

**AFFECTIVE INFRASTRUCTURES: RELIGION, MATERIALITY AND THE (UN)-
MAKING OF A REMOTE BORDERLAND IN LADAKH.**

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**AFFECTIVE INFRASTRUCTURES: RELIGION, MATERIALITY AND THE (UN)-
MAKING OF A REMOTE BORDERLAND IN LADAKH.**

By

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Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Submitted

in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



Indian Institute of Technology Delhi

June 2025

Declaration

This is to declare that this thesis titled ‘Affective Infrastructures: Religion, Materiality and the (Un)- Making of a Remote Borderland in Kargil being submitted by me to the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, is a record of bonafide work carried by me under the supervision of Prof. Farhana Ibrahim.

The contents of the thesis have not been submitted in part or full, to any other university or institute for the award of any other degree or diploma.

Priya Bose

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June 12, 2025

Certificate

This is to certify that this thesis titled ‘Affective Infrastructures: Religion, Materiality and the (Un)-Making of a Remote Borderland in Ladakh’, being submitted by Priya Bose to the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, is a record of bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision. In my opinion, the thesis has reached the standards of fulfilling the requirements for submission relating to the degree.

The contents of the thesis have not been submitted in part or in full to any other university or institute for the award of any other degree or diploma.

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the complex interplay of infrastructure, affect, religion, and state power in Kargil, a strategically vital borderland within Ladakh, India. Focusing on the Shia Muslim community, the study examines how religious practices engage with and transform state-controlled infrastructure, primarily roads, producing affective counter-geographies. Kargil's location along the contested India-Pakistan border has profoundly shaped its infrastructural development and socio-political dynamics of the region. The 1947 partition and subsequent closure of traditional trade routes converted Kargil from a transnationally connected hub into a remote, landlocked territory, rendering it critically dependent on modern infrastructure for connectivity and socio-economic progress. Moreover, the development infrastructures like roads also act as a mechanism of surveillance of the lives of people in this borderland. This imposed remoteness is exacerbated by a pervasive military presence, which restricts civilian access to space and influences infrastructural priorities. This thesis, therefore, reflects on the various forms of affect that infrastructures tend to garner in the lives of the inhabitants of this borderland.

This study contributes to infrastructure studies by foregrounding the role of infrastructure when it comes in conjunction with the realm of religion, or ecology, creating intense affective experiences for people. The state's strategic development of roads to promote pilgrimage sites highlights the uneven distribution of infrastructural resources and their instrumentalization for nationalistic purposes. Furthermore, the thesis examines the affective experiences generated by dilapidated road conditions in civilian areas, contrasting them with the well-maintained military infrastructure. This infrastructural disparity fuels feelings of discrimination, marginalization, and a sense of infrastructural backwardness. The research concludes that in Kargil, infrastructure, particularly roads, is not a neutral instrument of connectivity, but a contested terrain where religion, state power, and affective experiences converge, profoundly shaping the lives and identities of this borderland community.

सार

यह शोध भारत के लद्दाख में रणनीतिक रूप से महत्वपूर्ण सीमावर्ती क्षेत्र कारगिल में बुनियादी ढांचे, प्रभाव, धर्म और राज्य शक्ति के जटिल अंतर्संबंध की जांच करता है। शिया मुस्लिम समुदाय पर ध्यान केंद्रित करते हुए, अध्ययन यह जांचता है कि धार्मिक प्रथाएं राज्य-नियंत्रित बुनियादी ढांचे, मुख्य रूप से सड़कों के साथ कैसे जुड़ती हैं और उन्हें बदलती हैं, जिससे भावनात्मक प्रति-भूगोल का निर्माण होता है। विवादित भारत-पाकिस्तान सीमा पर कारगिल के स्थान ने इसके बुनियादी ढांचे के विकास और क्षेत्र की सामाजिक-राजनीतिक गतिशीलता को गहराई से आकार दिया है। 1947 के विभाजन और उसके बाद पारंपरिक व्यापार मार्गों के बंद होने से कारगिल एक अंतरराष्ट्रीय रूप से जुड़े हुए केंद्र से एक दूरस्थ, भूमि से घिरा हुआ क्षेत्र बन गया, जिससे यह कनेक्टिविटी और सामाजिक-आर्थिक प्रगति के लिए आधुनिक बुनियादी ढांचे पर गंभीर रूप से निर्भर हो गया। इसके अलावा, सड़कों जैसे विकास के बुनियादी ढांचे भी इस सीमावर्ती क्षेत्र में लोगों के जीवन की निगरानी के तंत्र के रूप में कार्य करते हैं। यह लगाया गया दूरस्थता एक व्यापक सैन्य उपस्थिति से और भी बढ़ जाती है, जो नागरिकों की अंतरिक्ष तक पहुँच को प्रतिबंधित करती है और बुनियादी ढाँचे की प्राथमिकताओं को प्रभावित करती है। इसलिए, यह शोध प्रबंध इस सीमावर्ती क्षेत्र के निवासियों के जीवन में बुनियादी ढांचे के प्रभाव के विभिन्न रूपों को दर्शाता है। यह अध्ययन बुनियादी ढांचे की भूमिका को सामने लाकर बुनियादी ढांचे के अध्ययन में योगदान देता है, जब यह धर्म या पारिस्थितिकी के क्षेत्र के साथ जुड़ता है, जिससे लोगों के लिए गहन भावनात्मक अनुभव पैदा होते हैं। तीर्थ स्थलों को बढ़ावा देने के लिए सड़कों का राज्य का रणनीतिक विकास बुनियादी ढांचे के संसाधनों के असमान वितरण और राष्ट्रवादी उद्देश्यों के लिए उनके उपयोग को उजागर करता है। इसके अलावा, शोध प्रबंध नागरिक क्षेत्रों में जीर्ण-शीर्ण सड़कों की स्थिति से उत्पन्न भावनात्मक अनुभवों की जांच करता है, उन्हें अच्छी तरह से बनाए रखा सैन्य बुनियादी ढांचे के साथ तुलना करता है। यह बुनियादी ढांचागत असमानता भेदभाव, हाशिए पर होने और बुनियादी ढांचे में पिछड़ेपन की भावना को बढ़ाती है। शोध का निष्कर्ष है कि कारगिल में, बुनियादी ढांचा, विशेष रूप से सड़कें, कनेक्टिविटी का एक तटस्थ साधन नहीं है, बल्कि एक विवादित इलाका है जहाँ धर्म, राज्य की शक्ति और भावनात्मक अनुभव मिलते हैं, जो इस सीमावर्ती समुदाय के जीवन और पहचान को गहराई से आकार देते हैं।

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