

***PATHOPOIESIS: THE NARRATION OF SUFFERING AND EXISTENCE***  
**IN DALIT AND PALESTINIAN LITERATURE**

**AARUSHI PUNIA**



**DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI**

**MARCH 2024**



***PATHOPOIESIS: THE NARRATION OF SUFFERING AND EXISTENCE***  
**IN DALIT AND PALESTINIAN LITERATURE**

by

**AARUSHI PUNIA**

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Submitted

in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

to the



**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI**

**MARCH 2024**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work presented here in the thesis has been carried out by me towards the partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of a PhD from the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. The work contained herein is my own and is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever quotations from others are involved, every effort has been made to indicate this clearly with due reference to the literature. The content of this report, in full or in parts, have not been submitted to any other institute or university for the award of any degree.



Aarushi Punia

2015HUZ8505

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “*Pathopoiesis: The Narration of Suffering and Existence in Dalit and Palestinian Literature*” being submitted by Ms. Aarushi Punia to the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences is a record of the bonafide research work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance. She has fulfilled the requirements for the submission of this thesis, which to the best of my knowledge, has reached the requisite standard.

The material contained in the thesis has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any other degree or diploma.



Dr. Divya Dwivedi

Associate Professor

Indian Institute of Technology Delhi

New Delhi – 110016, India

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am extremely grateful to my supervisor, Dr Divya Dwivedi, for enabling me to write this dissertation. Most doctoral research scholars have supervisors, but I had a mentor in the truest sense. She encouraged me to write about the most difficult of experiences, protected me in the toughest of situations, and empowered me to be a rigorous and politically committed academic. The list of things for which I could thank her is endless, but the one I'd like to record my gratitude for is the day she chose me to be her student when I applied for the PhD program at the HSS Department, IIT Delhi. I would not be here without her today.

I'd also like to thank my parents, Dr VPS Punia and Dr Sarita Punia, for giving me a room of my own. My parents pushed me to the greatest of heights and let me chart my own path to the summit while they stood behind me at every step. My brother, Dr Sudhanshu Punia, taught me how to laugh in the toughest of situations, remaining a bright ray of sunshine in the overcast that often came in my life. He performs surgeries, writes papers, attends sessions, teaches scholars, and still finds time to watch movies. I thank him for inspiring me to lead a holistic academic life.

My family witnessed the beginning of my dissertation, and my partner Achal Walia stayed with me till the very end. He shared his calm with me on manic nights, but more importantly, consistently made an effort to educate himself and others around us about the value of my research. I thank him, for always trying, and for teaching me never to give up.

I'd like to thank my professors and peers at Lady Shri Ram College, St. Stephen's College, and IIT Delhi who taught me to be critical and curious. I'd also like to thank my friends in Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru who have been extremely supportive and understanding as I wrote my dissertation.

And lastly, I'd like to thank the three children of our house, my cats Jag and Jumbo, and my dog Auliya, for surrounding me with love and laughter on lonely and bleak days. It takes a village to complete a dissertation, and I was lucky to have the most supportive one.

## Abstract

This thesis undertakes a comparative study of Dalit and Palestinian literatures in English in order to explore the morphologies of racialized discrimination, to outline the analogous character of racisms in the two contexts, and to understand the lived experience of these as expressed in the narratives of the suffering they cause respectively. Both contexts are found to be structured in the form of an ethno-national state, which privileges fictive ethnicity to empower a dominant group that installs itself as the native and the subordinate group that is racialized in multiple ways. I define the ‘carceralopolis’ as an advanced stage of an ethno-national state that uses spatial control and stigmatisation, oppressive in/visibility, and orchestrated murder to control and annihilate the subordinate group. I examine how Dalit and Palestinian literatures in English expose the operations of the carceralopolis and their experience of being racialized, oppressed, and rendered superfluous. The thesis proposes that through these literary works, the oppressed of a carceralopolis oppose their invisibilization by building a public realm in literature, where they regain the right to speak and be heard, and testify to their experience and hence to their very existence which the carceralopolis negates. For this purpose, I study narratives in English, a language that connects on of the largest readerships and potential solidarities in the world.

I distinguish victimhood from “suffering” and propose the concept of ‘pathopoiesis’ for the configuration of narrative elements and techniques through which the narration of suffering and the assertion of existence occur in literature of the oppressed. I examine theoretical contributions in the field of trauma and testimony, and argue that superfluous can and do narrate traumatic experiences by referring to multiple testimonies of Dalit and Palestinians. In *Coming Out as Dalit*, Yashica Dutt’s builds what I propose to call a ‘castography’, a new type of autobiographical narration that blends the political history of caste and personal experiences of racial passing. Meena Kandasamy’s *The Gypsy Goddess* uses unreliable narration to critique structures of power like courts, police, and

media, that are hegemonies by upper castes, and reject lower caste testimonies in the Kilvenamani massacre of 1968. Suad Amiry uses humour and the mode of 'public confession' to build 'episodic worlds' in *Sharon and My Mother in Law* that enable her to travel and comment upon experiences of racialized discrimination and patriarchal suppression where she was forced to be silent. In *The Drone Eats With Me*, Ate Abu Saif domesticates the weapon of surveillance, and thereby attempts to check Israeli power over Gaza and its inhabitants.



## Abstract (Hindi)

यह थीसिस नस्लीय भेदभाव की आकृति विज्ञान का पता लगाने, दो संदर्भों में नस्लवाद के अनुरूप चरित्र को रेखांकित करने और इनके आख्यानो में व्यक्त इनके जीवन्त अनुभव को समझने के लिए अंग्रेजी में दलित और फिलिस्तीनी साहित्य का तुलनात्मक अध्ययन करती है। वे क्रमशः कष्ट पहुँचाते हैं। दोनों संदर्भों को जातीय-राष्ट्रीय राज्य के रूप में संरचित पाया जाता है, जो एक प्रमुख समूह को सशक्त बनाने के लिए काल्पनिक जातीयता को विशेषाधिकार देता है जो खुद को मूल और अधीनस्थ समूह के रूप में स्थापित करता है जो कई तरीकों से नस्लीय है। मैं 'कारसेरालोपोलिस' को एक जातीय-राष्ट्रीय राज्य के एक उन्नत चरण के रूप में परिभाषित करता हूँ जो अधीनस्थ समूह को नियंत्रित करने और नष्ट करने के लिए स्थानिक नियंत्रण और कलंक, दमनकारी/दृश्यता और सुनियोजित हत्या का उपयोग करता है। मैं जांच करता हूँ कि कैसे अंग्रेजी में दलित और फिलिस्तीनी साहित्य कार्सेरालोपोलिस के संचालन और नस्लीय, उत्पीड़ित और अनावश्यक बना दिए जाने के उनके अनुभव को उजागर करते हैं। थीसिस का प्रस्ताव है कि इन साहित्यिक कार्यों के माध्यम से, कैरेरालोपोलिस के उत्पीड़ित लोग साहित्य में एक सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र का निर्माण करके अपनी अदृश्यता का विरोध करते हैं, जहाँ वे बोलने और सुने जाने का अधिकार हासिल करते हैं, और अपने अनुभव की गवाही देते हैं और इसलिए उनके अस्तित्व की गवाही देते हैं जो कैरेरालोपोलिस है नकारता है। इस उद्देश्य के लिए, मैं अंग्रेजी में कथाओं का अध्ययन करता हूँ, एक ऐसी भाषा जो दुनिया के सबसे बड़े पाठकों और संभावित एकजुटताओं को जोड़ती है।

मैं पीड़ित होने को "पीड़ा" से अलग करता हूँ और कथा तत्वों और तकनीकों के विन्यास के लिए 'पैथोपोइज़िस' की अवधारणा का प्रस्ताव करता हूँ जिसके माध्यम से उत्पीड़ितों के साहित्य में पीड़ा का वर्णन और अस्तित्व का दावा होता है। मैं आघात और गवाही के क्षेत्र में सैद्धांतिक योगदान की जांच करता हूँ, और तर्क देता हूँ कि दलित और फिलिस्तीनियों की कई गवाहियों का हवाला देकर अनावश्यक दर्दनाक अनुभवों का वर्णन किया जा सकता है और किया भी जा सकता है। कमिंग आउट एज़ दलित में, याशिका दत्त ने वह रचना की है जिसे मैं 'कास्टोग्राफी' कहने का प्रस्ताव करता हूँ, एक नए प्रकार का आत्मकथात्मक वर्णन जो जाति के राजनीतिक इतिहास और नस्लीय गुजर के व्यक्तिगत अनुभवों को मिश्रित करता है। कंडासामी की द जिप्सी देवी अदालतों, पुलिस और मीडिया जैसी सत्ता की

संरचनाओं की आलोचना करने के लिए अविश्वसनीय वर्णन का उपयोग करती है, जो उच्च जातियों द्वारा आधिपत्य हैं, और 1968 के किल्वेनामणि नरसंहार में निचली जाति की गवाही को खारिज कर देती हैं। सुआद अमीरी हास्य और 'सार्वजनिक स्वीकारोक्ति' की विधा का उपयोग करते हैं ' शेरोन और माई मदर इन लॉ में 'एपिसोडिक दुनिया' बनाने के लिए जो उसे यात्रा करने और नस्लीय भेदभाव और पितृसत्तात्मक दमन के अनुभवों पर टिप्पणी करने में सक्षम बनाती है जहां उसे चुप रहने के लिए मजबूर किया गया था। द ड्रोन ईट्स विद मी में, सैफ निगरानी के हथियार का घरेलू उपयोग करता है, और इस तरह गाजा और उसके निवासियों पर इजरायली शक्ति की जांच करने का प्रयास करता है।

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                                    |     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Certificate.....                                                                   | i   |
| Acknowledgements.....                                                              | ii  |
| Abstract.....                                                                      | iii |
| Abstract (Hindi).....                                                              | v   |
| Table of Contents.....                                                             | vii |
| Introduction.....                                                                  | 1   |
| Chapter 1: In/Visibility and Superfluity in the <i>Carceralopolis</i> .....        | 32  |
| Chapter 2: <i>Pathopoiesis</i> : The Articulation of Suffering and Existence.....  | 96  |
| Chapter 3: The Narration of Suffering and Existence in Dalit Literature.....       | 137 |
| Chapter 4: The Narration of Suffering and Existence in Palestinian Literature..... | 182 |
| Conclusion.....                                                                    | 225 |
| Works Cited.....                                                                   | 228 |
| Curriculum Vitae.....                                                              | 271 |