

CHAPTER 34

INDIAN LANGUAGE & LITERARY STUDIES

Doctoral Theses

01. BATRA (Yatin)
Resurgence and Assertion of Identity: A Study of Sindhi and Siraiki Communities through Partition Narratives.
Supervisors: Prof. Amitava Chakraborty & Ravi Prakash Tekchandani
Th 28400

Abstract

The present research, titled “Resurgence and Assertion of Identity: A Study of Sindhi and Siraiki Communities through Partition Narratives”, investigates the socio-cultural transformations and resilience of Sindhi and Siraiki communities in the aftermath of the Partition of 1947. It explores how these communities navigated displacement, linguistic decline, and socio-political marginalization while striving to preserve their cultural identities. The study examines the historical trajectories of Sindhi and Siraiki languages, highlighting Sindhi’s stateless yet politically mobilized identity and contrasting it with the ongoing struggle of Siraiki for recognition despite its strong geographical roots in Punjab. It delves into factors contributing to language decline, such as migration, dominance of regional languages, and inadequate educational support. The research emphasizes community initiatives aimed at fostering pride and sustaining linguistic heritage across generations. Through ethnographic fieldwork, this research explores the worship of Shitala Mata among displaced Sindhi and Siraiki communities. These spiritual practices, maintained primarily by women, emerge as crucial elements of cultural preservation and social cohesion, offering a form of resilience and continuity amidst displacement and loss. Additionally, the study highlights the enduring influence of the poets Shah Abdul Latif and Khwaja Ghulam Farid, whose verses provided solace and cultural anchors for displaced communities. Their poetry, rooted in themes of mysticism, love, and spiritual longing, fostered a sense of belonging and regional pride while serving as a means of emotional healing. By weaving together historical, ethnographic, and literary insights, this research underscores the intricate relationship between language, literature, and religious practices in sustaining cultural identities. It provides a nuanced understanding of how the Sindhi and Siraiki communities have navigated the challenges of displacement and marginalization while asserting their identity and preserving their heritage in post-Partition India.

Contents

1. Reconstructing Identity: Exploring the Status of Sindhi and Siraiki Languages in the Post-Partition Era
2. Shifting Tongues, Evolving Identities: Language Dynamics in Displaced Sindhi and Siraiki Communities in the Post-Partition India
3. Edges, rehabilitation, and the crisis of human hope
3. Healing and Belonging: Post-Partition Resilience of Sindhi and Siraiki Communities through Shitala Mata Worship
4. Partition, Resilience, and Cultural Continuity: Identity Assertion through Literature in Sindhi and Siraiki Communities. Conclusion and Bibliography.

02. CHAUHAN (Rohan)
Automatic Text Recognition for Historical Documents in South Asian Languages.
 Supervisor: Prof. Amitava Chakraborty
Th 28810

Abstract

While Automatic Text Recognition (ATR) has achieved considerable efficacy for historical documents in European languages, its application to the diverse cultural heritage of South Asia – with textual traditions spanning centuries in multiple languages – remains remarkably underdeveloped. This technological imbalance creates a significant barrier, restricting the proliferation of machine-readable text repositories, and thereby precluding the application of computational methods to the study of the region’s rich literary traditions. This thesis directly addresses this disparity by localizing state-of-the-art open-source ATR technologies for nineteenth and twentieth-century early printed materials in Urdu, Hindi, and Bengali. It leverages existing frameworks to establish a foundation for robust text recognition where few to no solutions currently exist, thereby bridging a substantial gap in digital scholarship for these languages. The primary contributions of this thesis are a set of reusable, open-source ATR models for both page layout analysis and character recognition, alongside diverse annotated ground truth datasets used for their training. By providing both a practical framework and tangible models, this research enables new possibilities for computational literary studies and lays the groundwork for expanding ATR capabilities to other under-resourced South Asian languages and beyond.

Contents

1. Automatic Text Recognition: History and Process 2. Technologies of Early Printing in Urdu, Hindi, and Bengali 3. Challenges in ATR for Early Printed Urdu, Hindi, and Bengali Sources 4. Preparing Annotated Ground Truth Datasets for ATR 5. Training Pipeline. Conclusion.

03. DUTTA (Airene Kour)
Representation of Women in Conflict Zones: Contemporary Kashmiri Writings.
 Supervisor: Prof. D. Uma Devi
Th 28401

Abstract

This research explores the representation of women in conflict zones through the lens of contemporary Kashmiri literature, focusing on how gendered trauma, memory, and resistance are articulated in conditions of prolonged political unrest. Drawing on feminist memory studies and trauma theory, particularly the works of Veena Das, Cathy Caruth, and Marianne Hirsch, the study examines how women in Kashmir negotiate experiences of militarization, enforced disappearances, and sexual violence through testimonial and literary forms. Texts such as *Do You Remember Kunan Poshpora?*, *Resisting Occupation in Kashmir*, and ethnographic accounts highlight how women act not only as victims but also as custodians of cultural and collective memory, transforming grief and silence into acts of everyday resistance. By applying an intersectional feminist framework, the study attends to how trauma is mediated by ethnicity, region, and class, and how the domestic sphere becomes politicized in the wake of conflict. These Kashmiri narratives are then brought into comparative dialogue with Sri Lankan Tamil and Muslim women’s experiences of civil war, particularly through Sharika Thiranagama’s *In My Mother’s House* and Rohini Mohan’s *Seasons of Trouble*. Despite different historical and geopolitical contexts, women in both regions exhibit similar patterns of resilience, using memory, ritual, and narrative to

resist erasure and challenge dominant nationalistic discourses. The project argues that literary and testimonial narratives by women in conflict zones function as alternative archives, challenging official silences and offering new modes of witnessing and justice. This comparative study contributes to broader discussions in postcolonial studies, feminist conflict literature, and trauma theory, proposing a transnational feminist approach to understanding women's roles in documenting and surviving war and occupation.

Contents

1. Impact of Conflict on Literature and its Impact on Women 2. Representation of Gender-Based Violence Against Women in Kashmir Writings 3. Memory and Trauma as Recurrent Themes in Selected Kashmiri Writings 4. Gendered Struggles: A Comparative Analysis of Women's Experiences in Kashmir and Sri Lanka 5. Conclusion

04. JAIN (Kanchi)

Growing up in War Zones: Contesting Childhood in Autobiographies through the Vestiges of Traumatic Memory.

Supervisor: Prof. Amitava Chakraborty

Th 28729

Abstract

The present research builds on four structural unities: employment of child narrators by adult authors reflecting on their traumatic childhoods in war zones through the prism of introspection and nostalgia, cultural and social lives of children in war zones, and the trauma they underwent in strenuous circumstances. The thesis explores how childhood is affected, disrupted, documented, and reimagined through diverse autobiographical narratives—conventional, graphic, and multi-performative memoirs, diaries, and oral narrations. The unique platform with an inherent quality of providing space to the narrative-I exploring its experiential-self with the help of memory, challenges the hegemonized and institutionalized historical accounts by re-historicizing and politicizing childhood. The central premise posits that autobiographies of childhood offer a vital counter-discourse to dominant historiographies and state-sanctioned memories, situating individual recollection as a potent site for cultural memory, identity formation, and political critique. Drawing from trauma theory, narratology, and affect theory, alongside interdisciplinary frameworks from sociology, psychology, and child development studies, the research argues that the representation of childhood in conflict zones re-historicizes political violence through the lens of innocence and vulnerability. The study adopts a cross-civilizational and comparative methodology and examines various geopolitical and historical contexts while situating the common breakdown of familial, institutional, and cultural systems of children during wars, which significantly hampers and alters children's identity formation, cognitive development, and leaves epigenetic markers. By amplifying the affective, fragmented, and often non-linear narratives of children growing up amid war, the dissertation not only broadens the scope of autobiographical studies but also contributes to a more inclusive understanding of historical violence and its lasting imprint on human development. In doing so, it affirms that to read these cultural texts in their liminal spaces is not merely to recover lost childhoods but also to reckon with the cultural and political systems that make such losses possible.

Contents

1. Authoring Childhood: Agency, Representation, and Form 2. Cartographing Childhood through a Sense of Loss 3. Affective Ecologies of War: Childhood, Trauma, and Disrupted Development in War Zones 4. Conclusion and Bibliography.

05. SHRUTI

Literatures of Sex -Workers in India: A Socio-Cultural Study.

Supervisor: Prof. Govindaswamy Rajagopal

Th 28402*Abstract*

This thesis provides a socio-cultural analysis of sex-work in India, focusing on the devadasis, tawaifs, and contemporary sex-workers through literature and historical perspectives. The study traces the evolution of these groups, examining how their roles transitioned from revered figures within religious and cultural spheres to marginalized identities under colonial and modern influences. It analyses the devadasis' origins, exploring their once-sacred roles in temples and how colonial perceptions led to their stigmatisation. Similarly, it delves into the lives of tawaifs, celebrated for their artistic talents and societal contributions, who faced diminishing status under British colonial rule and post-colonial reformation. Through literary analysis, particularly Vaasanthi's *Breaking Free*, Saba Dewan's *Tawaifnama*, and the autobiographical works (*The Autobiography of a Sex Worker* and *Romantic Encounters of a Sex Worker*) of Nalini Jameela, the research highlights how these narratives reflect the socio-political dynamics surrounding sex-work. These texts are used to discuss issues like women emancipation, agency, and resilience against stigmatisation. The study also contrasts devadasi and tawaif traditions with the experiences of contemporary sex-workers, illuminating the evolving cultural and legal challenges they face. The thesis argues that literature serves as a crucial medium for understanding the complexities of sex-work in India, presenting the struggles and voices of sex-workers across time. By examining the intersections of gender, caste, and socio-economic status, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the multi-faceted identities within sex-work and challenges the dominant stigmatising narratives.

Contents

1. The Relationship between Devadasis, Tawaifs, and Sex-Workers 2. From Devotion to Stigma: A Critical Exploration of Devadasi Traditions and Gendered Marginalisation in Vaasanthi's *Breaking Free* 3. From Revered Performers to Tabooed Figures: The Decline of Tawaif Tradition in India Through Saba Dewan's *Tawaifnama* 4. Understanding the Politics of Sex-Work Through Nalini Jameela's *An Autobiography of a Sex Worker* and *Romantic Encounters of a Sex Worker* 5. Reframing Sex Work: Representation of Sex-Workers in the Select Writings of Vaasanthi, Saba Dewan, and Nalini Jameela 6. Conclusion. Bibliography.

06. WANI (Aamir Qayoom)

Agency, Identity, and Politics of Gender: A Gynocritical Reading of Select Women Writings from Kashmir.

Supervisor: Prof. D. Uma Devi

Th 28403*Abstract*

The endeavour to carry out the present research is based on the understanding that women have been historically denied 'room' to write about their experiences freely, when it comes to writing literature of their own. Therefore, the present thesis delineates on agency, identity, and politics of gender by engaging in gynocritical reading of select women writings from Kashmir. While speaking beyond the act of self-expression and using literature as literary therapies. The present research brings into focus how these

writers write about their life experiences, how they see the world around them and particularly what is the perspective they build to assert agency, redefine their identities, and navigate gendered power structures to reclaim their voices. The research validates and further adds more power and weight to the argument that women need to write their own stories to preserve the authenticity of their experiences that are rooted in their biological essentialism. It creates an alternative narrative that opens up the conversation/s about how and why these voices are significant to disrupt the conventional and stereotypical understanding of gender roles in the society. Where it also strengthens and stretches the feminist discourse by offering scope to recognise the intersectionality of localised experiences, so as to promote a more inclusive approach to how women writings should be articulated. Moreover, the research largely challenges traditional gender roles, advocates for a more egalitarian, inclusive and gender sensitive society by pushing forward the narrative that these women writers have delineated through their literary imagination. The work also serves the significant function to bolster social change by using the power of storytelling, creating a diverse literary dialogue that inspires readers to believe in the power of literary analysis/literary studies to advocate for gender equity and egalitarianism in the society.

Contents

1. Articulating Contours of Women's Literary Imagination: An Engagement with Female Literary Tradition of Kashmir 2. Of Writing and Womanistic Consciousness: A Critical Engagement with Discourse of Writing Women's Agency 3. Unveiling the Journey to Selfhood: An Inquiry into Question of Women's Identity and Writing as Self-assertion 4. The intersectionality of Gender and Writing: A Study of Politics of Gender in Select Women Writings 6. Conclusion.

M.Phil Dissertations

01. AYUSHI (Bartwal)
Many Ahalyas: A Comparative Study of Gender and Identity in the Retellings of Ramayana.
Supervisor: Prof. Venkata Ramaiah Gampa
02. JANGID (Siddhi)
Indian Adolescents' Psychology Through Young Adult Epistolary Novels.
Supervisor: Prof. V. Narayanappa
03. KHEMANI (Megha)
Navigating Narratives of Displacement and Resilience in Sindhi Experiences of Partition of India and Tamil Experiences of Sri Lankan Civil War.
Supervisor: Prof. D.Uma Devi
04. SIDDIQUI (Anam)
Mushaira Culture of the Amroha City A Study of a Poetic Symposium in Contemporary Times.
Supervisor: Prof. Amitava Chakraborty
05. SINGH (Mallika)
Massifying Tendency of Biopolitics in Totalitarian Regimes and Gender Struggle: A Comparative Analytical Study of Selected Feminist Dystopias.
Supervisor: Prof. Amitava Chakraborty