REDEFINING GENDERED SPACES: THE CASE OF THE INDOFIJIAN FEMALE QAWWAL

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QAWWALI, AN INDOFIJIAN MUSICAL PERFORMANCE, links directly to first generation Indian indentured laborers brought to Fiji by British colonizers between 1874 and 1916. The form of qawwali considered in this paper is performed as a challenge between two vocalists both assisted by musical ensembles, respectively. Firstly, this paper describes IndoFijian qawwali and its connections to South Asia and then pays attention to IndoFijian identity because the female qawwal's ethnic identity precedes her performance-based identity. Through Qawwali female performers created a new public identity, that of a female qawwal. This transpired through the inclusion of females on a stage traditionally exclusive to male performers. In the process, a highly gendered space was deconstructed and reconstructed to include the female voice. The article concludes that qawwali performances, particularly those that feature an intersex singing competition are sites of gender rebellion and performativity through which at least one nonnormative gender identity is articulated.

Introduction

Subversive behaviour exhibits the capacity to point both towards and away from received convention, at once legitimatising the cultural order as naturally given and destabilising it as artificially contrived. (Brightman 1999: 273)

Within IndoFijian society, there is a pressing preoccupation with portraying an image of connectedness and stability. This concern is driven by the pressures of being a settler population acutely aware of their differences from both a distant India and the indigenous *iTaukei*[1] population of their Fijian home. This concern manifests in attempts to control all aspects of daily life in order to present a sentiment of coherence. The effort to maintain the status quo is significantly vigorous in propagating and policing adherence to gender ideals. In an earlier research undertaking, I studied the role of folk performances in producing culturally gendered beings from biologically sexed ones. That project clarified that IndoFijian folksongs performed for wedding ceremonies are meant to create, reiterate, and reinforce conventional femininity and gender hierarchy (Shandil 2016). Considerable emphasis through discourses of religion, culture, and tradition is placed on gendered ideologies in discursive forms like cultural performances. Gender norms are not only expected but also emphasized by policing and disciplining (sometimes even violently) otherness. IndoFijian females have historically been the predominant recipients of these gender-conditioning processes within this community, in which they were either ordered to or discouraged from embodying some specific gender traits. The following excerpt from the dissertation of a pioneering IndoFijian feminist, Shireen Lateef, outlines IndoFijian patriarchy's notion of normative femininity:

> Ideally, women should be quiet, demure, unobtrusive, and obedient. They should dress modestly and generally attempt to be physically and socially inconspicuous. Interaction with unrelated males should be avoided and spatial movements outside the home should be minimized. Women must not talk too much or too loudly or be argumentative, especially in the presence of males or older females. A disobedient, argumentative, talkative female who mixes freely with males and is seen alone in public too often has the potential to dishonor the family. Women are perceived as sexually vulnerable and sexually impulsive and thus in need of protection and control since they are the repositories of family honor. (Lateef 1990: 45)

Lateef's commentary on IndoFijian gender relations, particularly in relation to the role, responsibilities, and normative identity of IndoFijian females, provides an overview and insight into the limitations emphasized on IndoFijian females. In attempting to conserve this image, women have been policed and their behavior has been controlled to ensure compliance. Key to this process has been the spatial restrictions women have had to endure under the guise that women needed to be protected and veiled from those areas of society in which they would be particularly vulnerable to the male gaze. A discussion that

I undertake elsewhere (Shandil 2014, 2016, 2017) is that even when females were engaged in cultural performances, such events were limited to the domestic realms or audiences were mostly women. This article discusses *qawwali,* an IndoFijian cultural performance that has historically been dominated by male performers and audiences; however, in the last three decades, female representation has been noted not only as audiences but also as performers.

Qawwali as a performance genre has roots in Southeast Asia and is one of the creative imports of indentured laborers who were brought to work on sugarcane farms in Fiji from the mid-1870s until the indenture system officially ceased in 1916. From the outset, qawwali was used as a vehicle for teaching human values, imparting religious teachings, and even iterating political narrative, even though this was mostly witnessed in the South Asian context. To enable qawwali to remain an interesting pedagogical vehicle, poetry and music were combined to attain and retain wider and more sustained audiences. From performances in places of worship within Southeast Asia, qawwali performances moved into other social settings. In Fiji, qawwali performances have always been organized in homesteads as a form of entertainment for people celebrating social events like weddings or in community halls where the purpose of the performance was fundraising to finance social and humanitarian projects. While qawwali can be performed by an individual imparting religious knowledge to an audience, in Fiji the vast majority of performances feature two sets of musical ensembles, each led by a central singer and supported by backup singers and musicians. The performances prior to the late 1970s were characterized exclusively with content that was either religious or focused on moral values. Competing singers would attempt to poke holes in the ideologies and interpretations of religious texts embodied within the songs and poetry of their opponents. From the mid-1970s onward, this musical form underwent many changes, most of which have been related to the styles of performing and the themes that feature in the performances. Competitions that were once focused on the religious knowledge of singers rapidly became more reliant on their debating prowess, in which the ability to insult and defeat the opponent took prominence over making valid arguments and tactful interjections. The nuanced aim opened the pathway for vulgarity to be included in the performances of qawwali. The vulgarity-ridden competitive singing style is how many IndoFijians of today identify qawwali, with little to no knowledge of its initial characteristics. These changes have had the effect of mollifying the rigidity with which participation in qawwali has been controlled, and this has had the positive outcome of the inclusion of female audiences and even a few female performers. This article argues that the performances by female qawwali performers have been performative acts that have compelled a rethinking of IndoFijian femininity, more specifically the feminine traits and attributes that Lateef had witnessed among this community.

To be present on the qawwali stage, the female must enter a previously restricted (gendered) space. To have a chance of being a proficient performer, a female will need to argue with her onstage opponent and state her opinions loudly and forcefully, which are all against the normative expectation that an IndoFijian female must be "quiet, demure, unobtrusive, and obedient" (Lateef 1990: 45).

This paper also pays some attention to IndoFijian ethnic identity, because it is foundational to the performance of the qawwali genre in the sense that the forms of qawwali performed in Fiji and in IndoFijian communities in Australia and New Zealand are unique to the region. First, the language of performance, that is, Fiji Hindi or Fiji *Baat* (talk/language), is spoken only among IndoFijians in Fiji and those who belong to this diaspora internationally, including in Canada and the United States. Second, the themes and content of qawwali songs are context based; hence, performers constantly reference their local settings, and this demarcates IndoFijian qawwali from Southeast Asian forms. IndoFijian qawwali as a performance genre illustrates the practical manifestation of articulation theory, because there have been countless hookings and unhookings over time that have eventuated in the current form of this genre. Emma Powell speaks to such constructions in her paper in this issue (2020), in which she argues that cultures are not necessarily solitary, limited artefacts but rather accumulations of ideas that can be grouped together, separated, and reconceptualized in ways that are meaningful and useful to the people they belong to. IndoFijian identity is an assemblage that comprises an imported cultural foundation that was shaped and reshaped by the experiences of indenture, colonization, and having to exist and develop within a multicultural, postcolonial context. Clearly then, any artforms and practices of this group will be characterized by adoptions and departures from cultures that have influenced IndoFijians. This paper pays specific attention to how qawwali performances have had an impact on redefining IndoFijian femininity, because the connections and disconnections that have occurred over time have resulted in the alteration of IndoFijian gender expectations, which has always been one of the significant pillars of this community.

Methodology

This paper results from an extensive literature review of texts on gender, feminism, and folklore. It is part of a larger research project in which a feminist lens, guided by an interdisciplinary approach within Pacific Studies, is used to analyze two forms of IndoFijian cultural performances that include portrayals of unconventional gender identities. Emalani Case (2020) argues in her paper on this issue that "Pacific Studies should be our conscious and critical consideration of our region's environments and how we, as humans, sometimes protect them and at other times become complicit in their destruction." In a sense,

Case's argument encourages the development of awareness among scholars and academics within the Pacific Studies realm. This awareness may not necessarily be limited to environmental concerns but rather expanded to all issues pertaining to Pacific people and Pacific societies. This paper results from such critical awareness and questioning of cultural concepts and practices that at one level unite people under a common cultural identity and on another level create the circumstances for the oppression of certain subgroups. This paper also argues that cultural practices and performances can become the means of challenging social norms and thereby inspire change for the betterment of everyone. Qawwali clearly is a cultural practice that has been rearticulated within modern contexts to remain suitable within a context in which it must remain relevant to a young, formally educated audience that has access to various entertainment avenues. The onus for developing and including new material and content into performances is largely on performers. This is why one of the main sources of information in the completion of this project has been performers of qawwali and its enthusiasts, who were interviewed to gain insight into their experiences onstage and offstage. These respondents live in different parts of Fiji and New Zealand. Some performances were also recorded and analyzed for their subversive elements, and these served as concrete illustrations of gender subversions. The contribution of performers is key to understanding their motivations and struggles in sustaining a liminal gender identity in contexts that operate under systems founded on a rigid gender binary.

Being IndoFijian

IndoFijians constitute the largest concentration of people of South Asian descent in the Pacific. Their culture and traditions are undoubtedly founded on Hindu Indian principles but have been and still are practiced within and alongside other Pacific communities, in which generations of adopting and shedding has birthed what is called the IndoFijian ethnic and cultural identity. Hence, the identity of the IndoFijian is rooted in liminality—and contention when viewed from the perspective of any claim to indigeneity. For example, even as IndoFijian identity originates from Fiji and has developed within the Pacific context, to class it as indigenous would push against definitional indices and limitations offered by several historians and anthropologists.

The injection of Indian indentured workers into Fiji by British colonizers as a solution to labor shortages between 1879 to 1916 began a transition that would reconfigure not only the identity of a group of people but also that of a nation and a region. The Fiji that Indians arrived to was an infant British colony, experiencing its share of teething problems in negotiating with existing Fijian political structures and hierarchies, into which these laborers became an

additional and significant influencing factor. In the years after Fiji's independence, Becker (1995: 15) notes "the enhanced awareness of Fijian ethnicity and of both Indian and Western infringement on indigenous lifeways occasioned a popular movement, supported by the chiefly leaders to return to indigenous customs." The coups of 1987 and 2000 were explicitly blamed on the increasing success of IndoFijian political involvement and its threat to indigenous rights. Rabuka (2012: 9), the 1987 coup leader and afterward Fiji's prime minister, claims that "the tension in the relationship between indigenous Fijians and our Indian population had been building up in the 1970's and 1980's . . . and was fanned by the racial nature of party political confrontation in parliament."

Racially charged tenuous political conditions and contentions became apparent postindependence, and the Fijian coups acted as highlighters that emphasized ethnic differences. The media and international attention paid to postindependence political upheavals may also have shadowed the underlying power politics that plagued Fiji preannexation.

Fiji's cession to Britain in 1874 was completed amid immense intraracial political volatility and power struggle involving violent suppressions of certain provinces and alliances by Cakobau and other chiefs loyal to him. The declaration of Cakobau as Fiji's king was further evidence of "a regional system" comprising "Fiji's eastern islands together with eastern and southern Viti Levu" that existed even "before the Europeans arrived" (Norton 2012: 20). Historical accounts by Norton (2012) and Howard (1991) attribute significant blame for Fiji's recurring political issues, even in the independent and modern nation, on unequal power sharing that always tipped in favor of powerful individuals from eastern Fiji, which deprived other regions of much power or control. This resulted in the emergence of short-lived yet strong insurgencies, such as the cult movement called *Wai Ni Tuka* (The Water of Immortal Youth) that existed around the 1860s and 1870s, and antigovernment figures like Apolosi Nawai, who from the 1920s to the late 1930s remained a thorn in the side of administrations backed by colonial authorities. These rebellions received harsh treatments in the form of arrests, imprisonment, and banishment. Since admitting to this preexisting intraracial power struggle was undesirable for Fijian leaders, IndoFijians as a group proved to be a readily available, easily justifiable, and conveniently placed scapegoat. Brij Lal (2009: 72) observes that even in the 2006 coup, in which all major players were indigenous, the blame landed with IndoFijians as soon as the formerly deposed IndoFijian prime minister from the 1999 elections, Mahendra Chaudhry, joined the postcoup interim administration. IndoFijians cannot be clearly and completely disconnected from any responsibility for Fiji's political problems, but with that in mind, they should also not be purported to be the sole cause for all these issues. However, as has been stated earlier in this paper, indenture

had sown certain seeds that have and will continue to produce both expected and unexpected results.

The indenture period, in a critical sense, had been an initiation ritual, one filled with pain, anguish, and toil that would later see the birth of new identities. Even for those indentured laborers who would later return to India, their experiences in this Pacific British colony would remain a powerful memory. The narrations of *girmit* (indenture) by various writers of that era clarify that from the onset of their journeys, Indians had to deal with the presence of others on ships they boarded. While the laborers were sourced from India, they were from different villages, regions, and states, as well as from diverse social backgrounds, most prominently determined by the caste system. The unavoidable interactions within space-restricted ships over several months had the effect of severing old ties and creating new ones. Gillion (1973: 122) explains, "In India social status, marriage, eating arrangements, and occupations were determined by caste, but these distinctions were all but obliterated in the depots, ships, and plantations. A new pattern of association, work, and marriage was imposed by the indenture system." Depots, ships and plantations symbolize points where "connecting and disconnecting, the hooking and unhooking of elements" (Slack 1996: 45) occurred, thereby articulating a new and contextually specific identity: the IndoFijian. If a few months of exchanges can erode the historically instituted ideology of caste, then surely one can expect more substantial shedding and adoption of identity characteristics through years of communication with other dominant ethnicities on these Fijian islands. My central argument for this article is derived from this assimilation of values and ideologies, and qawwali as a cultural artform and practice in many ways illustrates this. When old Southeast Asian forms of qawwali are compared with the form that exists and is performed among IndoFijians today, the differences between the two become apparent, and these serve as testaments to the process through which the current form has been articulated.

The IndoFijians this research specifically studies, which are the female performers of qawwali, are considered liminal due to their subversive practices and performances that ultimately cause their othering. I argue that through their performance, they articulate a public presence and a social image that compels their entry into discourses. Following Sharma's (2006: 30) rationale for understanding cultural performances as "sites of community dialogue," which are useful "for fostering social change," I present female qawwal as liminal others at the forefront of gender negotiations. As Sharma (2006: 72–73) notes, in some Indian performance forms, qawwali establishes opportunities to "modify or sabotage the dominant oppressive rhetoric" in society, because these performances are "less rigid compared to a literal text" and the improvised nature of these genres provides "more space for its participants to derive multiple

expressions and interpretations." This discursive involvement has two potential social effects. First, these female qawwali performers challenge the historical practice of ignorance, whether intentional or otherwise, whereby religious and cultural authorities neither publicly acknowledge nor explicitly condemn them. Second, these female performers create circumstances for their social claims to be discussed, debated, and negotiated. Their constant existence in various social spaces requires clarification or justification. Their bodies carry meaning, their presence asks questions, their corporeality destabilizes hegemony, and their performance redefines reality. The bodies of these performers speak and ask questions, not just through the words of their songs but also through their presence and actions. These generate the conditions for reassessment and reevaluation of tradition, culture, and social expectations. Nonetheless, Clery (2014: 212) warns "performances can provide 'safe' spaces for reflection and dialogue; however, *speaking out* is always a complex, risky, and political act, despite the cloaks of metaphor and playfulness that may help to enable expression" (emphasis added). As this paper discusses, the performers as social beings have struggled to justify their existence to a society always contemplating and enacting measures of discouraging subversive acts and demeaning subverts. In interactions with performers in interview scenarios, a sense of separation and difference is embodied within their discussions about how society sees and interprets them. As much and as often as these subversive performers try to integrate with society, they constantly encounter situations that remind them of their difference.

IndoFijian Patriarchy

Kandiyoti (1988: 274) argues that "of all the concepts generated by contemporary feminist theory, patriarchy is probably the most overused, and in some respects, the most under-theorized" or at least in need of more contextualization. Many societies, even beyond the geographical boundaries of Fiji, still exist today that are heavily administered by patriarchal notions and are relatively unaffected by global appraisal in the status and awareness of women. This entails the continuous suppression of women by denying their legal and economic rights, as well as regulating their sexuality, which in many instances is the most powerful tool used against them. Lacking theoretical and critical insights into such societies, coupled with those aspects of modern ones that are still patriarchally structured (such as religion) and immune to feminist views, patriarchy remains a term whose mechanisms are still not exhaustively explored. A complete theoretical framework can only be fashioned once its workings in all societies have been analyzed. This is due to the plasticity of patriarchy; that is, while its androcentric principles are consistent, the way in which it controls societies varies. Religion, economic factors, and basic biological differences

are some mediums and justifications used to enforce patriarchal ideologies on women, with complete submission the only expected response. "Patriarchy as a concept has history of usage among social scientists who used it to refer to a system of government in which men ruled societies through their position as heads of households" (Walby 1990: 19).

The patriarchal system is so finely intertwined in IndoFijian societal structures that its existence is hardly even noticed. What things are done and how they are done in most patriarchal societies are dictated by a society's patriarchal principles, which are seldom questioned or deliberately mentioned. This ideology has been absorbed, internalized, and naturalized by individuals to the extent that it now appears to be the way things are supposed to be. Mostly the mask of culture or tradition veils its true image, allowing its largely undisturbed continuation.

The application of Judith Butler's (1993, 2004, 2007) theory of performativity could help unveil the hidden agenda of patriarchy. Butler, whose work involves "analysing the performative production of sexed identity," focuses on the influencing cultural factors that help shape an individual's gender in such a manner that "sex and gender come to be conceived as natural extensions of a biological body" (Jagger 2008: 53). Butler's theory proposes that the entire process of gender formation has nothing to do with innate or biological conditions. She offers that gender "is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Butler 2007: 43–44). Her well-known illustration based on drag opens up the view of how gender performance can also be outside of social norms, and these actions in turn transform the norms, forming in a sense a new edition or an updated version of the one in which those actions were performed. In that sense, the body as the biological component of any subject also has a vital function in the absorption and display of identity traits. The body could be deemed the stage on which the performance of gender is staged for the wider social audience, because gender formation cannot occur in a vacuum: it requires society's play and a body to be played. The performance reflects the internal perception of self as it has been stenciled out by external forces. Based on Butler's theoretical portrayal of gendered subjectivity, which is constituted through performative acts, this paper first argues that gender is performative and is not linearly dependent on biological features of agents. While a sex-gender system exists in the wider social context, the analysis in this paper is based on the point of view that gender is acted out through repetitive acts and in many instances assumes a "natural" disposition, whereby certain gender forms become accepted as originals to be emulated. Gender, therefore, is a social construct, and if it is done through social interactions, it can be undone or alternatively done within the same sites. Gender discourses play a significant

role in the formation of gender, because the agent is submerged in the discursive sphere that reflects social expectations. The individuals absorb all notions of gender from here, as Laura Shepherd (2008: 20) propounds that "discourses are recognisable as systems of meaning production rather than simply statements or language, systems that fix meaning, however temporarily, and enable us to make sense of the world." Folksongs as cultural heritages are also poetic representations of social discourses covering almost all aspects of society, such as notions of gender, relationship, and religion; thus, they become vital threads of the larger discursive net. As I have argued elsewhere (Shandil 2014), folk performances have historically been heavily invested in supporting gendered ideologies, through which they actively pursued the promotion of patriarchal authority, and traditional gender norms to maintain status quo. Nonetheless, gender subversion is and has always been a possibility due to the performative nature of gender. This is also evident in folksong performances by women who deliberately act outside of their gender norms. Butler argues that gender is not a constant identity, a starting point, or the core of a multilayered structure. Neither is it a finished mold that demands everything poured into it assume a delimited form. For Butler, gender is an identity that takes shape through patterned repetitions of acts. Over time, the patterns become categorized to represent specific gender types. This implies the potential for multiplicities of gender. Butler insists on the body's plastic nature. Nonetheless, its flexibility is delimited by previous bodies. Butler's aim is to remodel these constructs to liberate bodies from appearing as presexed and predestined for certain gendered roles and identities. Portraying sex as fundamental to bodies leads to the "production of duality of bodies that sustains reproductive heterosexuality as compulsory order" (Jagger 2008: 7). Butler asserts that "one is not simply a body, but, in some very key sense one does one's body" (Butler 2004: 902). She goes on to clarify that when one does one's body, one does it differently from those of "one's contemporaries and from one's embodied predecessors and successors as well" (Butler 2004: 902). The body does not exist as a bounded entity but has the capability to absorb and become a range of possibilities presented to it by its surroundings. Therefore, there is no valid justification in curtailing this fluidity by erecting it securely on a polarized gender schema.

Therefore, the application of Butler's theory of performativity to analyze gender patterns in a social group that recognizes only two extremes of gender makes for interesting research. The explosive nature of gender mandates that the gendering process must be heavily regulated in order to maintain conformity to the binary. IndoFijian patriarchal society instituted various mechanisms to control gender formation, and one of these was to create and sustain a discursive environment that supports this polemic structure. The use of folksongs was part of this strategy to discursively standardize and manage gender.

As Bauman and Briggs (1990: 61) note, "Oral narratives, whether song, poetry, story, or autobiographical narrative, are always situated communicative practices that may serve to reproduce a social order." Social events became significant stages for the performance and display of sanctioned gender scripts. The assumption of gender as a cultural construct makes patriarchy a vital phenomenon for study. This is due to the fundamental role it plays in forming the cultural mold within which gender construction occurs. Most, if not all, societies of the world have functioned at one point under patriarchal systems. This depicts the significance of comprehending patriarchy, because most of what we experience in culture or gender has been affected at some point by patriarchal values. Steven Goldberg (2008: 16) concludes from his study of past, present, primitive, preindustrial, and modern societies that "all of the 1500–5000 societies on which we have any evidence have associated hierarchical dominance with men." This fact can be used by propatriarchy advocates to justify its existence and continuation. They may argue that because patriarchy has existed for so long alongside only a negligible number of matriarchal societies, it has assumed "ubiquitous" (Humm 1992: 61) power in structuring, organizing, and developing diverse communities and societies; hence, its presence is necessary. However, feminists point out the oppressive aspects of this system, demanding transformations or preferably absolute elimination. Perhaps attention should be given to the methods applied to keep patriarchy intact and its subservient members passive, obedient, and complicit.

Gill Jagger explains that "the matrix of any idea is reality" (Jagger 2008: 53), implying that most societies carry on the lifestyles they are given by preceding generations, without really inquiring into why such traditions exist and hence reducing the possibility of cultural transformation inspired by critical thought and analysis. The IndoFijian community that has existed in Fiji for more than a hundred years has been patriarchal as long as anyone can remember. Lateef emphasizes that "the Indian family in Fiji is ideally patrilocal, patrilineal and patriarchal. The essential characteristics of which are absolute male dominance and female subordination, males as the economic providers with females and children as the economic dependents" (Lateef 1988: 358). Lerner asserts that "images, metaphors, myths all find expression in forms which are prefigured through past experiences" (1986: 10) and cultural practices often underscore the validity of this argument. For example, IndoFijian folklore has always been supportive of patriarchal notions like the dominance of husband over wife, the role of males in leadership positions, and the creation of gendered roles that almost always delimited female participation to tasks that were hardly given social recognition. Performers of a vast majority of such folklore practices were also males, as seen in the specific context of qawwali.

Folklore and Feminism

The study of folklore as a concept "was introduced by William Thoms to describe all studies focusing on anything old; old buildings, old legal documents, old artefacts, old tales, old songs, old customs" (Oring 1986: 6). The term depicted the materials that had been passed down through generations after being produced and reproduced over time in cultural and traditional contexts. William Thoms, in his essay *What Is Folklore?,* writes that "although folklore is probably as old as mankind, the term 'folklore' is of comparatively recent origin" (Thoms 1965: 4). His comments indicate the initiation of folklore studies that established a demarcated space for the analysis of aesthetic, abstract, and tangible materials. The materials that were previously left out of academia as a result of their origins in stereotypically rural, illiterate, and unstructured societies became the focus of studies in numerous communities. It was immediately proved that the thoughts and attitudes surrounding folk literature had been misguided, because this field proved to be rich, with its own structure, content, and values.

In a definition of folklore offered by MacEdward Leach, a more detailed view is presented that encompasses diverse folk art forms while considering folklore's intimate function of defining a people. Leach (1996: 261) suggests that

> Folklore is the generic term to designate the customs, beliefs, traditions, tales, magical practices, proverbs, songs etc.; in short the accumulated knowledge of a homogenous unsophisticated people, tied together not only by common physical bonds, but also by emotional ones which colour their every expression, giving it unity and individual distinction. All aspects of folklore, probably originally the product of individuals, are taken by the folk and put through a process of re-action, which through constant variation and repetition become a group product.

Some common aspects in these definitions have to do with tradition, repetition or performance, and people. Thoms (1965: 11) offers that "the primary materials of folklore must be certain categories of creative ideas which have become traditional among the people of any society and which may be recognized as their common property." The criterion set here acknowledges the imaginative art and creation by individual communities in their various forms. Leach's definition also presents a common misconception of folklore as being the creative art of the unsophisticated. Dundes (1969: 472) elaborates that in some contexts, people and their folklore are highly esteemed and in others, "the folk were wrongly identified with the illiterate in a literate society and thus the

folk as a concept was identified exclusively with the vulgar and the uneducated." This is one of the reasons there has been a decline in the level of engagement among younger-generation IndoFijians in performances that resonate with the old or traditional styles in which nonelectronic musical instruments such as double-barreled drums, harmonium, and tambourines are at the center of performances. IndoFijian functions, typically celebratory ones, increasingly feature a combination of traditional and modern forms of musical performances, with the latter given more prominence at birthday parties or weddings.

IndoFijian folksongs have been around for more than 130 years.[2] These songs were based on folksongs sung in India and brought to Fiji by immigrant Indians, most of whom arrived under girmit. What differentiated these songs from the India-based songs were the content and contexts of singing. The performers translated their personal experiences on ships, on cane farms, and in line living and the difficulties they faced into songs. These made their songs hybrids of the ones they had been singing in India, and today these songs are deemed solely IndoFijian folksongs. These songs have survived through all these years, which indicates the importance they have held for the performers. Through years of battling with new modes of entertainment, such as television, movies, and recorded songs, live folksong performances have declined but have not been eliminated. Folklore continues to thrive in modern, literate, and academic-oriented societies today as a result of the vital social functions it fulfills. According to Lal (2009), there were instances during the girmit era when laborers would gather to sing a few songs on the days they were not expected to work. These practices continued even after the end of indenture until today, when these performances have come to represent IndoFijian folklore. The length of survival validates the notion, as Oring (1965: 290) identifies in other contexts, that "beneath a great deal of humour lies a deeper meaning," in the sense that folklore had more to offer than enjoyment. Bascom (1986: 33) mentions that "folklore is used in some societies to apply social pressure on those who would deviate from the accepted norm." His comment holds true for IndoFijian folksongs, because in many circumstances, folklore works simultaneously to patronize and discourage unacceptable attitudes and actions. This remains a vital role of folklore, which Oring (1965: 294) feels is "often overlooked," but its function of "maintaining conformity to the accepted patterns of behaviour" continues. In one of the few studies on IndoFijian folklore, Donald Brenneis and Ram Padarath (1979) focus on challenge songs, which were once a common feature of IndoFijian rural settlements. The challenge songs were sung by two groups against each other, and these groups constituted individuals from different religious backgrounds, mainly Muslims, *Sanatanis,* or *Samajis.*[3] Brenneis and Padarath (1979: 57) describe these songs as "witty" and "complex pieces," and "the subject matter of the songs often illuminates moral and social

issues which are important to the villagers." The study by Brenneis and Padarath outlined the use of folk performances as a means of instructing the audience on acceptable social expectations and at times musically debating issues and ideas that concerned them.

Folklore does not operate in a vacuum and is heavily reliant on social contexts. Abrahams (1978: 163) goes as far as to claim that folklore is often a "means by which membership in a community is established, maintained, and celebrated." Gender, ethnicity, nationality, geographic placement, and the economic position of social groups are depicted in the performances of folklore. For example, the IndoFijian community is an ethnic group, with a history that entails the indenture system and colonial administration and with traces of cultural practices belonging to one of the oldest civilizations in the world: India. Oring (1986: 32) maintains that "members of an ethnic group share and identify with historically derived cultural tradition or style, which may be composed of both explicit behavioural features as well as implicit ideas, values and attitudes." The situation becomes more fascinating when women performers are brought into the equation. The study of women-centered folklore provides a distinct view because of the substantially different experiences of women in a culture that is patriarchal and androgenic, compounded by their colonized status. Hence, comprehending the context of performers of folklore is essential to the conception of folklore.

The mechanisms of performances as related by some researchers of folklore overlap in many regards with Butler's theory of performativity. Sawin (2002) stresses that the emotions and personalities of performers emerge as powerful determinants in forming the overall image of folklore. Just as Butler (2004: 904) maintains that "the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time," Sawin (2002: 45) maintains that

> Performance is a multi-layered phenomenon. We must constantly be aware both of the actual human beings who act and observe and of the relative subject positions posited by the culture and genre. Further, we must recognize that these discursive positions in a sense *create* the participants (as performers/spectators), while the participants (as performer/audience) reciprocally *create* these positions as effective social realities by embodying and reinstating them.

Recurring performances of certain styles, themes, and rituals through folklore leads to their naturalization in societies. This naturalization leads these communities to claim ownership over these styles. To ensure its survival, folklore has to be performed as a form of reiteration. Kapchan (2013: 479) believes that the potential in folklore to sustain tradition creation through repetitions

is the cause for the shift in methodology by ethnographers studying folklore. These researchers move from studying "static texts" that had been "severed from their ground of enunciation" to studying performances of folklore as its scope lies beyond what inscribed materials capture. Schechner (1988: 265) classifies performing "as a public dreaming" where revelations are made in two distinct ways. First, those things are revealed that may have been blocked for such a long time that they have turned into fantasies and have been kept from materializing by the same powers that blocked them initially. Second, views and opinions are expressed that would in normative circumstances "have had a hard time getting expressed at all" (Schechner 1988: 265). Thus, analyzing performances of folksongs is a means of peering into the societies they originate in. Bauman and Briggs (1990: 73) assert that "performance puts the act of speaking on display; objectifies it, lifts it to a degree from its interactional setting and opens it to scrutiny by an audience." One aspect of folklore that requires some specific attention is the involvement of female performers.

Reverend Thiselton-Dyer's publication of *Folk-Lore of Women* in 1906 is considered to be one of the first to call attention to the presence of women in folklore. Now folklorists study folklore produced and performed by women and the unique reflections women-oriented folklore present. Jordan and De Caro (1986: 518) note that women's folklore "has revealed a fresh vantage point from which to look at the world." They credit this positional change for the more comprehensive insight into the mechanisms of women's world. Understanding women's version of events also allows a reevaluation of men's world and how it functions and creates structured societies, mainly in restrictive patriarchal contexts. The interrelationship and interdependence between these two worlds is revealed, together with the biases, oppressive principles, and underlying gender stereotypes. These stereotypes not only exist in men's imagination but also as influencing factors that affect realities in everyday life. However, more intriguing is the complicity on the part of women who encourage, abide by, and discursively enforce these forms as a result of their upbringing, which has engrained existing gender norms in them. IndoFijian communities that uncompromisingly affirm a patriarchal structure and permit exclusively heterosexually bounded relationships are in principle antagonistic toward feminist ideologies (see also Narayan 1997).

With the establishment of feminine perspectives and themes in folklore, it is only fair to perform deeper research to establish the workings of folklore and how these fair under a feminist gaze. Sawin (2002: 41) suggests a "gender-sensitive theory of performance" to evaluate folklore performances to reveal undisclosed gendered ideologies. She reveals several reasons behind male hesitance to grant women uncontrolled access to public performances. First, they fear that women performers could persuasively portray nonnormative and socially

unapproved images of females in performances. Furthermore, women could snatch positions of prestige in a conventionally male-dominated performance space. In the IndoFijian setting, women perform within the social boundaries monitored and enforced by patriarchal powers. With situations such as this, according to Nichole Kousaleos (1999: 19), "feminist folklorists have looked to women's experience and their expressions in all its various forms to examine the reality of women's lives in various cultures and contexts." An interesting discussion can also be done on IndoFijian female folk performers, such as female qawwal, because they are engaged in a performance within a performance whereby the singers perform the songs while performing their gender. The conflation of these performances merits elaboration.

What Is Qawwali?

Inayatullah and Boxwell (2003: 220) define qawwali as "a fusion of the emotional power of Indian music with the emotional content of Sufi mystical poetry." It is a performance genre that combines poetry, song, and music; has roots in South Asia, specifically India and Pakistan; and was brought to Fiji during indenture. Traditionally, in Fiji, qawwali was considered *deni mazhab* (spirituality in religion). This meant that qawwali performance was considered service to religion, which mandated guidelines, restrictions, set expectations, and aims. "The word qawwali itself is derived from the Arabic word *qaulah,* meaning to speak or give opinion" (Inayatullah and Boxwell 2003: 221), but for IndoFijians the term has attained a nuanced meaning. In addition to referring to a musical genre, the performance event is called qawwali. Therefore, it is correct to say *Ham kawali sunta hai* (I am listening to qawwali) and *Ham kawali jata hai* (I am going to a qawwali). Khan,[4] a qawwali promoter and enthusiast, explains that his paternal grandfather was instrumental in initiating qawwali in Fiji by using his knowledge and experiences with qawwali from India (Khan 2017). Brenneis (1983: 63) notes that while the qawwali in Fiji is "not markedly different from those found in India and indeed often seen to have originated there, the performances of the texts have been radically transformed along lines both constant with and contributing to the more general transformation of Indian life in Fiji." The "texts" that Brenneis refers to are religious writings and holy books that qawwali performers in the indenture and immediate postindenture Fiji exclusively referenced in preparing the content of their songs and poetry. Over time, other texts such as Hindi films have become source material for performers.

Amir Khusrau is credited with the inception of qawwali as a musical genre. As a court poet, he devised a creative strategy of combining music with religious content for its dissemination to new subjects that were added to the Khalji dynasty in India. This practice, called *zikr* (remembrance), became a way of

bringing god into discourses and discussions "to help people to understand Allah, the Prophet, *pirs* (saints) and their greatness" (Bhattacharjee and Alam 2012: 212). Specific subgenres of qawwali existed to accomplish this purpose; for example, *hamd* were songs about Allah, *nath* were songs about the Prophet Mohammad, and *qatat* were songs for pirs. The first two on this list are still performed in Fiji, albeit in modernized versions. Performers and fans use the same or similar names for the various segments of the performance. Qureshi clarifies "*sufi* poetry, the source of qawwali texts, constitutes a principal vehicle for expressing and communicating mystical thought and experience" (1986: 83). Qawwali, therefore, was traditionally from its inception performed in *sama* or *mehfil-e-sama* (assembly to listen). In this case, people gathered to listen to musical performances based on Sufi traditions, where qawwal were tasked with articulating Allah's worship through the combination of poetry with music. In India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, these performances were held in *dargah* (shrines) that were graves of saints and spiritual leaders. The dargah could also be any site associated with saints when they were alive. The practice was at first marked on specific days of the week when a male lead qawwal would gather a few other singers to comprise a chorus and perform renditions of "philosophical verses in several languages . . . embellished with clapping and some musical instruments" (Bhattacharjee and Alam 2012: 211).

Even though almost all religions have in their devotional repertoire, some form of musical component, what is most fascinating about qawwali has been its ability to survive in various forms that clearly resonate the original genre, especially within communities geographically removed from South Asia (Newell 2007: xvii). In Fiji and New Zealand, for instance, qawwali maintains an undeniable presence within the conglomeration of multiple Pacific cultures. As Newell (2007: xvii) and other researchers have identified, qawwali is a blending of "musical sounds" with "song texts" that has traditionally been "constructed and performed with the explicit intention of guiding the listener into subjective states of religious experience" or, in other words, to enhance worship of god as a medium of connecting the natural world of listeners with a spiritual dimension. To attain this "spiritual nourishment, men—and, rarely, women" (Qureshi 1986: 1) attended these performances. While Qureshi does not clarify why women were given access to these venues on rare occasions, it would not be incorrect to speculate that these could be for catering purposes or when these women came from powerful families whose male relatives could have wielded the power to momentarily bend social norms. In Fiji, performance events, even today, can have exclusively male attendance, especially when the event features Islamic qawwali and even when these are part of social occasions like weddings. The separation of genders in such spaces means that women are unable to witness these performances, because these are always located in the male space. In

addition to being highly gendered, qawwali performances in Fiji, as with most other folk and cultural practices, were didactic in nature and purpose. Brenneis explains "whether religious or secular . . . mental improvement and clarity, not intoxication" (1983: 71), was the acknowledged purpose of cultural perfor- mances, because they were seen as a means of "bringing change" and "causing social transformation" (1983: 70). Qawwali's multifarious applicability is evi- denced in its use for religion, ritual, popular culture, and creative art (Sakata 1994: 91). As this paper argues, women have also used the medium of qawwali to make a mark in a male-dominated genre and hence make qawwali a space for cultural transformation, in addition to its other social uses.

Religion and Society

The overwhelming attachment of people to music inspired the absorption of performances into all important social and cultural events, such as weddings, festivals, and even funeral rites, as witnessed quite significantly in IndoFijian communities. In the specific case of qawwali, it represented an important source of meaningful entertainment as performers and audiences spent several hours engaged in performances, mainly in the pre-1980s era, when qawwali had min- imal competition from other forms of entertainment and was still considered a religious performance. As Dhiren Prasad narrates:

> Qawwali was meant to promote the Islamic faith but then, Hindus were also present in the audience, so they decided, let us sing some Hindu songs too. Like there was this qawwal known as Habib Painter and he was a very old qawwal. He was from India. He would sing songs and then tell a parable of how the song relates to a story. The people who sat in those performances were people who were spiritual, and they would sit and discuss spiritual things. When people sit through the form of performances we have today you cannot expect them to be discussing spiritual things. Those were what we could call "high standard" but today the "high standards" refer to how well someone can insult the other person through their performances. Now even the dholakia (dhol (drum) player) compete with each other, trying to out- play the opposing team's dholakiya. (D. Prasad, pers. comm.)

   The high and low standards that Dhiren Prasad brings up refer to the opin- ion people have and have had of qawwali performances. He implies that the audiences of the old form of qawwali were people who wanted to hear philo- sophical and religious deliberations through a poetic medium, and this he clas- sifies as high standard. He witnessed high-standard performances as a child

in the 1970s and performed such styles in the 1980s and 1990s, by which time he also saw the emergence and development of low-standard forms in which the focus had shifted from content to style. This meant that performances were appreciated for how well performers insulted and demeaned their opponents. One of the key reasons performers have had to resort to less spiritual forms of performance has been the need to keep audiences entertained and engaged with qawwali performances, especially with increasing competition from modern forms of musical performances. In addition, with passing time, new performers have appeared who are not privy to the roots of qawwali. They take their cue from existing modern-style qawwal and begin performing on the qawwali stage solely based on their singing and musical abilities, without going through rigorous study of religious texts like their traditional counterparts. Such practices have opened the doors for the inclusion of vulgar content in the performance of qawwali, because qawwal with better abilities at insulting opponents drew larger crowds and could charge higher fees. While the use of vulgarity and insults in qawwali was one of its less pleasant transformations, the inclusion of performers from a more diverse background was one of its greatest features. Qawwali was a cultural practice that originated among the followers of Islam, and this was the case in Fiji until many Hindus became involved in its performance. Initially, this meant that Hindus sang about Islamic history and philosophies. Because a significant number of qawwal were emerging from Hindu backgrounds, it was only a matter of time before the Islamic genre was adopted into a Hindu subgenre called *bhajan* qawwali. In Fiji, similar to what Rashid (2017: 273) found in other communities, "qawwali performance became a space for the manifestation of multiple cultural contacts, Indic and Islamicate" that helped define new cultural identities like that of IndoFijians. Even today, despite the transformations to the genre, "qawwali performance remains a shared cultural space, which continues to adapt and grow. It is not meant to efface religious difference, but to recognise that contestations of identification occur on multiple levels" (Rashid 2017: 273). As a derivative of Islamic qawwali, bhajan qawwali follows a similar structure to the Islamic version but is based on content from Hindu religious texts like the Ramayana. Even today, the IndoFijian qawwali genre is predominantly performed by Hindu singers and musicians. While qawwali was encountering all these transformations, along the way female qawwal entered the qawwali stage and became one of the most significant changes. This paper identifies the contribution of three female qawwal, all of whom came from Hindu backgrounds. Of the three female qawwal considered in this research, only Manju had performed both Islamic and bhajan qawwali. Shalini performed bhajans as a separate genre and competed in bhajan competitions, but these were not performed in qawwali format. Sushil Krishna, who was the first female qawwal, emerged on the qawwali stage in the

late 1980s and performed the modern style in which she focused on engaging in exchanging insults with her male opponents on stage. Another discovery of field consultants was that although current competitions mostly feature two qawwal, in many instances historically, several qawwal gathered at one setting and performed competitively following the same *muqabala* (competition) strategies against each other simultaneously. None of the female qawwal were involved in such performances.

Media

Miller (2008: 298) notes that the qawwali that developed in Fiji had no direct connection with the mystical Sufi (Muslim) tradition associated with the thirteenth-century poet-musician Amir Khusrau, because there were few members of this order among the *girmitiyas* (indentured laborers). He goes on to point out that Hindi films[5] were perhaps a greater influence on styles that were used in Fiji. However, as Khan (2017) explains, the generation prior to his own had carried the idea from India and initiated the performances in Fiji. Khan's father was an authority on the traditional qawwali style seen mostly in Western Fiji, and his ensuing generations actively promote qawwali and support qawwal (performers). Furthermore, while Bollywood movies were available in Fiji, they were not accessible in all regions, because cinemas were mostly located in urban areas and televisions became available in Fiji considerably later.

   One of the main factors that has influenced change in the Indian version of qawwali has been the use of qawwali in the Indian film industry, or Bollywood. With the overwhelming nature of Bollywood's impact on Indian way of life, the adoption of traditional performance forms into commercialized activities is not always a question of if but when. There is criticism of filmy[6] (featuring in films) qawwali, which is accused of being "a packaged cultural commodity" that has "little or no spiritual quotient," and that those who consume such materials substantiate a lack of religious and spiritual affinity (Bhattacharjee and Alam 2012: 222). Bhattacharjee and Alam note that this criticism was aggravated when qawwal began performing in "pubs, discotheques and lounges to entertain the people," which was unacceptable to conservatives, because such venues were associated with "ungodly activities" (2012: 222). In Fiji, however, those who have previously been critical of the new qawwali form have softened their condemnation, citing the crucial role these nuanced performances have played in preventing qawwali from dying out. This illustrates a sort of role reversal of religion and culture with music. Historically, people had an attachment to religion and culture, so music became the medium through which people engaged with matters of spirit and identity. Today, music has a global appeal and a heavy following, and there is an effort to harness music's popularity to disseminate religious and cultural values.

Responses to Changes

Shalini[7] is currently the only active IndoFijian female qawwal in the Pacific region, and her heavy borrowing from movies and performance of modern or filmy qawwali is a typical representation of the changes affecting this genre. She is an example of those qawwal who have embraced modern themes and styles quite overtly. By doing so, she has altered the nature of the genre by positioning herself, a woman, as a dominant player in that field. Furthermore, she has brought changes to qawwali's focus and content by singing on modern topics. These qualify as performative acts on Shalini's part, because through her performances, she has revolutionized the expectations of qawwali.

Qawwali's appeal now reaches across a wider social section, but distortion of older, more religious-based qawwali has been the price paid in materializing this change. On a positive note, however, the loosening of restrictions and formation of new subgenres have been significant in creating the space for the emergence of female qawwal. The changes to qawwali are not completely surprising, because its genesis was already one that echoed subversion of existing reality rather than conformity. Qureshi expounds that the "sufi ideology is a response to orthodox Islam" (1986: 79), which is founded on philosophies of monotheism and an unquestionable distinction between god as Creator and humankind as Created. However, sufi doctrines emphasize an intricate and intimate bond between Creator and Created, symbolized through love. This "mystical love is at the centre of sufi ideologies" (Qureshi 1986: 79) and is reflected in qawwali performances. The segment in qawwali, called *ashiqana* (erotic) exclusively features the themes of love, intimacy, and romance. Fiji's modern qawwali form predominantly reflects a concept of love that is not spiritual but is reflective of heterosexual intimacy. The Sufi rendition of kinship between god and men had already set a trajectory of subversion by depicting intimacy in god–men relations, which then set the platform for fledgling of nonconformist practices. The inclusion and participation of females in qawwali is yet another transformation that results from the nonconforming approach of Sufi ideology.

Changes have not necessarily been detrimental to qawwali's image and purpose; for instance, among IndoFijians, qawwali performances are no longer associated with one community or religious group. As Rashid (2017: 271) shows, in the context of qawwali in America, "the performance of qawwali is a multireligious site, where boundaries are contested and refashioned." The arguments presented in this paper have depicted that the boundaries that are challenged are not only cultural and religious but also gender related, as clearly witnessed in the identity of female qawwal, an identity that did not

exist a few decades ago. This discussion follows the subversive practices of
a few individuals who through their subversion have changed the image of
an important cultural performance, if not an entire community's identity.
This resonates with social intercessions introduced by Sufis, who as "mystics
opposed the vulgar display of wealth and power in public life by the *ulema*
(ruling class) or their willingness to serve 'ungodly' rulers" (Bhattacharjee
and Alam 2012: 211). Bhattacharjee and Alam note "many began to lead a
retired ascetic life, having nothing to do with the state . . . emphasizing upon
free thought and liberal ideas, turned to meditation, to achieve religious sat-
isfaction" (2012: 211). In attempting to resist what they considered flaws in
society's organization, Sufis also chose musical performances as the medium
to circulate counterhegemonic thought to motivate and inspire change. As
Dolan (2005: 91) argues, "People do performance, in both performative
and material ways; publicly practicing performance makes it a tool of both
expression and intervention, of communication and fantasy, of reality and
hope."

   Musical performances like qawwali are ideal mediums for generating change
through resistance, because they are "participatory, easily transmitted," and
accessible; in particular, qawwali "has a strong symbolic language that is easy to
adapt to different situations" (Rashid 2017: 280). Rashid's assertion is substan-
tiated by the versatility witnessed in qawwali performances and the changes to
the genre. For example, in breaking from norm, females have emerged as qaw-
wal, even though only one remains actively engaged in qawwali performances
among IndoFijian communities. This has subversive implications on multiple
levels, because these women challenge not only the one-gender monopoly of
qawwali but also the hegemony of social spaces.

The Female Qawwal

The late Sushil symbolized a notable exception among IndoFijian cultural
performances by becoming the first female qawwal in the late 1980s. In
permeating gender boundaries of cultural performances, she founded the
IndoFijian female qawwal identity. Manju and Shalini began performing
wedding folksongs in the 2000s and later segued into performing qawwali.
Shalini remains active on the qawwali stage, while Manju decided to delimit
her performances to wedding songs after her qawwali mentor passed away
in 2011. Sushil created a niche for herself on the qawwali stage by displaying
boldness in engaging with her onstage male opponents. Since she performed
where IndoFijian feminine expectations required her to be quiet, respect-
ful, and demure, her subversion of these expectations made her ideal for the
qawwali stage. Insults were popular, and when these were exchanged between

performers of the opposite sex, the appeal was greater for the audience. The following analysis based on one of the only recorded qawwali performances by Sushil illustrates a typical male versus female qawwali competition. It must be mentioned at the onset that while the male qawwal's insults are typical of most male performers in such contexts, Sushil is the exception in this case, because she is equally vocal and insulting—unlike Manju or Shalini, who were far more reserved in insulting their opponents. As Khan (2017), an IndoFijian qawwali expert, relates:

> There was a well-known singer, Sushil Krishna who performed in those days. Khalid Hussein Qawwal was her mentor. Unfortunately, there are not many recordings of her performances because during her time we had tapes for recording. This was an expensive affair as you needed tapes, batteries and a radio with recording feature. I know that she sang competition songs with several qawwal.

Khan mentions having heard Sushil perform in qawwali competitions, but earlier in her performance life when she did not use vulgarities. Khan's interview also explained the lack of recordings from that time. Sushil became infamous later in her life for performing subversive content. Rajendra Prasad[8] narrates Sushil's life briefly:

> I have heard recordings of Sushil's performances although I never personally attended her performance. I know she challenged Nura Qawwal and Yasin Qawwal. I do remember overhearing my female relations criticising the fact that Sushil sang vulgarities in the presence of men. This is because people do perform vulgarity in qawwali. The unfortunate thing was that more women were unappreciative of her performances than men. This was simply because they had ideas about what a perfect woman was supposed to be and going outside that role was unacceptable. So, they doubted the femininity of a woman in such a position. (Prasad 2017)

While Rajendra Prasad's comments narrate the general opinion women had of Sushil, it is understood that women used secondhand information from men to form these viewpoints, because females traditionally did not attend muqabala events. This is evidence of female complicity in oppressive gender structures and the unquestioned influence of ideological frameworks.

Because only an audio-recorded version of this qawwali was available, this analysis focuses on lyrics. Nonetheless, lyrics provide evidence of Sushil's transgression of codes of femininity. Using invectives contravenes conventional

qawwali style, but both qawwal maintain consistency in the structure of their performances. Each takes ten to fifteen minutes for rebuttals and arguments. Every segment of performance is composed of *shayari,* a short narration (which could precede songs or be included midsong), and song. The qawwal lays a stirring foundation with a shayari, preparing audiences for the rest of the segment. For example, the excerpt below marks Sushil's response to Vijendra's opening performance. Initially she acknowledges her absence from the stage for a few years, which had caused her songbook to be metaphorically covered in dust: *dhool se lipti kitab* (dust covered book). She confesses that competing with a renowned opponent is an immense task yet challenges Vijendra, stating that she will put his reputation to the test:

Aem veri veri hepi todae ae hait iu.	I am very happy today, I hate you.
Sori nahi bolo sori sori will not help iu,	I will not say sorry because sorry will not help you,
Iu ar veri veri noti toh ae hait iu.	You are very naughty, so I hate you.

Use of English in songs is apparent from the outset. Both qawwal do this but Sushil more so. This event already features a female qawwal; therefore, English lyrics mark yet another shift from convention. Some interpret this change as a necessary innovation to appeal to younger audiences, while others see it as distortion of tradition. The introduction between shayari and song outlines the argument's focus to audiences. For example, Sushil claims that Vijendra asked her to apologize to him without stating any reason for apologizing. After identifying this, Sushil sings a song repeatedly disagreeing to offer apology. This essentially depicts public female rebellion against patriarchal authority and mandatory female submission. She then accuses him of being *noti* (naughty), which later builds up into more insults. She also gives her first justification for singing in this style, stating "*abh toh lakta hai ki mai iski latest ka jawab latest[9] se de rahi hun aur qawwali me sher bol bol ke deti hun*" (it is evident now that I am responding to his latest with my own latest and with shayari). In the next shayari she calls Vijendra a dog, saying "*Arre kutr ke tarif ko badlna hi paḍega*" (alter this dog's reputation). The performance scenario does not negate this comment's potential emotional effect on Vijendra, a male in a patriarchal society and the beneficiary of social codes put in place restricting females from exactly this sort of behavior. Sushil continues her insults, targeting and undermining Vijendra's performance capabilities. She intensifies her rebuttals with constant references to her strength and Vijendra's destruction resulting from her commitment to defeat him. In the following lines, she narrates awareness of her stylistic variations:

Lekin aaj mei kissi aur tarike se gaati hun.	Today, however, I am singing in a different style.
Shayad aap log ko aaj ke mugable ki zada mazza aaye kiyunki mei uske latest ka latest se latest me jawab deti hun.	I feel that you will find more enjoyment in today's performance because I respond to his latest with my own latest.
Shaitan ki raha me jab yeh chalat hai toh mujhe bhi chalna hi paḍega . . .	Since you have started this walk on the devil's path, I will surely follow you . . .

Sushil is principally targeting Vijendra, not his singing style or songs' content. This magnifies Sushil's subversiveness, because unlike Shalini, who uses a nonconfrontational strategy, Sushil emulates those qawwal who, in breaking from tradition, personalize rebuttals rather than argue on content. From the standpoint of a hegemonic IndoFijian masculinity, Vijendra should find Sushil's attitude unacceptable and ideally mount counterarguments. Sushil's personal attacks have left both his performance skills and male supremacy vulnerable, and she even suggests physical violence against him: "*Laat ghusa khana hai jabdha yun fadhwana hai toh*" (if you want to be punched and kicked and your jaw dislocated).

Sushil uses the logic of "a taste of your own medicine" by constantly clarifying that she is following a style initiated by qawwal like Vijendra. She claims to be following the "devil's path" only to pursue him and declares that Vijendra is only a calf in comparison to her, indicating that he is naïve as a qawwal:

| *Humne dekhe hai tumhare jaise bahut bacheḍhe.* | I have seen many calves like you. |

In response to Sushil, Vijendra's arguments seem relatively weak. His performance comprises of several repeated statements. He mainly argues that Sushil is *machiwa nahi* (immature) and *besaram* (shameless). He cautions that further insults will compel him to react in ways that would make Sushil flee. Sushil has done enough to aggravate Vijendra and cause him to reciprocate her insults. His repeated cautioning and lackluster response indicate one of two things: either he chooses to take the higher road instead of singing vulgar songs or realizing that he cannot match Sushil's subversion, he creates the illusion that although he can insult her, he decides not to do so. His lines, for instance, identify Sushil as immature and shameless, implying that he is mature enough to choose appropriate content:

Dosto yeh bilkul machiwa nahi,	Friends she is not mature at all,
Yeh jitna purana hoti hai utna hi besaram hoti hai.	The older she gets the more shameless she becomes.

Sushil's subversion is heightened by her aggressive approach. She already transgresses gender expectations by being present on this male stage; in addition, she verbalizes expletives and makes public references to forbidden themes. In the extract below, Sushil sings about sexual intercourse, not from a passive feminine perspective but from one in which she penetrates. The words *bhoku* (poke or penetrate) and *lagḍhu* (rub) place her in the position of doer rather than receiver, as heteronormativity requires:

Jisko me kas ke bhoku woh ghabḍha ke mujhse bole,	Whoever I poke with force, calls out to me in shock,
Dhire Sushil Dhire Dhire Sushil Dhire.	Slowly Sushil, slowly Sushil, slowly.
Jada na humkho kahe dena,	Do not say a lot against me,
Warna aaj raat ke tum bolio Sushil pirae Sushil pirae.	Otherwise tonight you will shout out, it hurts Sushil, it hurts.
Jisko mai kaske laghḍhu chilla ke ghabḍha ke bole,	Whoever I rub with force shouts out and says,
Dhire Sushil Dhire Dhire Sushil Dhire.	Slowly Sushil, slowly Sushil, slowly.

Sushil states "*Teer choḍhne se pahile mai nishana laga leti hun*" (I target precisely before I let the arrow go) as clarification that her vulgarity is targeted to frustrate Vijendra. She reaches further subversive extremities in referring to Vijendra's wife in rebuttals. Refraining from comments on opponents' female relations is an unwritten, yet implicitly emphasized, qawwali code. When needed, this rule is included in qawwal's contracts, and in some programs, comperes explicitly instruct performers against insulting female relatives. In mentioning Vijendra's wife, Sushil first breaches this code. Second, she breaks from the expectation of showing empathy for a fellow female. Sushil disregards this expectation and tells Vijendra, "*Jao apne ghar me jao apne biwi ke sath me chuḍhiya todho aur kalaiya moḍho*" (go to your home and then break your wife's bangles and twist her wrists) in response to his attacks. This is a reference to sexual intercourse that Vijendra insinuated he would do to Sushil. Her choice here parallels her with many male qawwal who, to display a masculine rebellious nature, often deliberately break performance codes. Sushil does not shun from embodying rebellion even when it requires picking on other females with

whom she is expected to empathize. Sushil concludes her sexualized offensive by again threatening physical violence "*Inko jaḍhoo se marungi inko laat bhi marungi*" (I will beat him with a broom and kick him around). Choosing the broom as her weapon is symbolic, because brooms are commonly associated with female domesticized roles.

Vijendra's next round follows a similar trajectory in labeling Sushil naïve: "*Tum toh ek nadaan chokri kiyun humse takrati*" (You are just a naïve girl why would you pick a fight with me). This, in his opinion, is sufficient cause for Sushil to cease performing: "*Khaer tumhari isse me hai ki lelo ghar ke raaste*" (It would be better for you to start following the path homeward).

Sushil's rebuttal proves interesting in its demonstration of activism against gender biases. IndoFijian cultural performances have always been gendered, and the few genres dominated by women performers were often relegated "to the domestic realm and men's performance activities to the public realm" (Goundar 2015a: 233). Goundar's research on Ramayana recitals identifies some issues of gender within IndoFijian cultural performances in which even within regularly organized cultural events, devotees voice "concerns over female performance in the public realm, centred on the impropriety of a woman sub-jecting herself to the male gaze particularly if she is married and particularly in a mixed-sex performance context" (Goundar 2015a: 233). With this already registering as problematic in religious genres, Sushil's qawwal identity is poten-tially more transgressive due to qawwali's focus on both religion and entertain-ment, with increasingly more emphasis on the latter. Vijendra labeling Sushil a *nadaan chokri* (naïve girl) hints at this gendered segregation, which he qualifies by repeatedly telling her to resume domestic responsibilities. Khan (2017) says of such arguments:

> Comments mostly ask women to return to the kitchen and make *roti*. I have noticed, that when a man and woman compete, the man always reminds the woman that she does not belong to that stage. This is most common with our IndoFijian community, because we believe a wom-an's place is the house, doing kitchen work or washing clothes. The man qawwal will always pick on such things and keep reminding the lady that she should not be on-stage, and her performances should cease. When it is man versus man, they handle each other's insults differently.

Upon realizing Vijendra's hint, Sushil recites a lengthy shayari, focusing on women's strengths and their social, cultural, and emotional contributions to human life. Sushil substantiates her claim "*Agar gustaki hui toh talwaar bhi hai*

nari" (if offended a woman can also be a sword) later by directly swearing at Vijendra.

Masculine expectations compel Vijendra to raise insult levels in asserting his dominance. The audience's shouts indicate appreciation for Sushil's effort and serve as additional impetus for an experienced qawwal to fight for his reputation. However, Vijendra does not introduce new strategies or argument trajectories but instead continues to boast about his qawwali prowess with little evidence. Ultimately, Vijendra's performance is entertaining as far as song and music syncing is concerned but fails in content for being a series of unqualified claims, as shown here:

Sare badan me ekar charbi[10] chadhi hai,	Her entire body is filled with fat,
Taan ki jamna mere samne khadhi hai,	She is standing wide chested before me,
Yeh kya dauḍe gi latest ke rais me.	How will she run in this race for latest songs?
Muh ke fulaye mere agge khadhi hai,	She stands here with an angry face,
Koi na raonak hai ekar agli fais me.	There is no glamour in her ugly face.

Sushil, however, introduces more interesting rebuttal techniques. First, she performs on the tune of Vijendra's previous song and identifies this in the song's introduction. It is clearly meant to disprove Vijendra's earlier assertion that "*Ki tum mere saat chal nahi sakti*" (you cannot move at the same pace as me). Second, taking a cue from other male qawwal who often suggested females return to domestic duties, Sushil states "*Koi jadoo aaj nahi chali Vijenwa laut ke jao apan ganna ke khet me*" (None of your tricks will work today Vijendra, just return to your cane farm), hence telling Vijendra to return to his primary occupation. Field consultants explained that qawwal are mostly part-time performers. Some qawwal sustain themselves financially as full-time performers by charging substantial hiring fees and performing several folk genres for constant income supply. Sushil's act of turning the tables here substantiates her confidence and thorough knowledge of rebuttal tools.

Vijendra's final response remains as ineffective as his earlier rebuttals and attacks. He orders Sushil to "*Jaldi koshish karo abh mahefil se bhaag jane ki*" (Try and run out of this gathering as quickly as you can), claiming that she is irrational and just "*chilati hai gawaro ki tarha*" (shouts mindlessly like an uncultured imp). The same assertions would be more relevant if they came from Sushil, because she has surely outperformed Vijendra. Another weak argument from

Vijendra is his claim "*Tameej nahi hai tumko kuch bhi geet ganne ki*" (you do not comprehend protocols of performing these songs). It is hypocritical because Vijendra, in many instances during that event, resorted to shouting rudely to intimidate Sushil, although he knows such acts are outside traditional qawwali's etiquette. As a male qawwal, he probably feels immune to the repercussions of committing such violations, based on his sense of entitlement to that stage, a space Sushil must fight for. Vijendra delves into some sexual reference depicting himself as a rooster and Sushil a hen when using the idiom "*apna churkhi na fudhwale*" (until her comb is ruptured), a colloquial phrase for sexual intercourse.

Sushil's concluding remarks suggest her realization of being the better qawwal in that muqabala. Such information is mostly gathered by a qawwal's team, who move into and dialogue with audiences. More often one's success is assessed by accounting for claps, shouts, cheers, and monetary gifts received in response to songs' tunes, rhyme and ingenuity of shayari, and the performer's singing ability, musical skills, audience interaction, and ability to frustrate opponents. Sushil outdoes Vijendra in all aspects except music and singing skills, where they were equally effective. Sushil begins with a rude remark reflecting Vijendra's defeat:

Kitne qawwalo se tu bach gaya hai Vijenwa lekin aaj Krishna nikali acha se tumar leedh.[11]	You had escaped from so many qawwal but today Krishna has beaten the shit out of you.

The female performer appears more liberated and upfront with insults than her male opponent. Vijendra continuously tells Sushil to concede defeat on account of his experience but fails to match up with her level of engagement, which incorporates insults and invectives. This reminded me of Manju's comments in relation to her participation in a qawwali muqabala against a male named Bobby. That performance was prematurely stopped when Bobby used vulgarities despite the organizing committee forbidding their inclusion, because the crowd composition included women and children. Bobby resorted to insults because it was the style his fan base preferred. Moreover, male qawwal recognize this as an easy strategy for frustrating female opponents given that they were hesitant to follow suit. In their respective interviews, both Shalini and Manju revealed making requests with organizing committees to institute limits to vulgarity in programs they participated in and they were both involved in performances that ended abruptly when limits were crossed and these qawwal or their supporters intervened and ended the program. Manju related to me her comment to Bobby after such an incident. She narrates, "it's okay that you are singing vulgarities but let me caution you, if a woman opens her mouth and

starts to sing vulgarity, then women definitely know more vulgarity than men" (Manju 2017). She continues, "I explained this to him, nicely. If I begin to sing vulgarity then you will not be able to take it because you cannot match the criticisms a woman can pile on you" (Manju 2017).

Manju's comment is clearly validated in Sushil's performance. Sushil's use of vulgarity, insinuations, and crudity are significantly subversive. She confesses that these are deliberate acts when she sings that she will "beat and sweep" Vijendra and asks "*Kaise marega yeh humko?*" (How will he hit me?), because "*Mahefil dega tanna isko*" (The audience will criticize him for that). This happens toward the end, when Sushil realizes that Vijendra has not engaged much vulgarity, which could be because she has outshone him. Sushil's interpretation may be accurate, because Vijendra was restrictive in his comments and he labeled Sushil besaram for her comments. He is apparently referencing social codes of speech and behavior that prevent public use of certain vocabulary, particularly in mixed-gender situations. This can also be attributed to his unpreparedness for this level of contest from Sushil.

This recording is from the part of Sushil's life when she had gained the confidence to use vulgarities against opponents, just as several male qawwal were doing. This is reflected in her explanation that she would be singing "*kissi aur tarike se*" (in a different way) and then qualifies this comment, saying, "*mei uske latest ka latest se latest me jawab deti hun*" (I will respond to his latest with my very own latest). As noted earlier, "latest" in qawwali contexts now typically refers to vulgar songs or those with double meanings of sexual nature. Sushil's comment announces her decision to perform such songs, motivated by performances of her male contemporaries. Finally, she states:

Aur inhone kya kiya, kuch galti baat kahi hai veshi wagera.	And this one has committed a great mistake by calling me a whore.
Toh mai itna kahena chahati hun. Ki joh aurat ko gali deta hai woh Maa bahen ka izzat kab rakta hoga.	So, I want to say just this. Whoever swears at any woman, he certainly does not safeguard the honour of his own mother and sister.
Dusri taraf yeh dekhi jati hai ki inki tarha, joh lavz yeh bol diya toh inki taraha . . .	Also, I want to bring your attention to his words, so, in the same manner . . .
Aaplog gussana nahi kiyunki jawab deti hun . . .	You (audience) please do not be annoyed by this because I am just responding to what he has said . . .

Inhone kaha veshi toh mai kaheti hun	He called me a whore then I say . . .
. . .	
Agar mai woh hun toh tum ek	If I am that, then you are a pimp.
bahdhwa ho.	

There are a few subversive moments here. First, Sushil claims that Vijendra is unable to safeguard his own mother and sister's honor. Her appeal to the concept of *izzat* (honor) and claims of Vijendra's failure to fulfill his protective obligation essentially question his manhood. Hegemonic male gender identity compels authoritative displays, including protective behavior toward female relations. Second, Sushil publicly swears at a male who infringes on socially expected femininity. A traditional IndoFijian concept of femininity forbids even loud public speaking, let alone use of expletives. Despite the context, Sushil realizes that social conventions are not easily overlooked, mainly when one lives in the same society offstage. Chattier (2008: 73) explains that despite femininity being "a patriarchal fiction which women are socialised to embrace as their own social reality, as their own gender identity regardless of what their lived experiences reveal," it still "compels a particular kind of appearance and adopting a particular set of behaviour traits that is considered desirable." This explains Sushil's offer of justification even before using the expletive. She maintains that her action is a reaction to Vijendra's pronouncements and clarifies that as a performer, she is obligated to respond.

Nonetheless, what becomes apparent in this scenario is the undercurrent of social codes and the omnipresence of social values. Sushil's justification shows that even performances are social events that despite their need to create a spectacular event, continue to rely on social structures and ideologies to construct meaning. In the moment Sushil verbalizes certain words and performs certain movements, all these are analyzed in real time against a backdrop of set norms and codes. It is essentially this backdrop that qualifies a performance's success or failure. It is in the application of social conventions that performers form their performance material, and audiences use these conventions to analyze what they witness. To exist, to have an identity, is to be relatable to these concepts and conventions, because based on these, identities are articulated. Sushil therefore explains her actions, because her use of certain words in certain contexts can potentially force her outside the matrix of accepted norms. Without such justifications, she risks being found liminal, because although she claims to be a woman, she speaks as a man and on a stage where men have traditionally been the sole occupants. Ultimately, despite explanations, some audience members would still categorize her as a failed embodiment of IndoFijian femininity. This point is illustrated by Vijendra's comment on Sushil's shamelessness. If one were to conceive the stage of performance as something constructed outside

society's network of beliefs, ideologies, values, and principles, in which a per-former is at liberty to say and do whatever is deemed necessary to producing a successful performance, then Vijendra's accusation of shamelessness against Sushil is neither appropriate nor relevant; Vijendra would not be able to call her shameless, because there would be no moral or social standard against which to assess her actions.

However, as analysis of the songs suggest, the stage does not offer any such relief from society. Prasad (D. Prasad, pers. Comm.) says about Sushil's offstage image that "those people who have a real appreciation for traditional music understand the effort of these women. Other people would still raise their eye-brows against such a lady and ask '*kaisan besaram aurat hai?*' (what sort of shame-less woman is this?)." Thus, a male qawwal's use of vulgarity is interpreted as the norm, whereas a female qawwal assumes that she has an obligation to justify any divergences. Regardless of what eventual symbolism is attached to her presence and performance on the qawwali stage, Sushil redefines perceptions of gender through her embodiment of traits that problematize ideals of femininity. Not sur-prisingly, two other female performers entered the field of qawwali some years later. Neither Manju nor Shalini ventured into the levels of subversion of Sushil, but they still entered a male-dominated stage and publicly competed against men. Their conservative approach can be attributed to both these women being wed-ding folksingers who could not allow their reputation to be soiled, because that would mean they would not be hired to perform at weddings, where they mostly had to sing instructions of ideal womanhood and femininity to brides.

Sushil, Manju, and Shalini are still the only three female qawwal to come out of Fiji, and none of them came from an Islamic background, even though qaw-wali has its origins in Islam. When asked as to why more female qawwal did not emerge despite there being several women folksingers, a field consultant, who preferred to remain unidentified, stated:

> Yes, surely the culture affects this. The culture is a major problem, it places many restrictions. In Islam, with our religion women perform-ers will not be able to perform because other men will start to crit-icise this decision. Additionally, people's perception of that lady will be changed even though she is not involved in anything wrong. They would question that if she is performing then when will she have time for cooking and child rearing.

Based on this comment's contextualized truthfulness, women performers risk blighting their reputations because of difficulties in escaping men's voy-euristic gaze. Regardless of their level and nature of participation "they are sexualised because men look at them as desired or despised objects" (Lorber

1994: 93). Another factor that affects the development of female qawwal is that performance venues often separate men and women and qawwali is always performed on the male side. The female would have to sit among an all-male audience, and if there is a muqabala or competitive style of performance, she would inevitably be pressured because of unfamiliarity with that space. In these cases, support is essential, as Khan (2017) explains:

> When I am present for these competitions and I notice that one of the qawwal is getting suppressed too much then because of the knowledge that I have, I sometimes go and whisper into their ears what they could sing about. I have helped Shalini like this. When the lady is surrounded by all males then you can understand the pressure she may face being looked at that way.

Apart from spatial and image-related issues, females must take a longer, more burdensome route to becoming qawwal. Males have an advantage in terms of exposure to qawwali, because they can attend programs from an early age. This enables them to experience the qawwali atmosphere, learn audience preferences, and familiarize themselves with various performance techniques and segments of the genre. Men can also turn apprentice to other qawwal easily. A young and single woman would not be permitted into the companionship of an unrelated man for fears that such actions will cause her to lose her honor. After marriage, a woman would be expected to handle domestic work and motherhood, which would leave her time constrained for training.

All IndoFijian female qawwal started performing later in their lives and were only able to do so because of support from husbands (and husbands' families), who out of an appreciation for the talent of their spouses ignored social conventions to enable these women to enter the qawwali stage. Such support is needed for several reasons. First, a lot of time must be dedicated in preparing for qawwali programs, especially when one is a new qawwal. For example, for a whole-night program, twenty-five to thirty songs need to be prepared. For a short four-hour program, they would need at least twelve. These, together with shayari (poem), must be composed and practiced. A qawwal would also need to have sufficient knowledge of texts and scriptures so that she can create impromptu songs and shayari to rebut her opponent or opponents. For Hindu performers, this would require studying Islamic texts and seeking assistance from scholars to comprehend them. Therefore, many new qawwal opt to become understudies to experienced qawwal. This would again prove difficult for a female, because she would have to negotiate numerous social codes to become an apprentice of a male qawwal. Her husband would need to be extremely supportive, because he would be expected to accompany her to

both training sessions and performances. In addition, he would have to deal with criticisms about his willingness to expose his wife to the male gaze and with the notion of being less renowned than his wife. Even after scaling these hurdles, the female qawwal must endure the sexist and misogynist views of male opponents onstage. Analysis of contemporary qawwali content reveals an overwhelming reliance on sexual content, and male qawwal do not hesitate to use this against female opponents. This becomes tricky for female qawwal like Shalini, who must decide whether to respond reciprocally or abstain from such discourses in order to retain a positive offstage reputation. Whether she chooses to use vulgarity or not, her presence on the qawwali stage already places her in a subversive position. The presence of her female body in an otherwise male space begins a new narrative that recreates realities and inspires a renegotiation of identities for all involved in such interactions (Goundar 2015b: 1). In that sense, qawwali as a musical discourse proves that "a range of semantic possibilities (are) inherent in a musical structure" and that performances can have impacts beyond the physical and imagined performance space (Qureshi 1986: 233).

Conclusion

Qawwali music's voyage from traditional folk musical performance to an entertainment form has been key to the creation of a space for the inclusion of females, not only as audience members but also as performers. This has led to redefinition of the genre, because now female opinions, desires, and stories are narrated by female voices, whereas in the past, male performers had a monopoly on the depiction of both male and female emotions and perspectives. The intersex challenge style of performance has also led to the unveiling and public admission of misogynist, patriarchal, and female stereotypes through the arguments presented by male qawwal when competing against female opponents. After analysis of several performances, I found the tendency in male qawwal to enforce feminine ideologies of their female opponents, such as ordering them to remain veiled from the public, telling them to prioritize domestic duties over stage performance, and in many cases attacking them with sexual innuendos with the hope that females would give up the performance to avoid being publicly shamed. At least one female performer used similar levels of vulgarity in her performances, which had the effect of shutting down her opponents simply because they were unprepared or did not expect such rebuttal from a woman. Female presence has also redefined the qawwali stage such that it is no longer dominated by male performers. In that sense, the presence of the female qawwal has been performative, in that it has created an alternative reality through rebellion against and subversion of the heteronormative status quo.

NOTES

1. In this paper, non-English terms are italicized only at the first instance of their use.

2. Detailed analyses of IndoFijian folk music can be found in Manuel (2009), Brenneis (1991), and Miller (2008).

3. Sanatanis and Samajis were Hindus but of different sects, and they had many variations in their styles of worship. For detailed distinctions, see Kelly (1991) and Somerville (1986).

4. Khan, a resident of Auckland, lived most of his adult life in Ba, Fiji, where his family were well known for its involvement in promoting qawwali. It is difficult to discuss qawwali in Fiji without at least the name of one of his family members being mentioned.

5. For more on Hindi films, see Manuel (2000).

6. These were songs performed in qawwali style, that is, with poetry and music, but were shortened for inclusion in full-feature movies that were usually between two-and-a-half and three hours in length.

7. Shalini is the only one left, since Sushil Krishna has passed away and Manju no longer performs qawwali.

8. Rajendra Prasad is an academic at the University of the South Pacific who has spent several years promoting and researching IndoFijian language and culture.

9. The word "latest" is used in the context of qawwali to refer to the modern performance style that is typified by insults and vulgarity.

10. The word "fat" is used metaphorically here. He is not saying that she is fat but is using an IndoFijian idiom for someone being a deliberate nuisance.

11. Horse excrement.

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