

## CHAPTER 14

### ENGLISH

#### Doctoral Theses

01. ABHINAV PIYUSH

**Dalit Fiction in Hindi: the Emergence of a New Literary Counterculture.**

Supervisors: Prof. Raj Kumar and Tapan Basu

Th 26060

#### *Abstract*

The period of transition from the nebulous Dalit socio-political movements in Hindi regions to the emergence of modern Hindi Dalit literature as an autonomous discursive space provided an immense terrain to interrogate the countercultural politics of writings and representation. Going beyond autobiographies, this project mapped and studied the emergence of Hindi Dalit novels and short stories in the wake of the implementation of the Mandal Commission report in the 1990s and simultaneous growth of the Ambedkarite ideas in the Hindi regions. These Dalit literary assertions have not only contested the representation of the Dalit experience in Hindi literature but also registered a subversive, rights-oriented and assertive vocabulary to deal with the experiences of caste discrimination in contemporary Indian society. The ideological mould of Dalit Chetna is consciously and carefully designed as a literary framework in rhetorical consonance with the larger Dalit social and political movement. As a countercultural space in making, • Dalit fiction in Hindi captures the intricacies of Dalit subject's negotiations with the caste-saturated social reality of India and the intersectionality of belonging while emancipatory ideas of Dalit writings are taken to the reading public. In this study of mainstream genres, it is argued that the emergence of the Dalit middle class through constitutional measures and enabling means of education has resulted in this reconfigured aesthetics of Dalit literature in Hindi. The multilayered debates around Dalit identity assertion, nature of Indian modernity, and regional belonging are duly captured by these works of fiction. Hindi Dalit women writers also lay the foundations of a distinct Dalit feminist epistemic space by employing the intersectionalities of caste, class and gender.

#### *Contents*

1. Introduction 2. The ideological novels of Dalit Chetna (consciousness): a study of select Hindi Dalit novels 2. Beyond lived experiences in short fiction: reading select works of Hindi Dalit male writers 3. De-centring Hindi Dalit literature: voices from Bihar and Jharkhand 4. Ek nayi duniya ki talash (the quest for a new world): a study of select works of Hindi Dalit women writers. Conclusion and Works cited.

02. ALI (Semeen)

**Politics of Location in Pakistan with Reference to Kamila Shamsie's Works.**

Supervisor: Prof. Christel R Devadawson

Th 26062

*Abstract*

In the act of leaving Pakistan by Kamila Shamsie and taking up British citizenship, there is a process of defining oneself that continues and does not change with the change in one's geographical positioning. Identity is bound up with one's origins. The origins consist of the place you come from, the people you grow up around (community) and invariably the boundaries that are constructed around this identity, through its markers. My PhD thesis attempts to look at the constructions of the self and how identity is bound up with the notions of the place one comes from and as a writer Kamila Shamsie tries to give voice to concerns that emerge from this situation. Coming to a new place, a woman brings with her, her ideas of culture as well as her location at that point of history when she had to uproot herself from. And she uses this to negotiate her place in the new cultural setting of her host country. There are preconceived notions regarding where a person comes from- when it comes to their mannerisms, their language, their food choices, their dressing sense- it is the us versus them that comes into play. When it comes to works of fiction by the diaspora, they are not only looking back at the past or lamenting about what has been lost. There is a constant conversation that they are engaged in with their sense of home and the self. Kamila Shamsie though her works has always been interested in looking at what happens to the relationship of people from contrasting backgrounds and places. When they start to feel themselves on different sides of history/politics- in such situations do such relations endure and in what situations do they crumble? Shamsie draws upon her life while writing her novels, growing up under Zia-ul-Haq's dictatorial Islamic regime, where any anti-nationalist or potentially blasphemous behaviour could be met with severe consequences. My former topic was - Redefining the concept of a South Asian Muslim woman and the current literary trend in Pakistan through Kamila Shamsie's works But after my first annual presentation which was on Mohajirs in Karachi, I realized that in Kamila Shamsie's works- the voice that came out was that of a migrant. The various migrations that had taken place within and outside- the location in that 2 particular country of Shamsie as a writer, as a woman. There is a need to situate oneself in a particular time and space in order to understand our own selves and it is through memories that one writes one's own cultural and one's personal identity. It is not just cold facts or historical circumstances that create a piece of fiction but the distillation of it through the prism of memory. I realized that her writings were not only questioning the dynamics within families or between genders but they were also questioning the location and the politics behind it that has been there since the recognition of Karachi as an important base by the British in pre Independent India. I have tried to look at how Kamila Shamsie as a Muslim woman writer in the political climate of a country like Pakistan reaches out to her readers with a set of issues that echo in her works and how deeply are they connected with her growing up years in Pakistan as well as the Pakistan in the present context. Adding to that is her identity as a Pakistani writer. How that affects the way one writes for the people at home and those abroad. As a diasporic writer ( She became a British citizen in 2007)- How does one come to terms with the culture and history of one's country in a new setting which although offers you a space to speak out yet cannot understand the cultural context in which things are explained. Therefore bringing to light an important matter of whether one's writings are being dictated by the demands placed on a writer to write in a particular manner or does the writer exercise her freedom, in this case Kamila Shamsie, to break through the stereotypes- rather play with them in order to express herself and defy the conventions.

*Contents*

1. Introduction 2. A country and its voice: reading kamila shamsie's novels in the socio political context of Pakistan 3. Looking at kamila's Karachi through kartography 4. Kamila shamsie's writing from Karachi 5. Kamila shamsie's writing from London: her second home. Conclusion. Bibliography and Appendix.

03. CHETAN

**Youth and Empire in Kipling's Fiction.**

Supervisor: Prof. Christel R. Devadawson

Th 26061

*Abstract*

I have attempted to show that between the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of twentieth century, Kipling utilized several frames to capture linkage between the Empire and young people. The five chapters have studied this cross connection in the frames like colonial war, travel writing, modern medicine, boarding military schools in India and England, youth movement, adventure fiction and British history. While analysing the two categories – empire and youth – in these contexts, it is clear that they both feed off and sustain each other. In his representation of the British Empire, Kipling dissolves rigid parameters of conceptualization. He illustrates that it is a project that cuts across multiple spheres such as political control, military exercises and economic transactions. Kipling captures the complexity of empire by incorporating its territorial vastness, diverse cultural contact zones and potentiality for human and regional development. Among other things, empire is a kind of thought process that drives a sense of segregation and difference while also signalling a particular kind of social progress, and cultural modernization. Kipling's own interest shifts from tales that represent British soldiers toward stories that concern themselves with the preparation of young adults for the responsibilities of empire. In the beginning of the twentieth century, a shift was observed in Kipling's children stories from adventure tales to the stories embodying themes of Britain's history. These tales act as coupling between children and the country's past which has a long history corpulent with regimes replacements, movement towards industrial economy, religious and social upheavals. In these tales, Kipling undertakes the task of 188 reconstructing the British history from ancient times to modern times for children to learn from. Not only this, Kipling highlights through these tales, the necessity of teaching fictionalised British history in school. As a result of his engagement with young people and their literature, Kipling's response to Empire becomes more sensitive and also more flexible.

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1. Introduction 2. The light that failed: colonial war, youthful aspirations and empire 3. The naulahka: travel narratives, identity construction, medicine and zenana 4. Adventure and rebellion in kipling's captains courageous and stinky & co. 5. The jungle books and kim: kipling's philosophy of law and education 6. Puck of pook's hill: local history, children and empire. Conclusion. Illustration and Bibliography

04. DEEBA ZAFIR

**Dream Deferred : Urban Aspirations and Sensibility in Dalit Short Fiction in Hindi.**

Supervisors: Prof. Raj Kumar and Tapan Basu

Th 26058*Abstract*

After more than a century of Dalit Hindi literary production, it has yet to receive a sustained critical attention in Hindi academia, leave alone in English. Since Hindi Dalit autobiography has garnered the maximum research interest, this thesis focuses on short fiction as an equally representative genre of the statement, development and refinement of the foundational principle of the radical Dalit consciousness, in short, Dalit chetna. Tracing the origins of this consciousness to the arrival of the Dalits into the print medium, subsequent to the migration of Dalits to the city, this research examines their transact with modernity and the emancipatory promises it held out to them. The early prose writing tradition is linked with beginning of the Adi- Hindu movement led by first Dalit intellectuals and right from 1930s to 1960s with small, alternative publishing outlets established as separate space alongside mainstream Hindi public led to the making of the Hindi Dalit counterpublic. Upon scouring the history of Dalit literature, this research finds a flash in the past, as early as 1915, followed by a long interregnum until the 1960s, when the Dalit short story begins to make an appearance, thereby shifting, what was assumed to be the date of the first story from the 1970s to the 1960s. Gaining recognition as a post-Mandal phenomenon, Dalit literature in Hindi carved a unique identity for itself by building itself around two templates -the espousal of Ambedkarite ideology and the rejection of Premchand's "idealistic realism." This research looks at Dalits in the city and examines the nature of Dalit aspirations as well as the making of an urban sensibility as represented in the short stories of some of the first generation of Hindi Dalit writers- Dayanand Batohi, Omprakash Valmiki and Jai Prakash Kardam, highlighting the literary tropes that mark their fiction: the absence of nostalgia for the village, the transformative potential of the acquired urban sensibility that turns around caste dynamics, the theme of passing on the one hand and the assertion of identity on the other, both appearing as a potential source of jeopardy for the Dalit character. The research also focusses on specifically urban themes like students' suicides, inter-caste relationships and the issue of reservations to substantiate what theorists of discrimination have asserted that even in seemingly caste-neutral spaces, caste discrimination is very much a modern sector phenomenon. Given that the Hindi Dalit counterpublic is not a homogenous space, with various constituents presenting contesting voices within the Dalit Hindi literary sphere, this thesis also undertakes an examination of the stories of those authors that occupy the opposite ends of the Dalit spectrum- the shrill and the subtle voices of the second generation of Dalit writers in Hindi: Sheoraj Singh Bechain and Ajay Navaria respectively. As members of the urban Dalit middle class, their stories cast a sharp glance at all the major modern institutions of the country, attacking each of them for newer forms of untouchability and caste discrimination- be it the army, media, public schools, private hospitals, old age home, inter-caste marriage and even academia as well as the curious case of reverse passing. While Bechain considers representation of the fears and anxieties of Dalits as his authorial responsibility, Navaria presents a sharp contrast by asserting that he is not a round the clock Dalit, preferring to experiment and innovate with the genre, subtly weaving into its form the Dalit strand of caste-based issues. These writers expand the scope of the short story by bringing into its ambit not just the staple range of references to Ambedkar, Kabir

and Buddha but also to Black American struggle, the need for a separate empowering identity, dignity of labour and Dalit-Muslim solidarity. The Indian Constitution as well as the Buddhist character and family are the new elements that are introduced into the lexicon of Dalit literature in Hindi. The frequent use of English that contributes to the unique linguistic register that characterises much of Dalit fiction is also highlighted.

*Contents*

1. Introduction 2. Early footprints: Dalit short fiction in Hindi 3. Dalits in the city 4. The shrill and the subtle: contesting voices in the Hindi Dalit literary sphere 5. Rebels within and without: the Hindi Dalit woman writer. Conclusion and Bibliography.

05. MANDAL (Arijeet)  
**“Messed up my Stomach”: A Study of Concepts and Natures of Disgust in Indian Short Fiction.**  
 Supervisor: Prof. Shormishtha Panja  
Th 26059

*Abstract*

The dissertation here attempts to trace how the emotion of disgust can be read and analysed in Indian short fiction. It is a way to study disgust through a materialistic positioning of the emotion in the world, and a phenomenological understanding. Disgust is universal to humans across the globe in its broader aspects, and localised and individualistic in its specific targets and formations. This dissertation tries to trace a history of studies in disgust, then proceeds to analyse the basic reasons why it is such a common emotion across the world. It then tries to analyse why and how the emotion is related to networks of power. The problem of the emotion of disgust is that it works as an anchor against existential dread, anxiety, and the fear of loss of meaning. It is disgusting to look at rotting bodies or slimy, sticky, odorous things because it reminds us of the insignificance of life. However, disgust is also deeply embedded with networks of social and political power. Disgust is used as a tool in encounters with the other. This other that is the target of disgust could be from the categories of other gender, race, caste, class and sexuality. This dissertation tried to engage with a few of those categories in order to understand how disgust as an emotion has both an existential and socio-political life. The dissertation then tries to interact the generated findings to analyse a few works in Indian short fiction. While the primary focus was on Vilas Sarang and Subimal Mishra, it tried to trace a history of the use of disgust as a literary device in a few other writers. In its conclusion, it tries to connect to other fields of study and develop a broader perspective of understanding this specific emotion.

*Contents*

1. Introduction 2. A brief history of reading disgust through different philosophical traditions 3. A materialist discourse on disgust 4. Disgust and gender 5. Looking at disgust in Indian short fiction. Conclusion and Work cited.

06. NINGOMBAM ROJIBALA DEVI  
**Breaking Silences and the “Other History”: Exploring Three Pioneer Meetei Women Writers.**  
 Supervisor: Prof. Shormishtha Panja  
Th 26057

*Abstract*

Socialist feminists believe that the situations and the kinds of work women are subjected to, their material condition, shape their thoughts and signify femaleness. While socialist feminists focus on women's actual social and political condition, the French feminists, namely Helen Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, emphasise the psychic repression of women. The French feminists have offered alternative ways of being and thinking beyond male prescription, focusing on the extra-linguistic characteristics of the representation system. Despite their differing positions, the mentioned feminists—socialist and French feminists—have shown what constitutes a woman's text, what makes it distinct from a male-written text and the strategies for rewriting women's history. Inspired by the theoretical concepts offered by the feminists mentioned above, this thesis titled *Breaking Silences and "Other History": Exploring Three Pioneer Meetei Women Writers* studies the beginning of a female literary tradition in the history of Manipuri literature. Though there has been an extensive amount of Meetei literature and an established history of it, Meetei women began writing very late. It was only in 1935 that women's education began in Manipur with the establishment of Tamphasana Girls High School. Therefore, with the coming of a new vision, one of the seeds was sown for the rise of women writers. Among the first few educated women of Manipur, three women writers of profound influence, namely Thoibi Devi (1920-1996), M.K. Binodini (1922-2011) and Khaidem Pramodini (1924-2006), emerged in the 1960s. With their emergence, Meetei women's literature began to grow. This thesis examines the characteristic features of their writings that differ from the existing literary tradition. It explores how the three writers challenge the monolithic ideology of male-written literature and make their works emerge as a literary subculture in Manipur.

*Contents*

1. Introduction: Breaking silences and the "other history": exploring three pioneer meetei women writers  
 2. Women in meetei society: re-reading the feminist grain  
 3. The concept of the 'new woman' in the writings of thoibi devi (1920-1996)  
 4. Gestation of feminine writing in binodini's texts  
 5. Women and class in the writing of khaidem pramodini (1924-2006). Conclusion and Works cited

07. SHARMA (Megha)  
**Fairy Tales and the Utopian Imagination.**  
 Supervisor: Dr. Ira Raja  
Th 26056

*Abstract*

My thesis seeks to problematize the understanding of the development of the genre of fairy tale as it evolved to its present form—as a consequence of the relationship between the underlying influences which resulted in its metamorphization—firstly, the transition of the social structure from feudalism to capitalism and secondly, the historically changing understanding of magic and utopia. I will not only interrogate the historical situations which necessitated the carving out of fairy tale as a genre, from the broader genre of folktales, but will also try and establish the socio-political implications and ramifications of the same in the capitalist contemporaneity. For a nuanced concretization of such a tremendous shift—across centuries and in the geographical specificity of Europe—the era of Enlightenment becomes both, a dividing and a connecting juncture. I will postulate the dialectical relationship between pre-Enlightenment understanding of magic

and the scientific temper (with science explicating magic at times but at other times appearing magical itself) and the changing patterns of sorcerers, sorcery continuing unabated nevertheless. I will also highlight the connection (with the dawn of capitalism, the division of labour embodied at every level and the society's parallel display of stratification and centralization) between science, labour and the altered perception of magic. I will investigate the process whereby science, on a project of decoding myths (giving rational, scientific explanation), ends up being mythical itself, its apparently intrinsic relationship to modernity and the changing art forms (fairy tale in particular).

*Contents*

1. Introduction 2. The mode of production 3. Folktales and fairy tales 4. The witch in fairy tales 5. Magic and science 6. Fairy tales and the enlightenment. Conclusion and Works cited