THE SPL JOURNAL OF (Open Access Peer-Reviewed Journal)
LITERARY HERMENEUTICS
A Biannual International Journal of Independent Critical Thinking
ISSN: 2583-1674 Volume 2 Issue 2 Monsoon Edition (2022): 184-200 (Online)

Writing Sikkim, Writing Identity: Cultural Belonging in Selected Indian English Texts

Sanjukta Chatterjee
ORCID: 0000000199681165

***Corresponding Author:** Sanjukta Chatterjee, sanjuktachatterjeesengupta@gmail.com, Associate Professor, Department of English, Raiganj University, Uttar Dinajpur, West Bengal 733134, India

Abstract

Aims: *This paper discusses the construction of cultural identity in selected literary works written in English by Sikkimese authors, namely Parsu Dahal's The Lama Who Never Was, Prajwal Parajuly's Land Where I Flee, and Pankaj Giri's The Fragile Thread of Hope. It aims to examine how these texts represent cultural identity and negotiate questions of belonging, displacement, and marginality within the socio-cultural context of Sikkim.*

Methodology and Approaches: *The study adopts a qualitative textual and interpretative approach. It is informed by Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of cultural hybridity and the Third Space, Stuart Hall's understanding of cultural identity as a dynamic and evolving process, and Edward Said's notion of geographical imagination. Through close reading and theoretical analysis, the paper investigates the literary strategies employed by the selected authors in articulating cultural distinctiveness and identity formation.*

Outcome: *The analysis demonstrates that Sikkimese literature in English functions as a counter-discourse to dominant metropolitan representations of Northeast Indian culture. The study finds that motifs such as return to the homeland, food habits, dress, and rituals serve as important markers of cultural specificity. These elements contribute to the construction of a distinct Sikkimese-Nepali identity within a culturally diverse and politically complex region.*

Conclusion and Suggestions: *The paper concludes that the literary representation of Sikkim reflects the hybrid and evolving nature of cultural identity. The study suggests that greater scholarly attention should be given to Sikkimese writing in English and other underrepresented regional literatures to enrich discussions on identity, hybridity, and cultural representation in contemporary Indian literary studies.*

Keywords: Cultural Identity, Sikkimese English Literature, Hybridity, Third Space, Homecoming, Marginalisation, Eastern Himalayan Writing

Volume: 2 Issue: 2 Monsoon Edition

Paper Type: Article

Article History: Received: August 12, 2022. Revised: October 27, 2022. Accepted: November 12, 2022.

The paper can be accessed online at: www.literaryherm.org

India's northeastern fringe has remained an equivocal entity in the cartographic scheme of the Indian literary imagination. Whereas metropolitan areas have come to define the contours of Indian English literature, marginalized areas have increasingly started asserting themselves within the larger narrative discourse on Indian literature. Of all these, the tiny Himalayan state of Sikkim, which is sandwiched between Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan, and West Bengal, provides a unique

instance. It has emerged relatively late into the literary scene, its readership remains limited, and its geopolitics remain unique; nevertheless, the English literature that has recently begun emerging from this geographical expanse is among the most interesting contributions to the field of Indian English literature.

The history of Sikkim is different from that of any other state in India. As a former kingdom and a protected British territory, Sikkim became an Indian protectorate in 1947 and was finally integrated into India in 1975 through a politically charged process of voting that is still seen as highly controversial. The state is comprised of several ethnic groups including the Lepcha, Bhutia, Limboo, Rai, and the dominant Nepali speaking Gorkhas. Gerald Berreman observed that in the Himalayan region, "the ruggedness has tended to slow down population movement and has inhibited communication so that people living close together have remained relatively isolated and have maintained or developed cultural differences which easier access might have blurred" (290). Spatial isolation has, however, both contributed to cultural distinctiveness and delayed literary representation of the same.

Literacy through the English language was relatively more recent in Sikkim compared to neighbouring Darjeeling hills. There were attempts at capturing the historical past of the region through non-fiction – Lal Bahadur Basnett's *His Majesty Is Paying Guest: A Short Political History of Sikkim* (1980), for example, or Kesab C. Pradhan's *The Life and Times of a Plantsman in the Sikkim Himalayas* (2008). However, it was not until the twenty-first century that a fictional tradition emerged in the region. It was with the publication of Prajwal Parajuly's *The Gurkha's Daughter* (2013) that scholars marked the beginning of an Eastern Himalayan literary tradition in English. The paper has analyzed three exemplary texts – *The Lama Who Never Was, Land Where I Flee,* and *The Fragile Thread of Hope*– through the lenses of interlinked theories

namely postcolonial identity theory, cultural geography, and sociology of everyday life.

Exploration of issues of identity within post-colonial literature rests largely on the theories of Homi K. Bhabha, Stuart Hall, and Edward Said, who collectively offer an analysis of how the specifics of English Literature from Sikkim may be most effectively interpreted. According to Bhabha, the theory of cultural identity does not merely consist of the representation of tradition but, rather, takes place in the interstices between different cultures. This space "displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom" (Bhabha 55). These authors are situated in this very kind of Third Space; they write in English about a community which speaks Nepali as its mother tongue, in a state whose own political inclusion in India is itself highly debatable. They do not merely reflect a settled identity in their writing; on the contrary, they create an identity through their writing. Their identity formation is paradoxical too- they intend to create an identity of an imagined space of homogenous Nepali belongingness which as per Bhaba would be a 'hybrid' existence "Hybrid space of examination"- the creation of a Nepali identity through rituals, food and other cultural identifiers but tinged with historical trauma. The desire to (re)create a past is impossible as the tools of creation are happening in the present and are therefore using negotiated applications. (The Location of Culture - Chapter 2 - The Commitment to Theory).

Stuart Hall's "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" is another useful essay in this regard. There are, he contends, two perspectives regarding cultural identity. The first one views identity as a collective "one true self" held by people from a similar background or history (Hall 223). The second perspective, which is viewed by Hall as more effective, sees cultural identity not only as "being," but also as "becoming." It is "partly belonging to the future as much as to the past and

is continually under construction" (225). These literary characters can be described as individuals who try to reconcile both identities, longing for the former one while coping with the latter.

The idea of geographical imagination formulated by Edward Said in his book *Culture and Imperialism* (1994) constitutes the third pillar in the discussion. It must be remembered that "just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings" (Said, 7). This idea gains extra significance when applied to the Sikkim case where the geography of the region was affected by competing geographical imaginations of colonial British, independent India, Nepal, and China. It can be argued that to these frameworks can be added the following observations by Richard Jenkins, "identity implies how people or groups of people are recognized in terms of their social relations to other people or groups of people" (18)

Parsu Dahal, who hails from the district of Gelling in western Sikkim, is rooted in the practice of 'rooted cosmopolitanism'; the former's literary aspirations are linked to a larger write with his allegiances firmly entrenched in the landscapes and societies of Sikkim. *The Lama Who Never Was* is steeped in the cultural memories of the hills. In 'The Lame Squirrel,' the opening story, Parsu focuses on individual lives and historical memories by using the character of Jetha Khaling, an eighth-year-old farmer with cancer, which he does not know about. The central imagery of the story is the 'Chuchay Dhoonga,' which was once a huge rock representing the local history of the region, which Jetha discovers to have been reduced to rubble for constructing roads. The writer avers:

> The majestic rock had been cruelly mutilated and pruned beyond recognition — not even a pale shadow of its former grandeur. A heap of freshly broken pieces of the rock lay stacked on the side of the under-

> construction road, where a woman sat battering them into still smaller pieces, unbothered ... 'A literal battering down of history, and all cunningly carried out in my absence ... a well-planned sacrilege,' he muttered. (Dahal 2)

Rock represents some lieu de memoire, or a place of memory, and its destruction means the destruction of the cultural identity associated with it. By using the term 'sacrilege,' Dahal has transformed a simple civic act into a cultural act of violence, implying that the debate surrounding the geography of Sikkim is indeed a debate surrounding 'ideas, forms, images and imaginings,' as Said states. Jetha is taken to a hospital in Bengal, where he experiences homesickness on both an emotional and ontological level:

> Never had he been away from home for so long, and never in the last eighty years of his existence had there ever occurred a situation so compelling as to require him to ever breach the safe confines of his tiny country and venture out to the relative chaos of the plains ... Still proud and obstinate and oblivious to the lethality of the ailment that plagued him, he pestered his son to bring him back to Sikkim. (2)

The phrase 'the safe confines of his tiny country' is remarkably subtle, for Jetha, his tiny country is Sikkim, which technically stopped being an independent nation in 1975, and it demonstrates the political contradictions of his national identity. Following Bhabhan's terminology, one could describe him as the occupant of a Third Space where the map of the nation-state clashes with the map of his cultural identity. In the title story, the issues mentioned above are explored further through the character sketch of Jigmee, a child placed in a Buddhist monastery in Gangtok, who runs away and makes his living as an entrepreneur. His return to Gangtok is prompted by remorse regarding the death of a classmate novice named Khandoola. What follows is an unexpected twist of fate - Khandoola turns out to be alive, and the story concludes with:

> The parrot-nosed lama stood before him, the same mischievous, devilish smile and the unforgettably, prominently hooked nose, only that he had grown old. As Jigmee stood frozen, Khandoola gently pulled him towards him and escorted him out of the monastery ... Unable to believe the turn of events, Jigmee stood, staring aimlessly at the vast nothingness of blue Gangtok skies, sobbing silently. (45)

The vast emptiness of the blue Gangtok skies is both an image of nothingness and freedom, freedom from the burden of guilt and an opportunity for a new experience of belonging . So keeping with Hall it may be stated that, the journey back to Gangtok is not a return to an identity fixed once and for all, but rather to the process of identity formation and renewal through interaction with tradition and modernity.

In Prajwal Parajuly's novel, *Land Where I Flee* (2013), four grandnieces and grandnephews return to their ancestral land, Gangtok, to observe the eighty-fourth birthday party called the Chaurasi for their grandmother, Chitralekha Neupaney. On one level, the book may be seen as an exploration of the price that is paid when people go away from home. The Chaurasi is a complex ritual. Parajuly clarifies:

> The Chaurasi is a curious event — not many Nepali-speaking Hindus in India, especially people of my generation, know much about it. This could be partly because few people live to see their 84th birthday ... A somewhat satisfactory, if rarely cited, explanation lay in the significance of the lunar calendar and the numbers 108 and 1,008 — especially auspicious in Hinduism. The 84th birthday is, thus, celebrated as a day of gratitude to the moon. (Author's Note)

By centring the novel around this ritual, Parajuly not only preserves the memory of a cultural practice at risk of being lost through diasporic forgetting but also examines the internal divisions within the Nepali Hindu community in Sikkim. At

the same time, the ritual functions as a response to the disruptive forces of migration, inter-caste marriage, and religious conversion that challenge the community's sense of unity. The Chaurasi may be read as a space of cultural expression where communal identity is briefly reinforced, even while its contested nature remains visible. The four grandchildren represent distinct forms of the Sikkimese diasporic condition. Bhagwati, Agastya, Manasa, and Ruthwa each represent different dimensions of diasporic experience and shifting identity. Bhagwati has entered an inter-caste marriage, Agastya's sexuality places him outside traditional expectations, Manasa struggles with feelings of cultural alienation in America, and Ruthwa has undergone religious conversion. Of these, Bhagwati's story emerges as the most overtly political. Her marriage across caste boundaries results in the loss of a socially recognised identity, which, as Jenkins argues, is shaped through "the perspective of others" (18). Consequently, she occupies an ambiguous position, which is excluded from established social categories in Sikkim, while simultaneously experiencing racial and cultural otherness in America.

Through Bhagwati's experience, Parajuly captures the emotional complexity of double displacement, showing that diasporic alienation extends beyond physical separation to a more profound crisis of identity and belonging. The novel's focus on clothing as a symbol of identity is equally important. Parajuly's opening depiction of traditional Nepali dress stands out as one of the most vivid and affectionate portrayals of clothing in contemporary Indian English fiction. Parajuly states:

> The male is in cream daura-suruwal. His top, the daura, button-collar- and cuff-less, the flaps in its front held in place by the only visible pair of strings across the chest. The trousers, the suruwal, snug-cuffed, tapered, their excess length gathering at the feet. The woman, formerly depicted in a black dress, is now wearing gunyu-cholo, her green gunyu a sari whose

> loose end is tucked into the front. The blouse, her red-and-white rhombus-patterned cholo, bulging at the chest but otherwise similar to the daura. (Parajuly 1)

This isn't just merely description; it is cultural reconstituition . By chronicling the clothing terms and pictorial elements of Parajuly's traditional clothing, it tries to save important and meaningful material symbols of identity that may be lost when it is under the influence of globalisation. Here dress functions as per Barthes' sign system and serves as a symbol of cultural identity, collective memory, and social status. The argument of Chitralekha and her grandchildren revolves around a conflict that relates to a critical theoretical grounding in Hall's dual conceptions of identity. Chitralekha symbolizes an established highly cherished sense of identity deriving from one's caste, ritual, and history. Her grandchildren' experience with identity, on the other hand, is a more malleable experience, negotiated, adapted, and renegotiated by an audience of her own making. By not prioritising one or the other, the novel maintains a fruitful tension between different views, implying that maintaining culturally inherited traditions are not the only things needed for a community to survive, social change is also a reality. It is reflected in its impending title, the homeland is neither a sort of balm nor a completely repressive place, but rather both a place of belonging and a place of restriction.

Pankaj Giri's *The Fragile Thread of Hope* is the most formally traditional of the three texts. It travels the broadest path of cultural identity and religious conversion, Giri's portrayal of Gangtok gives the feel of familiarity and intimacy of someone who is, say, a longtime resident of the city. The pace of the scenery – Teesta river, misty hills and chilled mountain roads are not just a pleasing garnish but the sensory substance of an emotionally-living, resonating world. Born to Nepalese Hindu parents, Fiona, originally devout, becomes a Christian after her father dies. In the process, she and her mother Shanti take new names:Fiona and

Sharon. By altering this name, the novel seeks to allude to the broader concerns of this act of cultural naming, displacement, transformation, and reconstruction.

The shift from "Falguni" to "Fiona" can be read, in Bhabha's terms, as a movement through the Third Space—a process of cultural translation in which a new identity emerges through the reworking of pre-existing cultural elements rather than through a complete rejection of the past. The novel begins with Fiona's return to Gangtok after spending time in Goa:

> As the rented taxi passed through the meandering road alongside the mighty Teesta River, Fiona found herself gazing at the gorgeous landscape before her eyes. A thick veil of mist floated across the lofty hilltops. The sky darkened bit by bit as the overcast evening eased into night. A drizzle moistened the dry, dusty vegetation covering the hills. After tolerating the heat of Siliguri, the breezy journey towards Gangtok felt like paradise. Despite having a gala time at a beautiful place like Goa, she realised — nothing beats the feeling of returning home. (Giri 11)

On this site the scene is moving from visual description to an emotional one of belonging; the landscape here is serving a function beyond its visual representation. These things like the presence of mists, the river of the Teesta and the welcome of the cool mountain air constitute sensorial cues that bring back Fiona's intense feeling of home, suggesting that no matter how far afield one goes and how many tricks the mind can play on the body, it will never lose its felt sense of where it came from. However, food was its most distinctive contribution to Sikkimese identity writing, as *The Fragile_Thread_of_Hope* portrayed it. Based on Barthes's premise that the food is not simply nourishment but denotes something beyond. Giri creates a symbolic matrix of Nepali –Sikkimese food, with an emphasis on three key dishes. Traditionally, rice bread is in the shape of a ball – sel roti – which stands for home- festivity, and community-bonding comfort. A member of the placement class, Soham seems fond of its taste than he

is of its culture, describing it as "He would eat it up like a hungry wolf" (62). This is the reason the first delight of the placement class is easy yet meaningful: familiarity and belonging to a culture. There is one other achaar of churpi, a tangy preparation, which has much more emotional connotations being closely associated with sorrows, memories, and losing a family member. This is particularly noticeable when Soham's father reads a dish and times go back to his memory of a child killing his older brother, and then back again, etc. Giri writes:

> 'Churpi ko achaar' a tangy Nepali delicacy prepared by frying Churpi — a traditional version of cottage cheese in the form of a white, soft mass — with onion and tomato, was on the menu today. Oh, Churpi ko achaar, Vikas's Baba failed to complete the sentence, a bolt of sorrow paralysing his face. Churpi ko achaar was Dada's favourite dish ... 'I made it for Vikas,' Aama said, glancing towards the kitchen ... 'I hope he'll like it,' she said, bursting into tears. Her gasps echoed in the gloomy lobby, snapping his heart strings, one by one. Memories of Dada flooded his mind like a tide, and he broke down. (62–63)

This passage powerfully reflects Barthes's argument that food extends far beyond the satisfaction of physical hunger, functioning instead as a symbolic medium through which emotional and social meanings are expressed. In this context, "churpi ko achaar" becomes a form of memorial communion, connecting the living to the dead through shared experiences of taste, memory, and ritualised remembrance. The dish transcends its purely culinary function to emerge as a complex cultural signifier, one that shapes personal identity, preserves collective memory, and reinforces familial emotional connections. "Momos" appears in an even more emotionally charged context in the novel. Parshuram, the deeply troubled father, leaves behind a letter asking his wife to prepare his favourite cheese momos every year on his birthday after his death. As Giri writes, "Please

prepare my favourite cheese momos for me on my birthday every year. It will give me peace, telling me that you have forgiven me" (75).

In this moment, the momos becomes much more than a preferred dish; it emerges as a symbolic medium of posthumous reconciliation. By transforming the preparation of cheese momos into an annual ritual, Parshuram creates a means through which forgiveness and emotional healing can continue even after death. Food thus becomes a bridge between unresolved grief and the possibility of reconciliation. The novel also includes thukpa, the Tibetan noodle soup - "A chilly gust blew across Fiona's face as she stood outside the college parking lot. Yet, she felt snug. Maybe the hot Thukpa—Tibetan noodle soup—she had just had for lunch was keeping her warm inside" (Giri 114). The presence of thukpa alongside distinctly Nepali dishes is particularly significant, as it acknowledges the Tibetan cultural influences that are equally integral to Sikkimese identity. Through this inclusion, Giri portrays Sikkimese culture not as singular or culturally homogeneous, but as a composite and syncretic formation shaped by diverse historical and cultural influences.

There is no narration of Fiona's conversion to Christianity as a betrayal of her culture, but indeed as an attempt to cope with her pain and adapt to the world around her. Meanwhile, the novel never proposes to totally remove cultural origins due to religious conversion. Fiona always has a strong tie to her Sikkimese identity; this ties into how food, landscape and memory feel delicious to her. Cultural identity is not simply about religious affiliation, but it is an accumulated, layered, and evolving sense of self, through connection to sensory experiences, social engagements and meaning-making attachments to places, as Stuart Hall puts it. Beliefs and even names may shift, but the body will remember home.

The three writers – Dahal, Parajuly, and Giri - discussed in this paper share a common literary initiative to create the counter-discourse against the stereotypical views of the impact of the metropolitan culture on Sikkim and its

people. Their goal is not only to overturn such stereotypes but to view Sikkimessese life from the inside and understand its sensuous, cultural and emotional truths in all their nuances, complexity and authenticity. Geographical imagination, to go by Edward Said, is an excellent lens to view this literary interventionism. The sheer otherness produced in mainstream metropolitan imaginations of Sikkim's make it appear as a visual kaleidoscope of misty mountains, Buddhist monasteries, rare orchids and the majestic Kanchenjunga with little concern to imagine it as a social and cultural world. It is akin to the construction of the 'Orient' in this study, the writers who are central subjects have taken up a challenge to this under-representative mode of representation. Their dramatization of Sikkim shows how people cope with conflict within the family, encountering dilemmas of caste and religious change, missing loved ones, sharing cultural food, and dealing with the dichotomy of tradition and modernity. In these human and socially significant terms, the writers represent Sikkim. They are involved in what Said will call a counter-imperial literary act.

The translation in the medium of English itself is a major irony in relation to this counter-discourse. However, the word mimicry is a more alluring technique of reading this decision as suggested by Homi Bhabha. The strategic appropriation of English is a way that is "almost the same, but not quite" by writers who have been historically marginalised that allows them to modify language in a manner consistent with their own culture. English is enriched by vocabulary, rhythms and cultural themes of Sikkimese Nepali life in these texts, resulting in a hybrid literary language that encapsulates the "Third Space" complexities of modern-day identity formation in Sikkim.

Homecoming is a theme seen time and again throughout all three texts. Jetha decides to enter the state of Sikkim, Jia comes back looking for redemption, Parajuly's four grandchildren gather around the Chaurasi, and Fiona makes her way home along the road of the River Teesta. In each case, the return isn't just a

physical movement but also an ontological return, a return to one's own self where cultural return is simultaneously affirmed. These stories don't turn a blind eye to the past either. The house where the characters come back is not a house of the imagination but a house of negotiation, contradiction and change. Nor does Jigmee just return to monastic life, Bhagwati ignores her inter-caste marriage ban bracket, and Fiona abandons her Christian faith. These characters are not identitiy but a base over which new and emerging identities can be developed. The text organizes itself in this way according to Stuart Hall's definition of cultural identity as a continuous, as opposed to fixed and inherited, process of becoming.

Thus, *The Lama Who Never Was*, *Land Where I Flee*, and *The Fragile Thread of Hope* may be viewed as the essential texts which develop English literary tradition of Sikkim. They advance the geographical and cultural perimeter of Indian English literature by introducing Sikkim as, long disenfranchised as it is, a politically contested region with a relative recent stake in the literary production of English, however while retaining its cultural distinctiveness. Their approach to identity is complex and distant from a traditional/local binary and a global/modern binary approach. These characters are not symbolic entities but real people who aim at creating their lives in a sophisticated social and emotional context.

Most significantly, these writers bring to the foreground the possibility that a cultural identity is not necessarily seen as ethnically exclusive or politically separatist. All of these create Sikkimese identities that are inclusive, hybrid, and representing many layers, drawn from the Nepali, Tibetan, and Lepcha cultural beginnings; Hindu, Buddhist and Christian religions; as well as rootedness in one locality and the presence of another. It is an identity that is neither about the denial of contradiction nor about simplifying and condensing it but about celebrating it as a source of strength and cultural richness. Raymond Williams states that culture refers to "one of the world's most complex ideas" (77).

Sikkimese writers further complicate all this by claiming that the cultures of small communities and historically underprivileged groups are also worthy of serious literary and critical interest along with the cultures of the metropolitan centres. When English is in their hands it is no longer a colonial language, but an instrument of cultural reclamation, political expression, and artistic innovation. The way to enter these texts is to come to know Sikkim not as an item for the tourist's gaze and as an event item in the geopolitics, but as an actor in its own right: as a history, as a memory, as a longing, as home comforts of sel roti and churpi ko achaar, as open blue skies of Gangtok.

Works Cited and Consulted

Barthes, Roland. "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption." *European Diet from Pre-Industrial to Modern Times*, edited by Elborg Forster and Robert Forster, Harper and Row, 1975, pp. 47–59.

Berreman, Gerald D. "People and Cultures of the Himalayas." *Asian Survey*, vol. 3, no. 6, 1963, pp. 289–304.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.

Dahal, Parsu. *The Lama Who Never Was*. Notion Press, 2015.

Giri, Pankaj. *The Fragile Thread of Hope*. Notion Press, 2019.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, Lawrence and Wishart, 1990, pp. 222–237.

Jenkins, Richard. *Social Identity*. 4th ed., Routledge, 2014.

Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire." *Representations*, no. 26, 1989, pp. 7–24.

Parajuly, Prajwal. *Land Where I Flee*. Quercus, 2013.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. Vintage Books, 1994.

Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Oxford UP, 1976.

Sanjukta Chatterjee

Dr. Sanjukta Chatterjee is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at Raiganj University. A University Gold Medallist and NET-qualified scholar, she specializes in Postcolonial Literature, with research interests spanning feminism, ecocriticism, Indian classical literature, nationalism, gender studies, and North-

East studies. She has served as Head of the Department of English and has been actively associated with Women's Studies initiatives. Her academic contributions include research papers, seminar presentations, and scholarly engagements focused on postcolonial identity, gender discourse, ecology, and contemporary literary studies.