

MAHARAJA AGRASEN COLLEGE

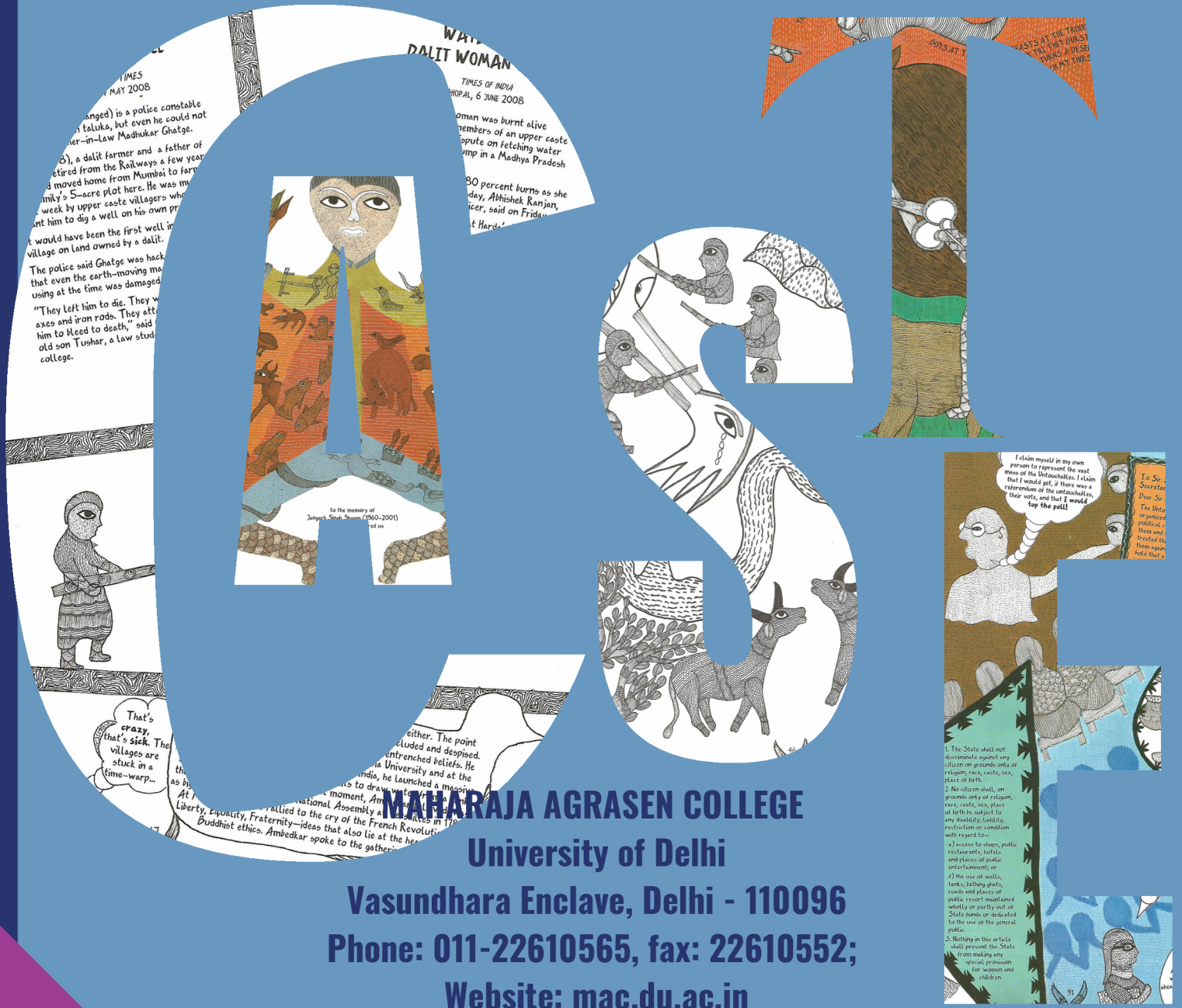
(UNIVERSITY OF DELHI)
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



6TH INTERDISCIPLINARY NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RE-EXAMINING 'CASTE': POSTCOLONIAL THEORY AND PRACTICE

08-09 OCTOBER 2024

ABSTRACT BOOKLET



MAHARAJA AGRASEN COLLEGE
University of Delhi

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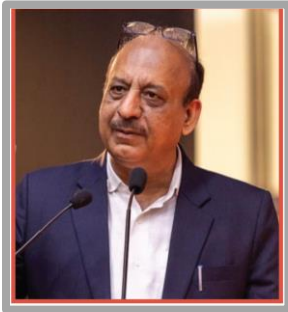
MAHARAJA AGRASEN COLLEGE

Maharaja Agrasen College (MAC) is a dynamic institution, which in the 30 years of its existence has quickly risen to take its place amongst the highest-ranking colleges of the country for the variety of courses it offers in Arts, Science and Commerce stream. The college has excelled in almost every sphere, be it academics, sports, extra-curricular activities or faculty skill enhancement, and has successfully improved its score while retaining grade 'A' in the most recent NAAC evaluation completed in 2022. In the latest nationwide survey of India's best colleges conducted by India Today Group and MDRA, Maharaja Agrasen College stands at 26th rank in Science, 30th rank in Arts and 36th rank in Commerce. The college has earned its rightful place as an institution of excellence, which is evidenced from its ranking amongst the top 50 in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (2022) conducted by the Ministry of Education, Government of India.

Maharaja Agrasen College has constantly striven to keep abreast with the latest in technology and teaching practices to create a holistic learning environment for its students. A number of centres are run by different departments within the college, such as the Media Centre, Centre for Civic Education, Centre for Performing Arts and Cultural Studies, Sanskriti Kala Kendra and so on. The activities and opportunities provided by these centres provide value addition towards holistic development of the students. The Abdul Kalam Centre for Research and Vivekananda Study Circle are recent additions to enhancing a positive research culture supporting both students and faculty members.

The college has one of the best infrastructures in terms of both facilities and furnishings. It has smart classrooms with NET-enabled interactive panels, auditorium, conference halls, a library with e-journals, course-specific laboratories and ICT labs, gymnasium, etc. The MAC community is especially proud of its Girls' NCC unit, which has brought tremendous accolades to the college with its commendable activities. The college is sensitive towards weaker sections of society and has always created equal opportunities for all students. Our responsibility towards the society has led us to establish student faculty associations in the form of NSS and its projects such as AKSHAR, Project Baroji, etc. The college boasts of a very proactive Placement Cell, which offers various opportunities to the students to interact with visiting companies and job-providers.

Maharaja Agrasen College firmly believes that the path to individual and collective growth lies in its capability to adapt and accept changes as opportunities for future achievements. It aims at nothing less than being the best and shall continue in its endeavour to scale greater heights in the coming years.



FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S DESK

I warmly congratulate the Department of English, Maharaja Agrasen College for organizing the national conference on “Re-examining ‘Caste’: Postcolonial Theory and Practice.” Maharaja Agrasen College has often showcased its academic rigour and excellence by engaging with social and cultural issues via diverse activities, platforms, and forums. In this regard, the Department of English has frequently taken the lead to deliberate on issues of ‘everyday’ practices from an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives. This present conference on ‘caste,’ seen and refracted through the postcolonial lens, is a significant concern of contemporary times and adumbrates the highly focused research potential of the department.

Caste studies is a social reality, which denominates various outcomes, possibilities and potentialities of our everyday world. Without undermining traditional methodological lens and frameworks, the conference’s focus to address the diverse issues and concerns of ‘caste’ from a postcolonial perspective offers a more nuanced understanding of the multi-faceted dimension of caste to emerge, and enables the transcending of the rigid and fixed theoretical understanding of caste structures and politics.

I trust this conference will promote numerous alternate intellectual positions to materialize vis-à-vis the issues of caste. The ramifications of caste studies are found in several disciplines, contexts, and institutions, and which this academic conference, I am fairly certain, will engage with to generate a rich intellectual discourse of public importance. I firmly believe that the fostering of academic exchanges and dialogues via this conference would function as a catalyst to contribute towards more comprehensive policy interventions, implementations, and scholarly engagements. I wish great success to the Department and to the Principal for organizing this conference.

Prof Rakesh Kumar

Chairman, Governing Body

Maharaja Agrasen College

University of Delhi.

Professor, Department of Chemistry,

University of Delhi





FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

It's a matter of immense pleasure to see the Department of English organize the national conference on "Re-examining 'Caste': Postcolonial Theory and Practice." This national conference outlines complex and layered interactions between different groups and communities, and charts connections with various social variables like class, gender, sexuality, public policies, etc. In our everyday consciousness, the framework of caste articulates various dimensions of social stratifications, habits, and rituals, which verbalizes power networks, hierarchies and discriminations, and underscores the importance of geo-political positionings. The intellectual deliberations on caste issues have often framed public discourse in terms of caste-based violence, socio-historical aspects of identity formation, anti-caste movements or focused on its representations in literature and culture. This national conference will supplement the already rich academic discourse on caste by re-reading the caste issues, practices, and policies through the postcolonial lens. The examination of caste via the postcolonial methodology allows for a nuanced investigation of how caste impacts livelihoods, consciousness, families, and communities.

The Department of English in its previous five editions of national and international conferences deliberated on issues pertaining to indigenous cultures and languages, urban realities and phenomenon, representations of migrations in popular culture and literatures. All these conferences grappled with pressing global problems, and this conference continues the intellectual tradition of dealing with complex global challenges. The discussions and dialogic exchanges between academic luminaries, young scholars, and academicians participating in this conference will undoubtedly encourage innovative affective, social, and aesthetic insights and perspectives on global and local features of 'caste' to emerge.

I congratulate the entire Organizing Committee for planning and organizing the conference efficiently. I convey my best wishes to the whole team for the grand success of the Conference.

Prof. Sanjeev Kumar Tiwari

Principal (Offg.)

Maharaja Agrasen College

University of Delhi





DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

The Honours course in English was introduced in 1997 and since then the Department has grown from strength to strength in terms of academic excellence, co-curricular and creative activities, and student-faculty upgradation programmes. The Department has its own departmental library. It has also established *The Centre for Performing Arts and Cultural Studies* which also has a rich library and a vibrant calendar of activities throughout the year. Since the inception of the College, members of the department have contributed significantly to the design and publication of the College Magazine, Annual Report, NAAC Report, and many other prestigious colleges' documents each year. The faculty members of the Department of English have been active members of important committees like IQAC, Admission, Academic Planning, Extra-curricular, Annual Activity, Sports, NSS, Equal Opportunity Cell, SC/ST Cell, Internal Complaints Committee, Grievance Redressal Committee, National Scholarships, Student Aid Fund Committee, etc. We have not only collated and articulated the collective voice of the institution several times but, have also lent our voice literally by anchoring many key events of the College.

The Department of English Co-Curricular Student Society – ACTIVE lives up to its name each year by organizing many well-attended events under the patronage of the teachers. These events include: *The Annual Lecture Series, Meet the Alumni Series, Meet the Author Series, Workshops* (Creative Writing, Effective Reading, Visual Communication, Photography), *Excursions* to places of cultural, historical and literary interest like Jaipur Literary Festival, Saattal, Udaipur, Jaisalmer and Jodhpur, Amritsar, Bhopal, and organizing *Heritage Walks* such as to Nizamuddin Basti and to 1857 uprising sites in Delhi, etc. The Department actively engages in curating theatre and movie projects, photography sessions, and also enthusiastically participates in the organization of conferences. The Department organized its First International Conference on *De-territorializing Diversities: Cultures, Literatures, Languages of the Indigenous* in 2013, Second, the UGC-sponsored Interdisciplinary National Conference on *City Lives: Spaces and Narratives* in 2016 and Third, the Interdisciplinary National Conference on *Reading Migrations: Fractured Histories, Forged Narratives* in 2017, Fourth, the Interdisciplinary National Conference on *Indian Popular Fiction: Redefining the Canon* in 2019, and the Fifth was the National Conference on *Representations of Disability in Literature and Cinema* (2020). The present Conference in 2024 is on *Re-Examining Caste: Postcolonial Theory and Practice*, and is the 6th edition of Department's series of conferences. Despite the disruption caused by the ongoing global pandemic of Covid 19, the Department organized a veritable cornucopia of events in that academic year managing various events held on various online platforms. The pandemic disruption led the faculty and students to also become acquainted with various digital skills and which ensured that learning intellectual deliberations continue without a break.

The faculty members of the department have been Editors and members in the Editorial Board of the College's research journal, *Journal of Social Enquiry* in its various issues. The book publications and research articles' publications at national and international level have been the strength of the faculty members' academic achievements. Few of the recent books published by faculty members include: *Indian Popular Fiction: Redefining the Canon* (2021), *Gandhi in India's Literary and Cultural Imagination* (2022), *Indian Popular Fiction: New Genres, Novel Spaces* (Routledge 2022), *Dalit Feminist Discourse-Voices in Dalit Narratives* (2023).

The Department also organized the *Interfaculty Lectures* and *Faculty Student Research Seminar Series* to promote various research-based sessions being presented by Faculty and students both. The Department keeps bringing various opportunities to students to publish their creative pieces in 'The Edges' – a literary magazine of the department. This





quarterly Magazine deliberates on various topics and showcases the immense potentiality and creativity of the department students. The special issues of the Magazine have covered writings by alumni and a few select issues covered travel interests and food habits and cultures, etc. With the introduction of the CBCS curriculum, the Department has successfully offered Generic Elective and Skill Enhancement papers in 'Text and Performance', 'Media and Communication Skills', 'Academic Writing', 'Creative Writing', 'Translation Studies', 'Soft Skills', 'Technical Writing' and Value Added Courses like 'Emotional Intelligence' and 'Ecology and Literature', etc., eliciting keen response of students from various disciplines. At the University level, the Department has engaged with numerous course revisions, curriculum development, content writing, paper setting, and resource sharing.

The Department has been teaching *English Language Proficiency* courses in the past, under the aegis of Institute of Life Long Learning, University of Delhi and several faculty members were also engaged in preparing course material for these courses. In continuation with the same practice, *English Language Proficiency Workshop* for the B.A. (Prog.) students was organized under the aegis of Abdul Kalam Research Centre, Maharaja Agrasen College. We have offered the short-term course 'English Language Proficiency Course for Professional Success,' under the aegis of Abdul Kalam Centre for consecutive years. In multiple ways, the dedicated faculty of the department have attempted to engage with students of various streams to enhance their soft skills, communication and negotiation skills.

The Department has consistently provided opportunities to students to interact with some of the most renowned scholars, critics, authors, intellectuals, and artists. Prof R.W. Desai, Prof Harish Trivedi, Prof Langston Hughes, Prof Amritjit Singh, Prof Tabish Khair, Prof Jonathan Gil Harris, Prof Madhavi Menon, Prof Rashmi Doraiswamy, Ms Gitanjali Shree, Prof Rosemary Marongoly George, Mr Tenzin Tsundae, Mr Vijay Lokapally, Ms Sheela Reddy, Mr Yaseer Usman, Prof Sukrita Paul Kumar, Dr Anjana Neira Dev, Prof Marcel Courthiade, Prof Sabrina Dhawan, Prof Savita Singh, Prof Nishat Zaidi are a few of the glittering names in this chain. The screening of movies and documentaries having a bearing on the curricular content is a regular feature in the department.

The Department is engaged in research and innovation projects in diverse fields and produces papers and other outputs year after year. Two ICSSR projects are being handled by the faculty with one of them being completed this year and awaiting publication. Four members of the department have earned doctorates in the last two years and one member has also, been the Presidential International Visiting Scholar at Boston University in 2018. The English Department room is abuzz with activity and good cheer at all times. The students of the department have gone on to excel in various trajectories. Whether it be the field of sports, cultural activities or academic engagements, the department students have created a special name for themselves within the academic and public space. We are proud of our alumni, who have excelled in diverse careers like being in media, publishing houses, academics, international research scholars, financial banks, language trainers, theatre artists, etc.

The Department believes in individual and collective enhancement, with room for individuality on the one hand and best practices of academia and intelligentsia on the other, and will continue to thrive for the same in all the coming years.





FACULTY MEMBERS OF DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



ABHA SINGH earned her Ph.D. from Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut, U.P., in 2018. Her doctoral research focuses on the works of the renowned author Rohinton Mistry. Her scholarly work explores the lives of ordinary people and their struggles during India's Emergency in 1975; shedding light on how political and historical upheavals transformed the lives of Indian citizens. Dr Singh has presented her research at numerous national and international conferences, and contributed significantly to literary and socio-political discourse. Currently, she is working as an Assistant Professor (Guest) at Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi.



ADITI GOSWAMI is working as Assistant Professor (Guest) at Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi. She has completed M.Phil in English Literature from Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut. Her dissertation examines Radha- Krishna motifs in the works of Kamala Das and Sarojini Naidu. She secured the first position in her postgraduation at Chaudhary Charan Singh University. She has been a member of the Organizing Committee of Swami Vivekananda Chair, and was responsible for various activities organized by the Department of Languages at Swami Vivekananda Subharti University, Meerut. She has presented papers in national conferences and recently published a research paper on the poetry of Kamala Das. Her area of interest includes: Romantic Literature, Feminist studies and Indian Literature.



AISHWARYA JHA holds a Ph.D. in English, with her research broadly exploring the evolving portrayal of disability through the medial and cultural adaptations of key disability texts. She has presented





at many national and international conferences and has multiple publications to her credit. Her academic expertise spans disability studies, adaptation studies, human rights literature, Indian classical literature, and Victorian literature. She is currently teaching at Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi, where she continues to contribute to both research and teaching in her fields of specialization.



ANUPAMA JAIDEV KARIR is Associate Professor in the Department of English at Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi. Her research areas include Romani studies, narratives of the Indian Emergency of 1975-77, tribal narratives, popular reading, and cultural historiographies of itinerant communities in the subcontinent. She has presented as well as published papers in these areas. She writes poetry and also translates from Hindi to English.

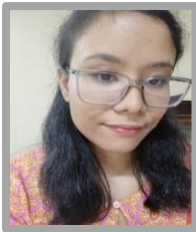


CHARU ARYA is presently working as an Associate Professor in English at Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi. After her PhD in American Literature, her research interests expanded to Dalit literature. She has been presenting various papers in the National and International Conferences and has also published research papers on Dalit writings, Gender writings and Dalit autobiographies. She has also co-edited an anthology titled, *Dalit Feminist Discourse-Voices in Dalit Narratives* in 2023. She has been the Principal Investigator of a Minor Project at the University of Delhi, titled “Enquiring into the relevance of prescribed textbooks for undergraduate level” in the University of Delhi. She is also the Nodal Officer for scholarships at MAC. During her association with the non-government organization, Asiatic Society of Social Science Research that works with NITI Aayog, she organized an International Conference on ‘Women Empowerment’ as the Convener in February, 2023. She is also working as Faculty Coordinator for AKSHAR program under NSS, engaged in teaching the underprivileged children of the vicinity, since 2016. She has also been a Resource Person for many Refresher Courses in the Academic Staff College, Jamia Milia Islamia, Delhi and has also prepared study material for the English Proficiency Course, Advance Level, run by the Institute of Life Long Learning, University of Delhi.





GITANJALI CHAWLA is Professor in the Department of English. She has more than thirty years of teaching experience at Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi. Her research on the folk songs of Punjab has led to an active participation in several fora, both at the national and international level and has several publications in journals of repute to her credit. She is the co-editor of five seminal anthologies, *Cultures of the Indigenous: India and Beyond* (2014), *De-territorialising Diversities: Literatures of the Indigenous and Marginalised* (2014), *Re-storying the Indigenous and the Popular Imaginary* (2017), *Knowledge Organisations: Aspirations and Experiences* (2020) and *Indian Popular Fiction: Redefining the Canon* (2021), an international publication by Routledge. She was also the Project Coordinator and Director of an ICSSR sponsored empirical Research Project titled ‘A Study of the Relationship between Skills and Employability in Tourism and Hospitality Sector in J&K: Examining the Special Industry Initiative (SII) for J&K- UDAAN’. The project was successfully completed, and report submitted in March 2024. A long-time editor of *Fortell*, she is currently its Vice President and has also been the Presidential International Visiting Scholar at Boston University, Boston, USA.



HIMALEE DEKA is Assistant Professor (Guest) of English, Maharaja Agrasen College and a research scholar at the Department of English, University of Delhi. She recently submitted her M. Phil dissertation on “Benevolent Subordination of Women in North-east India: Myth of Women at better position with reference to the works of Temsula Ao & Easterine Kire”. Her research interest lies in North-East studies, feminism & gender studies, identity crisis & the ideological notion of Indigeneity. She has presented papers in national & international conferences and has authored an article titled “Reflections of cultural loss & indigenous identity in the poems of Mamang Dai & Temsula Ao” published in the edited book “The Himalayan Saga: Nature, Culture and Literature” (2024).

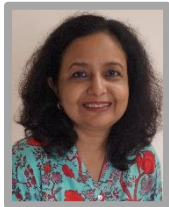


INDRANI DAS GUPTA is Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi. She completed her doctoral research in the field of Indian science fiction from





the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. She writes primarily in the areas of popular culture, speculative fiction, ecocriticism and ethical activism, sports studies, cultural studies, fandom culture, and film studies. Her articles/chapters have been published in Routledge, Bloomsbury and Macmillan. Her recent publications include a co-edited book titled *Gandhi in India's Literary and Cultural Imagination* (Routledge, New York, 2022) and chapters on Bollywood dance, Rudyard Kipling and science fiction (Routledge, New York; Bloomsbury, London). She served in the capacity of Co-Project Coordinator in the ICSSR sponsored empirical Minor Research Project titled 'A Study of the Relationship between Skills and Employability in the Tourism and Hospitality Sector in J&K: Examining the Special Industry Initiative (SII) for J&K – UDAAN' (2023-24). The project was successfully completed and report submitted in March 2024. She has widely presented papers in national and international conferences. She was also the Fiction editor of *Mithila Review: An International Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy*.



MONA SINHA, Associate Professor in the Department of English, has been teaching at Maharaja Agrasen College for over 25 years. She holds Masters and M.Phil degrees in English from University of Delhi, and a doctorate in television and cultural studies from Jamia Millia Islamia. She writes primarily in the areas of language and literature, cultural studies, media and television, feminist studies and popular fiction. She is an associate editor for *Fortell* journal, having recently co-edited a special issue on 'Media in the Classroom: Genre, Resource and Practice' (January 2023). Her recent publications include a co-edited anthology on *Indian Popular Fiction: New Genres, Novel Spaces* (Routledge & Aakar 2022).



ONSHANGLA ZIMIK earned her Ph.D. from the Department of Comparative Literature and Translation Studies, Central University of Gujarat where she examined the visual colonial politics and representation of the Nagas in museums. Her research and publications investigate how indigenous peoples are represented within museum settings, addressing the complexities of confronting colonial legacies. She has worked as a Project Fellow at National Council of Educational Research and Training, Delhi, focusing on integrating Global Citizenship Education (GCED) values through folktales from Northeast India. Currently, she serves as an Assistant Professor (guest) in the Department of English at Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi.





RUCHI NAGPAL is the recipient of 2024-25 Harry Ransom Center Research Fellowship offered by the University of Texas at Austin, USA. She is the co-editor of *Premchand on Literature & Life* (New York: Routledge, 2023) and *Panorama of the Pandemic: A Phenomenological Inquiry* (New York: Routledge 2024). She has also translated more than two dozen non-fiction prose pieces of Premchand in *Premchand on Culture and Education* (New York: Routledge 2021). She has presented papers in various national and international seminars. She is currently working as Assistant Professor (Guest) at Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi. She has also worked as a Project Fellow under the aegis of UGC SAP DRS, Phase III, D/o English, Jamia Millia Islamia.



SANGEETA MITTAL is Professor in the Department of English, Maharaja Agrasen College. She has over 30 years of experience of teaching English literature. Her dissertation on 'Delhi Culture: A Literary Perspective' encapsulates the historical, topical, material and urban aspects of this complex and layered phenomenon. Having helmed several Interdisciplinary National Conferences, she is continuing her work on culture and environment through research papers, chapters in books, edited anthologies, translations, and FDPs. She is co-PI of the ongoing ICSSR Major Research Project titled 'Diver-city: A Virtual City Compendium Project'. She is a WIG Fellow, India's first fellowship for women in politics. She is the Chief Editor of the on-line journal *Interdisciplinary Journal of Digital Humanities and Ubiquitous Scholarship* (IIDUS). She is the founder member of Himalayan Study Circle, Maharaja Agrasen College chapter. With passionate interest in institution building, she researches and writes on educational leadership and has contributed extensively to the corporate life of the College by serving in most portfolios and positions.





SHILPA GUPTA is Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi, where she has been teaching literature, language and cultural studies for more than a decade. She is currently pursuing Ph.D. in Disability Studies from the department of English, University of Delhi. She has presented research papers in several national and international conferences. She has published research papers in prominent journals. She has also been the Editor of *The Indian Journal of Social Enquiry*. Her areas of interest are 'Eighteenth-Century British Literature, Indian Writings in English and Indian Literature in Translation, Contemporary Literature and Disability Studies.

VINOD VERMA is Associate Professor of English, in the Department of English, Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi, where he has been involved in teaching and researching literature in English, performing and visual arts, including film making for more than three decades. He has presented research papers, screened films and given musical performances in national and international conferences in India, UK, Lebanon, France, Germany, Hungary and Italy. He has also co-edited books titled *Individual and Society* and *Living Literatures* for Department of English, University of Delhi.

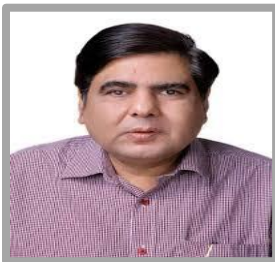


BIO-NOTES OF INVITED SPEAKERS



PROF AJAY NAVARIA has earned his Doctorate from Jawaharlal Nehru University.

He has numerous books under his name like *Udhar ke Log*, (a novel), *Yes, Sir* (a collection of short stories), *Samiksha ka Samay*, and *Kahani ke Kamleshwar*, which are on criticism among others. He is the recipient of Sudha Sahitya Samman (2007), Sahityik Kriti Samman by Hindi Academy of Delhi (2008), Bharat Ratna Dr B.R. Ambedkar Rashtriya Samman (2011) and Kathakram Story Competition (2000) to name a few. There have been 10 research projects based on his novel and short stories. As a key speaker at Jaipur Literature Festival, he shared the dais with veteran writer (late) Om Prakash Valmiki in 2010 and veteran writer Mr. Kancha Illiah in 2013. He has visited several Universities abroad to deliver lectures like Torino University, Italy; Leicester University, UK and Nottingham Trent University, UK and has delivered more than 100 lectures in Indian Universities.



PROF ANIL K. ANEJA has a long and distinguished career in academics of more

than 35 years. Currently serving as the Head, Department of English, University of Delhi, his areas of interest include Twentieth Century Fiction, Disability Studies, Human Rights Literature, Indian Writing in English, Translation Studies, Diaspora Studies and Communication and Technology Applications. He has more than hundred conference presentations, many paper publications and a number of significant books. Prof Anil Aneja is the Director, Centre for Disability Studies, University of Delhi; has served on the Governing Bodies of many colleges of University of Delhi and has also been the Chairman of three of these. He has been the Nodal Officer as-well-as Grievance Redressal Officer for Persons with Disabilities and Officer on Special Duty at the Equal Opportunity Cell, University of Delhi till November, 2021. For nearly 30 years now, Prof Aneja has been actively involved in the disability sector in various national and international roles. Presently, he is the President, All India Confederation of the Blind, a premier self-help organization of the visually impaired. He is part of the Indian delegation to the World Blind Union, the foremost international organization of the visually-impaired and also served as the Chair, Rehabilitation Committee, World Blind Union from 2016-21. His achievements have earned him several distinctions from various quarters. Prof Aneja





was conferred the National Award for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities by the then President of India in 2014. In 2017, he was presented with the Achiever's Award by the Indian Eye International Human Rights Observer. He was also conferred the State Award in the Category 'Best Individual Working in the field of Social Work' by the Govt. Of NCT of Delhi, the Rustom Merwanji Alpaiwalla Memorial Award 2020 by the National Association for the Blind, and NAB Sarojini Trilok Nath National Award 2020. He was recently conferred with the prestigious 23rd NCPEDP-LTI Mindtree Helen Keller Award 2022 in the category Role Model Persons with Disabilities.



SHRI BALBIR MADHOPURI is an eminent writer and accomplished translator. His writings are focused on the issues related with the oppressed and depressed classes, especially Dalits. His autobiography *Chhangiya Rukh* (2002) in Punjabi was translated by Oxford University in English in 2010 and its 10th edition appeared in 2023. Balbir's novel *Mitti Bol Paye* (2020) won the prestigious International Dhahan Punjabi Literature Prize-2021. He has authored eleven books, translated 45 books and he has also edited several writings in his mother tongue Punjabi. His writings have won prestigious awards. He retired from the Ministry of I&B, GOI in as Deputy Director in 2015. Presently, he is Director, Punjabi Bhawan, Punjabi Sahit Sabha and the editor of *Samkali Sahit*, a Punjabi quarterly.



PROF BRATI BISWAS is a Professor of English at Dyal Singh Evening College University of Delhi. She has a Ph.D. on Dalit literature of Bengal from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. She has published and presented articles on a wide range of topics from Feminism, Dalit literature and Disability. She has co-edited three books, *Language through Literature, Women and Empowerment in Contemporary India*, Essays on Text and Performance. She translates from Bangla to English and Hindi. She is also a practicing poet.



DR DEVENDER SINGH is Associate Professor in the Department of English, University of Delhi. He has published several articles, chapters and books in national and international publications, and has been the resource person in several forums. He completed a course from University of Oxford, UK. He has written and published widely on Dalit issues and discourses and which includes an edited volume on *Dalit Issues and Perspectives* (A.K. Publishers, New Delhi, 2017) and a textbook on *The Journey of Dr B R Ambedkar: A Pictorial Tribute* (Sangharsh Publications, New Delhi, 2015). He has also compiled a documentary on Dr Ambedkar, and which enthused a lot of young students and scholars to study Ambedkar's teachings. His published play *In-Between* was selected for discussion on Azad TV, London, UK.



DR PRABUDDH ANANDA is an Associate Professor in the Department of English, Ramanujan College (University of Delhi), Kalkaji, New Delhi. He has been awarded MA, M Phil and Ph D by the Centre for English Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, in 2004, 2006 and 2012, respectively. His research areas include Indian writing in English and Indian writing in English translation, Dalit literature: autobiographical Narratives, African-American and Postcolonial Literature, 19th Century British Literature and Caste and Gender Studies. He has one self-authored and two edited books to his credit: Mulkraj Anand's *Untouchable: A Mirror of Dalit Life* (2010), *Relevance of Baba Saheb Dr B. R. Ambedkar Today* (2018) and *Voices of Marginalization: Literary Records of Trauma* (2023). He has two dozen research papers and articles published in edited books and peer-reviewed journals. He has presented several research papers at national and international seminars and conferences. He is a lifetime member of IACLALS and CLAI.





PROF RAJ KUMAR is Professor in the Department of English, Delhi University. His research areas include Autobiographical studies, Dalit literature, Indian writing in English, Odia literature and Postcolonial studies. He has been a Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla in 1999 and has published in journals such as *Social Action*, *Sateertha Bulletin*, *The Fourth World*, *Creative Forum*, *Language Forum*, *Jadavpur Journal of Comparative Literature*, *Indian Literature*, *Social Scientist*, *Journal of the School of Language*, *Literature and Culture Studies*, *International Journal of Communication*, *Rama Devi Women University Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*, *Ravenshaw Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences*, *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics* and *Sociological Bulletin*. Raj Kumar has also translated literary texts from Indian languages, especially Odia into English. His book, *Dalit Personal Narratives: Reading Caste, Nation and Identity* has been published by Orient Black Swan, New Delhi in 2010 and got reprinted in 2011, 2015 and 2017. His English translation of Akhila Naik's *Bheda*, the first Odia Dalit novel is published by Oxford University Press, Delhi in 2017. His book *Dalit Literature and Criticism* is published by Orient Black Swan, New Delhi in 2019 and got reprinted in 2022 (twice) and 2024. His other publications are: *Bama: Writer as Activist* (co-edited with S. Armstrong) published by Routledge, London in 2024, and *Padapodi: Beyond the Point of Return* (translation of Basudev Sunani's Odia novel) to be published by Orient Black Swan, Delhi in 2024.

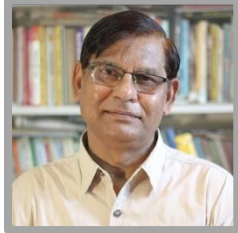


PROF SAROJ MAHANANDA is Professor in the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia. He completed his doctoral work from the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia. He has published several articles, chapters and books in national and international publications, and has been the resource person in several forums. Prof Mahananda has translated the short stories and non-fiction prose of Premchand from Hindi to English under the aegis of UGC SAP DRS Program in the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia. He is currently engaged in documenting the oral narratives of Western Odisha. His writings include varied topics from Dalit historiography to Odia Dalit narratives to folk literature and folk studies to the aesthetics of translation to Patrick White's fiction to issues of identity and to discourses on social inclusivity. He has worked in numerous administrative





capacities as the research advisor in the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia (2018-2021) and as the Nodal Officer, IQAC (2014-19) to name a few. He has supervised several doctoral thesis and has also worked in the capacity of academic counsellor to MA courses, IGNOU.



PROF SHEORAJ SINGH BECHAIN is an Indian poet, short story writer, and essayist. When he started writing and progressing academically, he adopted the pen name “Bechain.” He was appointed Professor on an unreserved position in the Department of Hindi at the University of Delhi in 2010 and became the first Dalit Professor in the department. He is currently serving as the Head of the Hindi Department at the University. Bechain has written more than two dozen books in Hindi. The most well-known of his writings is his autobiography *Mera Bachpan Mere Kandhon Par*, published by Vani Prakashan in 2009. He is a regular contributor of articles to national newspapers and magazines. His Ph D thesis *Hindi Dalit Patrakarita Par Patrakar Ambedkar Ka Prabhav* was published as a book, was mentioned in the *Limca Book of Records* in 1999. His other notable works include *Kronch Hoon Main*, *Bhor Ke Andhere Me*, *Nai Fasal*, *Meri Priya Kahaniyaan*, *Haath to Ug hi Aate Hain*, *Mook Nayak Ke Sau Saal Aur Asmita Sangharsh Ke Sawal* and *Hindi Dalit Patrakarita Par Patrakar Ambedkar Ka Prabha*.



PROF VIVEK KUMAR is a world-ranking sociologist and a public intellectual. He is a Professor and was the Chairperson of Centre for the Study of Social Systems, School of Social Sciences, JNU, and was a visiting Prof, Columbia Univ. New York & Humboldt, Berlin. His works: *Caste and Democracy India: A Perspective Below*, *Dalit Leadership*, *India's Roaring Revolution*. *How Egalitarian is Indian Sociology* is the seminal article. His specialization is methodology of social sciences, sociology of South Asia.



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PROF YASHADATTA SOMAJI ALONE was awarded the UGC Junior and Senior Research fellowship in 1988 in the History of Art. He obtained M. Phil and Ph.D. from Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi under the guidance of Prof R Champakalakshmi. Presently he is working at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Previously he worked at the Dept. of Archaeology, Deccan College Post Graduate Research Institute (deemed university) Pune and at the Dept of Fine Arts, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra. He has published 43 research papers in journals and chapters in edited volumes on Ancient Indian Art and critic of Walter Spink, Ajanta caves and Buddhist caves in western India, critic of modern Indian art, popular neo-Buddhist visual culture, the interpretative framework of Dr Ambedkar and social sciences. His research contribution has always offered direction to the disciplinary paradigm of art history and social sciences. He has curated exhibition as a point of departure to critic the idea of meta-narratives of modernity as tracing the difference. His research interests include ancient Indian art, Buddhist art, modern Indian art and popular visual culture, Neo-Buddhist visual culture, photography, philosophy as well general social sciences. Prof Alone has presented research papers in national and international forums on art-history and social sciences seminars. He has delivered more than 220 lectures at many places in India and outside India; mainly Germany, Spain, USA, China, and Sri Lanka. He happened to be the first Indian delivering lectures at Buddhist Research Academy Hangzhou, Maijishan Academy Maijishan, China. He was nominated as ICCR chair visiting Professor in Shenzhen University China, and was invited as a short-term visiting professor at Renmin University Beijing China, Autonoma University Madrid, Heidelberg University Germany, East China Normal University Shanghai China. He has been engaged in popular lectures as part of social movements. Prof Y S. Alone





also served as members of various committees of Government of India, including review committee member of Planning Commission, Advisor of textbook on History of Arts of NCERT, expert consultant for the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India etc. He has been member of Board of Studies of School of Arts and Aesthetics JNU, Faculty of Fine Arts of M S University, Baroda and Jamia Millia Islamia New Delhi, Department of Fine Arts, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra. He is a life member of Indian Society for Prehistoric and Quaternary Studies, Society of South Asian Archaeology. His recently published book-*Early Western Indian Buddhist Caves: Forms and Patronage* (Kaveri Books, New Delhi, 2014). He has curated exhibitions on Ambedkarian Aesthetics. He has evolved a critical conceptual formulation termed as 'protected ignorance' and has lectured and published papers on it.



“RE-EXAMINING ‘CASTE’: POSTCOLONIAL THEORY AND PRACTICE” CONCEPT NOTE

In the modern global era, transcending boundaries have made identities relative. ‘Caste’ is an important socio-cultural parameter and identity marker that articulates subjecthood. Usually, caste identities are built around a system of social stratification characterized by hereditary transmission of occupation, lifestyle, and social status. However, the postcolonial global era has created a layered frame by blending traditional caste identities with new adopted identities. To begin with, one can argue that caste identity is usually channelised through major factors like birth and nationality, but further observation demands digging deeper into parallel forms of identities, like gender and class. In the global world, these identities additionally coalesce with diasporic, ethnic, geo-political, professional, environmental and many more such discourses.

There is an important and urgent need to understand how these deeply rooted caste practices create the ‘Other’ amongst not just Indian but also global formations of populations. Apart from India, caste is also practiced in Africa. One can compare the endogamic nature of the African castes to many other caste orders, as they followed similar rituals related to pollution and inter caste restrictions. Caste identities are also part of the socio-cultural identities in Japan and these are also based on occupational structures. Untouchables are less in number in Japan, but these communities are oppressed at various levels. Mike Sunda writes, Burakumin (Hamlet people) the untouchable castes and Eta (abundance of filth) are in existence from the feudal era and most of these are in the profession of slaughter and sanitation. Thus, this Conference interrogates ‘caste’ as a social occupational practice not only in India but also in many other countries.

The Conference will contextualize caste identities as native and global both in postcolonial theory and practice. Postcolonial writings are not only amenable to assess the intersection of various identity issues with caste, but also express new frames of resistance and reformation that are in consonance with new identities. The Conference will explore how these deep-rooted identities are unpacked and repackaged globally in postcolonial literature to factor in, especially, the challenges these caste identities pose to a large number of diasporic populations. In Albert Camus’ words, ‘Building identity is a phenomenal process of repeated evolution.’ Thus, identities may be reflected and observed as manufactured as well as evolved. The Conference aims to pursue caste as a subject of research by deconstructing its traditional manifestations and also identifying new junctures of its intersection with other identity positions. In the recent years, with new legislations resulting in reformative laws, equal opportunities for people with different caste backgrounds are being provided by many countries.

Castes and other identities are now being recognized at international platforms for affirmative actions. The Conference will also debate about the question of re-examining the contribution of these shifts in policy frameworks in building new identities.





Papers are invited in but not limited to the following areas connected with the theme of the conference:

- Identity and Caste in postcolonial theory and practice
- Caste and/as the 'Other'
- Manufacturing caste identities in the Postcolonial world
- Caste identities and women in postcolonial theory and practice
- Caste and Queer identities in postcolonial theory and practice
- Economic status and caste identities
- Environmental concerns and caste identities
- Caste and affirmative action
- Policy frameworks and caste identity
- Caste identity and postcolonial popular culture
- Negotiating caste identities in corporate culture
- Caste hegemonies in the diaspora
- Translating caste: Dalit Literature in translation

ABSTRACTS

Voices of Resistance: Studying Caste and Gender in select Indian Plays based on *The Ramayana*

Aayushi Tripathi

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Feminist revisionist plays of *The Ramayana* reimagine the epic's narrative through a subversive lens, foregrounding the intersections of caste, gender and power dynamics in both traditional and contemporary contexts. Plays such as *Sita's Daughters* by M. Sarabhai and *Sitayan* by K. Madavane reinterpret the figure of Sita, moving beyond her archetypal image to emphasize her resistance to patriarchal norms. Similarly, *Thus Spake Shoorpanakha, So Said Shakuni* by P. Sengupta destabilizes the trope of the villain underscored in the 'rakshasi' image by portraying her as a symbol of Dalit and tribal resistance against Brahmanical domination. By reimagining the epic, these plays offer a postcolonial critique of how colonial and upper-caste narratives have co-opted and reshaped epics like *The Ramayana* to uphold hegemonic power structures. In a postcolonial world, these feminist retellings also resonate with broader discourses on caste, gender and identity challenging the cultural capital and symbolic power embedded in dominant retellings of *The Ramayana*. This paper examines how feminist revisionist plays employ Dalit and postcolonial frameworks to resist traditional narratives that foreground the agency of marginalized characters.

Keywords: *Caste, Dalit feminism, feminist revision, gender, postcolonial theory*





Re-Examining Caste in light of Postcolonial Theory and Practice

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This paper explores the complexities of the caste system in India, examining it through the lens of postcolonial theory. By challenging traditional understandings of caste as a purely cultural or religious phenomenon, postcolonial theory offers a valuable framework to analyze the lasting impact of colonialism on our deeply rooted social structure of caste. This is achieved by exploring the historical roots of the caste system and its relationship to colonialism. It examines how colonial policies and practices reinforced and perpetuated caste-based discrimination leading to the marginalization of lower-caste groups. Attempt is therefore made to investigate the ways in which postcolonial thinkers and activists have sought to challenge and dismantle the caste system and how their promotion of social justice and equality uses postcolonial theory. Furthermore, the paper explores the intersection of caste with other forms of social inequality, such as gender and class. It examines how caste-based discrimination acts as a catalyst towards the marginalization of women from lower-caste groups and how economic disparities can further perpetuate caste hierarchies. The paper concludes by contributing to a deeper understanding of the impact of colonialism on Indian society and the ongoing struggle for social justice and equality. By reexamining the caste system through the lens of postcolonial theory, the paper seeks to challenge existing narratives and provide new insights into the issue of caste.

Keywords: *postcolonial, decolonization, national identity, caste system, Dalit*

Navigating Hybridity and Alienation: An Exploration of Identity in Maryse Condé's

Heremakhonon

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The paper proposes to examine Maryse Condé's *Heremakhonon* through the lens of postcolonial theory, focusing on the themes of identity, displacement and disillusionment in postcolonial Africa. The protagonist, Véronica Mercier, embarks on a journey to an unnamed African country driven by a desire to reconnect with her African heritage and escape the alienation she experiences in France. However, her idealized vision of Africa as a site of cultural and spiritual fulfilment is dismantled as she encounters political corruption, class inequality, and patriarchal domination. Drawing on the works of Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha, the study will explore Véronica's fragmented identity as a diasporic subject, torn between her French education and African roots. Fanon's concepts of alienation and the internalization of colonial values examine Véronica's psychological struggle, while Bhabha's notion of hybridity elucidates her inability to fully belong to either world. The novel is ultimately a critique of the disillusionment faced





by individuals of African descent who attempt to reclaim an idealized Postcolonial identity, only to be confronted by the persistent legacies of colonialism.

Keywords: *Hybridity Alienation Identity Displacement Postcolonial*

One Person, Many Identities: The Evolution of the Intersections Between Caste and Gender in India

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Caste has always formed an integral part of the Indian social hierarchy, so has the differentiation between men and women. Both have been equally complex indicators of status, treatment and inequality, and both frequently intersected in direct and indirect ways. While both continued to evolve from the ancient times over the medieval age, the British Raj brought significant changes to the way both were perceived, separately and together, in a way that still impacts us today. This paper attempts to understand how gender and caste intermingled in the ancient times, and their place in the socio-political circumstances of those times. Secondly, it attempts to understand the multitude of ways the varied attitudes and policies implemented during the British rule changed the perception of these systems among Indian people. Thirdly, there is a focus on the long-term impact of these actions in a contemporary India, and how they continue to shape our perception regarding caste and gender. Finally, this paper attempts to understand the possible future implications with regards to the individual and combined roles of these systems and the value they might continue to hold in the Indian society.

Keywords: *Caste, gender, intersection, British Raj, contemporary India, future implications*

From Silence to Speech: The Transformative Power of Dalit and Tribal Literature

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Dalit and tribal literature represent a powerful literary movement that challenges established socio-cultural hierarchies and brings marginalized voices to the forefront of Indian literature. This paper explores the evolution, themes, and significance of Dalit and tribal writings, focusing on their role in resisting caste oppression, advocating for social justice, and preserving indigenous cultural identities. By examining key authors, genres, and works, the paper highlights how these literatures use personal narratives, folklore, and oral traditions to expose the lived experiences of marginalized communities. It also addresses the intersectionality of caste, gender, and ethnicity, emphasizing how Dalit and tribal literature not only critiques systemic inequalities but also envisions possibilities for empowerment and





solidarity. Ultimately, this paper underscores the importance of these literary traditions in reconfiguring the dominant discourse on Indian society, history, and culture.

Keywords: *Tribal Feminism, Tribal Literature, Dalit Literature*

The 'Others' of Partition

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This essay looks at the othering taking place in different social categories based on religion, class, caste and gender in the wake of partition. I have tried to accomplish this by analyzing these concepts in the works of Rajinder Singh Bedi and Bhishma Sahni — prominent writers known for their contribution towards Indian Partition literature. Their works are not just a saga of a tussle, but a full-fledged confrontation of socio- cultural divisions which ended up shaping the future of three nations and lives of millions of inhabitants. The focus is on their short stories. The economic style and suggestiveness make these stories a perfect tool to present the grim pictures of the brutalities and massacre that occurred during the partition. At the same time, their stories question the cultural hegemony and look at the internal cultural and patriarchal structures which were always an underlying factor further extending and manifesting itself on such a large scale in the wake of the Partition. Although the partition remains historical, its echoes are still heard in contemporary times. It still shapes and underlines how one approaches and perceives the ‘other’ caste or religion in the present.

Keywords: *‘Other,’ Partition, caste, class, gender*

Reading Untouchable: A Gandhian Guide to being an ideal Bhangi

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Arun P. Mukherjee argues that postcolonial critics often misread texts by ignoring their social context. Texts emerging from ‘colonies’ are taken at face value for the radical ideologies endorsed by their authors. In her essay, she uses Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* (1936) as case study to argue that “radical politics of a writer need not translate into a radical text” (1991). Taking cue from her, this paper provides a close textual analysis of Mulk Raj Anand’s novel *Untouchable* and explores how its protagonist Bakha is a Gandhian Hero, rather than an Ambedkarite Hero. In the early 20th century, M.K Gandhi fired up the imagination of Indian writers. Simple panegyric narratives eulogizing him and fictional tales documenting and interrogating his ideologies - all found ample space in the Indian literary





landscape. Prominent writers took inspiration from him and fashioned their literary protagonists as Gandhian Heroes. However, as this paper argues, in the postcolonial world, with the rise of Dalit vernacular literature, Gandhian heroes were rejected and a new kind of Hero emerged - the Ambedkarite Hero, “a rebel with a scientific and rationalistic attitude” (Bagul; *Poisoned Bread*, 289).

Keywords: *Gandhian Hero, Ambedkarite Hero, Postcolonial Literature, Dalit Literature, Untouchable*

A Postcolonial Critique of ‘Otherness’ and Resultant Familial Dislocation in Chigozie Obioma’s

The Fishermen

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The postcolonial concept of ‘otherness’ critiques the oppressed and marginalized subjects as ‘demonic,’ and the binary opposite view of the civilized, privileged, authoritarian Whites as ‘exotic’ other. Consequently, a few African black subjects deemed ‘black in body and black in mind’ developed a distaste for the Indigenous value system resulting in cultural amnesia, familial dislocation, and identity crisis. In his debut novel *The Fishermen* (2015), Chigozie Obioma hailed as a literary heir to Chinua Achebe, presents a grim view of the devastation caused in postcolonial Africa. The existing cultural dichotomy and the desire for upward mobility among the colonized forged fragmented identities, rendering Nigerians ‘Others,’ in their own land, stripped of both tradition and a sense of self. Such a situation has borne what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o calls the “Comprador Bourgeoisie” in the newly independent Postcolonial world. Therefore, the present research paper seeks to critique the idea of ‘Otherness’ by exploring the narrative instances of select fictional work and to establish the role of one’s traditional belief system whose values are often misrepresented as barbaric.

Keywords: *Dislocated identity, Otherness, fragmentation, marginalization, traditional belief system*

Subaltern Voices: Women, Caste and the Challenges of Postcolonial Feminism

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The paper will the intersection of caste and gender in postcolonial feminism, and will focus on how the experiences of the marginalized women, particularly from the lower castes, challenge dominant feminist narratives. This concept is drawn from the concept of the “subaltern” as theorized by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, to investigate how caste-based discrimination coincides with patriarchal oppression, thereby creates unique struggle for women in postcolonial societies. While postcolonial feminism seeks to critique colonial power structures, it often overlooks the internal hierarchies of caste that further marginalize certain groups of women. Subsequently, through an analysis of feminist





theory, postcolonial theory and case studies, this paper argues that postcolonial feminism must broaden its framework to include the voices and lived experiences of Dalit and other lower-caste women, whose realities often remain silenced. The goal is to push for greater solidarity and promote intersectional approaches within postcolonial feminist movements, so that subaltern voices are seen, heard and addressed.

Keywords: *Gender, inequality, postcolonial theory, women*

Transcending Caste: An Exploration into the Literary Traditions of Odisha

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Give us wholeness, for we are broken.

But who are asking and what for? (Phylis Webb)

Caste is ignorance and turning a blind eye to the redness of human blood. Its practice involves the delicacy of rolling tears—the alike emotions at the site of love and the pain of loss at heart. Therefore, the need arises to read the alternate literatures that narrate the tantalizing tales of caste politics. In the historical landscape of Odisha, the 14th century poet, Balarama Das in *Lakshmi Puran* valiantly portrays the female Dalit, Sriya Chandaluni as the epic heroine of the text. In the Jagannath tradition, the intimate priests are not Brahmins, but the Daitapatis — the generations of a low caste tribal devotee Biswavasus. The famous story of Dasia Bauri and Shudramuni Sarala Das raise the issues of caste in *Bilanka Ramayana* and *Chandi Purana*. The land of Odisha via its evocative literature has questioned the concept of caste for centuries, enforcing the belief that celebration of equality is the highest human virtue. So, it's time that the writing of history has to be new and the unheard voices to be heard again!

Keywords: *Odisha, Daitapati, Biswabasu, Shudramuni*

Women And Caste in Postcolonial India.

Camellia

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The later Vedic period is regarded as the rudimentary base which internalized the concept of caste in Indian society. The idea of discrimination stemmed from this exact period, which led to further branched consequences in the society. One of the major consequences was the narrative regarding women especially of the marginalized castes. This paper acknowledges and discusses these ideas in a detailed manner. A deeper understanding about the origin of caste is required, therefore this paper aims to explain the definition, historical background and events that led to the origin of this social ill-called caste issues. The second element that is discussed is the stakeholders. Who are the people who





faced this brutality? What impacts did it have on the society of that time and the present day? Thirdly, it aims to enlighten people about the marginalized gender as an umbrella term of women and the Dalit women under that. We as humans need to redeem for our past actions. Therefore, a special element considered in the conclusion is the status quo, and analyzing its impact.

Keywords: *Later Vedic period. Caste. women. origin of caste. status quo*

Caste Identities and Women in Postcolonial Theory and Practice

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The paper delves into the presence of interplay between caste and gender identities within postcolonial theory and practice. It strives to build and exemplify the complex relationship between caste and gender in societies, specifically affected by colonial rule. A blend of recent research and case studies has been utilized in the paper to examine the reinforcement of caste-based social stratification and amplification of patriarchal conventions. Postcolonial rule has significantly contributed to the alienation of women, particularly those from lower castes, such as Dalits.

The analysis has been drawn from works of prolific literary critic and postcolonial scholar, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as well as the social reformer, Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar, to dissect traditional feminist discussions that often overlook issues centered around caste. By incorporating case studies of Dalit women facing the multifaceted nature of discrimination, the paper underscores the challenges they face, including violence, harassment, and lack of legal recourse. These case studies further highlight the need for feminist and anti-caste movements to address the struggles of oppressed women. The paper concludes achieving true equality requires a multi-dimensional approach that integrates a thorough understanding of Dalit women's experiences along with theoretical and practical frameworks.

Keywords: *Dalit women, subaltern theory, Dr BR Ambedkar, anti-Caste movements, feminism*

A Postcolonial Reading on Alan Paton's *Cry, The Beloved Country*

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Postcolonialism refers to the period in which colonized nations confront the lasting effects of European colonialism. Postcolonial literature addresses the culture and experiences of non-European people marginalized by colonial rulers, aiming to reclaim their heritage. Postcolonial theory, in contrast, examines colonial strategies and explores intersections of race, caste, gender, and racial segregation in literature, highlighting the cultural, historical, and economic impacts of Western colonialism. This paper explores the intersections of caste, status, race and gender faced





by Africans in Alan Paton's *Cry, The Beloved Country* (1948), and which highlights the impact of social status, caste, and racial segregation on people's lives. By analyzing Edward Said's *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (1978) and Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), this paper focuses on the emotions, politics, conflicts, and segregation depicted in Paton's novel. It explores the cry for equality, respect for Africa, and the hope for freedom and progress. The paper examines how these issues intertwine with postcolonial struggles and the quest for cultural and societal decolonization in Africa.

Keywords: *Race, status, intersection, colonization and segregation*

Against the Cosmos: Dalit Women

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Dalit women in postcolonial India are subjected to pernicious dual marginalization as both women and Dalits, and they occupy the nadir of the caste and gender stratification. Their lived realities are marked by relentless exploitation; not only do they face pervasive sexual violence of upper-caste men but are often violated by Dalit men as well, revealing their vulnerability. The reprehensible breast tax further illustrates their dehumanization and socio-economic disenfranchisement. Though many of these atrocities were institutionalized before independence, examining them through a postcolonial lens reveals how these injustices continue to shape the lived experiences of Dalit women. Yet, within this imbroglio of subjugation lies an ironic contrast: Dalit women, particularly widows, retained a semblance of agency often denied to their upper-caste counterparts. While Brahminical patriarchy mandated punitive customs like sati, tonsure, and enforced sartorial austerity upon upper-caste widows, Dalit women navigated widowhood without these draconian impositions. These struggles are artfully mirrored in literary works like Premchand's short stories and Sivakami's *The Grip of Change*.

Keywords: *Dalit, women, marginalised, postcolonial lens, struggle*

Caste-free Capital: Entrevolution

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In postcolonial India, the entrepreneurial sphere has long been construed as the exclusive domain of Baniyas due to entrenched stereotypes and historical precedents. While historical patterns have reinforced this stereotype, contemporary evidence suggests that talent and industriousness can transcend caste limitations, with eminent figures from diverse backgrounds now emerging as triumphant entrepreneurs, challenging traditional notions. However, several factors continue to inhibit like familial and societal pressures favoring stable employment (naukari), financial





constraints, and a general aversion to risk-taking. The allure of a steady income and lack of awareness regarding potential benefits often outweigh the entrepreneurial force. Socio-economic disparities are evident in the approach to investment: the affluent invest surplus wealth post-expenditure, while the less privileged invest what remains after fulfilling basic needs. Nevertheless, the accomplishments of diverse entrepreneurs show that with innate talent, relentless perseverance, and access to high-quality education, individuals can surmount traditional barriers and excel in the entrepreneurial sphere.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, postcolonial, stereotype, caste*

Translating Dalit Narratives: Taming the Dalit Tongue

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This paper examines the "taming" process that Dalit narratives undergo in translation, particularly when rendered by upper-caste translators. It argues that the relationship between these translators and Dalit narratives is akin to that of bull tamers to their subjects; however, unlike bull tamers who are skilled and knowledgeable about their task, upper-caste translators often lack the understanding of the complex experiences of Dalit life. Professor Panchanan Mohanty questions the qualifications of translators, emphasizing that even carpenters need formal training. Building on this, the paper questions the qualifications of upper-caste translators who attempt to translate Dalit narratives. For instance, Sharankumar Limbale's *Akkarmashi* is translated as *Outcaste*, a term that fails to capture the layered meanings of caste and patriarchy in the original. This translation blunts Limbale's critique, reducing the work to a singular focus on caste oppression while erasing the specific experiences of Dalit women. As Dr B.R. Ambedkar's writings suggest, caste and patriarchy are inextricably linked.

Keywords: *Dalit literature, problems of translation, taming*

Redeeming Selves: The Socially Mobile Middle Class in Sharankumar Limbale's *The Dalit Brahmin*

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The rapid Globalization and positive discrimination policies post-independence have led to the growth of a Dalit urban well-to-do class. This paper seeks to address the exclusionary practices of savarna middle class which has forced the Dalit urban middle class to forge new identities vis-à-vis the celebrated collection of short stories by Sharankumar Limbale, a Dalit Brahmin. The contrast between the perpetual reality and material reality in the lives of the middle - class Dalits, leads to a cognitive disarray and an identity crisis, which in turn shapes new models of segregation and discrimination bias in the community itself. Using the concept of Pierre Bourdieu of "social space" this paper will





engage with the terrains on which these identities are manufactured, and how these new identities interact with their own culture and the other members of the community (especially lower class). Further, this paper will address how this stratification does not only effectively torment the individual soul, transforming the aspirations of Limbale's middle class into psychological anguish, but also can produce antagonistic identities which may hamper the Dalit movement as a whole.

Keywords: *Social mobility, Dalit Brahmin, forged identity, social space*

Masquerades and Marginalities: Understanding "Passing" from a Postcolonial Perspective

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Masquerades are a common employment in literature emerging out of the marginalities. Through this paper, we attempt to interrogate the motif of camouflage in Baburao Bagul's "When I Hid My Caste" and Nella Larsen's "Passing", revealing the interstitial negotiations of identity within the folds of caste and race. In this paper, we attempt to study and understand the precariousness and inherent dissonance of such performative transgressions. Both of these texts offer a trenchant critique of the hegemonic social structures that necessitate the abnegation of authentic selfhood, articulating a scathing indictment of the entrenched socio-political hierarchies dictating the boundaries of belonging. Through a juxtaposition of these narratives, our analysis accentuates the transnational and transcultural dimensions of the theme of 'passing', illustrating how both caste and race function as immutable socio-ontological barriers that individuals are compelled to traverse. Ultimately, this study underscores the enduring struggle for self-affirmation, interrogating the psychic and societal ramifications of inhabiting the interstices of rigidly constructed social identities.

Keywords: *Interstitial negotiations of identity, caste and race, performative transgressions, transnational and transcultural, passing, enduring struggle for self-affirmation*

Intersectionality of Caste and Gender in Bama's *Karukku*: A Feminist Analysis of Dalit Women's Oppression and Resistance

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In *Karukku*, Bama Faustina Soosairaj stitches together a powerful narrative that brings into light the problem of intersectional struggle Dalit women undergo, presenting some lived realities of persons facing caste oppression along with patriarchal subjugation. Being a pioneering work in Dalit feminist discourse, *Karukku* remains a vital testimony





to the ways in which caste and gender combine to produce unique forms of marginalization. Informed by Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality, this paper discusses how Bama's personal narrative confronts the dual burdens of caste and gender disparity in exposing complexities often overlooked in Dalit women's lives. This is taken even deeper in postcolonial feminist theory that takes into account the ways in which Bama's experiences diverge from those of upper-caste women and, in turn, challenges dominant feminist discourses. Drawing on Gopal Guru's "Dalit Women Talk Differently" and Sharmila Rege's *Writing Caste, Writing Gender*, this research paper fills in the gap by locating *Karukku* both as a personal narrative of suffering and an enabling genre of resistance literature which critiques caste, gender, and religious marginalization. The scope of the paper extends to the present-day relevance of *Karukku*: underlining its contribution to reshaping postcolonial discourse on caste and gender while pleading for more nuanced readings of Dalit women's narratives within global literary studies.

Keywords: *Caste, Dalit literature, gender, intersectionality, postcolonial feminism*

Reimagining Dalit Feminine Identity: Translating Unheard Narrative in Baby Kamble's *The Prison's We Broke*

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The Prison's We Broke (2009) by Baby Kamble is a compilation of the tribulations faced by Dalit women in their everyday lives. This paper discusses the shaping of the identity of Dalit women and highlighting the social translation of personal accounts ascribed to these women. Dalit women face double marginalization under male patriarchy, both as women and as Dalits. The research unravels various aspects of looking at the feminine Dalit identity by drawing upon Gopal Guru's idea on how Dalit women is positioned in a male society, and which shapes their self-representation. This research advances Betty Friedan's notion of the 'feminine mystique' to identify and critically analyze the overlooked women in Baby Kamble's literary contributions. Maya Pandit's translation of Baby Kamble's narrative provides a framework within which one can contextualize the intricacies that accompany Dalit existence. The research also places Baby Kamble's narrative alongside other Dalit female autobiographies, like *Aaidan* (2002) by Urmila Pawar and *Karrukku* (1992) by Bama Faustina. The paper aims to challenge the patriarchal narratives and instead offer a voice to the marginalized Dalit women by translating their culture, traditions, and belief systems.

Keywords: *Dalit feminine identity, patriarchy, Dalit autobiography, female identity, marginalization*





Dalit- Bahujan Assertions in the Hindi Public Sphere: Locating the Counter Public in Postcolonial India

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This paper will analyze the postcolonial Hindi Dalit literary sphere using Nancy Fraser's concept of the counter-public. Fraser criticizes Habermas's portrayal of the bourgeois public sphere as inclusive and status-neutral, highlighting its exclusionary nature, particularly towards marginalized groups. According to Fraser, such marginalized groups create their own counter-publics to address their exclusion. I will explore how Hindi Dalit writers have utilized literature to redefine their engagement with Indian society and nationhood, establishing a distinct and transformative narrative. By mapping the production and dissemination of Dalit-authored texts, this paper will examine how these writers have carved out a space within the Hindi public sphere to articulate their perspectives and experiences. Additionally, the study will consider the contributions of prominent Dalit and backward caste intellectuals, analyzing how their writings have further shaped the Hindi counter-public sphere. This investigation will reveal how the Hindi Dalit literary sphere functions as a counter-public, challenging dominant narratives and offering new insights into social and cultural dynamics in India.

Keywords: *Public sphere, Hindi Dalit literature, counter-public*

Caste and/is 'Other'

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This paper investigates the concept of caste and the construction of the 'Other' in both South Asian and international contexts. By examining the historical roots of caste systems and their intersections with race, class, and gender, it explores how marginalized groups are relegated to the status of the 'Other.' Case studies from India, Japan (Burakumin), and the United States (Dalit diaspora) are analyzed to demonstrate how the dynamics of caste continue to influence social exclusion globally. The paper further discusses modern challenges in dismantling caste-based discrimination and the role of intersectionality in creating an inclusive society.

Keywords: *Social exclusion, discrimination, marginalization, caste, other*





Shame, Self-narration and Dalit Identity in Contemporary Dalit Autobiography: Reading Yashica Dutt's *Coming Out as a Dalit: A Memoir*

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Dalit literature is neither engaged in the project of 'writing back' to the colonial 'centre' or valorizing a 'pre-colonial' and 'pre-modern' past as much as it is invested in writing back to a hierarchical Hindu culture responsible for its erasure from history. Hence, reclaiming the right to say 'I' in the socio-political field by giving voice to personal experiences of shame and humiliation, which appears as a consequence of caste oppression has become a fundamental characteristic of Dalit literature in general and Dalit autobiographies in particular. A recent example, in this case, is Yashica Dutt's memoir *Coming Out as a Dalit* (2019). Dutt's memoir reconstructs an alternate history of Dalit oppression by including her own experience of shame as a female Dalit subject and by speaking to and against an unjust shame, which created a rift in her social being. Keeping the aforementioned discussion as its focal point, this paper will engage with theories from life writing, shame studies and critical caste studies to closely read Dutt's memoir and explore how shame as an emotion and as an affect shapes and interrupts contemporary articulations of self in Dalit writing.

Keywords: *Shame, writing, affect, postcolonial theory and Dalit autobiographies*

Caste and the Corporate
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Negotiating the caste identities in corporate culture presents a complex relationship. Navigating through the competitive corporate landscape, one has to often deal with the invisible but impactful influence of caste. On the one hand, caste dynamics in corporate world have created disparities among cultures. On the other hand, policies like reservation have helped uplift many marginalized people by facilitating their path of success. To understand more about this hypothesis and questions surrounding the theme of this topic, we will examine various articles, case studies, and listen to the statements, interviews and podcasts from well-known corporate individuals and working professionals. Further, we will compare the corporate structures in both government and private sectors to better understand the situation revolving around the caste framework that exists. We plan to gather insights, data, and perspectives from individuals connected to the corporate world through online surveys. Our research is expected to provide valuable insights into the current scenario of the caste identities in the corporate sector. Finally, we will conclude by discussing the learning outcomes and suggesting questions for future scholars or researchers to explore, as the corporate world evolves in coming year.

Keywords: *Caste identities, corporate culture, reservation policies, disparities*





Caste and the City: Urban Experiences in Post-Partition Bengali Writings.

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Partition literature has always been read monolithically as a single moment of rupture where all human depravity came into play, devouring human beings in the most horrendous acts of communal killing, severing all fraternal bonds and perpetrating heinous crimes like rape, murder, loot and displacement. The Bengal Partition experienced a more unique fallout than Punjab, characterized by its casteist axes. Dalit Bengali writers experienced double marginalization in a society where both the host community and refugees were predominantly upper-caste. Their lived experiences in post-partition Bengal offer a glimpse into the layers of societal ostracism that have persisted since colonial times and failed to be overcome through the urban rehabilitation process. Bengali writers of the twenty-first century began to document their lived experiences of the Partition, providing a fresh understanding of the event and contributing to the ongoing scholarship of the literature. Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004) sparked interest among English readers towards the plight of Dalit refugees in the Sundarbans, who faced both ecological crises and institutionalized violence. Manohar Mouli Biswas's *Surviving in My World: Growing Up Dalit in Bengal* (2015), Adhir Biswas's *Memories of Arrival* (2021) and Manoranjan Byapari's *The Runaway Boy* (2023), are significant works that offer personal and political perspectives on the challenges faced by the marginalized caste in the postcolonial urban imaginaries.

Keywords: *postcolonial, post-partition, caste, refugee life, city*

Empowerment of the Lower Caste Communities in Kerala through Colonial Modernity and Social Reforms

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Dalit culture and identity were impacted by the Keralite caste reform movement. In an attempt to gain prestige in Kerala's deeply caste-based society, these initiatives came dangerously close to Brahmanise the lower caste people. Vegetarianism and purity were important manifestations of the upward mobility that Kerala's reform movements aimed to attain. The reform has been described as a "renaissance" by some. The lower caste was converted to Hinduism by the entire social reform movement in Kerala, something they had never done before. This study displays the complex effects of Kerala's caste reform movement through a critical analysis of historical texts, social movement literatures, and oral narratives. The results put doubt on the oversimplified accounts of social progress and highlight





the necessity of a sophisticated comprehension of the complex interrelationships between caste, culture, and power.

Keywords: *Caste in Kerala, Renaissance, Lower Caste, Colonial Modernity, Reforms*

Caste system in South India: A Comparison of Colonial and Post-Independence World

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This interdisciplinary study undertakes a critical examination of the evolving dynamics of the caste system in South India, comparing the post-colonial periods of (1947-1970) and (1970-2020) periods. By integrating historical, sociological, and policy perspectives, this research aims to provide a significant understanding of the complex interplay between colonial legacy, independence, and social change. The paper attempts to chart the continuities and discontinuities between the past and the present by reflecting on how caste issues have altered the Indian landscape.

Keywords: Caste, South India, postcolonial, post-independence, social change

Women, Witchcraft and Cast(e)ing Experiences: An Analysis

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Dalit women face triple marginalization on account of caste, class and gender. Dalit women thus are the most vulnerable lot when it comes to caste-gender based violence. They face the worst forms of violence and atrocities; witch-hunting is one such violence where they have to suffer physical, emotional and economic damages. Witchcraft is a ritualistic belief and common to all societies of the world. It involves black magic and spells. The practice still exists in many parts of India. Many women have been killed under the garb of being witches and patriarchal dominance has been regarded as the root cause of such practices. However, it is quite astonishing to note that out of the numerous women accused/killed for being witches, majority of these women belong to lower caste communities. Thus, a close nexus exists when it comes to witch-hunting, caste and gender politics. Women from lower caste communities have been at its receiving end since ages and they have been witch-hunted by powerful lobbies solely because of their caste. This paper thereby is an attempt to expose the dark powers of society that come together to vilify women from lower caste communities. In doing this, the paper will investigate the intersection of caste and gender politics through Mahasweta Devi's "Bayen" and Baburao Bagul's "Prisoner of Darkness". The two short stories are tales of Dalit suffering and subordination revolving around such cases of witch-hunting, where the protagonist-victims are declared



witches particularly because of their caste and gender.

Keywords: *Dalit, Dalit literature, Caste, gender politics, witchcraft, witch-hunting*

Theorizing Caste through the Social Identity Theory (SIT): A Socio-psychological Perspective

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The intersection of caste and social identity is complex and multifaceted. Caste can profoundly shape an individual's sense of self, their beliefs, and their interactions with others. This study examines the role of 'Social Identity Theory (SIT)' proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979, in understanding the psychological impact of caste on Indian individuals. By exploring the intersection of caste identity, social comparison, and intergroup relations, this research aims to shed light on the ways in which caste influences individuals' self-perception, self-esteem, and attitudes towards other social groups. This study investigates how caste-based discrimination and stigmatization affect individuals' sense of belonging, group identification, and psychological well-being. The findings in this paper will contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological consequences of caste-based oppression and inform the development of interventions to further promote social justice and equality.

Keywords: *Caste, social identity theory, stigmatization, well-being*

Representation of the 'Other' in Mahasweta Devi's Rudali and Bama's Sangati

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Subalterns occupy the edge or boundary of the Indian societal arrangement. Coined by Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* (1947), the term subaltern denotes the entire people that is subordinate in terms of class, caste, age, gender or in any other way. Thus, there prevails a common tendency to use this term as binary opposition of the dominant class of the society who are exploited on social, political, cultural and religious grounds. The present paper aims to portray how the subaltern women are tortured, disrespected and exploited in society. It focuses on how the notion of women empowerment seems to be only a myth and not a reality as far as the case of these low caste women is concerned. The paper tends to incorporate theories from Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), Uma Chakraborty's *Gendering Caste through a Feminist Lens* (2002), and Partha Chatterjee's *Nation and its Fragments* (1993) in analyzing the selected texts – Mahasweta Devi's *Rudali* (1993) and Bama's *Sangati* (1994) to



unravel the plight of gendered subaltern.

Keywords: *Subaltern, women, exploitation, marginalized, myth*

Interrogating Caste and Postcolonialism: A Comparative Study of Oppression and Resistance in Indian Short Fiction

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This study analyzes three pivotal short stories—Mahasweta Devi's "Mother India", Munshi Premchand's "The Child", and Pudhumaippithan's "The God and Kandasami Pillai" through the lenses of caste and postcolonial theory. In "Mother India," Devi highlights the intersection of caste and gender oppression, portraying the exploitation of Dalit women and dismantling the myth of a unified Indian identity by exposing caste-based violence as a legacy of colonialism and patriarchy. Premchand's "The Child" explores caste hierarchies in rural India emphasizing shared humanity but maintaining a distance from fully addressing caste-specific injustices. Pudhumaippithan's "The God and Kandasami Pillai" satirizes the religious and social hypocrisies of Tamil Brahminical society; critiquing caste dominance and its manipulation through religion. The comparison of these narratives illustrates diverse approaches to caste oppression and postcolonial resistance, revealing how caste remains a colonial residue and an enduring force in shaping social identity and power in India.

Keywords: *Caste oppression, postcolonial theory, Dalit literature, social stratification & gender and caste intersectionality*

Dalit Voices and their Resistance in Globalized India: A Critical Foray into Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) and Neeraj Ghaywan's *Geeli Puchhi* (2021)

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Postcolonial literature plays a crucial role in empowering marginalized voices and offering a platform for the previously silenced to be heard. *The White Tiger* (2008), the book that earned Aravind Adiga, 40th Man of the Booker Award, provides a darkly humorous perspective of India's class struggle in a globalized world as told through a retrospective narration from Balram Halwai, a village boy. The novel examines social mobility of this boy in the millennial city, Gurugram, while the brutal caste, socio-economic divide of the nation leaves him no choice than to resist in a similar brutal fashion. Few years later, in *Galli Puchhi*, a short film from *Ajeeb Daastaans*, (2021), Bharati Mandal, an educated and brilliant Dalit woman is trying hard to make herself seen and heard in a hard, unrelenting patriarchal world that refuses to recognize her talent. Like Balram Halwai, she too has not much to choose than take





recourse to deceit and snatch opportunities to form her identity and succeed. The paper will undertake the two texts, one a novel and a film, and the other, a short film to discuss subjugation and its form apprehended as dark and unwieldy in the face of a divided, discriminating society.

Keywords: *postcolonial, marginalized voices, silenced, heard, darkly, social mobility, unrelenting, deceit*

Reframing the Archive: Reading Anti-Caste Polemic in *A Gardener in the Wasteland*

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The paper will foreground the narrative strategies of the graphic novel, *A Gardener in the Wasteland* as investigating the numerous temporalities which intertwine India's past and contemporary struggles. The paper with an in-depth discussion of the various templates and images in the text will unravel the continuity of the injustices committed against the oppressed, where the oppressive conventions of the past persist in the present. The paper will also examine the parallels between American slavery and Indian colonialism, and show how the narrative critiques the negotiation of history through contemporary politics. The paper will analyze the various visual 'texts' that blur the boundary between myth and history, uncovering the ways they misrepresent and mislead the historical narratives. The paper will also seek to illustrate Phule's counter-history that dissects the deeply ingrained myths of inequities and offer alternate statements to hegemonic archives. The paper will also innumerate the ways in which history is inscribed on material bodies, proposing that past is not documented just in texts but also integrated in social practices of the present times. The paper will conclude that the visual and the textual plates create "graphic dissonance" that challenge the accepted notions of history and allows the marginalized narratives to speak for themselves.

Keywords: *graphic narratives, caste, Phule, slavery, dissonance*

Caste, Modernity and Postcolonial Theory

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Critics of postcolonial theory have often said that caste is conspicuous by its absence in much of subaltern studies and postcolonial theory. But some postcolonial scholars have defended themselves by claiming that they have indeed engaged meaningfully with matters relating to caste. The critics further problematised the 'unquestioning' manner in which Dalit, liberal and leftist scholars uncritically pinned their hopes on the state and on modernity in general which according to them have rendered them incapable of responding adequately to the question of caste. In this paper, I wish to show that in the recent collaborative work by Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai there are some signs of a





rapprochement between the two camps. I also want to critically examine some recent works on caste by Aniket Jaaware and Debjani Ganguly in order to probe deeper into the dialogue between postcolonialism and its opponents.

Keywords: *Caste, postcolonial theory, modernity, Dalit scholarship*

Dalit Women in Corporate Sector

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This study aims to increase the number of Dalit women's participation in the corporate job sector. The conducted research is to understand the reasons behind the non-participation of the Dalit women in the corporate job sector and the setbacks of the initiatives that have already been implemented on this issue. I used both data analysis method and mixed methods to retrieve the necessary data. As per the results, even though around 9.79 crore Dalit women exists in India (UN CEDAW), only 1-2 % of women work in the corporate sector. More than 50 % of them works in the agricultural sector with low wages in this rural sector. In conclusion, my findings suggest it is essential to bring some new initiatives that are currently available in the government sector and also that there is an urgent need of a proper supervision on the implementation on the initiatives that is already available.

Keywords: *Dalit women, corporate world, new initiatives, proper implementation*

Deconstructing Caste and Identity in Dalit Literature: A Critical Analysis of P. Sivakami's *A Grip of Change and Author's Notes*

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Postcolonial scholars are deeply engaged in analyzing caste as a persistent and complex social, cultural, and political institution that intersects with gender, class, and ethnicity. Scholars like Debjani Ganguly, Anand Teltumbde, and Anupama Rao argue that caste operates through hegemonic cultural structures, which reproduce marginalized identities. These identities, seen as 'the other,' are continuously produced through language, political and historical discourses, and physical violence. Homi Bhabha's concept of ambivalence highlights how stereotypes about 'the other' persist affecting both the colonizers and the colonized. Caste's legitimacy stems from social conventions, rituals, and religious sanctions, including practices like untouchability. Dalit literature counters these dominant narratives by portraying the lived experiences of caste discrimination. It resists the portrayal of Dalits as static or victimized subjects, offering complex representations of identity and power. Dalit writers engage with concepts like hybridity and alterity, challenging caste's essentialist binaries. This paper focuses on P. Sivakami's *A Grip of Change and Author's Notes*,





analyzing how her characters critique the essentialization of Dalit identities. By doing so, Sivakami contributes to the broader conversation on caste, identity, and resistance in postcolonial discourse.

Keywords: *Post colonial discourse, other, Dalit and caste*

Decolonizing Desire: Caste, Queerness and Resistance in Postcolonial Theory and Practices

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Caste and queer identities in postcolonial theory and practices are deeply interconnected and have become focal points in understanding how systems of oppression operate in postcolonial societies. Both caste and queer identities challenge the heteronormative, patriarchal, and caste-based structures that have perpetuated through colonial and postcolonial times. Colonial rule in South Asia reinforced existing social hierarchies, such as caste, and imposed new ones, like racial and gender norms. Colonial authorities often codified caste distinctions, solidifying the social stratification that persisted into postcolonial times. Authors and filmmakers are increasingly exploring these intersections, offering nuanced portrayals that challenge dominant narratives and provide visibility to marginalized communities. This paper explores the intersections of caste and queer identities within the framework of postcolonial theory and practice in select contemporary texts. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of social justice, urging for an intersectional approach that recognizes the interconnectedness of identities in postcolonial societies.

Keywords: *Caste and queer identities, postcolonial societies, racial and gender norms, heteronormative structures*

Caste Identity and Event: A Reading Bama's *Karukku*

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The reading of caste identity in Bama's *Karukku* as an event derives its support from the latest trend in literary theory which views literature as event. This autobiographical novel of Bama offers a stylized commentary to postcolonial studies vis-à-vis Dalit literature. The concept of literature as event, particularly Dalit literature, can be accommodated in postcolonial studies by virtue of a common community of concerns like 'difference', 'other', 'encounter' etc. The narrative of Bama is a serendipitous journey of the narrator involving encounters as the so-called other in search of a 'true' identity and ultimately remains unrealized and as such it leads to epic consequences. In the age-old caste-system, Bama's projected self, a product of liberal humanistic education, has found itself being 'othered' in almost every sphere of life. In the narrative, event pile on events and Bama has the ultimate, essential encounter as teacher in a school,





which earlier provided her with a liberating model, landing her in a career of creativity which is realizable only in uncertain terms. This uncertainty is a property of the event proper.

Keywords: *Difference, event, Dalit literature*

Caste as the Other

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History of the term, ‘caste’ can be traced back to the mid-16th century, where it was used to describe the social structure of South Asia, especially among Hindu society. It was adopted from the Latin word ‘castus’ (meaning ‘chaste’) by Portuguese observers who noticed how Hindu society in western and southwestern India was divided into different social groups based on their occupations. Caste is a systemised hierarchical order that divides people into groups based on their birth, occupation & lineage. It’s a contradictory situation: It claims to be based on a person’s job but that job is actually determined by their family background creating an endless cycle. In this research paper, we aim to examine caste in relation to the concept of the “Other” through a critical reading of Om Prakash Valmiki’s *Joothan*. Valmiki’s *Joothan* is an autobiographical work detailing his life since childhood and how it has been affected, or hindered, by his caste identity. Each episode drives home Valmiki’s distance from his peers, both outside his caste and within. His, and by extension his father’s attempts to “elevate” their caste leave him vulnerable to opposition and scorn by others in the village. His own teachers sabotaged his academic progress in order to preserve the ‘purity’ of their own caste, and when he was unable to stomach the work expected of him due to his caste, he was reprimanded by his own family, including his own father at one point. A critical reading of *Joothan* affords us the opportunity to scrutinize the negative effects of ‘caste’ as we raise questions on the concepts of “purity” and “pollution”, the excommunication of caste members for not following caste rules, conflicts between the ingroup and outgroup, and alienation both within and due to caste.

Keywords: *Caste, alienation, purity and pollution, excommunication*

‘Caste’: The Core that Never Reached

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The caste system is a significant aspect of Hindu social organization. From a Hindu and from a student viewpoint, the caste system is seen as misunderstood and misrepresented. The original varna system based on merit, qualities, and duties was distorted by foreign interference, notably the British colonial empire. The British institutionalized caste distinctions, creating a rigid hierarchy to control Indian society. This view suggests that postcolonial critiques often





continue colonial misinterpretations, overlooking the system's positive aspects and inherent flexibility. A cultural analysis sees caste-based discrimination as a distortion of Hindu religious teachings. The varna system initially organized society by qualities but economic factors rigidified it, leading to the sub-caste 'jati' system. Caste discrimination evolved separately from religion and many reform movements have challenged the rigid stratifications. Modern legal and social reforms increasingly recognize caste discrimination as a cultural issue, requiring social, and not religious reformation. These views call for addressing caste issues by acknowledging colonialism's impact and fostering internal reform within Hinduism.

Keywords: *Caste system, cultural distortion, Varna and Jaati, postcolonialism, evolution*

Memory, Translation and Caste: An Exploration of Select Odia Dalit Writings

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This paper will explore how lived experiences of caste shape both individual and collective Dalit memory, focusing on how these memories consolidate to create a counter-hegemonic discourse against dominant caste narratives. Drawing from Paulo Freire's idea that reflection by the oppressed can lead to engagement in their struggle for liberation, this paper will examine how Dalit memories are mobilized to construct an alternative Dalit personhood. The paper will focus on select works of Odia Dalit literature and particularly examine the writings of contemporary writer, Basudev Sunani. He has experimented with forms and techniques in Odia Dalit literature by incorporating elements drawn from postmodernism. The paper will also look into the act of translating Dalit literature into English to understand in what ways education is utilized by Odia Dalit writers to disseminate Dalit ideologies. The study investigates how English, historically a colonial tool, is appropriated as a decolonial model within Dalit activism. The paper will also look at the increasing recognition of lesser-known Dalit writings from Odisha, highlighting the intersection of education, activism, and literature in shaping Dalit identity and resistance.

Keywords: *Caste, memory, trauma, postmodernism, translation*

Addressing Caste Inequality through Affirmative Action: Limits and the Way Forward

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The paper tries to critically examine the role of affirmative action in addressing the caste-based inequalities, which was the *raison d'être* for such an arrangement in the country. Since its inception the affirmative actions in the country have been responsible for the upliftment of marginalized sections of the society. However, the debates surrounding these policies have not ceased to exist. The success of such policies in widening access to education, employment and





political participation among the oppressed castes cannot be denied. This paper is an attempt at investigating its current inadequacies and seeks to suggest measures at making the policy more inclusive. Yet the debate surrounding merit and the idea of social justice does have substance to it. Here, the paper argues that the growth of economic criteria in affirmative action is a move towards widening its scope and proves beneficial in addressing inequalities. Through a detailed exploration of the working of these policies, the author tries to make a case for moving these demands beyond urban centers. It seeks to engage rural narratives upon affirmative action into the continuing debate. In the wake of the evolving socio-political horizon, this paper calls for policy reformulations that balances the need for social justice along with a merit-based inclusivity.

Keywords: *Caste inequality, affirmative action, policy, social justice, merit*

At the Crossroads of Disability and Caste

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Disability has gained attention in academic studies in recent years. This paper explores the nuanced intersection between disability and caste, focusing specifically on how caste identity, which has long shaped lives in South Asia, particularly India, impacts individuals with physical disabilities. The caste system's historical evolution will be examined, highlighting how it has perpetuated marginalization across various communities, including disabled individuals. By scrutinizing this intersection, the paper aims to reveal the layers of discrimination experienced by disabled individuals within lower and upper caste groups. In the second section, attention will shift to how government policies have addressed this intersection of disability and caste. Public perception, shaped by both cultural and social norms, will also be analyzed to understand how these views further reinforce marginalization. By combining historical perspectives with contemporary policy analysis, the paper will offer insights into the challenges faced by individuals at the crossroads of caste and disability, and how systemic change is essential for fostering a more inclusive society.

Keywords: *Disability, Caste, intersection, Marginalization, historical*

Caste, Ecology, and Resistance: An Eco-critical Reading of Bama's *Karukku*

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The environmentalism discourse in the Indian subcontinent has an inherent tendency towards sidelining the intersection of caste and ecology, thus obliterating the iteration of Dalit experiences. Bama's *Karukku*, traditionally seen as protest literature, offers a critical perspective from an interdisciplinary lens of ecology, literature, and cultural





studies. In doing so, it forms a nuanced understanding highlighting the Dalit experiences of environmental marginalization and socio-economic oppression. Through the personal narrative of a Dalit Christian woman in Tamil Nadu, Bama gives a critical insight into the systemic inequalities that cuts through both the domains of caste and environment. The symbolism of the "karukku," or palmyra leaf, becomes a powerful representation of her lived experience of endurance and survival, in a society relegated to oppressive social and environmental conditions. The paper seeks to highlight how Bama uses stark descriptions of the Western Ghats, local ponds, and agricultural cycles to depict the mutual connection between the Dalit community and their environment. Moreover, it also intends to discuss the manner in which the text uses animal imagery to illustrate the dehumanization of Dalits, as it draws parallels between the exploitation of not only the human lives, but extends the ethical imperative towards the non-human lives. This paper thus adopts an eco-critical lens to discuss how *Karukku* presents a prospect of inclusive vision of environmental justice to bring the systemic ecological and social inequalities faced by Dalits into notice within the mainstream eco-literary traditions.

Keywords: *Autobiography, caste, Dalit, ecology*

Resisting Erasure: Caste, Social Death, and the Reclamation of Identity in Eknath Awad's

Autobiography

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This paper explores social justice and social death in Eknath Awad's autobiography, *Strike a Blow to Change the World*. Awad, a Dalit activist, uses his life story to expose caste oppression, resistance, and the pursuit of dignity in India. His narrative not only reflects his personal struggles but amplifies the collective experiences of marginalized communities. Using the concept of social death—the systemic erasure of marginalized identities—the paper examines how Awad challenges the invisibility and dehumanization imposed on Dalits. It also explores how his activism confronts caste-based discrimination and advocates for social justice and the reclamation of dignity for the oppressed. Awad's autobiography serves as both a personal and political tool, illustrating how resistance empowers marginalized communities. Positioning Awad within the broader context of Dalit literature and activism, the paper highlights his contribution to the ongoing struggle for equality and justice. It emphasizes the need to dismantle the social death that continues to affect marginalized groups in India, while underscoring the transformative potential of autobiography as a tool for justice.

Keywords: *Caste, social death, Dalit literature, resistance, social justice*





Beyond Caste and Indenture in Children of Sugarcane

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In *Children of Sugarcane* by Joanne Joseph, the narrative captures the complexities of caste identity as it intersects with the oppressive system of indenture in colonial South Africa. The story shows how rigid caste structures from India, particularly Madras, were disrupted yet endured as individuals transitioned into exploited lives in Natal, South Africa. Sumit Guha (2013) in *Beyond Caste* states, “Rules about purity and propriety have long characterized human society. They have often been used to mark crucial social boundaries” (p. 2). While migration and the colonial context disrupted caste identities, they persisted in altered forms, reflecting continuity and change. Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed (2010) highlight that “ship was a site of massive social disruption as old rituals and ceremonial observances...were compromised” (pp. 23, 39). Even in South Africa, caste-based prejudices persisted, particularly around food, water, and social interaction, maintaining aspects of the old system. This paper analyzes how Joseph’s novel highlights caste oppression from the homeland, compounded by indenture, resulting in hybrid identities shaped by survival and cultural continuity.

Keywords: *Caste, indenture, slavery, South Africa, Global South*

Exploring Caste and Gender Discrimination through Amitav Ghosh’ s *Sea of Poppies*

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India, a land of multicultural ethnicities, religions, caste and creed encountered British colonization, which led to mass exploitation, domination, religious & social tension between natives of diverse caste, class, and creed. Many Indian writers attempted to portray such realities and differences through their fictional narratives. Amitav Ghosh’ s *Sea of Poppies* is a perfect representation of colonized India and it explores the impacts in colonized India. This novel presents a historical overview of India where Britishers exploited Indians by making them slaves. Amitav Ghosh has discussed numerous issues with multiple of characters including Deeti, a widow, Kalua an untouchable ox man, Raja Neel Ratan Halder a Bengali zamindar who had right to enjoy multiple women for fun, lust and sexual desires, Mr. Zachary Reid an American sailor, Miss Pauletta Lambart, the orphaned daughter, and others. The novel focuses on such numerous instances, this research paper aims to discuss caste hierarchy, gender discrimination, and patriarchy as Ghosh has portrayed the plight of women in the 19th century which worsen during the colonial period.

Keywords: *Gender discrimination, caste hierarchy, labour exploitation & migrant worker*





Caste in the Corporate Organizations: A Myth or Reality?

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According to Yogendra Singh, the structural view of caste is that it forms an ideal type of stratification system and that it could exist forever, either alone or in coexistence with other forms of stratification in societies. (1997. p.32) This paper investigates the persistence of caste-based discrimination within corporate organizations and explores employees' perspectives on implementing affirmative action in the private sector. While it is widely believed that metropolitan corporate environments have transcended caste practices, this research aims to critically examine the validity of such claims. Many companies emphasize merit-based hiring, avoiding inquiries into candidates' caste, race, or origin during recruitment. However, this approach overlooks the entrenched systemic discrimination that exists. In contexts where Dalits are denied access to the very institutions and opportunities necessary to cultivate "merit," a purely meritocratic framework is inadequate. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's 'social reproduction theory', which argues that social inequality is perpetuated through the unequal distribution of resources across generations, this study seeks to reveal the subtle mechanisms that maintain caste hierarchies within corporate spaces. Through a quantitative approach, the researcher will collect data from 25 employees across various caste groups in the private sector, using a questionnaire as a research tool, to assess their experiences with caste discrimination in the workplace. The study will employ a subaltern perspective as a methodology and will also investigate employee's views on affirmative action in the private sector. By capturing these insights, the research aims to inform policy recommendations that can advance the inclusion and empowerment of marginalized communities.

Keywords: *Caste-based discrimination, affirmative action, systemic inequalities, meritocracy*

Queer Imaginations and Caste Identity: How does Queer Literature Re-imagines Humanity and Social Existence

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How does queer identity—including its expression—participate in the conversation of caste? In a world where, as rightly read by Vijayrajmallika, "gendering is a hobby", can a new language be inspired that allows the othered to not be violently introduced to their subjecthood? These are some of the questions I wish to answer through this paper by reading Vijayrajmallika, the first transgender Malayalam poet's book of poems, "A Word to Mother" through the concepts of planetarity and indigenous imagination. In her poem Hijda—the poet writes, "Aren't there numbers / Between one and two?" How can such literary works lay new systems of connections to imagine a new humanity? The poet uses her truths to create new ways of being, a crucial piece of the puzzle queer politics can lend to (re)imagining caste. The poet is not merely the native informant, but with haq is forging a space that is not alternate but dreams of being undivided. Vijayrajmallika's work moves beyond persuasion and anger into desire and new





meanings of motherhood and care. How can such processes of birthing new realities, without overlooking the suffering, engage with the problem of caste?

Keywords: *Queer literature, postcolonial theory, planetarity, imagination, intersectionality*

Translating Caste: Dalit Literature in Translation

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Dalit literature is vast and complex with themes of oppression, marginalization, and resistance, making it difficult to convey these nuances accurately in translation. Dalit literature often encompasses regional language and dialects which can be challenging to translate. It often represents the political and social struggle of the Dalits in a community. Translators need to be able to maintain the authenticity of the text, sensitivity to language and style should be maintained while translating, stereotypes need to be avoided in order to not convey Dalits in a negative light, the focus should be on the atrocities faced by them and their struggles and achievements. Few examples of such translated texts are “The Shroud” by Premchand; “The Parable of the Lost Daughter” by M.M. Vinodini and Bama's *Sangati*. I set out to explore the translated texts and their complexities, the struggles depicted and rooted in the historical Indian context. My objective would be to focus on the difficulties of translation, the role language and dialect plays in the translation process, the difference of perspectives of a male author and a female author in portrayal of women characters, and how the author's identity, social background and language plays a role in the writing process.

Keywords: *Language, translation, Caste, marginalization, Dalit Feminism*



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My storming emotions while penning down this acknowledgement are making this task slightly difficult for me. Yet, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude towards everyone who supported me immensely in organizing this conference. I began thinking about this conference almost a year before. I will not deny that caste and Dalit literature started connecting threads for me years before when I read *Joothan* as the introductory autobiography to Dalit literature. And after this I knew I wanted to read more and this enthusiasm led me to express in the form of working on an anthology on *Dalit Feminist Discourse*. Reading caste allowed me to explore and understand it as a social phenomenon functioning as a multilayered structure. Many texts introduced in the University syllabi allowed me to discuss the issues of caste in the spaces within and outside classrooms. I understand that caste has not only been functioning as the base of a society but has become a reflection of identity within and beyond a social structure, transcending global margins. This conference was born out of that itch to go beyond the simple definition of 'caste' and once again bring it to the intellectual platform for discussions and deliberations. From reflecting on how the politics of caste plays out every day in academia and what can be done to disrupt the exclusions and marginalization that ensues to seeing its playing out in the public spaces forced me to examine its various discourses and implications. And last year with the publication of an edited book on caste, I realised that the various figurations and configurations of caste are yet to be studied comprehensively. The recent NEP changes in the syllabi of English literature and the addition of Dalit Writings as a core paper was a positive change as students, faculty and researchers grappled with the caste issues and praxis not as peripheral to the issues to mainstream literature but as one of the evolving canons achieving global considerations.

This interdisciplinary two-days national conference was the result of a team effort collectively standing up for each other and dedicatedly marching together to verbalize newer expressions on the discourse of caste. From the very first occasion of sharing the first draft of the concept note of the Conference to allocating the duties for the execution of that vision, each and every member of my department rallied together and offered their full support.

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We are deeply indebted to all our invited guests/speakers who offered us their valuable time and provided a nuanced understanding on caste issues. Their deep knowledge outlined on how to disrupt the hegemonic understanding on caste and connected discourses leading to identify questions on identity, multiple marginalizations, questions around citizenship, public and affirmative policies, reading and developing academic understanding towards life narratives, reading trauma and literature of the oppressed, etc. We are thankful also to our fellow participants and paper presenters for their thought-provoking ideas and insights, and for sharing their ideas/research with us.





A heartfelt gratitude to all our colleagues within the department who tirelessly worked and collectively shouldered all the responsibilities in order to shape the vision of this conference. Prof. Sangeeta for creating conference logo to drawing up the timeline, creating formats, speaking to all the speakers and participants to draw up the schedule, Prof. Gitanjali for looking after the finances, purchasing and registration of the participants. Dr. Mona in managing various planning and management issues and also in supporting Dr. Anupama and me in reviewing each and every abstracts painstakingly and with Dr. Anupama preparing the conference schedule. Dr. Indrani has worked very efficiently in putting things together in the Abstract Booklet and also Dr. Ruchi for her contribution towards the same. Special thanks to Mr. Vinod K. Verma and Ms. Shilpa Gupta from the department for their valuable inputs in shaping the conference's vision. I would like to thank my colleagues, Dr. Ruchi, Ms. Aditi, Dr. Abha, Ms. Himalee, Dr. Aishwarya and Dr Onshangla for their immense contribution in helping us in organizing this conference.

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I would like to express my gratitude to my core committee comprising of Prof. Sangeeta Mittal (Organising Secretary), Prof. Gitanjali Chawla (Treasurer), Dr. Indrani Das Gupta (Joint Secretary) and members of my Department Dr. Mona Sinha and Dr. Anupama Jaidev for standing with me in this mammoth task. We worked collectively, cohesively to articulate the coherent vision behind the organization of this conference and I hope we will continue working in the future with the same team spirit.

Lastly, I would like to thank my husband and children for providing me a constant support and keeping me free from many household responsibilities and allowing me to organize this conference with a free mind.

Thanks!

DR CHARU ARYA

(CONVENOR & TIC, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH)



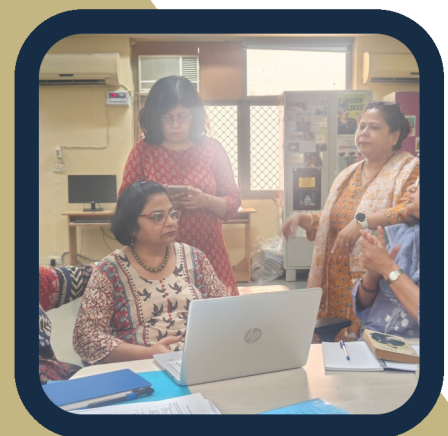
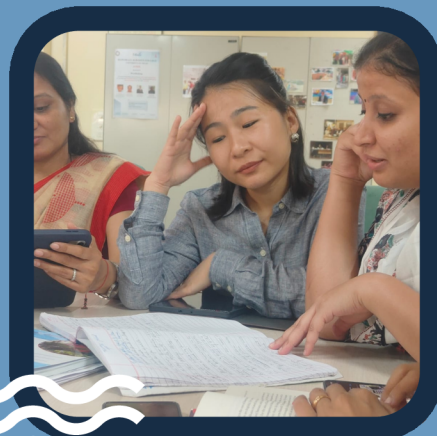
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