

The journey taken by 60,000 Indian workers across the Pacific ocean about a century ago has given modern India an unlikely cultural ally today. 'Fiji', an island nation located thousands of miles away in the heart of the [Pacific Ocean](#) shares a unique connection with India, a mix of diplomatic relationship and cultural bonding which we can call as 'Pacific Bonding'. Our cultural ties with Fiji goes back to 1879 when British Government in India sent Indian labours to work in Fiji's sugarcane plantations. Although this system of forced labour ended in the 1920s but the majority of Indian workers chose to stay back.

### **Impact of Indian Culture in the lives of Fijians.**

The presence of Indian workers in Fiji embedded Indian culture in the lives of Fijians to much extent that in subsequent generations a new language was developed 'koiné language', known as Fiji Hindi that was formed as a result of a mix of different languages and dialects of India. Fiji Hindi was further made more inclusive by adding many Fijian and English words.



Fiji: Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with school girls of Indian Origin after a traditional welcome ceremony at Albert Square in Fiji on Wednesday. PTI Photo by Kamal Singh(PTI11\_19\_2014\_000050B)

The language is now the mother tongue of the majority of Fiji Indians and is the lingua franca of not only all the Fiji Indians but also of all Fijian communities where ethnic Indians are in a majority.

Although this unique cultural bonding suffered many setbacks in the form of ethnic violence between native Fiji population and Fiji Indians. The political/military establishment in Fiji has sometimes utilized this ethnic suspicions among the communities to fuel their political agenda.

The Indo-Fijians now permeate every sphere of life in Fiji and have enriched their adopted homeland with their multifaceted talents. The community has integrated well with the Fijian way of life and has retained vital cultural and spiritual bonds with the land their ancestors left behind decades ago.

## Impact of Fijian Culture in the lives of Indo Fijians.

The affection and warmth of Fijian culture had a profound influence on Indo-Fijians and led to an evolution of native Indian Culture as Indo-Fijian have largely discarded the rigidities of India's caste and social structure. In Fiji, schools, higher-education institutions, the workplace and places of worship do not discriminate according to caste or class differences. As a result, the relative ease with which Indo-Fijians socialize and engage is arguably one of the characteristics that set them apart from Indians - especially the middle classes in India.

## India-Fiji Diplomatic Ties

[Our cultural ally in Pacific rolled out the red carpet for Prime minister Modi in November 2014 to boost its ties with India.](#) It was Modi's first visit as Prime minister of India to the island 2 nation and it was also the first visit by Prime minister of India, after former Prime minister Indira Gandhi's visit to the nation in 1983. The government of India always desires to engage in mutually fulfilling exchange of ideas and information with Fiji, thereby encouraging the dissemination of Indian culture within Fiji without overpowering the island nation's cultural heritage and offending its indigenous population. Indian establishment aims at having cultural diplomatic ties with Fiji as cultural diplomacy is undeniably an important element in maintaining cooperation and goodwill between the two nations.

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