throughout the novel. It may seem contradictory that Nandan reveals his Indianness within the Fijian background but this is a unique feature of his twice migrant experience. At the age of 19, in 1958 Satendra Nandan received the scholarship of higher education and he went Delhi for the same. He stayed there for four years. He writes:

I was making the first return passage to India from my family. I had given a Government of India scholarship: it was on the radio, in the Hindi weeklies. It was a momentous occasion only I didn’t know it or understand its historic significance….I was establishing a rainbow bridge across the dark waters- *kalapani* - of the seven seas which they had crossed-links in the chain of injustice.

Nandan’s visit to India was his most memorable experience. India is a country of mystery and magic, from where grandfathers and grandmothers of all girmitiyas were descended. It is a country of their births. Nandan’s grandfather was also a girmitiya from India. For Nandan it was an act of reestablishing the self, his real identity and roots. It was like establishing a bridge between the past and the present. From his family, no one was able to cross the seven seas. Only Nandan got this golden opportunity to reclaim his ancient roots. For the girmitiyas, their journey was a journey of injustice, hardship and trauma. Now Nandan’s journey was a journey of self-justification and self-establishment. His interest in and concern with India provides a significant status to his writings. Though living in Fijian culture and surroundings, he is completely aware of his Indian roots and identity. It is important to note that Nandan was born and brought up in Fiji, raised his career and became an active politician, writer and ideal citizen. He also calls Fiji, his second home. But the loss of motherland constantly becomes the major theme of his writings. His vision or image of
India is neither like a traveller’s diaries nor it is an outsider’s observations. But in his writing he captures the true Indianess, ‘real’ India which is near and dear to him. He narrates the image of India from his father’s account of India, tales and stories related to India among the Indo-Fijians and their rituals. All this becomes the source of Indianess in his writings. Nandan can be considered as a leading poet and novelist of Indo-Fijian Diaspora, his writings dealt with his own experience as an Indian in Fiji and betrayal of the Indians in the form of the coup. Nandan’s novel *The Wounded Sea* is set in Fiji, around the experiences of his grandfather, father and the protagonist. He grew up surrounded by Indian ethos which kept India alive in his mind. He came to India for the fulfillment of his higher education. To him India was everything that Fiji was not. For the Indo-Fijians, India is their motherland, the country of Rama and Krishna, and the country which they had left behind. This diasporic consciousness links Nandan with India, this link gives him a sense of pride and honour. Nandan’s experience of his journey to Delhi transforms into a veritable self-exploration and self-realisation. In the very first chapter of the novel *The Wounded Sea*, he describes the *antyesti samskara* /funeral of his father which clearly shows us that though they are living in midst of an alien surroundings, the Indians has preserved their rites and rituals related with birth, marriage, and death. He writes:

> My grizzled brother lit the pyre while the local *pundit*, Birbal shouted several “Oums” in the wind and hurled incomprehensible *shlokas* into the ocean. And as the sugar-and- ghee smoke blew towards the Fijian huts on the other side of the village I was glad the old man was dead, now being burnt, and his ashes were to be thrown tomorrow into the sea, the Pacific Ocean, part of the Indian Ocean, part of the holy Ganga…it was comforting.⁸

They are performing the ritual in a small village of Fiji but as in India, they are doing it with all its grandeur and faith. Here also a Brahmin or local pundit controls the ritual. So, the ritual possesses an important place in Indian people, no matter they are living in India or outside. The grandfather always performs his *puja*, early morning and “sing a few couplets from the *Ramayana*.”⁹ At this
juncture, he also invokes the whole girmitiya history and their origin. For the first time there comes a reference of India, as a place of their origin from where all they have migrated; “My father was born in Fiji. His father had come from India – from a little, obscure village called Sultanpur near the Taj Mahal – under the indenture system.”

Here India is presented as a source of cheap labour from where the indenture Indians came under the brutal colonial yoke to work on the sugar plantations of Fiji. The pathos and trauma reaches to its nadir when Nandan remembers his father weeping, when his son was going to Delhi for study.

Why did he weep? Was it because his own father, at almost my age, had made an earlier journey from India to Fiji – and never returned? Something, as father, he was now beginning to understand? Or was it because he himself could never make the journey to his father’s village?

He also presents a beautiful imagery of an Air India flight which creates an image of India for the Indians. For the exiled and transplanted Indians in Fiji, the flight becomes the symbol of India, from where it had arrived. He gives a brief pen picture of it.

To Father, Air India was the idea of India itself. India, for Father was a grain of sand in an oyster: it troubled him, then crystallized into a pearl in his imagination.

His father’s imagination of India was further invoked and awakened by the regular arrivals of the Air India flight. The particular advertisement about the flight is also depicted in Indian terms: “Nandi, Shiva’s bull with a garland of hibiscus round his neck, a tikka on its forehead and an Air India hostess performing arti.”

For Satendra Nandan, art is a useful medium to create consciousness. As a true humanist and activist, he wants to bring about revolutionary changes in Fijian society and politics. Nandan challenges the Fijian constitution and politics based on the racial discrimination. He raises firm voice against the social demarcation and exclusion of Indians from Fiji. Depicting the religious, traditional, cultural, social and moral facets of Indian life, Satendra Nandan explores the colour and vibrancy of India’s rich cultural
heritage. The central themes of all his poems and fiction revolves around abolition of racism, sacrifice of girmitiyas, their longing for motherland, respect for Fijian culture and an appeal for creating democratic politics in Fiji.

In order to presents the ideal picture of the life of Indenture and the story of forgotten girmitiyas and their descendents, before the readers, he employs so many Indian characters, speech habits, myths, history and traditions in his prose and poems. The village, which he describes in *The Wounded Sea*, is an ideal picture of a Fijian village where the Indians settled and lived with all their traditions and beliefs. Even after the hardships and struggle of the whole day, these villagers spend their time in reciting bhajans, chopais and tales from the Indian epics. They try to soothe their pathos and pain chanting and praying the names and tales of Rama and the Pandavas. Employing the gigantic scale of two colossal Indian epics, *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*, Satendra Nandan tries to explain and explores before the readers, the enigma of arrival and existence of Indenture Indians in Fiji. He sees the solution of this indenture experience in these Indian epics. Nandan employs various techniques and strategies to impart an Indian identity and image to his works and language. His usages, words, idioms and dialogues explicitly show the Indian influence on Nandan’s creativity and genius. Syd Harrex remarks in this context:

> The narrator also celebrates the nourishing and enriching influences of Indian tradition, the joint family culture, the villagers’ intimate relationship with the rural world and the beauties of nature, and the power of human love, goodness, compassion and kindness.

He not only depicts the image of ancient India but also he successfully recreates the era of Indian indenture of the colonial period. He beautifully catches the images of girmitiyas and their grand children coming through the dark, dangerous waters, crossing the seven seas. He invokes the whole girmitiya tragedy and colonial machinery, and thus presents before us the pathetic plights of the Indians, leaving India to transplant themselves into an alien atmosphere. The ancient Indian philosophy about *swarg/heaven* and
The myths and tales of *The Ramayana* is the constant and unfathomable source of wisdom, consolation, fortitude and faith for them. They inherited these tales from generations to generations and thus preserved the age-old Indian values, ethics and culture. In the very first chapter “Landscape of Little Ruins” of *The Wounded Sea* the grandfather explains the protagonist, the tragedy of Indenture and the influence of the Indian epics. In the novel, describing the influence of these scripture on his Baba; his grandfather, Satendra Nandan writes:

> I never saw Baba read but he had a reservoir of gripping tales from *the Ramayana*. His favourite story was of Ram’s exile with Sita, his princess wife. Baba didn’t think much of Ram’s younger brother Laxman, possibly because he had mutilated the nose of a woman – Supnekha, Ravan’s sister. And Baba even tried to make us understand why Ravan had abducted Sita and taken her to Lanka. “Wouldn’t you do that, chodou, if your sister’s nose was chopped off?” I didn’t understand the moral or metaphysical implications of the cowardly deeds of Laxman or Ravan.\(^{15}\)

When the little boy questions about Rama’s exile from Ayodhya, his grandfather further explains him very gently- “Because Keykeyi wanted her own son to be king of Ayodhya. Exile, beta, is common. Valmiki wrote about; Ram’s exile, so that we could bear ours. That’s how I have lived here.”\(^{16}\) According to Satendra Nandan, *The Ramayana* is an inspiring and influencing text, it is a tale of Rama’s exile and suffering without which their survival in Fiji was not possible. They were under the yoke of cruel colonial power, but still they did not forget their religious practices and the same gives them strength to survive. His grandfather wants to tell him that exile is a common experience in their life and in the life of Rama. In *The Ramayana* there is the reference of Rama’s exile because from him, we receive the strength and inspiration to survive in our exile. Rama, the prince of Ayodhya, exiled on the eve of his coronation and left his motherland with his wife, Sita and his brother, Laxman. He followed his father’s orders. This episode of Rama’s exile/\(^{16}\)
bears a close resemblance with the exile of the girmitiyas. Nandan, here, compares both the tragic tales of exile and thus gives an epical significance to the indenture experience. Thus, Rama’s banishment possesses a strong affinity with the lives of the girmitiyas.

I began to see things in perspective. On the eve of his coronation, Ram was exiled for fourteen years by his selfish stepmother. In Ram’s story I saw our Fijian Indian lives mirrored. And I began to understand the myths on which our civilization was founded. Both their potency and impotence.

The story of Rama gives them a feeling of comfort, peace and courage to endure their hardship in exile. He further writes that “The Mahabharata is the most terrible and wisest of books; the first recorded holocaust of humanity.”

When father and the whole family decide to buy a new pair of shoes for the writer, the decision was taken with a great seriousness. Now, he was going to possess a new pair of shoes which was for him a momentous occasion. Even the village Pundit, Birbal was also consulted who argues with his knowledge of The Ramayana: “yes, yes, Bossie: Rama had his sandals. He leaving them behind when he gonna into exile. A noblest idea- already in the Ramayana…” They try to link the tales and interpretations of the epic with their life’s smallest events and incidents. There is also a reference of Katha, a holy ritual. When Nandan admitted to the school, the family decides to perform Katha, which is a sacred Indian ritual for the family’s betterment and good luck. Nandan writes pointing out the importance of Katha:

Katha, I recalled was the most popular Hindu ceremonies, performed on a special occasion. I remembered it being performed when I have passed my first exam, when Father had bought his bicycle, his tractor, his cargo lorry…the same ritual must have followed the purchase of the taxi. It was going to be an interminable affair.
The preparation for the \textit{katha} is also described in great details:

At dawn, Zhaman would rise; pick up the broom made of bariara saplings, a bucket full of Lali’s fresh cowdung and go into the orchard under the mango tree – the one with red mangoes. There she would sweep the ground, then wet the earth, pouring the bucketful of cowdung to clean a rectangle for the sacred ceremony as the sun shimmered in its morning glory over the hills. As the cowdung dried Zhaman would go to the well, cut a few banana leaves, gather fallen mango twigs, collect flowers – marigolds, hibiscus, and jasmine-and lay them neatly by the cowdung–painted place.\textsuperscript{21}

These preparations shows that people, though living in scarcity of things in alien country, still tries to perform these rites and rituals with great faith, sincerity and sacredness. This kind of rituals spreads a kind of sacredness and religious fervor among them. Like \textit{katha}, other ancient Indian rituals like \textit{yajna}, \textit{antyesti samsakra}, and marriage are also performed with utmost dignity. The characters make ample use of mantras and quotes from the Indian scriptures like \textit{Vedas} and \textit{Bhagavad Gita}, during the rituals. Nandan demonstrates the scene of Birbal, performing rituals, which is also the evidence of the writer’s use of realism. Their attachment and reverence for the Indian rituals, ceremonies and beliefs shows their inner sense of Indianness. Syd Harrex writes in this context:

\begin{quote}
Tragedy, pathos and death cast their shadows throughout the novel, but they are counterpointed by tropical qualities of light, warmth, love and mirth. This Pacific landscape, moreover, is augmented by the girmitiyas’ importation into it of the Hindu epics and their contrapuntal myths: \textit{Ramayana}, the \textit{Gita} and stories from \textit{Mahabharata}, slokas, sutras, Vedic hymns, rituals etc.\textsuperscript{22}
\end{quote}

Not only the rituals but also the food, dress and speech habit plays an active role in their identity formation, it also shows their inheritance of Indianness in adopted country. Indian dishes like curry, rotis, jalebi, laddus, etc. are the favourite dishes which they enjoys with their Fijian friends which shows their fondness for Indian cuisine and culinary. He writes in this context:
Nani lived on the hill across the river. She was a wonderful cook. Her fish and chicken curries still make my mouth water; the rotis she made in the embers had a special village taste.\textsuperscript{23}

At another place, there comes a reference of delicious Indian \textit{thali}; “Bhauji was beginning to chop some baigans for dinner - baigan curry, bhaji, dhal and pilchards fried in green chilies and lots of onions with hot, steaming rice with a bit of tomato chutney.”\textsuperscript{24} There is also a reference of bhajans performed by bhajan mandalis- a kind of group of singers and musicians who regularly sings bhajans/ devotional songs at different houses in the village. It is a kind of recreational activity for the indenture Indians in the absence of other entertainments. Tired by the hard toil and struggle for the whole day, these girmitiyas sings bhajans till late at night. The rhythm and music gives them an intense joy, pleasure and relief. They also tried to soothe their minds and body with the help of these bhajans which are always religious in tone. Nandan beautifully makes ample use of Hindi words which creates onomatopoeic effects in prose and which the Indo-Fijians uses in their daily bhajans; “Dhaum dhama dhum dhum/ Dhol bajai hum/ Dhum dhama dhum dhum!”\textsuperscript{25} He describes:

…the \textit{mandali} boys were celebrating, singing bhajans and drinking grog. \textit{Mandali} was an auspicious occasion and gave the menfolk a chance to leave their wives with the coughing, feverish children.\textsuperscript{26}

During his depiction of a local villager’s sexual encounter and his consequent punishment, he gives an excellent example of the continuation of Indian traditions among these girmitiyas. Jaddu, a watchman finding Chanchal alone enters her house and tries to molest her. Sukhu, Chanchal’s husband arrives accidently and Jaddu is caught red-handed. As a result, Sukhu takes the whole case to the village \textit{panchayat}. Nandan’s father and Pritu, the milkman, were the judges. Nandan writes; “And whenever something unpleasant happened – like a quarrel between husband and wife, the running away of a grown up son or daughter (especially daughter – in - law), or if someone was caught stealing from the farm – people came to Father, who immediately sent me to fetch Pritu.
Then a panchayat would be staged, the parties, wronged and innocent, would come into our “public” bure and, after lengthy deliberations, the dispute would be settled. All the panchayat would cost the families was a bottle of gin, a dozen bottles of Fiji beer and a goat. The gin and the tender fried, freshly spiced goat meat were given to Father and Pritu while the rest of us were given the beer and rice and baigan curry. This “Dozen – and – One” solutions to village problems became our slogan.”

During the trial, Father quotes a famous saying and puts stress on the Indian belief about one’s character. He says vehemently:

Izzat gone, everything gone. The white people too say that, bhai. That real truth. In the Bible. Ten Commandents.

After the trial, Jaddu was punished for his evil deed. At this time Pritu, quotes two lines from The Ramayana and The Mahabharata:

One referred to the great tradition of the Hindus: “Keep your words; even if you have to die.” The other warned: “whenever our dharma is threatened, god takes his avatar to conquer evil.”

These lines reveal the essence of the two ancient Indian epics. The whole theme of The Ramayana is based on this great utterance of Rama, when he left for his vanvas /exile. Rama tells his brother that promises, once made never should be broken. It is the tradition of Raghu dynasty. At the same time, Nandan also quotes the famous sholka from Lord Krishna’s teaching to Arjuna on the eve of the great war of Kurukshetra. Nandan firmly advocates the Indian philosophical thoughts as displayed in the epics and calls, The Mahabharata “a doomsday book of our time.” in which the freedom and importance of an individual is stressed. The catastrophic events of the coup of 1987 and its aftermath is discussed by him against the backdrop of The Mahabharata. Nandan compares the Fijian political anarchy with the chaotic conditions of the kurukshetra plains where the armies of the Pandavas and the Kauravas clashes with each other. When all the ministers were imprisoned at Queen Elizabeth Barracks for five long days, they began to lose their inner strength and courage.
After completing the Morning Prayer, Nandan tells them the story of Rama’s exile on the eve of his coronation. Nandan explains:

To see them with sorrow and sympathy for us was quite heartbreaking. Then suddenly in my speech I told them the story of Lord Rama: how such a noble prince, the favourite son of his royal father, had to go into exile on the eve of his coronation. The kingfather died of grief and the prince returned after his 14-year banishment with victory over Ravana, the demon King of Lanka. That was our fate. If that can happen to a god, why do we grieve about this betrayal by a group of rakshas. Ram, after all, was betrayed by one of his own.\footnote{31}

In the second chapter of his autobiography, *Requiem for a Rainbow: A Fijian Indian Story*, he mentions the value of person’s name in Hindu girmitiya family. While living in different demographic locations, these people have retained their Indian names and their significance. The choice of names can be done by a village pundit who is ceremoniously invited for it. Nandan gives interesting details of his own name, which was given to him by Ram Kishore, a village pundit; “Soon after every birth he’d come on his horse, say the prayers, read from his frayed pothas, always wrapped in red, name us with meaningful mantras, have his freshly cooked vegetarian meal, accept his dakshina and ride his mare back across the river to his village…”\footnote{32}

These Sanskrit names echo the ancient Indian culture still alive on the Fijian soil. He uses words like Satya mev jayate, Tamaso ma jyotirgamaya, nautanki, tapsya, etc. He also registers a harmonious relationship between the Indians and the native Fijians. They have unique understanding between them until the racial practices of the coup. Occasionally, they would eat freshly cook food, drink and laugh. It also suggests the peaceful and humble attitude of the Indians. The Indian marriage ceremony is also described with all its pomp and grandeur. He narrates the whole process of great Indian wedding of his brother in the same chapter of the book. He describes the bride and groom in perfect Indian terms. We come across Nandan’s skillful narration when he describes the bride of his brother, which also is an excellent example of the attachment to Indian culture, still practiced in Fiji. He writes:
Guddi has become our Bhabhi, a girl of sixteen. She’d come to our village decked as a Hindu bride in a red, silk saree with a goonghat – veil – hiding her face as an incandescent clouds across the moon. Her palms and feet were marked with henna, eyes with kaazal; a nose ring glinted in the light of a tilley lamp, a necklace of mohars – gold sovereigns – in thick black thread and numerous coloured glass bangles on both her arms.33

The Indian tradition of moohdekhao – seeing the face is also performed and, “Everyone had to pay some money to see her face, touch her virgin cheeks.”34 Other rituals related with marriage like baarat, haldi ki rasam are also described here with great realism. Nandan succeeds in depicting the Indian community and their various rituals. He faithfully reconstructs the whole Indian atmosphere and culture which was prevalent in Fiji during those days. The communal gathering of the Indians during the marriage is also described with great details. “Most Hindu weddings in Fiji in that era had three important days: telwaan, bhatwaan and shaadi, the wedding day.”35 The Indians were properly invited by nau, an especially hired man, who would ride a horse a week before the wedding and distribute grains of yellow rice to every home in the village. This neota was most important for them and Nandan adds, “If you deliberately left out one of two homes, there was always a risk of your cows being stolen or cane burnt.”36 Nandan also describes the importance and significance of the Indian rivers and compares the river Nadi with the great Indian rivers, the Ganges and the Jamuna. He writes in Requiem for a Rainbow: A Fijian Indian Story;

For us, Ganga and Jamuna were common names amongst the girmit people. We had no knowledge of these mighty rivers flowing from the Himalayas. In my imagination their sacredness was deepened through reading, songs, bhajans and the sprinkling of sacred water at a Hindu ceremony…Even my father, a most skeptical of Hindus, kept a bone, picked from the cremation ground of my grandfather and wanted it thrown into the Ganges if ever someone from our family went to India…he couldn’t quite escape the filial obligations mentioned in ancient scriptures and practiced by some in Fiji.37
Nandan wants to emphasis that these Indenture Indians living in Fiji still craves for their distant motherland from where they have been uprooted. They cannot find holy rivers like the Ganges and the Jamuna in Fiji, so they preserves the bones of their forefathers and waits till someone from their family went to India and throw it in the sacred rivers. He also explains that living very far from India, they did not cease to practice their cultural rituals. His father’s wish would provide him the highest status- moksha, as depicted in Indian religious scriptures. These illiterate and simple hearted villagers are alone on the island country and these traditional Indian concepts and beliefs gives them inner strength and vigour to survive in the wild world. According to Nandan:

Besides, as mainly illiterate, peasant Indians, most of whom hadn’t ever travelled beyond their village and district, coming to Fiji crossing the kalapani of the seven seas – saat samundar paar – was a massive migration. But like most migrants, especially under the suffocating cloak and yoke of colonialism, they carried their petty prejudices and age-old beliefs and clung to them under an alien sky connected to a savage sea. Many of the ceremonies rituals and rites of passage reflected this daily. It gave them a feeling of community and continuity.

These girmitiyas remembers, in their imagination, the distinct and distant image of India, which is situated sat samundar paar/ across seven seas. These girmitiyas were the illiterate Indian peasants who carried with themselves the age old religious beliefs and habits, rites and rituals, pathos and passions. They remember India as the only hope for the future. At present they are landless, nameless and helpless in this alien land but look towards India and receive inspiration from it.

The Indian Freedom Struggle, the contribution of the prominent leaders and the role of C.F. Andrews and Gandhiji in the eradication of Girmit system provides Nandan and other Indo-Fijians, the strength and courage to fight against racism, injustice and betrayal. Gandhiji’s simple life and his mammoth crusade against imperial power inspire Nandan. Gandhiji’s own experiences of the indentured labour in South Africa shaped and sharpened his sentiments against the Indenture system and oppression. C.F. Andrews, who was sent by
Gandhiji to examine the conditions of the indenture Indians, came there bringing a new hope and consolation for the Indo-Fijians. Nandan writes that these epic efforts of Gandhiji and C.F. Andrews for the betterment of the Indo-Fijians create a benign and consoling effect on the entire community in Fiji. For Nehru, Nandan writes:

Nehru wrote that the fate of Indians was bound with the fate of free India. Dignity and Freedom of Indians in India would mean dignity and equality of Indians everywhere under the British. So our lives were inextricably connected with the lives of Indians in India. Our leaders saw the struggle in Fiji as an extension of the battles being fought in India.\[39\]

According to Nandan, Nehru’s efforts connect Indo-Fijians with India, where all the Indians deserve freedom, dignity and equality. Nehru’s concern for the freedom of the Indians applicable not only to the people living in India alone but also it encompasses the whole Indian community residing abroad. Nandan also adds that the Indians in Fiji have immense value and significance for the Indian festivals like Holi, Diwali, Ramzan etc. These festivals were enjoyed and celebrated with all its grandeur and colouring. Some of the Fijian neighbours were also being invited to participate. These festivals give them a sense of India, Indian culture and tradition. It fills them with renewed joy, fervor and vigour for life, particularly in critical consequences. Nandan writes:

I’m amazed that most Hindu festivals are so full of gaiety and colour. One would have expected a country like India with, its ancient wounds and tomorrow’s sorrows, to have a day or two of sad remembrances, but there isn’t one as in Christianity or Islam. To me it is the marvelous expression of the essential Hindu faith: to look at life as a \textit{lila}, a divine comedy.\[40\]

These festivals keeps alive their inner joy and fortitude to survive in exile. Like living in their homeland, they decorates their houses, prepares the Indian dishes and sweets like jalebi, laddu, halva, gulabjamun, gulgulas, from pure ghee and sugar, performing \textit{Laxmi Puja} etc. They lights \textit{diyas}/lamps, utters holy prayers and invites relatives and friends. After narrating the detailed account of \textit{Laxmi}}
Puja, the writer reveals his own reflections and thoughts on it which echoes the Indian spiritual philosophy. He says:

Knowing the Indian attachment to material goods and possessions, the Hindu sages preached simplicity, humility, detachment. We burdened ourselves with possessions that were really quite hollow.41

Nandan strongly believes in the Gandhian concept of simplicity and detachment. He also adds that luxury and money are not the real wealth of a person but it is freedom, spirituality and detachment from the worldly possessions is the real wealth for a person. Nandan vehemently says that he likes the simplicity and humanity of the simple villagers because in villages, people are connected with the bonds of compassion, sacrifice and selfless love. He also makes references of some of the cruel and tragic tales of the journeys of the Girmitiyas. During their tobacco cleaning sessions, these shipmates - Jehajibhais – tell their own versions and accounts of their terrible voyage across the sea. This common sense of suffering and trauma also gives them some consolation and strength. The brutality, injustice and humiliation which they have suffered were beyond any descriptions. Nandan says that his generation almost saved from the torture of the Indenture era but unfortunately, not from the racial discrimination of the Army Generals and Chiefs. Nandan at this juncture, narrates the significance mythical implications of the Indian festival, Holi which comes with a message of faith in God. He narrates the story of demon king Harnakshyap who tries to kill his son, Prahlad because of his intense faith and devotion to God. Here, Nandan tries to express the enigma of the lives of the Indo-Fijians with the help of Indian mythology, Vedic tales and philosophy. In his writing, he uses his own Indian thoughts, philosophy and roots to explore and understand the Indo-Fijian experience. The Ramayana is an ancient Indian text which possesses its existence not only in India but also in other parts of South East Asia. With the spread of the human civilization, the grand epic spread in the different corners of the world in various forms. In Fiji also, Rama’s story is widely read, performed by the Indians. Nandan also enjoys the public performance of Ramlila, held at Votoualevu Government
School. He further writes about the significance of *The Ramayana* in the lives of the Girmitiyas:

But little had I realized then that Rama’s banishment would be our fate in Fiji. That the story of exile, coups, conquests, suffering, and perhaps forgiveness would be repeated in my own life was far, far from my thoughts. *The Ramayana* had become a religious epic. I never saw it as a work of fiction reflecting the pain, sorrow, grief and glory of the human situation. It is a great pity that these magnificent books become holy and we do not read in them our lives, mirrored in myriad details.  

In the tales and characters of the epic, the writer sees the reflection of the Fiji Indians. Nandan reveals the truth and value of these epics in his own life which registers a strong and unforgettable image of India in his mind and soul. He himself admits the truth that when he set out for India for higher studies, he did not have any idea of India’s social or political history. The only image of India he possesses was through the stories and narration of the epic *The Ramayana*, which he enjoyed during his early days of childhood. He recalls his journey in his autobiography *Requiem for a Rainbow: A Fijian Indian Story*:

Of course when I set sail for India, I had no idea of either my history or India’s. It was a leap into my grandparents’ world which I had glimpsed only darkly through the myths of the *Ramayana* enacted in Ramlila…

Here, Nandan wants to explain that whatever he knew about India was through the epics. Through the stories of the *Ramayana* he peeps into the world of his forefathers who remained in Fiji till their death, always thinking about their homeland, India. According to Nandan, his journey is a rare event and moment in the lives of his relatives because they were eager to see someone who was one of them, one who was tilling the land and fishing with spear, now suddenly flying to India. He further writes that many of his relatives gathered there to see him going to India because “India, the land that haunted their imagination with her protean myths and heroes of freedom”. He notes in his autobiography, about his gradual attachment with India and Indian people;
After the first few months, India began giving me an immensely tender sense of belongingness. The next three and half year passed in friendship and love. 

Indeed, he was coming to a land where his forefathers once inhibited. This was a land of their imagination, dreams and thoughts. His visit proves a leap from the real world to the world of imagination. His trip to India feels him with intense joy and excitement. For him, coming to India was like returning into mother’s lap. No body from his family had returned from Fiji to visit India. The entire third chapter of Nandan’s autobiography is dedicated and based on his experiences in India and his thoughts about India. In the chapter entitled “Delhi: Among the Ruins”, he elaborately presents before us the whole panorama of Indian way of life and he also tells us that how he mingled with the Indian life-style and culture, only because of his inborn Indianness. He vividly depicts his education, love, marriage, friendship and other experiences of this new life in India. According to Nandan the epics are the base of the Indian thinking and life. The Indian mythology creates an immense influence on Nandan’s psyche, character and thinking. He firmly believes that; “no culture created more powerful and protean myths than the Hindu imagination.” These epics have an indelible impression on Nandan’s psyche, imagination and character. The readings of the stories of these epics in his childhood create a distinct image of India for him. According to Dr. Satendra Nandan, “the two epics are the vowels and consonants of India’s epical expression.” He firmly advocates and suggests us to interpret and accept the ideals and moral of the epics in our life. He wants to say that these epics are the base of the Great Indian civilization. In the busy streets of Delhi, he discovers the real image of India, the sea of love and humanity. For him, India is an experience, a rejuvenating memory and coming from Fiji to India was:
…like jumping from the airport’s swimming pool into the ever widening Pacific Ocean during the cyclone season. When one travels from the new to the Old World, especially of the orient, one is often bewildered, even terrified, by the civilization mulched by dung, decay, death and an acceptance of all these; but far below the dusty surface a whole way of life is breathing, living and regenerating…

According to Nandan, India has made a strong and positive impact on his life and in a sense, carved his career. Discovering the Old Delhi streets, roaming and wandering in the ruins of ancient monuments, Nandan confronts history, romance, affection and self-realization. This feeling of self-realization later becomes the pivotal theme of the poems like; Ruins and Hope in Delhi. Those were the formative years of his life which he had spent in Delhi. It created a sense of belonging in him. In Indian people, he finds a splendor of spirit and affection for others. He also writes that he never needed to give bribe for his work or his pocket picked. He also notes that during his hostel life he didn’t even lost a single rupee from his room where everyone was allowed to come. For him, India was more than a country; it was an ocean of humanity and compassion. According to Nandan, Nehru and Radhakrishnan had created a distinct image of India as a mother; it is loving, tender and beautiful. Nandan puts on record that:

…the living must have given me some sense of being an Indian. I used to think that to be born a Hindu – the most hospitable of all religions, growing up an Indian – the name of a river – were the boons of one’s life.

It was here in India that Nandan came into close contact with the works of Gandhiji and Nehru. In his autobiography, he discusses in detail the undeniable influence of these national leaders on his political and social life. From the philosophy of these two leaders he was able to understand that politics is not a power game of chair but it is one kind of religion in which we are bound to serve people, sacrificing ourself. According to Nandan because of Gandhiji many colonies inspired to revolt against the cruel system of indenture labour. He also points out the example of Mauritius where Gandhiji had visited in the
year 1901 and his speeches encouraged the Mauritian Indian to fight against indenture labour. He believes that the Influence of *The Ramayana, The Mahabharata* and the marathon struggle of Gandhiji against the Raj helped to create a magnificent image of India. “Indianness” according to Nandan, “is a conception rich in diversity, reflecting the variousness of life, both physical and spiritual, and growing out of a civilisation that is continually being enriched by the currents of many cultures, old and new.” Nandan also mentions that Gandhi’s efforts for the indenture Indians, India’s religion tolerance, active leadership and values makes India a great civilization. Nandan is optimistic and hopes that one day in Fiji, Indians will be given their due status and importance. He also put stress on the concrete efforts by the politicians, intellectuals, workers, professionals to make Fiji a great nation, like India. He firmly believes that; “The Indian sensibility - that capacity within us that enables us to react morally and imaginatively to human situations and see what is significant from what is trivial - is conscious of its roots deriving sustenance from many cultural streams. The striking ability of the Indian has been his ability to accept, absorb and integrate these into a vital way of life.” Thus, he strongly believes in the Indian sensibility that enables a person to survive in the traumatic experiences of life. It gives you the courage and stature to absorb life’s most painful hurdles. India, for him, is a country like a tree which is deeply rooted in its multicultural soil and its leaves always open to welcome new thoughts and views from all directions. It includes everybody and excludes no one. India’s landscape is full of ruins and palaces of ancient emperors which suggest the co-existence of religions which truly reflects the nation’s cultural and secular image. India’s traditional heritage is multi-dimensional and multicultural. In the words of Dr. Satendra Nandan; “…the essence of Indianness was a sense of decency, a sense of humanity, a commitment to human values, and a deep concern for others, especially those who were less fortunate.”

India always becomes a veritable home for the homeless and hope for the hopeless people. Parsis, Jews, Muslims and many other minorities settled here and practiced their religions, without any danger. When these minorities
were expelled from their respective natives, India welcomed them wholeheartedly. India accepted them and these religions flourished in their full bloom. The lives and legends of great personages of Indian culture help this diasporic race to survive and struggle in their predicament. Their teachings become inspiration in conflicting conditions. There is always a sense of detachment, fragility of life in an Indian mind and so, personal lot was never of paramount of importance, and hence in India you can find many legends of renunciation, sacrifice and self effacement. The lives and morals of these great Indian saints give mental and spiritual upliftment to the people who live in brutal colonial regime. Nandan quotes in his essay *The Indian – Fijian: A Complex Fate*:

The legends of Rama, Buddha, Christ and Mohammed help to live and bring deeper illuminations into our hearts so that we may not regard our suffering and sacrifices as the greatest. In the lives of great souls we see the realities of the human condition and accept our own.  

Further quoting the great Oxford professor of Indology, Max Muller’s famous attributes about India, Nandan wants to explain elaborately that how the Indian tradition helps to create a multiracial, multi-cultural, secular society and it is the demand of the time to create the same kind of society in Fiji where all the races and religions should be welcome whole-heartedly. Indians have been travelling and settled in the remotest corners of the world from the centuries. Indian freedom fighters, saints, prophets, innovators, traders, moved from the continent to continent, created new countries and enlightened people of the world. There isn’t any reference or any example in the history, where Indian people have colonized any country or enslaved any race. The Indians always advocates and respects others; their rights and humanity. India cannot behave like a dictator or oppressor. India always have propelled noble thinking in others, inspired thousands and encouraged millions of people to fight against exploitation, corruption, racism and marginality. Thus, India is a living organism, a living civilization flowing like a river which enriches to its banks. Thus, he wants to explain that:
…the Indian has often sided with the oppressed, initiated radical thinking, showed generosity of mind and material and contribute enormously for the welfare of others…there is a living, positive core at the heart of the Indian tradition which transcends the tremors of history.\textsuperscript{54}

The image of India acts as a binding agent, which connects people, cultures and races together. The Girmitiyas, who travelled abroad in search of bright future, landed in the darkest frontiers of the world, but with them, they have their ancient Indian traditions, legends, epics, tales and thoughts which not only gave them a sense of community in Fiji but also kept attached them with their nation, India. These Indians received their inspiration also from the Indian Freedom Movement. The girmitiya, who arrived at the shores of Fiji, came with their belief in truth, freedom and human dignity which encouraged them to fight against the brutal colonial regime. Nandan notes in his book, \textit{Fiji: Paradise in Pieces}:

\begin{quote}
For the Indian, the search for self-respect for his ancestral country was understandable. It helped the indentured labourer to survive with some sense of wholeness within a system and under a rule that for a long time denied him ordinary human dignity and a sense of a country.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

The idea and image of India helped the indenture Indians in Fiji to create and formulate their own identity in an alien land. They formed their own distinct stature and culture in Fiji, creating their nostalgic bond with their motherland. The Indian cultural legacy enables them to maintain their bond with their distant land, India. Nandan puts stress on creating one identity and one culture in Fiji. Eradication of racism in Fiji is his pivotal argument in this book. By giving the example of Indian image, he firmly argues that the Indians should be given equal importance in every aspect of life in Fijian society. They should try to create a multiracial Fiji where everybody has equal fundamental rights. According to Nandan the inherent qualities of the Indians makes them extraordinary persons in the time of conflict and the coup. He writes:
…hope, if one knows India, is only another word for “Indian”. But that kind of self-denial, renunciation, faith and an immutable belief in satye mev jayte (truth will triumph) demands from a people their deepest resources, their most profound sense of self-respect and, above all, the awareness that every ordinary person is truly extraordinary in moments of crisis, when one’s civilization values come to the fore – its resistance, resilience and resurgence. 56

Resilience and resurgence are the inherent qualities of the Indian people, which make every Indian capable to fight against injustice and racism, in any corner of the world. He further notes that this kind of inner strength and emotional attachment with India makes Indo-Fijian, a unique case. He also notes that, “the fact is that even to this day whatever happens in India, affects Indians no matter where they are.”57 The great Indian ethos pulsates in every Indian wherever he lives and in whatever conditions he may be. He explains the complexities of the Fijian politics with the help of the Indian epics in his essay The Politics of Dispossession and Exile. He believes that The Ramayana and The Mahabharata are the protean metaphors which elevate our understanding about exile, banishment, dispossession and nostalgia. These epics teach us Dharma, ethics and we should practice it in our life and politics. Callous colonels, coups and colonialism have shattered the multiculturalism of Fijian society. The fractured and tortured state of Fijian politics compels the writer to point out the moral values displayed in the epics. The epical imagination calms the feelings of exile, nostalgia and trauma of the girmitiyas. He writes in this context:

For it is with cultural imagination that the Indian Diaspora is most closely related. In that sense it is an epical relationship, as Amitav Ghosh has so perceptively defined – an epic without a text, he calls it. But this remarkable relationship, I think, is not without the epics. For both the Ramayana and the Mahabharata continue to exercise a creative hold on the Indian cultural imagination. I mean Indian, not just Hindu. One might say the two epics are the vowels and the consonants of the Indian epical expression. 58
The Indian diaspora possesses strong cultural and traditional bonds with India and this relationship is based on their imagination created strongly by the age-old Indian epics, The Ramayana and The Mahabharata. He further notes that this relationship not only proclaims their cultural unity but also it mirrors their lives. He writes:

They mirror our lives— in Rama’s banishment we see the fate of our girmit grandparents; in the civil war of the Kauravas and Pandavas we fear the imagined fratricidal conflict in Fiji. This is given a deeper resonance by echoes from many parts of our broken world, our crippled consciousness. It is plausible that the story of Rama’s banishment might have made bearable the Indian labourer’s ten-year indenture.  

Nandan wants to say that the themes of the epics, possesses strong resemblance with the lives of the girmitiyas. Like the Pandvas and Rama, they also banished, exiled and removed from their motherland. They suffer numerous tortures from the hands of colonial powers. And this affinity with the mythical personages helps the girmitiyas to live, survive and struggle in the exilic conditions in Fiji. They tell their friends and family members the tales of these epics and try to console their agitated soul. The epics, in this way, prove an outlet/catharsis of their traumatic emotions. The Indo-Fijians are now facing the same situation of civil war as the Pandavas faced in The Mahabharata. Indeed Rama’s banishment, the Pandavas vanvsas /exile, injustice, anguish, all finds a close similarity with the lives of the Indo-Fijians. Nandan compares the mammoth journey of the girmitiyas across the sea with the pernicious journey by foot of Rama, from Ayodhya to Lanka. He also adds that Rama returned after his exile, after the end of his duty as an avtar but for the unfortunate Girmityas, no return passage is possible. They must remain in the dark, derelict coolie lines of Fiji and their wish to return to their motherland never gets fulfilled. Quoting Derek Walcott, Nandan suggests that, the journey from the homeland makes a profound impact on the psyche of the girmitiyas. Derek Walcott compares the psyche of a diasporic person with the breaking of a vase. “The pieces had to be put together again but the marks of a cracked piece of pottery would remain as scars.”60 Their image of India further strengthens by
the harsh realities of the plantation life in Fiji. He further notes that if *The Ramayana* is about banishment, *The Mahabharata* is a classic of exile. He explains the paradigm of exile and nostalgia with help of these epics. These great classics of Indian mythology give him the inner strength to express and expose the vices of the coup, injustice and evils of racism. In India, everything remains in constant flux, and it encompasses all the foreign elements in her. For Nandan, India is regenerating force, ever-renewing and recomposing the human sensibility. He makes his keen and minute observation of Indian faith in religion. In the essay, ‘Not So Far Away, Not So long Ago’ from the book *Fiji: Paradise in Pieces* he again asserts his faith and reverence in Indian culture and traditions. He writes that India is benign country from where they all have descended, the country which have provided them a unique identity. Using the word *Bhumiputras* for the Girmitiyas, Nandan emphasis that many of India’s children left the loving hands of their Mother India because of the Indenture trade and settled in Fiji, but they had never forgotten their roots. He dedicates many pages and chapters describing the Indian customs and traditions. In one of his essay, he depicts the traditional Indian funeral, also called antyesti samskara, of his mother in Fiji. His mother’s last words, in telephonic conversation were; *Acha beta abkiya kiya jaye. Phir kabhi*, makes Nandan think about her Indian roots. The pundit who comes to perform the ceremony also appears in traditional Indian dress, dhoti and white kurta, and recites the mantras from the ancient version of *The Ramayana*. At this juncture we can find Nandan’s intense faith and reverence for Indian traditions. He also notes the philosophical importance of the *Bhagvad Gita*. He writes:

…the *Bhagvad Gita* perhaps our world’s most celestial poem about death, about the transcendent soul, about the cession of birth itself. Unlike many other scriptures, where birth after death is important, the quintessential teaching of Hinduism is how to end the cycle of recruiting births. *The Gita* has become the foundational text of Hinduism, a beautiful poem embalmed as a sacred text… I’m found of the *Gita*.61
According to Nandan, *the Bhagvad Gita* teaches you how to attain *moksha*, how to end the cycle of recurring births and sufferings. The book helps to elevate our soul and preaches nobility, stoicism and endurance in predicamental state. He compares the fractured state of Fiji society and politics with the horrid battle of Kurukshetra, where the Indians are facing injustice, cruelty and betrayal. The stories and tales of the epics also becomes an entertainment for them, in the absence of other sources. Because they had plenty of time and leisure, they would sit around their father or grandmother to listen the stories from the epics and because these stories were from Indian scriptures, they thought it real and plausible. In one of his short stories, *Mangoes* he depicts an Old Man who remembers the taste of the Indian mango in Fiji and nostalgically plunge himself into the world of imagination. The Old Man recalls: “Mangoes in Fiji lacked that *mithas* and the people were no different: fruit and flower, fish and flesh, reflect the nature of people in a place.” 

He wants to convey, through the medium of the Old man that like the Fijian mangoes, the native Fijians lacked sweetness. The inspirational song in the inception of the essay and the story reflects a unique image of India in Nandan’s mind. It was here, in India, that he found his ‘precious and priceless discovery’, his wife; Jyoti Nandan. He believes that India has provided him true light – Jyoti. Their love developed into marriage and settled for few years in Delhi and enjoyed their marital bliss. That is why he writes, “India, especially Delhi, had given me a sense of belongingness.” 

So, in this sense, India and Indian culture, traditions and people are the formative influences in his life and career. In the book *Theorizing and Critiquing Indian Diaspora*, the editors of the book notes:

Nandnan’s grandfather told him stories about Indian Kings, gods, flora and fauna, to such an extent that even in Fiji he looks at everything from an Indian perspective. So, an ordinary river of Fiji becomes the Ganga and, hence, he does not feel alienated. Thus his origin, his Indianness is within him and he sees everything in Fiji from that vantage point. 

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In one of his essay-collection *Between the Lines* he depicts the image of India in different and varied forms. In the essays in this volume like; *Ancestors: Distant Drums, Healing the Wounds, The Mahabharata and Modern Fiction, Nehru: A Vision Splendid, A Sense of Nation, Diwali: The Lighted Path, Gandhi’s Grief and Mahatma’s Glory*, Nandan talks elaborately on Indian concepts of religion, politics, mythology, nation, festivals, spirituality, etc. In one of his essay, *The Mahabharata and Modern Fiction*, Nandan put stress on the importance of Indian Sanskrit texts. In Fiji, *The Ramayana* is the only fundamental religious book available to the Indian indenture labourers. Nandan gives the reason that how these girmitiyas suffered and survived the trials and tribulations of the indenture labour. He gave a beautiful explanation of the survival of the Girmitiyas in Fiji;

The indenture-system was a painful exile, to many people. Scores committed suicide, some died of sheer exhaustion. But thanks to the spirit of man, most survived. What made so many live through that terrible experience? One reason, I would suggest, was their knowledge of *The Ramayana*. Not only did they believe that good would eventually win, but they saw in the story Ram – an innocent prince for 14 years – a parallel to their own existence: that if a prince such as Ram could accept his exile with a sense of obligation, why couldn’t they? Five years, ten years, it would be over. Even this, they knew, would pass away. That is why *The Ramayana* remains such an important epic to many Fiji Indians. Because it gave consolation and hope. Above all, they saw in that great work of literature a small reflection of their own fate and the ideals by which human beings live under the most difficult conditions.

He also argues that the Fijian version of *Ramayana* helps the Indians to survive their exile. The book makes them think that if Rama can endure the fourteen years long exile, why they cannot. The ideals of *The Ramayana* induce them to live under difficult and dangerous circumstances. He wants to convey that the Fijians should learn from the age-old Indian culture, its ideals and principles and if they don’t learn from this culture, and then there will be great loss to them. He further notes;
The magnificence of Indian culture ought to be known more widely in this country – and not by Indians alone. It will be a great loss to this land if others, who are not born into the Indian culture, did not know enough for it, and those who are part of it from birth did not understand the true quality of it.66

In an essay Nehru: A Vision Splendid, Nandan appreciates the Indian democratic reforms and political stability which India achieved with the help of strong constitutional measures which gives every citizen of Indian equal rights and status. He vehemently argues that this kind of constitutional steps should be taken by the Fijian government and the Indians should be accepted as the citizen of Fiji. Depicting Nehru as a great writer and leader, Nandan writes about his efforts to make India a great nation where every class and caste accepted by the constitution and had given equal status. He expresses his reverence for Nehru who gave India a larger vision and perception. Indian politics helped people to rise from their position and India became a great democratic success. In the essay Diwali: The Lighted Path Nandan notes India’s multi-culturalism and vibrancy. He presents India as a cradle of many religions and birthplace of humanity. He writes:

The idea of God’s truth has made ancient Hindu faith as the most tolerant religion in the world. India is the birth place of at least five major world religions. Christianity came to India before it went even to England - the Syrian Christians of Kerala claim their ancestry from St. Thomas, a disciple of Jesus. Islam built great monuments including the Taj Mahal in India: in multicultural environment music, poetry, philosophy, architecture, art flourished in India more than in any other part of the world. This was and is possible because the tradition of tolerance that is part of the Great Indian way of Life we call Hinduism, the most hospitable and hopeful religion. It has sustained our ancestor through Kalapani; it sustains many of us today.67

Thus, India always is a dignified country which is hospitable, gentle and generous to all, who comes to her for peace and shelter. And this idea and image of India provides inner strength and stamina to the Indo-Fijians to live and survive in Fiji. In his essay Post-colonialism in the Time of Plague,
Nandan advises his readers to see real India. On his way to Delhi via Simla he enjoys the Indian landscape and advises his readers to travel by road if they wants to enjoy the beautiful flora and fauna of India. The old Hindi film songs from India also arouse their emotions regarding ‘home’ and possesses unique importance in their life. *The Sydney Morning Herald* notes in this respect:

The story of a paradise trampled upon and hurt to its innermost core…Nandan’s portrayal of what is meant to be an Indian in Fiji from the 1950s to the 1980s is superb.  

The essays, fiction and poetry of Dr Satendra Nandan possess a unique importance in the Indian diasporic literature. Nandan, born in Fiji and educated and married in India always remains a keen observer of the Indian society. He married with an Indian girl, Jyoti, so he not only feels his emotional ties with India but during his stay in Delhi and occasional visits of few Indian cities enables him to look at India from close quarters. He is, initially an outsider who depicts India as a land of epics, legends, Gandhi and unfulfilled dreams. He sees India through the tales of his grandfather, stories from the epics and accounts of the Girmitiya ancestors. But when he comes to India as a student he again explores the land of his childhood imagination and dreams. Poems like *Siddharth, Arjuna’s Anguish, A Churning in Oceania*, reveals the writer’s unshakable faith in Indian mythology and Hindu scriptures. He gives us an accurate picture of Indian society and true image of India as presented by an insider. He goes back to his experience of life in Delhi in a poem *Hope in Delhi*:

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Delhi, like death, has many faces.
Still, a city’s dying monuments
Speak of life, as in winter
Spring comes back to mind;
New building rise to fall
On bent backs
Of mothers, fathers,
While the children play
In the dust of bricks.
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In his poems his memories of Indian past gives the descriptions an identifiable Indianness. He uses Indian traditions, rituals, food, mannerism and speech-habits in his poems and fiction which not only gives Indian flavour to his writings but also imparts an Indian identity to his writings. He also makes ample use of Indian ethics, values, religious-theological concepts, philosophy which strongly links his writings with Indian subcontinent. According to Nandan, Indian and Fiji-Hindi words are very necessary to depict the Indo-Fijian surroundings. He portrays Indian as well as Fijian expression, characters and mannerism to recreate the Indo-Fijian society. For example, he uses ‘Ram Ram’ which is an Indian gesture to welcome anyone. These Indian and Fijian words are very appropriate and proper to depict the Indians in Fiji background. In place of using standard British diction, Nandan employs native Fijian and Indian phraseology to narrate and depict the Indian girmitiyas and peasants. His fiction The Wounded Sea, poetry collections like Faces in a Village, Loneliness of Islands, and Lines Across Black Waters possesses strong Indian consciousness and sensibility. He presents before the readers, the downtrodden plantation workers living locale Indian life in Fiji. Nandan’s use of various Indian words and phrases which can be categories into three broad segments: (I) prevalent Indian words/phrase/idioms and Indianised English words or distorted English words, (II) Indian words of abuse, swear words and sentences, (III) transliterated dialogues from vernacular.

**(I) Prevalent Indian phrases /words /idioms and Indianised English words or distorted English words:**

Satendra Nandan makes an ample use of Indian Hindi words and phrases in his fiction and poems to give an Indian identity to his English prose and verse. These words and idioms possess the rhythm and patterns of the native Indian language which is the special quality of Nandan’s prose and poems. These words and phrases represent Indian sensibility and antiquity which creates a distinct idea and image of India through his writings. These
words and expressions are spoken by the Indo-Fijian characters during their daily life which creates an excellent picture of India.

**The Wounded Sea:** Oum, shlokas, Ram Ram Bhai(05), Ramsuroop, kallu (06), Pandavas, pujari, gurukul (07), Mausa, gita bhajans (08), Baba, tikka, arti(11), khatai, dhal, baigans(12), lathi, Achha (13), maatha (skimmed milk)(14), narak, swarg, bairati, ghasita(15), rotis (16), kaliyug (17), Pundit, girmi, jejahibai, coolumber, memsahib(20), salaam Sahib; salaam Memiaji(30), Namaste(33), mantras(35), dhoti, ghee(37), ghoose, katha (38), shlokas (39), becaroo (42), jungle, Oum Soaha(44), rotis (48), choorayal(49), Puja (50), kurta-lahanga, Hanumanji, parsad(51), bhauij (53), curry, bhaji(54), gudgudi, bhajan mandali(55), Chor! Chor!(58), izzat!, dharma(58), danda, mama (65), nautanki (66), gopis, maharaj (58), panchayat(59), yaar (60), beta (61), beti (62), munua, sindoor(63), Gita(66), jungle(71), Vasudaiva Kutumbakam (74), dalda(75), panchatantra(78), goonda(80), lassi (84), bahu(85), murgichors(96), zhumka (97), tuuli (98), lingam, holi, pujari (101), Brindavan (104), Gujarati, kerosene (106), topi (107), kasava, kumala,(119), gurudwaras, Ayodhya (123).

**Requiem for a Rainbow:** A Fijian Indian Story: Thela (20), pothas, dakshina, satya mev jayate, teen murti (70), tamaso ma Jyotirgama (71), tapsya, (72), jungle mircha (75), pehalwaan, zoola (77), bhabhi, goonghat, kaazal, moohdekha, pyala of pani (81), teelaan, bhatwaan, shadi, baraat (84), neota (85), shudh, baatcheet, (87), dholak, dantaal (87), alaap (88), mausi, jamuna (91), these words are related with the traditional Indian marriage ceremony which suggests the preservation of Indian tradition and rituals by the Indo-Fijians. Kalapani, saat samundar paar (94) these words help to express the trauma and pathos of Indenture labourers and show us the process of Indenture. juari, tiggi (93), ghasit, kothri, aangan, muthi (95), kai, kali, pakki(96), dholak, zaanj,gulgulas, lila, khoonta, gulabjamun, jalebi, laddu, halva, diyas, diwali, laxmi puja(98), dhalbhari rotis, puris, (99), lathi (101), khansi (108), arth, Ramayanchaupais, dhebri, chitrakar, jasoosi kahanis, chatai(110), ramlila
Loneliness of Islands: A number of Indian words from Indian scriptures and mythology describe the influence of these texts on the psyche of Indo-Fijians. Names from *The Mahabharata* and Indian mythology used to depict the theme of Indenture, exile and the existing racism in Fiji.

 Loneliness of Islands:

*Mata* (12), *mali* (36), *nananani*, Ajiaajwa (53), *unda* (71), Brahaman (80), chulha (81), Vedas, sati, savitri, anusuiya, draupadi (82), Hookah(83), Krishna, Bhisma, Nala damyanti (84), vishnu (87), Himalaya, Kunti, arjuna, karna (89),dharamraj, Gandhari, Duruyodhana (90), Dhitirashtra, Kurukshetra, Sanjaya (91), Chakravhyu (98), Mount Mandara, vasuki, nilkantha, manthan, ratnas, rambha, laxmi, uchchaisrava, airavata, kaustava, parijata, surabhi, dhanvantri, mohini (106), chor chor (109), aum shantih shantih (122), maan sarovar (125), banarsena (125), bulbul (124), khaki (125), moh, maya, kam, krodh (127), kailash, Shiva’s jata, Nandin (129), Shawl (137), vanvas (151), Ajodhya, Pandavas, parvati (152), chameli(160), kaliyanaag (161), gullidanda (173), sandals (183), minaret, taj, Mathura (187), Janmabhoomi (189), Chappenchori (198), mongoose (208), Hanuman chalisa (214), Pundit-cum-ojha (215).

Fiji: Paradise in Pieces: Some of the words suggest the daily habits of Indian, their beliefs, food, superstition, dress and thoughts which helps to create an Indian background. These words make the appearance of the characters natural and life-like. He uses words like; Saafa, adharma, shantih(15), sadhu, fakir(18), raga(28), satyagraha(31), Birbal ki khicharee, gathari, nana, tut gai mala, bikhar gaye moti dil ke…(98), karmayogi (111).
(II) Indian words of abuse, swear words and sentences:
In his novel, Satendra Nandan depicts the words, terms of abuse, expletives, swears words and dialogues from Indian and Native Fijian languages in their distorted form. Some of the illiterate and unsophisticated characters abundantly uses this kind of words in their routine languages.

*The Wounded Sea*: Arre chodou, Arre buddhu (07), Rakshasas (15), launda (64)


(III) Transliterated dialogues from Hindi:
Nandan transliterates many Hindi clauses and expressions to make dialogues appear natural, authentic and appropriate. He reaches in the depth of characters’ hearts and expresses their innermost thoughts in their language. Most of the characters are Fiji born Indians, so they cannot speak native Fijian language completely. No doubt, there are certain words from Fijian language but most of the dialogues and conversation takes place in Fiji Hindi, which is a mixed language of Hindi and Fiji words. Their dialogues include distorted English and Hindi words.

*Fiji: Paradise in Pieces*:

“Arre, yaar, salo behanchod tiffin box bairo leine ayo”-(133)

*The Wounded Sea*: There are abundant examples of dialogues spoken in distorted English words from vernacular. In his novel *The Wounded Sea* there are many such dialogues which show the Indianess of the characters. We come across a series of dialogues between the father and the son. Nandan records the common habit of speaking between the characters. When the boy mistakenly sits on the cow’s back, his father explains his evil deed in sitting on the cow and the popular Indian taboo according to which to seat on a cow is a
punishable sin which suggests that the cow possesses a sacred place in Indian society. It also shows their reverence for the Indian beliefs and its practice among them. He explains his son:

Riding a holy cow is paap (sin), betu; never do that. Otherwise when your Baba dies, Lali’s children won’t give their tails to your Baba to help him swim across the Baitarani – the river dividing narak (hell) from swarg (heaven).\(^{70}\)

When the protagonist’s father, Baba comments on the local politics, showing his anger, he speaks in Fiji Hindi:

“Naam baria, karam garia”, he would comment to himself—big name, bullshit work.”
Baba replied, calmly; “Arre, chodou, what do you know? They’ve chopped Mother India’s arms, her breasts. She fed all of us. We came in the same ship – jehajibhais – now they want to separate seats in this tin-drum island.\(^{71}\)

One Fijian makes fun of Birbal, the village pundit using few Hindi words: “Paanditum thookum poochum moochum!”\(^{72}\) Satendra Nandan also employs songs from the popular Hindi movies which show the strong influence of Indian films on Indians in Fiji. These songs from classic Hindi films depict the longing for motherland, India and their exile from India. A character named, Jaddu sings different film songs;

Dil deke dekho
Dil deke dekho...
Ek ghar banaunga
Tere ghar ke samne...\(^{73}\)

Nandan’s use of a song; “O’ Musafir jayega kahan,/ Yianh kawn hai tera.”\(^{74}\) from a famous Hindi film, reveals the uncertainty in life of the Indo-Fijians.

Vijay Mishra remarks on Nandan’s brilliant use of old Hindi movie songs:

This Cinema projects a homogeneous India which is very much like the Fiji Indian fragments in that it is not fractured by linguistic, religious, or caste divisions. The duplicities, the illusions of Bombay Cinema, reconstruct, for the Fiji Indians, a naive confirmation precisely of their own historical memory: Sita actress Nirupa Roy, the ‘Filmi song’ ek ghar banaunga, tere ghar ke samne’.\(^{75}\)
In the novel, Indian villagers sing popular bhajans which is also depicted in simple words: “Dhum dhama ghum dhum, Dhol bajai hum, Dhum dhamodhum dhum!”(49), “Jai Bajrangbali ki” (51), “Raghubati Raghu Raja Ram” (153) etc.

**Requiem for a Rainbow: A Fijian Indian Story:**

In the description of Gandhiji’s struggle for Independence, he makes ample use of Hindi words:

> “Gandhi walking the rocky and rugged ‘pagdandi’, path of Noakhali, where neighbours were butchering one another and his agonizing cry was, ‘mein kiya karoon! Maie kiya karoon!’” (55)

An illiterate villager, who makes sudden outburst of his feelings in Hindi;

> “I had the barely said a few lines of stilted dialogue when a villager shouted rather loudly:  Arre beta jor se bolo to sunai – O, son speak loudly so that we can hear you!”(72)

The old Hindi film song provides rhythm and also reveals the paths of exile and betrayal: Ankhia milake, jia bharmake, chale nahin jana Oh, oh, chale nahin jana… (87) The conversation between two villagers also depicted with accurate mannerism and speech-habit; This went on for quite a while until Bro, wiping his grog wet moustache, shouted, ‘Arre bhai, kuch gaio ki raat bhar, bas bhe, bhe kario!’(88) There are many examples of hindi songs, sayings, phrases and expressions in his autobiography; *Requiem for a Rainbow: A Fijian Indian Story*. They are as under;

a). “Sabarmati ke sant tune kar diya kamala
   De di azaadi hame bina talwar aur dhal.”(88)

b). “Pikar madak maddachi ek
   Chela kahin ko lathi tek…”(93)

c). “Eating, drinking and sleeping – kana, pina, sona!- (and farting)
   became his Fiji way of life”(115).

d). “Ye zindagi ke mele kabhi kum na honge
   Afsos hum na honge…” (151)

e). “Jahan saam, wahn savera – where evening, there morning.”(167)
f). “Aa laut ke aja mere meet
   Tuje mere reet bulate hain
   Mera suna para hai sansar…
   (O my beloved come back to me,
   My songs beacon you,
   My world is silent, empty without you…”) (168-169)

Loneliness of Islands:

a). “Aam ki achaar, limbo ki chatani.”(71)
b). “Pinjare ke panchi re, tera dard na jane koi.” (82)
c). “dane dane pe likha haii khane wale ka naam.” (86)
d). “Arbang than thooni, Das gor teen nooni.”(126)
e). “Suraj lal ki gheri badriya,
   Jaise Lanka ghere Hanuman”(128)
f). The tales of the arrivals on the Fijian shores is described using Hindi words
   in a very rhythmic way;
   “Bhaiya rowat-gawat,
   heelat-dolat
   adat padat
   hum sub aain!”(168)

Fiji: Paradise in Pieces:

Using the Urdu gazal, he brilliantly explores the trauma and pathos of the
Indian Indenture labourers;
   “Sine mein jalan, ankhon mein tufaan sa kyun hai?
   Ish shahar mein har shakhsh pareshaan sa kyun hai?” (11)

He also describes certain passages and some bad words where local Fijians and
Indians were talking to each other, either in their good mood or in harsh
manner. He also uses these words with the beautiful blending of Indian and Fiji
words making a new combination called FijiHindi. The conversation of his
brother and his Fijian friend, Lesu is depicted in Fijian and Hindi words of
abuses:
And as Bro scrabbled on to the dry bank, his Fijian friend, Lesu, had hissed under his breath, “Kaisi, Kaiindia! Sa Lasu! Lia lia.” (Stupid Indian, telling lies!) “Barchod, chutia, kaiviti,” (Bloody silly Fijian) pissed Bro with a grin.  

These Indians, tortured and tormented by the cruel colonial powers are soothed and pacified by the traditional Indian bhajans/religious songs, and philosophical sayings. Though trapped in the chaotic conditions of Fiji, still they have their faith in God’s existence as revealed in Indian religions. Facing the treachery of the colonial powers, still they believe in; “Bhagwan ke insaaf mein der hai, andher nahin”.  

In the story, Mangoes when the Old Man was in his young age steals mangoes in the darkness, zamindar runs after him saying in Hindi, “Arre, launda, aamwa churat hai, Saasura!” We can also find various speech habits of local illiterate villagers during the performance of Nautanki, a villager shouts loudly, “Arre beta jor se bolo to sunai- O Son, speak loudly so that we can hear you.” The bhajan mandali sang famous songs like; “Saranga teri yaad mein/ Mei hun uddas” and “Sabarmati ke sant tune kar diya kamala / De di azadi hame bina talwar aur dhal.”  

Satendra Nandan is a novelist, essayist and a poet who makes ingenious use of Indian mythology, culture, history, tradition, beliefs and Indian backdrop to deal with the themes of exile, nostalgia and displacement. It is said that his prose and poems are rooted in Indian soil and breathing Fijian air. Living in exile from India, Nandan makes a conscious attempt to attach himself with India and Indian tradition. His essential Indian sensibility and consciousness has enabled him to recreate India and Indian past in his writings. Due to his excellent sense of Indian culture and tradition, India comes to life, past becomes veritable present and we have the clear idea of India through his writings. It is a mammoth task for any diasporic writer to capture the unbiased, ideal and complete picture of India. To know and understand Indian values, and ethos one must understand about the sacred philosophical texts like; The Ramayana, The Mahabharata, The Gita. Any Indian, whether living in India or
abroad cannot remain free from the influence of these texts. An Indian living in
city or in hut, intelligent or mere villager, skilled or unskilled, rich or poor, the
image of India and Indian values runs deep in his veins. To grasp the concept
of Indianness, it is necessary to understand the influence of these texts on
Indian psyche. Indian beliefs and ethos cannot be separated from the lives of
the Indians. The diasporic or migrant community wherever they dispersed but
cannot shed their inherent Indian psyche. The preaching and teachings of these
ancient scriptures mingled with their blood and bones. Though born and
brought up in alien countries, across seven seas, their lives and times are
shaped and reshaped by the very influence and inherent Indian ethos. It is an
established fact that one cannot delineate the authentic picture of one’s country
without rooted in one’s culture.

The nostalgic bond of a writer-in-exile with his motherland and the
inherent quality of ‘Indianness’, remains in the centre in his literary output.
Being a writer of Indian origin, we can clearly observe the formative influence
of Indian scriptures The Ramayana, The Mahabharata and The Bhagvad Gita
in his writings. The Indian tradition and culture forms the base of Dr. Nandan’s
novel and poetry. These girmitiyas brought with them the Indian scriptures
which provided them essential moral and religious teaching, and rituals to
recreate a new home and new Indian culture in Fiji. The stories from these
epic were enacted in the form of play at the public places. These kinds of
activities and story-telling develop interdependency and strengthen mutual trust
among them. His poetry is a unique blending of his occidental vision and
oriental outlook. In his poetry, Nandan employs India as a type of motif to
indulge into his emotional and poetic universe. He uses Indian ethos
abundantly in his poems and essays. As a twice uprooted Indian, Nandan’s
sense of commitment finds it veritable expression in native ethos. His poetry
grows of his Indian experience and sensibility with all its memories of
childhood, family, mythology, history, places, and culture. His poetry is a
remarkable example which shows us how an Indian poet, living abroad, can
achieve inspiration and strength from going back to his roots.
Nandan’s artistic capacity enables him to present before the readers the Indian rituals, ethics, philosophy and tradition. He creates the image of India, India which is benign, consoling powerful source of inspiration for the millions of Girmitiyas and their children. Not only for Nandan but also for the whole generation, India is country of spiritual power and a ray of hope in clouded present. Nandan provides us an image of India, as a country where Lord Rama and the Pandavas waged immense conflict with *adharma/injustice* and survived in their pernicious exile. According to Nandan these tales of Rama and *The Mahabharata* gives strength to survive in exile, suffer the humiliations and pacify the life’s hardships. *The wounded Sea* is the major text of Satendra Nandan through which he expresses and communicates his thoughts about India and Indian mythology with the readers. His novel and short stories stand in a unique relation to Indian culture. He is a Fijian boy who travelled India for higher studies, when no one from his family had ever returned to India. So his acquaintance with Indian culture, education and people premised his fiction. He always uses and utilizes his experiences of India. Thus, he can be called both an insider and an outsider, who is educated, married and lived for few years in India and then in Fiji and Australia. So, his triple identity helps to express third dimensional picture of his life.

Many of his socio-political scholarly essays and poems raise questions of race, identity and home. In short, his writings attest to his ideological envisioning of himself as a precursor of novel thoughts, revolutionary experiences and literatures. In many of his poems and essays, Nandan continuously engaged himself in redefining the concept of ‘home’. Though he considers Fiji as his own land of birth but he cannot forget his Indian legacy. His inheritance as an Indian forces him to take shelter in Indian philosophy and ethos in the chaotic, cruel and brutal socio-political conditions of Fiji. The grandfather, who arrived as an indenture labourer from India, grows upon the Hindu beliefs and traditions. He still believes in sacrifice, resilience and faith in Indian Gods. No doubt, he was going to die in Fiji, an alien land but there exists his Mother India, across seven seas. The sense and essence, faith and
belief in Indian religion and ideology keep him alive in Fiji. Any person, who reads Nandan’s works, is struck by his attraction and attachment to his ancestral Indian roots and identity. He passed his early childhood and youth in Fiji among Fijian friends but during his study in Delhi, he came into a close contact with India and its people. All his works carry a lasting imprint of the traditional socio-cultural scene of India which has a significant bearing on the stylistic as well as thematic aspect of his prose and poetry. Thus, Delhi becomes Nandan’s synecdoche of the country as a symbol for her unity in diversity. It is this kind of emotional, sentimental and passionate bonds; his interest in Indian way of life makes him a great writer of Indian Diaspora. Thus he can be called the veritable product of two cultures, Indian and Fijian; which serves centrality to all his works. This biculturalism of Nandan and his split identity forces him to examine his roots and literary ancestry in both the cultures. His writing provides a panoramic journey through the vibrant Indian society, its culture and colour, tastes and traditions. In his memoir Requiem for a Rainbow, his writing mingles past and present in such a way that it creates as unique picture of Indian subcontinent. Nandan’s writing not only provides excellent insight into the traditional Fijian way of life but it speaks the blood curdling narratives of the Girmitiyas. Thus, The Wounded Sea is a classic work of its type, with sharp sensitive depiction of the socio-cultural practices and politics of the age. He observes that in these Indian epics the poet shows us a last hope and long cherished dream of returning home. In the end of the epics, major characters returns home, enjoys splendour and luxury. According to Nandan, this hope of home and the return passage as described in these epics attracts the Girmitiyas. The happy conclusion of the epic becomes a new beginning, and creates uncertain possibilities in their minds. He writes:

All poets are creatively subversive. While creating a place called home or homeland, they also show us the possibilities of exile and migration – a home beyond or the feeling of homelessness at home. 81

These writers of the great ancient epics, according to him, show the image of home and possible exile from it and possible return. He compares the journeys
of the Girmitiyas with the characters of the Indian epics and like an epic these journey of Girmitiyas is also full of multitudes of characters, voices, bloodsheds, betrayal, power, exile, conflict, struggle and pathos, but no return. He takes the tales of this indenture labourers to the level of an epic where these is always a conflict between good and evil, past and present, reality and illusion. For Nandan; “facing death and decay than becomes the sharp edge of creativity and affirmation of existence.”\textsuperscript{82} Gandhiji, for Nandan becomes a synecdoche for India. He describes in detail, Gandhiji’s twenty year South African struggle for the implementation of Satyagraha, abolition of the ‘coolie’ system and racism. Gandhiji’s concern for the Indian Diaspora in South Africa makes him a firm and first voice of Indian Diaspora, who expressed the suffering and plight of the indenture Indians. So in this sense, Mahatma’s stature and efforts for the indentured Indians makes Nandan proud to be an Indian and a part of its culture.

Nandan’s works continue to exhibit and represent the Indian culture. Nandan’s diasporic and political thoughts cannot be define easily because they have evolved in the course of his career so, the best way to define these developments are through his literary output. In his numerous speeches, interviews, articles and in other writings we can easily come across his Indian sensibility. It is on this basis that his novel \textit{The Wounded Sea} can rightly be called an autobiographical novel which gives us an excellent picture of Indian and Fijian culture. His volume of poems, \textit{The Loneliness of Islands, Voices in the River} negotiates his belief in Indian tradition and his Indian roots. His short-stories like \textit{A pair of Black Shoes}, and \textit{Mangoes} are stories related to his childhood describes his love for India. Nandan considers Naipaul, an excellent writer, who initially presented in his literary works, the trials and tribulations of the coolies. He says it was Naipaul who provided him an example of diasporic writing. Not only does Nandan portray Indian history, tradition, culture from the perspective of groups of Indians who inhabit a space of marginalization, he even represents the heterogeneity of these indenture Indians. After completing his study tour to India, he went back to Fiji. But this brief visit become crucial
and proved a turning point of his life. Earlier his childhood imagination was full of tales and legends from the epics but because of his visit to India changed the ideology and character of Nandan. The course and core of his sensibility strongly influence by the idea and image of India. So in all his later works he evoked so superbly and vividly what he saw and heard about India. His *The Wounded Sea* reinforces his conviction that India can provide a lasting solution to Fiji and Fijian politics. He attempt to explore and explain the socio-political crisis of Fiji through Indian philosophy. Nandan finds faults with the prevailing chaos and anxiety in the Fijian society and his mind goes back to the ideology of Indian philosophers and scriptures. In *Fiji paradise in Pieces* he states that Indian values like democratic politics, fraternity, equality, tolerance, should be practiced in Fiji and form a new constitution where every race, class, creed have their equal share in politics and society. Nandan certainly has some important insights onto the various Indian values and thoughts which is essential to make Fiji, a multiracial, multicultural nation. In the end of this chapter I would like to quote Dr. Satendra Nandan:

Identity and home are more fluid, more uncertain. Perhaps this is why the diasporic Indian’s attachment to mother India is like islands to a continent. *India*, with its assonance and association with a river; its ancient, foreign invention, its image of ever-renewing, ever-changing, ever-flowing - perhaps that is what Heraclitus meant when he said you never step in the same river twice. India gives the twice-banished Indian an edge of awareness.\(^{83}\)
References:


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