

CHAPTER 25

ENGLISH

Doctoral Theses

01. AWASTHI (Aanchal)
Literary Representations of Disability in Contemporary South Asian Writings.
Supervisors: Prof. Anil Kumar Aneja and Sanjay Verma
Th 28289

Abstract

The thesis explores the multifaceted representation of disability in contemporary South Asian literature. It focusses on the socio-cultural, political and personal aspects which shape the experiences of persons with disabilities. The study critically examines the evolution of disability rights movement, legal frameworks and social responses in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka from the 1970s to the present. This thesis employs a qualitative research methodology with a theoretical approach to analyse texts using critical literary theories; a representational approach to understand the portrayal of disability in literature and life narratives woven around history and culture, and an activist approach centred around disability laws and policies advocating for rights and challenging stigma. It also involves close reading of the primary texts, intersectional comparisons and thematic analysis to provide layered and nuanced meanings around South Asian disability writing. Texts studied include Clear Light of Day, Shame, Ice-Candy-Man, The English Patient, Lajja, Family Matters, Noor, Ancient Promises, One Little Finger, No Looking Back, and Flight Without Sight. The thesis offers multiple insights into various aspects of disability, including legal structures and disability activism, identity formation and marginalisation, the idea of self and caregiving, feminism and femininity and life narratives. It also highlights the double marginalisation of women with disabilities to understand how they navigate the challenges that further push them to the periphery. The present study advocates for a rights-based, inclusive approach to disability in South Asia by dismantling physical, social and attitudinal barriers. It contributes to emerging scholarship in disability studies in South Asia.

Contents

1. Legal and Policy Frameworks in South Asia 2. Identity, Stigma and Marginalisation 3. Self, Family and Caregiving 4. Disability, Feminism and Femininity 5. Disability Life Narratives 6. Conclusion. Bibliography.

02. BAISHYA (Debbie Lakshmi)
Rethinking Literary History: A Study of the Printing Presses in the Brahmaputra Valley (1846-1946).
Supervisor: Prof. Anjana Sharma
Th 28291

Abstract

This thesis is an enquiry into the print culture of the Brahmaputra Valley with the primary focus on the formation of Assamese linguistic identity. The print culture of the Brahmaputra Valley set the course of modern Assamese literature and gave rise to crucial literary and cultural trends which came to define the Assamese psyche of the twentieth century. The thesis traces the formation and evolution of the Assamese linguistic identity with reference to the changing politics, views on history, and cultural and linguistic shifts as reflected through certain newspapers and magazines circulated in the Brahmaputra Valley during the period between 1846 and 1946. The linguistic and cultural shifts pertaining to Assamese regional identity, particularly to Assamese linguistic identity can be attributed to factors such as colonial modernity, technology, the rise of the Assamese middle-class, standardisation of the Assamese language, the rise of Assamese literary organisations, the freedom movement, tribal politics and the question of gender. Thus, through an evaluation of the Assamese public sphere, this thesis attempts to analyse how these factors gave rise to different expressions of Assamese identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The primary argument of the thesis is that the politics of the Assamese middle-class in the formation of Assamese identity, which was a culmination of the above factors, gave rise to a homogeneous Assamese identity as opposed to the essential multi-ethnic and heterogeneous nature of Assamese identity in the pre-colonial period.

Contents

1. The Question of Assamese Linguistic Identity 2. The Assamese Press in the Twentieth Century: New Aspects of Regional Identity and the Fight for Freedom 3. Ghar-Jeuti: A New Discourse on Identity and the Woman Question in the Brahmaputra Valley 4. The Brahmaputra: Ecology, Technology and Spatiality 5. Assamese Nation-Building: A Critique 6. Conclusion. Bibliography.

03. PODDER (Kishalaya)

Rethinking Gendered Identities Beyond the Colonial and Postcolonial Assessment in Selected Indian Mythological Fiction in English.

Supervisor: Dr. Nidhi Vats

Th 28290

Abstract

The research primarily focuses on the points of gendered identities in selected mythological Indian fiction in English by Anuja Chandramouli, Saiswaroopa Iyer, Anand Neelakantan, Usha Narayanan. It tries to reinterpret the Indian mythological events and the assessment of masculinity, femininity from western colonial to Indian indigenous perspectives. The research offers some grounds where the mythological characters took contemporary forms surpassing the colonial and Indian conventional view on gender. The thesis attempts to interrogate and create new view points to foreground various dimensions as a resistance against the masculine and feminine gendered performances. On the one side, Anuja Chandramouli and Saiswaroopa Iyer focused on the non-highlighted corners of feminine perspectives in gender system offering them the narrative and authoritative voice. On the other, Usha Narayanan and Anand Neelakantan tried to offer a different side of the male characters of Indian mythologies. Surpassing the physical strength and warrior masculinity they focused on their personal life as a resistance against the gender performances in India.

Contents

Introduction 1. Interpretation of gender in myth and its relevance on postcolonial perspectives 2. Colonial assessment of masculinity, subversive Indian nationalist masculinity and beyond 3. Interpretation of mythological texts on contemporary India masculinity 4. Colonial assessment of women in India, Indian nationalist assessment of women and beyond 5. Reinterpretation of mythological texts on contemporary Indian femininity Mohini: The Enchantress, Conclusion.

04. SAPNA KUMARI

An Intersectional Critique of ‘New Woman’ and Liberation in the Poems of Maya Angelou in the Wake of Third Wave Feminism and Fourth Wave Feminism.

Supervisor: Dr. Yogesh Kumar Dubey
Th 28292

Abstract

This thesis explores the theme of the “New Woman” and liberation in the poetry of Maya Angelou through the lens of third and fourth wave feminism. By analyzing selected poems from *The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou* alongside newly discovered unpublished manuscripts from the Schomburg Center at the New York Public Library, the research offers a comprehensive, intersectional critique of Angelou’s poetic voice, writing style, and socio-political significance. The study positions Angelou’s work within the evolving frameworks of feminist theory, especially the intersectionality-driven discourse of third wave feminism (1990s–2000s) and the digital activism of the fourth wave (2012 onwards). Drawing on feminist theorists such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, Bell hooks, and Kira Cochrane, the thesis evaluates how Angelou’s poetry addresses race, gender, class, and identity through confessional and resistance-driven narrative strategies. Key texts include Angelou’s major published volumes and 16 folders of unpublished poems and notes, accessed through archival research. The work is organized into seven chapters, starting with an introduction to wave feminism and culminating in a recontextualization of Angelou’s poetry within digital-era feminism. This thesis interrogates the wave metaphor itself, arguing for a more fluid, inclusive, and intergenerational feminist discourse. Angelou’s legacy is presented as both historical and contemporary, enduring through her influence on social media and digital activism. The research also contributes to expanding the scope of feminist literary studies by repositioning Angelou’s poetry as central to feminist thought, offering new insights into her global and transgenerational relevance in the fight for gender and racial justice. This study’s archival comparison of Maya Angelou’s unpublished manuscripts with her published poetry offers rich insights into her evolving articulation of gender, race, and liberation. Further research could expand into feminist digital-archival methodologies, leveraging tools from Feminist Digital Humanities to enhance accessibility, contextualization, and critical engagement.

Contents

1. Third Wave Feminism: concept, scope and limitation 2 Maya Angelou and her published poems 3. Maya Angelou and her unpublished poems (Part A) 4. Maya Angelou and her unpublished poems (Part B) 5. Maya Angelou and Fourth Wave Feminism: scope and limitations 6. Conclusion 8. Works Cited.

05. SEN (Shamayita)
Revisiting the Politics of Representation: Violence, Identities and Nationhood in Indian Literary Narratives of the 1970s and Beyond.
 Supervisor: Dr. Varun Gulati
Th 28293

Abstract

Through a close reading of historical texts and literary narratives – novels, short stories, autobiographies, poems, in English, Bangla and translations from Marathi – the thesis attempts a study of 1970s in India. It comments on identity formation basis cultural, historical, social and familial othering that stem from negative stereotyping and generational humiliation of marginal communities. The five chapters establish, political apathy, ecological violence, upper-class aesthetics, upper-caste disgust, inhuman biopolitics, bodily shame, sexism and disablism are tools to mould socio-cultural subjectivities that later assume (political) identities in a postcolonial nation-state. Literary narratives about 1970s India indicate, upper-class/caste's complicity in class/caste, gender and disability politics intermingled with faulty implementations of welfare schemes to eradicate or ghettoize marginal communities and prevent them from participating in future nation-building. Identity formation of bereaved individuals from such communities was basis their understanding of gaps in government policies and social practices that did not prioritize their well-being. Consequently, their negotiations with social and authorial structures marked their understanding of themselves as a misfit Other to the culture they were born into. While elucidating on socio-political intent and salient features of good governance, the thesis argues, political apathy or subjective violence is not arbitrary but rather enables class, caste, gender and (dis)ability-based disputes in urban India. And since a social Other is imagined as an untrustworthy outsider, who appears different due to specific cultural markers and routine habits, and whose public presence evokes terror and disgust in onlookers, this project is a critique of dominant socio-cultural groups' self-preservatory fear of contamination, disgust and pity for the precarious Other's human-ness, and exposes the former's complicit actions in government apathy towards the latter. The thesis suggests, to initiate anti-caste grooming and stimulate socio-familial co-existence, empathy must not only be resistance-rhetoric but become key facilitator to aid national development and preserve multiculturalism.

Contents

Introduction 1. Homing Desire of Displaced Dalit Refugees in Literature and the Morichjhappi Massacre (1979) 2. Urban Destitution, Politics of Disgust, and Literary Reimaginings of the Indian Emergency (1975-77) 3. Undomesticated Lives of Working Women in 1970s India and Depictions of Intimate Violence in Fiction 4. Generational Humiliation, Dalit Rage and Ecocritical Hope in Dalit Panther Poetry (1972-75) 5. Disablism and Disability Representations in Fiction during the Early Indian Disability Rights Movement, Conclusion.

06. SHARMA (Tanvi)
Ramayana In The 21st Century.
 Supervisor: Prof. Christel R. Devadawson
Th 28294

Abstract

This thesis examines English-language retellings of the Ramayana and argues that they have emerged as a distinct and increasingly influential field over the past two decades, warranting an examination of both their origins and impact. This project seeks to delineate the sites of emergence of these retellings across various mediums and cultural contexts, interrogate the imperatives driving their resurgence in contemporary times, and examine the modalities through which they adapt to diverse audience constituencies. Building upon the critical frameworks established by earlier Ramayana scholars, the project advances their arguments by privileging the term ‘retellings’ over other terms that have been employed to designate the various instantiations of the epic in the past. This shift is not merely terminological but carries significant theoretical and functional implications. The project conceptualises retellings as a distinct practice that facilitates the transmission and transformation of the Ramayana tradition, actively encouraging—and even necessitating—re-contextualization, to ensure the continued relevance of the epic across temporal, linguistic, and cultural landscapes. While it is customary to analyse how the epic gets transformed when rendered in a new language, this thesis reorients the focus to study how languages themselves are shaped through their engagement with the epic. Specifically, it explores the effect of this encounter on the English language, tracing the ways in which the Ramayana contributes to its literary, cultural, and conceptual reconfiguration in the current post-millennial moment. By foregrounding this reciprocal relationship, the study highlights the evolving role of the English language within the Ramayana tradition, illustrating how the epic’s migration into new linguistic and cultural contexts actively reshapes the status of the English language itself. By combining close textual analysis and wider discursive contexts, this study aims to illuminate the complex interactions between the epic, language, and narrative form, demonstrating their mutual influence and evolution.

Contents

1. The Ramayana Tradition: A Critical Overview 2. Ramayana in the Twenty-first Century: The Rise of English Retelling 3. Recasting Ramayana: From Folk Forms to New Media 4. Interplay of Genres: Ramayana in Speculative Fiction 5. Novelising Ramayana: An Analysis of Amish Tripathi’s Ram Chandra Series 6. Countering Ramayana: Reading Oppositionality in Neelakantan’s Asura. Conclusion, Bibliography.

07.

SINGH (Akansha)

Subverting Narratives of Nationalism: A Cross-National Study of Borges and Muktibodh.

Supervisor: Dr. TASNEEM SHAHNAAZ

Th 28696*Abstract*

This dissertation investigates how modernist writers outside the West, particularly Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986) from Argentina and Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh (1917–1964) from India, exposed the violence concealed within the promise of national “progress.” By bringing these two authors into conversation across languages, continents, and political histories, the study argues that their works converge in a triadic entanglement of affect, time, and representation. Each makes the ideological operations of nationalism visible and vulnerable, destabilizing the promise of unity and progress that so often naturalizes exclusionary politics. The

analysis proceeds by situating both Borges and Muktibodh in relation to twentieth-century modernist movements, while resisting the reductive view that their writings are mere national allegories. Instead, their eclectic strategies foreground fragments, disruptions, and affective intensities over totalizing narratives. Borges's explorations of temporality, infinity, and textual recursion resonate with Muktibodh's probing of inner voids, fractured selves, and the violence of incomplete modernities. Reading them together reveals how literary modernism in the Global South not only contests colonial inheritances but also critiques the coercive imaginaries of postcolonial nationalism. The project further demonstrates how both authors respond to exclusion, rejection, and alienation, not through retreat into aesthetic autonomy but through creative strategies that articulate new ways of imagining collectivity. Their works invite readers to see nationalism as a historical artifact of modernity rather than an inevitable destiny, and to imagine political futures beyond its exclusions. By juxtaposing Borges and Muktibodh, this dissertation contributes to comparative modernist studies, nationalism studies, and postcolonial theory. It highlights how transnational and cross-lingual readings of literary modernism can illuminate the unfinished, heterogeneous, and affective dimensions of nationhood. In doing so, it suggests that the creative strategies of these writers remain vital for contemporary struggles against authoritarianism and exclusionary politics.

Contents

1. Introduction 2. the nation between modernity and modernism: reading affect in muktibodh's translated works 3. Borges, modernity, and the universal self: a journey through affects and national identity 4. muktibodh on the margins: time of modernity and nation form in his works 5. the temporal nation: borges and the universality of time 6. truth and illusion of nationalism: the work of representation in muktibodh and borges. 7. conclusion: affective worlds, heterogeneous times, and unfinished nations.

08. TAHA YASIN

Reclaiming Democracy: Looking into Literature of Independent India.

Supervisors: Dr. Prasanta Chakravarty and Dr. Christel Devada

Th 28295

Abstract

My thesis intends to envisage the ideal – sovereign, democratic India, that could be! As the first step, it critically engages with the historic understanding of the idea of democracy, and problematizes the question of democracy in modern, independent India. It situates the question of 'caste' as both historical and central question of the Indian social fabric, and intends to root the coming together of democratic ideals and caste based hierarchization - as the socio-political bedrock of the Indian phenomenon. It assesses all the ideological streams - Left, Right, Liberal-Centrists, Socialists etc.—both in their respective contexts and in comparisons—which has not only shaped the twentieth century India, but has also undergone appropriations in accordance to the Indian essence. This formulates the first two chapters of the thesis. In the next four chapters, I thematically assort the texts of independent India with an aim to make a threadbare analysis of the following: Questions of casteism, Dalit autobiography, Dalit women autobiography, Dalit patriarchy; questions of communalism, secularism, alienation of the Muslim minority, caste question within the Muslims; caste violence, communal violence; a counter hegemonic possibility and women solidarity. I use texts written in the following languages: English, Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Malayalam, Urdu and Gujarati.

I read English and Hindi in original and the rest in translation. The golden thread that runs through my thesis is an aspiration for casteless-democratic Indian society. I hypothesize the idea of secularism as fused in the ideals of democracy. Thus there cannot be a democracy sans secularism. Or a true democratic society, ought to be secular! All forms of violence erode democratic ethos, and solidarity of the marginal most is the beginning of the end of anti-democratic polity.

Contents

1. Democracy in/and Capitalism: Politics or Anti-Politics 2. To Be Oppositional, Truthful, Or Both, Yet Wrong? 3. Democracy and The Annihilation of Caste: Indispensable Yet Invisible Dalits.

09. YUMNAM ROCKY

Poetry of Witness: Recasting Terror and Violence in the Works of Robin S Ngangom.

Supervisor: Dr. Vinod Kumar Singh

Th 28697

Abstract

The term 'Poetry of Witness' enters into the lexicon of literary space as a form of political confession. It was interpreted as a poetic reportage or documentary writing. However, the term is an expression of extremities whose sensibilities are intertwined perplexedly by philosophical, religious and linguistic understanding of witness. According to Carolyn Forché, witness poetry is a tradition of writing which traces historical accounts of an extremity, a poetic memorial for those who survived and resisted against oppression, injustice, war and violence. She locates this tradition within 'social space' where readers/poets read and write poetry, searches for meanings which are stored as evidence of something that had occurred in the past. This poetic form stores experiences which journalistic accounts, historical and documentary writing, confessional or political poetry fail to reflect. Therefore, witness poetry relies on experiences whose sentiments are mixed together with the colours of imagination and generates a tradition of writing that revolts against injustice, war and violence. Marred by conflicts and the culture of violence, contemporary Manipuri poetry does not merely capture personal accounts. They are not the retellings of romanticised views of their world but 'living with the menace of the gun the poets cannot merely indulge in verbal wizardry or woolly aesthetics and must perforce 'the art of witness'(Ngangom). Their poetic expressions intricately capture an array of complexities and other forms of extremities which emanated from their social and political instabilities. They are also responses, reactions, commentaries, psychological and physical impacts of political and strategic measures adopted by the governments in the conflicted regions. Their writings reflect the different modes of life where people thrive to survive social and political instabilities that distorts any peace building process in the region. Therefore, the modern creative expressions merged the personal, the social and the political to mirror the ways in which common lives adapt to the terror zones and negotiate in between power and military occupations and 'yet retaining their own flavours while representing a reality of a different kind'(Das). Therefore, the research explores 'stratified layers of unexplored and insightful glimpses of the invisible, latent or the marginalized'(Tamuly) inherently captured by the works of Robin S Ngangom

through the lens of 'Poetry of Witness' (Forche). In doing so, the research also traces the historical and intellectual origins of 'Poetry of Witness'.

Contents

1. Introduction 2. Tracing Its Emergence: Poetry of Witness and Carolyn Forché 3. The Shape of Unrest: Exploring Insurgency and Violence in Manipur 4. Silence, Witness and Terror in Robin's "Words and Silence" 5. Witnessing the Rootlessness in Robin's "The Desire of Roots" 6. Witness and the Idea of Home: My Invented Land. Conclusion and Works Cited.