



Songs Across the Kala Pani: Bhojpuri Folk Songs as Oral Archives of the Girmitiya Experience

Smita, Ph.D., Faculty Member at the School of Languages and Literature/Humanities
Nalanda University, Rajgir, Bihar, INDIA

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



Author

Smita, Ph.D.

E-mail : smitasingh1708@gmail.com

shodhsamagam1@gmail.com

Received on : 08/07/2025
Revised on : 08/09/2025
Accepted on : 17/09/2025
Overall Similarity : 00% on 09/09/2025



Plagiarism Checker X - Report

Originality Assessment

0%

Overall Similarity

Date: Sep 9, 2025 (04:21 PM)
Matches: 0 / 4231 words
Sources: 0

Remarks: No similarity found,
your document looks healthy.

Verify Report:
Scan this QR Code



ABSTRACT

This paper examines Bhojpuri folk songs as living records of Bihar's Girmitiya past, focusing on Batohiya (Babu Raghuv eer Narayan, 1911), Bidesiya (Bhikhari Thakur, 1912), Kaise hoyi Kalapani paar re bidesiya (sung by Chandan Tiwari), and Saat Samandar Paar Karaike (revived by Raj Mohan and Nitin Neera Chandra). While Batohiya and Bidesiya emerged directly from the trauma of migration and separation, Saat Samandar Paar Karaike offers a retrospective reflection, recalling indenture with both pain and rationalization. Unlike colonial archives that reduced migrants to contracts and numbers, these oral traditions preserved the emotional and ethical truths of exile—longing, rupture, and resilience. Through the Shruti-Smriti framework, the songs are understood as Shruti (living sound, continually sung and heard) and as Smriti (codified remembrance shaping identity). The study asks: How do Bhojpuri folk songs encode the affective dimensions of migration, and how do they preserve memory differently from colonial records?

KEY WORDS

Girmitiya Experience, Indic Epistemology, Shruti-Smriti Framework, Indentured Labourers.

INTRODUCTION

The migration of indentured labourers from Bihar between 1834 and 1917 remains one of the most poignant narratives of global displacement. Thousands from Bhojpuri-speaking regions crossed the *kala pâni* to colonies such as Mauritius, Fiji, Suriname, and Trinidad. Colonial records reduced them to demographic entries, erasing their emotional worlds of separation, rupture, and exile. Bhojpuri oral

traditions, however, preserved these truths through song, theatre, and performance. This paper examines Bhojpuri folk songs as living records of Bihar's Girmitiya past, focusing on four cultural texts: *Batohiya* (Babu Raghuv eer Narayan, 1911), *Bidesiya* (Bhikhari Thakur, 1912), *Kaise hoyi Kalapani paar re bidesiya* (popularized by Chandan Tiwari's *Purbiyatan* series), and *Saat Samandar Paar Karaike* (revived by Raj Mohan and Nitin Neera Chandra), arguing through the *Shruti-Smriti* framework and memory studies—that these works endure as affective archives of the Girmitiya experience. While *Batohiya* and *Bidesiya* emerge directly from the trauma of migration and separation, *Saat Samandar Paar Karaike* is a retrospective composition, recalling indenture with both pain and rationalization

Review of Literature

Early attempts to document the emotional world of indenture were made by folklorists. Ravindra Bhattacharya (1983) identified how *viraha* (separation) songs became central to village life in Bihar, transforming women's grief into communal performance. Peter Manuel (1993, 2010) studied the circulation of Bhojpuri folk forms in the Caribbean and Fiji, showing how *biraha* songs transformed into *jahaji* and *tan-singing*, acting as "portable memory archives" of migration. Gaiutra Bahadur's *Coolie Woman* (2013) turned to women's experiences, highlighting songs as testimony to double marginalisation both in Bihar and in the colonies.

Closer to Bihar, scholars of Bhikhari Thakur have underlined the role of song in *Bidesiya*. Ashutosh Kumar (2017) argued that its *biraha*-inflected songs express women's anguish and critique how migration destabilised the dharmic household. In the diaspora, Brij V. Lal (2004, 2012) showed how fragments of Bhojpuri oral traditions persisted among Indo-Fijians, carrying the essence of migrant memory more powerfully than colonial records. Samita Sen (2010) also examined women's migration, observing that folk songs encoded anxieties of chastity, abandonment, and social ostracism.

Together, these studies trace a trajectory from folklore documentation to diaspora analysis and feminist interpretations. Yet few works explicitly frame *Batohiya*, *Bidesiya*, or *biraha* songs as epistemic structures of memory within the *Shruti-Smriti* framework. This study seeks to fill that gap

Objectives

This study aims to recover the voices embedded in Bhojpuri folk traditions, treating them as archives of indenture rather than mere entertainment. It seeks to examine how these songs convey separation, disrupted households, and gendered experiences of abandonment. By applying the *Shruti-Smriti* framework, it demonstrates how Bhojpuri oral traditions preserved memories colonial contracts could not. It also interprets recurring motifs *batohiya* (traveller), *viraha* (longing), *kala pâni* (ocean of exile) to show how Bhojpuri imagination translated migration into cultural symbols, sustaining identity across generations and diasporic geographies.

Research Methodology

This is a qualitative, interpretive study based on close reading of song lyrics. Since first-hand Girmitiya voices are limited, the analysis relies on secondary sources archival material, published translations, and scholarly criticism. The focus area is the Bhojpuri-speaking belt of Bihar, with attention also to how these traditions travelled overseas. The "population" under study is not statistical but textual: Bhojpuri songs and plays connected to migration. From this, a purposive sample of four representative songs has been selected.

The guiding hypothesis is that Bhojpuri folk traditions preserved the affective truths of indenture more powerfully than colonial records. Analysis is undertaken through the dual framework of *Shruti-Smriti* (oral vs. remembered memory) and cultural memory theory, which regards such songs as *lieux de mémoire*. Recurring motifs traveller, *kala pâni*, waiting wife are interpreted through *rasa* aesthetics, especially *karuGa rasa* (pathos) and *viraha bhâva* (longing).

Limitations include reliance on secondary sources and translations rather than fieldwork documentation. Yet within these constraints, the study proposes a framework for reading Bhojpuri cultural texts as indigenous oral archives of the Girmitiya experience.

Analysis: Song 1: Homeland as Sacred Geography

“Sundar subhumi bhैया Bharat ke deshwa se,
Mor pran base himkhoh re Batohiya.
Ek dwar ghere rama him kotwalwa se,
Tin dwar sindhu dhahrawe re batohiya.....”

English Translation (literal)

Beautiful good land brother India its country is
My life soul lives snowy cave O traveller.
One door (gate) encircling Rama
Himalaya sentinel like, Three door
(gate) sea roars O traveller
Want to go O traveller to see Hindustan,
Where Cuckoo sings coos O traveller.....”

The opening lines:

“सुंदर सुभूमि भैया भारत के देसवा,
मोर प्रान बसे हिमखोह रे बटोहिया।”
(Beautiful land, brother, the country of India,
My soul dwells in the snowy caves, O traveller.)

Place India in the highest register of imagination. It is not described politically, not as a territory under colonial rule, but as sacred space. The Himalayas appear as guardians, their snowy caves the seat of the soul. For Girmitiyas, who were severed from the land of their birth, this vision made homeland eternal, untouchable, *pran* (life-soul) remained anchored in the mountains.

This is the *Smriti* dimension of the song: memory codified in imagery so powerful that it could survive dislocation and time. The Himalayas, in collective imagination, became the place where the migrant’s soul rested safe from the rupture of *kala pani*.

Another passage imagines India as a divine fortress.

“एक द्वार घेरे राम हिम कोटवलवा से,
तिन द्वार सिंधु दहरावे रे बटोहिया।”
(One gate encircled by Rama as sentinel Himalaya,
Three gates where the seas roar, O traveller.)

Rama himself is envisioned as sentinel at one gate, the Himalaya. The seas become roaring gates on other sides. The land is thus guarded, encircled, sanctified. Such imagery is significant: while colonial power claimed to control India, the song asserts that *Bharat is impregnable, divinely guarded, cosmically secure*. It is cultural resistance: migrants may have been uprooted, but their homeland is imagined as beyond conquest.

“जहवाँ कुहुकि कोइलि बोले रे बटोहिया,
पवन सुगंध मंद अगर गगनवा से,
कामिनी बिरह राग गावे रे बटोहिया।”

(Where the cuckoo coos, O traveller,
The fragrant breeze drifts softly from the sky,
And the beloved sings songs of separation, O traveller.)

This is a landscape saturated with sound and fragrance. The homeland is sensory, aesthetic, musical. Even separation (*biraha*) is transformed into beauty the wife's sorrowful singing is not just grief, but a cultural marker of homeland itself. This intertwining of nature (cuckoo, breeze) with emotion (longing, *biraha*) reflects the *rasa* aesthetics of Bhojpuri folk traditions. Homeland is remembered not through history books but through sensory, affective registers.

Here the *Shruti* dimension becomes clear: these images are carried orally, sung and re-sung, alive only in the moment of hearing. Homeland exists as a song in the migrant's memory, renewed each time the song is performed.

"आगरा प्रयाग काशी दिल्ली कलकत्ता से,
मोर प्रान बसे सरजू तीर रे बटोहिया।"
(Agra, Prayag, Kashi, Delhi, Calcutta,
My soul dwells on the banks of the Sarayu, O traveller.)

The song here performs a striking cultural geography. It lists India's major centres—Agra, Prayag, Kashi, Delhi, Calcutta yet concludes that the singer's soul lives not in imperial or urban centres, but at the humble banks of the Sarayu. For Bhojpuri migrants, it was not empire or capital that defined homeland, but the familiar riverside, the intimate rural landscape. In this sense, the song privileges local belonging over imperial geography, re-centering the *Girmitiya* subject in their own world.

"अपर प्रदेश देश सुभग सुधर बेष,
मोर हिन्द जग के निचोड़ रे बटोहिया।"
(All other countries are beautiful with fine faces,
But my Hindustan is the essence of the world, O traveller.)

This is an unambiguous declaration of pride. Amid exile and displacement, homeland is exalted as the distilled essence of creation. It counters colonial narratives of backwardness and degeneration, affirming that Hindustan surpasses the world. For migrants often humiliated and derided as "coolies," this affirmation restored dignity and pride.

"सुंदर सुभूमि भैया भारत के भूमि जेही,
जन 'रघुबीर' सिर नवावे रे बटोहिया।"
(Beautiful land, brother, the land of Bharat,
Where people bow their heads to Raghubir, O traveller.)

The homeland is concluded as a devotional space, sanctified by obeisance to Raghubir (Rama). Migration had exiled the body, but song preserved homeland as sacred land where dharma endures. In this way, homeland is remembered not politically but religiously, as the place where cosmic order is honoured.

Synthesis: Shruti-Smriti Framework

This song exemplifies how Bhojpuri folk traditions carried homeland into diaspora through a dual epistemic structure:

- As **Shruti**, it was sung and heard, alive in sound, performed in community gatherings, sustaining homeland in the immediacy of voice.
- As **Smriti**, it codified memory into imagery Himalaya as guardian, rivers as sanctity, Sarayu as intimate belonging, Rama as protector ensuring that India lived in migrants' remembered imagination.

The song thus became both hearing and remembering, both performance and archive. It preserved Bihar's Girmitiya past not as a dry chronicle, but as affective cartography: a homeland mapped through mountains, rivers, cities, songs, scents, and devotion. In short: this *Batohiya* variant is a homeland elegy and a cultural manifesto. It keeps alive a sacred India in the voices of migrants who could no longer touch its soil, but could recreate it every time they sang together.

Song 2: Colonial Trickery and Betrayal

Firangiya ke rajuwa me chhuta mora desuwa ho,
Gori sarkar chali chal re bidesiya...
Bholi hame dekh arkati bharmaye ho,
Kalkatta par jao panch sal re bidesiya.....

English Translation (literal)

In the regime of British, I was compelled to leave country,
White government played a trick O migrant....
To see me innocent an arkati/recruiter misled me,
Go beyond Calcutta for five years O migrant.....
“Firangiya ke rajuwa me chhuta mora desuwa ho,
Gori sarkar chali chal re bidesiya...”
(In the regime of the British, I was compelled to leave my country,
The white government played its trick, O migrant...)

Here, the homeland is not yet imagined as sacred geography it is a stolen inheritance. The singer names the oppressor directly: “Firangiya” (British) and “Gori sarkar” (white government). Unlike the distant, awe-filled Himalaya in *Batohiya*, here colonial power is immediate and treacherous. The act of displacement is not voluntary but coerced, signaling the migrant's lack of agency. In memory studies terms, this is traumatic memory: recalling the rupture of being tricked and carried away. The *Shruti* dimension is the performative re-telling, keeping alive the wound of betrayal; the *Smriti* dimension encodes it as collective narrative, so the community does not forget the deceit.

“Bholi hame dekh arkati bharmaye ho,
Kalkatta par jao panch sal re bidesiya.”
(To see me innocent an arkati/recruiter misled me,
Go beyond Calcutta for five years, O migrant.)

The arkati (middleman recruiter) becomes a stock villain in Girmitiya songs. It is a symbol of deception. He embodies the betrayal within one's own society the neighbour, the “bhaiya,” who sells kin into exile. Memory here is gendered: the song's voice often is the wife narrating how her innocent husband was duped, or the husband himself lamenting his gullibility. This trope enacts *Smriti* by personalizing betrayal: migration is not abstract history but a narrative of intimate deceit. In *Shruti-Smriti* terms, this moment is where oral memory resists textual domination. The migrants did not “sign history” in colonial archives, but they re-wrote it orally in songs like *Bidesiya*. Thus, these songs become counter-archives, narrating what the documents concealed.

“Pal ke jahajuwa ma roy-dhoy baithi ho,
Kiase hoi kalapani par re bidesiya...”
(In the sailing ship I sat crying,
How would I cross the black water, O migrant...)

Here, the *kala pani* (black waters) is both physical and metaphysical. Physically, it meant the terrifying voyage across the Indian Ocean. Spiritually, it signified loss of caste and ritual purity, a permanent exile from community. The ship becomes a theatre of grief, with passengers crying together, carrying the sound of trauma across the waves. This passage embodies *Shruti*: the cry itself is memory, repeated in performance. And as *Smriti*, the metaphor of *kala pani* becomes cultural shorthand for rupture, remembered by generations long after indenture ended.

Song 3:

“Paal ke jahajwa par royi dhoyi baithai ho
Kaise hoyi kalapani paar re bideshiya.....”

English Translation (literal):

“On the sailing ship I sat crying and wailing,
How will I ever cross the black waters, O Foreigner?”.....

The song begins with an invocation of time and absence:

“जियरा डराये घाट, कहे नइख, आवे राम,
बीते दिन कई भइनी, मास रे बिदेसिया।”

“My heart trembles at the riverbank, why do you not return, O Rama? Many days have passed, even months, O Foreigner.”

Here the speaker’s voice is charged with fear and yearning. The *ghat* the riverbank is more than a physical location. It is a threshold, a liminal site between hope and despair. The wife waits, counting days, measuring time not in calendars but in her own emotional exhaustion. This is the quintessential register of *viraha bhāva* longing in separation that ties Bhojpuri folk lament to both Bhakti poetics and Girmitya memory.

The imagery then shifts outward, reaching across oceans:

“आइल घाट देखे हम, फ़िजिया के तपुआ हो,
मनवा भइल मोर उदास रे बिदेसिया।”
“I came to the ghat and saw the island of Fiji—
My heart turned sorrowful, O Foreigner.”

Here the homeland voice extends across the *kala pāni*. The word *tapua* (island) is striking—it localises the abstract “foreign land” into a concrete geography, Fiji. This is not merely imagination; it is transoceanic memory encoded into folk song. The homeland and diaspora mirror each other through performance. In Nora’s terms, this is a *lieu de mémoire*: the ocean crossing and the island settlement are preserved in collective memory through song.

The lament intensifies with domestic imagery:

“काली रे कोठरिया में बीते नइखे रतिया हो,
काके बताई हम पीर रे बिदेसिया।”
“In the dark room the night will not pass,
To whom can I tell my sorrow, O Foreigner?”

The *kothariya* (inner room) symbolises abandonment. The wife’s loneliness is made palpable: night refuses to end, speech refuses to find an ear. This is the gendered burden of indenture where women are left behind to live in half-empty households. Through *karuna rasa*, the song dignifies women’s grief, transforming their solitude into a communal, sung memory.

The voice grows more corporeal, more visceral:

“टुट-टुट मरी हम, कमवा करत-करत,
तबो रोज झिड़की लगावे रे बिदेसिया।”

“I break piece by piece, working and working,
Yet every day I am scolded, O Foreigner.”

Here the lament shifts from waiting to labour. This could be the voice of a woman in the diaspora—an indentured labourer on the plantation who suffers not only physical exhaustion but also humiliation. The idiom *tut-tut mari hum* (I die in fragments) conveys slow erosion, a death by labour. Colonial records describe daily tasks and productivity; the song preserves the *affective cost* the toll on dignity and body.

The final verse is searing:

“खूनवा पसीनवा से सिचली हम बगिया हो,
बैठ-बैठे हुकुम चलावे रे बिदेसिया।”

“With my blood and sweat I water the plantation garden,
While they sit and issue commands, O Foreigner.”

Bhojpuri folk songs are not merely laments but acts of resistance, exposing the exploitative structure of indenture. When songs speak of labourers watering plantations with blood and sweat while planters command idly, they name colonial asymmetry and become *Smriti* codified memory of injustice. To understand *Batohiya*, *Biraha*, and *Bidesiya*, one must return to indigenous epistemology: *Shruti* (heard) and *Smriti* (remembered). As *Shruti*, these songs live in performance, renewing memory in each utterance; as *Smriti*, they preserve grief and critique in stable form. Together, they create a dual archive, sustaining truths erased from colonial records.

Song 4

“Saat Samandar Paar karaike,
ek nawa desh k sapna dekhaiyeke
Kaise humke oo bharmaike
Le gail dur Surinam bataiyeke.....”

English Translation (literal):

“Crossing seven seas,
They showed us the dream of a new land,
How they deceived me,
And took me far away to Surinam.”.....

This song “*Saat Samandar Paar Karaike*” (by Raj Mohan, revived by Nitin Neera Chandra) is an extraordinary contemporary recollection of the Girmitya experience, written in the Bhojpuri idiom of folk songs but with a reflective modern awareness. Unlike *Batohiya* or *Bidesiya*, which emerged directly from the trauma of migration and separation, this one is retrospective, recalling the history of indenture with both pain and rationalization. Let me analyse it in detail from the perspective of our agreed framework: *Shruti-Smriti* and Memory Studies.

The Seduction of the Dream

“Saat Samandar Paar karaike, ek nawa desh k sapna dekhaiyeke
Kaise humke oo bharmaike, le gail dur Surinam bataiyeke”
(The dream of a new land was shown across seven seas,
How they deceived us and took us far away to Surinam.)

This is the classic trope of Girmitiya recruitment: the arkati's promise of a better life. Unlike the immediate lament of *Bidesiya*, here there is a reflective tone: the migrant recognizes deception *after the fact*. The dream of "ek nawa desh" (a new land) recalls the dangerous lure of colonial modernity. In memory studies terms, this is cultural recall – a later generation re-singing the story of deception to keep it alive. As *Shruti*, the performance retells what was "heard" from ancestors; as *Smriti*, it codifies that deception into the collective archive.

"Kapral atta kharcha gahina, gathri me bandh k sab asha
Kirpa Sri Ram ke mutthi me, dosar k sahara pani pe."
(With flour, expenses, and jewellery packed, hopes tied in a bundle,
With Lord Ram's grace in the fist, no other support but water.)

This verse shows the migrants leaving with tiny material possessions and massive spiritual faith. The "mutthi me Ram" symbolizes surrender to divine will, while the "pani" (ocean) becomes the only uncertain support.

Here we clearly see the *Shruti-Smriti* framework: *Shruti* → the invocations to Ram, the oral chants that accompanied departure and *Smriti* → the memory of faith, passed on to descendants, shaping how the Girmitiya journey is narrated. The juxtaposition of worldly bundles and divine grace reveals how migrants reinterpreted exile as both economic compulsion and spiritual trial.

"Dui teen mahina jahaj pe, rishta nata to ban hi jaye"
(For two-three months on the ship, bonds and relations were bound to form.)

This is a rare acknowledgment of the social creation of Girmitiya identity. On the *Kala Pani*, strangers from different castes, villages, and even religions became kin forming new communities that colonial rule had never intended but which memory preserves. Memory studies would call this prosthetic memory: remembering relations that were not natural but forged in trauma. In *Shruti* terms, songs like this *voice* those emergent bonds; in *Smriti*, they become inherited memories of collective kinship.

"Panch baris kas k kamaiyeke, laautab gaanv apan paisa jamaiyeke"
(After working hard for five years, I would return to my village with savings.)

This is the colonial contract's cruellest fiction. Almost every Girmitiya song carries the dream of "panch baris" (five years) and return, but reality ensured that most never returned. This verse enacts that broken promise. Here, *Smriti* works as collective disillusionment: each performance reminds the community that return was the exception, not the rule.

"Man k kona me ei sapna baki, rahibe ek din gaanv apan jaiyeke"
(In some corner of the heart, the dream still remains,
That one day I will return to my village.)

This is the Girmitiya paradox: adaptation and longing co-exist. The migrant may have accepted Surinam, but the dream of return never died it was carried in memory, sung in songs, whispered to children. Here *Shruti* (songs, laments) kept the dream vocal, while *Smriti* made it a permanent cultural motif: every Girmitiya descendant inherited the desire for "gaanv" (village), even if it was never fulfilled.

"Saat Samandar Paar Karaike" reflects the Girmitiya journey deception, trauma, adaptation, deferred return where *aeruti* sustains living memory and *sm[ti]* codifies loss, revealing indenture as both suffering and identity-formation.

CONCLUSION

The study sets out with a central question: *How do Bhojpuri Girmitiya folk songs particularly as represented in the songs of exile, longing, and survival, and in Bikhari Thakur's Bidesiya function as*

sites of cultural memory when read through the combined lens of memory studies and the Bharatiya epistemic framework of Shruti and Smriti?

Bhojpuri Girmitiya folk songs, from *Batohiya* to *Bidesiya*, function as cultural memory, preserving the emotional and ethical truths of indenture beyond colonial records. Sung in depots, ships, and plantations, they sustained identity through rhythm and narrative, transforming grief into resilience. Through memory studies, they emerge as communicative memory crystallized into diasporic heritage; through *Shruti-Smriti*, they appear as oral sound and codified remembrance. Evoking, *viraha*, and exile, these songs embody both archives of pain and instruments of survival. They testify to the resilience of Bharatiya Gyan Parampara, affirming folk utterances as legitimate knowledge traditions across oceans and generations.

Recommendations / Suggestions

This research on Bhojpuri Girmitiya folk songs and Bhikhari Thakur's *Bidesiya* demonstrates how oral traditions serve not only as memory-archives but also as extensions of Bharatiya Gyan Parampara. The analysis suggests several directions for scholarship, pedagogy, and cultural preservation.

First, there is a need to systematically collect, archive, and digitize Bhojpuri Girmitiya folk songs from scattered communities in Fiji, Suriname, Mauritius, and the Caribbean. Much of this oral heritage remains undocumented or fragmented, risking loss with the passing of older generations. Finally, there is a need to recognize these songs as knowledge systems in their own right that affirms Bharat's intellectual inclusivity and underscores the continuity of cultural wisdom even in contexts of rupture, displacement, and colonial exploitation. Overall, the preservation and reinterpretation of Bhojpuri Girmitiya songs is not only a matter of cultural heritage but also of epistemic justice. It ensures that the voices of the displaced remain an integral part of the philosophical and literary traditions of India and the wider world.

REFERENCES

1. Assmann, J. (2011) References. In *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, p. 277–300, References, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
2. Kumar, A. (2016) *Anti-indenture Bhojpuri folk songs and poems from North India* [PDF]. ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292626093_Anti-Indenture_Bhojpuri_folk_songs_and_Poems_from_North_India, accessed 20/06/2025.
3. Bahadur, G. (2014) *Coolie woman: The odyssey of indenture*. Hurst, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
4. Bhattacharya, R. (1983) Folk culture and migration: Bhojpuri songs of indenture, *Folklore India*, 22(1–2), 45–63.
5. Doniger, W. (Trans.) (1981) *The Rig Veda: An anthology*, Penguin Classics, Middlesex (England).
6. Jha, G. (2014) Bhojpuri folk memory and the Girit diaspora. *Indian Folklore Studies*, 20(2), 87–105.
7. Kumar, A. (2017) Recruitment, performance, and memory: Bhikhari Thakur's *Bidesiya* and indenture migration from Bihar, *Indian Theatre Journal*, 1(2), 121–140. https://doi.org/10.1386/itj.1.2.121_1
8. Lal, B. V. (2000) *Chalo Jahaji: On a journey through indenture in Fiji*, The Australian National University and Fiji Museum, Australia.

9. Lal, B. (2015) The World becomes Stranger, the Pattern More Complicated: Culture, Identity and the Indo-Fijian Experience. In P. P. K. (Ed.), *Indian Diaspora: Socio-Cultural and Religious Worlds* (1st ed., Vol. 1, pp. 52-72) Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004288065_005
10. Mishra, V. (1992) The diasporic imaginary: Theorizing the Indian diaspora, *Textual Practice*, 6(3), 261–286.
11. Nora, P. (1989) Between memory and history: Les lieux de mémoire. *Representations*, 26, 7–24. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928520>.
12. Raj Mohan. (2011) *Sarnámi-Bhojpuri geet: Songs of indenture and migration* [Album/CD]. World Connection. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSLVqN0yOxY>. Accessed on 05/07/2025
13. Reddy, V. (2018) Indenture and the Bhojpuri folk imagination: Songs, memory, and migration. *Diaspora Studies*, 11(3), 213–230. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09739572.2017.1393175>.
14. Sen, S. (2010) Gendered mobility under indenture: Colonial archives and migrant women's voices, *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 17(2), 145–172. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097152151001700202>
15. Shukla, A. (2015) *Bidesiya: A folk play by Bhikhari Thakur* (A. Shukla, Trans. & Ed.), Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi.
16. Singh, K. (2016) Songs of separation: Women's voices in Bhojpuri indenture folk songs, *Indian Literature*, 60(3), 145–162.
17. Tinker, H. (1974) *A new system of slavery: The export of Indian labour overseas, 1830–1920*, Oxford University Press, London.
18. Upadhyay, A. (2017) Folk theatre and Bhojpuri identity: A study of Bhikhari Thakur's plays. *South Asian Popular Culture*, 15(2–3), 123–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746689.2017.1396179>.
19. Weller, R. (2019) Indian indenture and oral traditions: Bhojpuri songs across oceans, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 55(5), 612–627. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2019.1626365>
