



From the Chairman's Desk

The topic of the Conference *Indian Popular Fiction: Redefining the Canon* has set me thinking. It is very different but very relevant at the same time. We have all grown up reading the 'literary' staples but to look at them from the perspective of 'popular' vs. 'canonical' is indeed a thought-provoking perspective. The Conference therefore compels me and other bibliophiles to rethink their reading choices.

The world of books is vast, and there are enticing options forever looking at you from the bookshelves in bookstores, libraries, kindle, and online and phone reading apps. The one you pick up to read is governed by many factors: the genre, the author, the packaging, the promotion; but also your own interest, exposure, motivation and pleasure. A book purchased, read, imbibed and evaluated involves in this way a very interesting interface of publishing, authorial and readership forces. I am sure the Conference will bring together all these factors for an academic analysis of the very significant cultural act of writing and reading. I am especially interested in the not-so-visible intermediaries in this process.

I am aware that the Department of English has rolled out Conferences like *De-territorialising Diversities: Cultures, Literatures and Languages of the Indigenous*, *City Lives: Spaces and Narratives* and *Reading Migrations: Fractured Histories, Forged Narratives*. I congratulate the English Department for continuing in this direction, and am sure that this Conference would have as vibrant and rich a tapestry as the type I have witnessed in some of the sessions of the earlier Conferences. I express my satisfaction in these institutional endeavours and extend my support and encouragement.

I wish the Conference Committee all the best.

Siddharth Verma

Chairman, Governing Body

Maharaja Agrasen College

07 January 2019



From the Principal's Desk

I am delighted to know that the Department of English of the college is organising a two-day Interdisciplinary National Conference titled *Indian Popular Fiction: Redefining the Canon* in collaboration with FORTELL (Forum for Teachers of English Language and Literature) on January 16 & 17, 2019.

Maharaja Agrasen College strives to be a preeminent institution in the country across the different streams of higher education. As part of its mission, the college champions both innovative and traditional approaches in an open and flexible environment and recognizes excellent scholarly and creative contributions. The college has created affiliations with a number of national and international organizations dedicated to promote research and development in higher education.

Such conferences are signature events of the Department of English of the college. Each year, scholars from many academic disciplines across the country travel to meet in Maharaja Agrasen College to share and discuss their research and publication at various events: conference presentations, roundtables, special sessions, film screenings, local tours, keynote speaker events, special awards ceremonies, and other occasions.

I would like to thank the Convenor of the conference, Dr Gitanjali Chawla, and her team for their dedication and service to not only this institution, but also to the larger cause of the learning of the students and teachers. I look forward to participating in the conference and understand more about popular fiction in India. I am sure that the conference will be very successful in meeting its objectives, as all other events of the Department of English.

Dr Sunil Sondhi

Principal

Maharaja Agrasen College.

07 January 2019



The Department

Maharaja Agrasen College was established in 1994 as a constituent college of the University of Delhi in 1994. 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 and faculty upgradation programmes. The department has its own departmental library. It has also established The Centre for Performing Arts and Cultural Studies which has a rich library and a vibrant calendar of activities today. 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 college 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 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 organising many well attended events under the patronage of the teachers. These events include The Annual Lecture Series, Literati: The Literature Festival, Meet the Author Series, Meet the Alumni Series, Workshops (Creative Writing, Effective Reading, Visual Communication, Photography), Excursions to places of cultural interest like the Jaipur Literary Festival, Sattal, Amritsar, Udaipur, Jodhpur and Jaisalmer, as well as Heritage Walks (to Nizamuddin Basti, and 1857 uprising sites in Delhi in previous years), curating exhibitions, theatre and movie projects along with robust and versatile participation in the organisation of Conferences. The department organised its First International Conference on *De-territorialising Diversities: Cultures, Literatures and Languages of the Indigenous* in February, 2013, Second UGC Sponsored Interdisciplinary Conference on *City Lives: Spaces and Narratives* in 2016 and Third Interdisciplinary National Conference on *Reading Migrations: Fractured Histories Forged Narratives* in 2017. The department has consistently provided opportunities to students for interacting with some of the most renowned scholars, authors, critics, artists and thinkers. Prof. R W Desai, Prof. Harish Trivedi, Prof. Langston Hughes, Prof. Amritjit Singh, Prof. Tabish Khair, Prof. Jonathan Gil Harris, Prof. Madhavi Menon, Ms. Gitanjali Shree, Prof. Rashmi Doraiswamy, Prof. Rosemary Marongoly George, Mr. Tenzin Tsundue, Mr. Vijay Lokapally, Ms. Sheela Reddy, Mr. Yasser Usman, Ms. Sukrita Paul Kumar, Dr. Anjana Neira Dev, Prof. Marcel Courthiade, Prof. Sabrina Dhawan, Prof. Savita Singh are some of the most 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. 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' and 'Technical Writing' eliciting very keen response from students of various streams.

At the university level, the department has engaged with course revisions, curriculum development, content writing, paper setting, and resource sharing. We have offered the English



Language Proficiency Course for consecutive years. The department is engaged in research and innovation projects in diverse fields and produces papers and other outputs year after year. Four members of the department have earned doctorates in the last two years and one has been the Presidential International Visiting Scholar at Boston University in 2018. The English Department Room is abuzz with activity and cheer at all times. It is a cohesive as well as democratic space. The department believes in striving for individual and collective enhancement, with room for individuality on the one hand and best practices of academia and intelligentsia on the other. We are indebted to all our esteemed partners and collaborators. Hope your association with us is memorable and fruitful.

Aditya Premdeep

Aditya Premdeep is Assistant Professor in the Department of English. His academic interest includes Postcolonial literature, Literary theory and Criticism, and Indian English literature in Translation. Presently, he is pursuing MPhil in English literature from the Department of English, University of Delhi and working on Nagarjuna as part of his dissertation. Recently, he has presented two papers in national and international conferences titled "Revisiting Thoreau: Nature and the Natural in Literary Imagination" and "Religious Dissemination through Travel: A Study of Bhopas or Singers of Epic of Rajasthan". Besides, he is also a translator and translating a few texts into English. He loves reading fiction, walking, and cycling in his free time.

Anupama Jaidev

Anupama Jaidev is Assistant Professor in the Department of English. Her research areas are cultural studies, tribal narratives, narratives of the Emergency in India, popular reading and Romani narratives. She is also a translator.

Charu Arya

Charu Arya has been doing research in Gender Writings, Dalit Writings, Dalit Autobiographies and Folk Culture of Uttarakhand. She has presented papers on Dalit Writings, Dalit Autobiographies in Translation and Gender Issues in Dalit Writings in various national and international conferences and seminars. She has been a Resource Person in Refresher courses and Orientation courses on Caste and Gender Identities in Academic Staff College, Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi. She has studied Linguistics and Phonetics as her main papers and has also been trained as a language teacher. She has worked in the materials team for English language proficiency course at ILL, University of Delhi. She has also taught English Language Proficiency Course, Intermediate level at ILL, University of Delhi. She has been holding Administrative posts of Liaison Officer SC and ST and Nodal Officer for Scholarships for last few years. Her creativity is visible with few creative pieces of poetry and articles that she has written for college magazine.

Debosmita Paul Lahiri

Debosmita Paul Lahiri is currently teaching in the Department of English. She has completed her PhD titled "The First Partition of Bengal and the Problematic of Indian Nationalism: A Study of Bangla Literature (1905-1916)" from Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, under the supervision of Prof Nishat Zaidi. Her areas of interest are Partition Literature, Indian Writings in English, Indian Literature and Postcolonial Literature.



Gitanjali Chawla

Folklorist, Researcher, Editor and Materials Producer, Gitanjali Chawla is an Associate Professor of English with more than twenty-five years of teaching experience. Her research on the folk songs of Punjab and its rap mutants 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 has also dabbled in translation and is keenly interested in innovative pedagogies in the virtual mode, having prepared several modules for e-learning at ILL, University of Delhi. She is the co-editor of three seminal anthologies, *Cultures of the Indigenous: India and Beyond* (2014), *De-territorialising Diversities: Literatures of the Indigenous and Marginalised* (2014) and *Re-storying the Indigenous and the Popular Imaginary* (2017). She has also been the Presidential International Visiting Scholar 2018, Wheelock College, Boston University, USA where she delivered a public lecture along with lectures in various departments on various aspects of her research area. She is also the Secretary, FORTELL (Forum for Teachers of English language and Literature) and has edited several issues of the journal, *Fortell*.

Guntasha Tulsi

Guntasha Tulsi has done her B.A. and M.A. in English from Hindu College, University of Delhi and MPhil and PhD from the Centre of English Studies, JNU. She has been teaching English Language and Literature for six years with experience of teaching at Delhi University, JNU and Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University. She has also completed Post graduate Certificate Course in ELT from EFL University, Hyderabad and is currently pursuing Post Graduate Diploma in ELT from the same university. She has written four full length research papers/critical essays published in reputed journals and six newspaper articles related to her discipline. She has presented papers at various national and international conferences including prestigious forums like ELTAI, IACLALS and RAWCON. She has co-edited John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Book Age Publishers, Delhi, 2016) and another volume on Eunice-de-Souza's poetry is forthcoming for publication by the same publishing house. She has acted as a valuable resource person in numerous workshops on English language and communication organised by prestigious forums like US Embassy, CPDHE and Department of English, University of Delhi. Her interest in the area of linguistic proficiency, communication and writing can be testified from her numerous research papers written on ELT and workshops conducted by her on communication, speaking skills and English language across colleges and institutions.

Indrani Das Gupta

Indrani Das Gupta is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English. She received her MPhil degree in English Literature from Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi. Her MPhil research was an examination of the sport of Indian wrestling and its discourse in selected texts of post-Independence India to explore notions of citizenship and the role of the nation-state in modern polity. She is presently pursuing her PhD in English Literature from Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi. Her PhD thesis is titled "Social Vision of Science Fiction in Modern India: A Study of Select Texts". Her teaching interests include Popular Culture, Victorian Literature, Modern British Literature and Postmodern literature. Fascinated and spellbound by the way words weave music, she aspires to become a writer.



Mona Sinha

Mona Sinha is Associate Professor in the Department of English where she has taught literature, language and cultural studies since 1995. An MPhil from University of Delhi, she is currently a researcher in television and gender studies. Her varied publications include translations, papers on feminist studies, media and culture, besides articles on language proficiency. She has presented papers at several national conferences and also international conferences in Prague (2012) and London (2016). Her most recent publication includes “The Camera and I (Eye): Mediated Imaging of the Self” in *Connected Hum Tum (Creative Forum, Jan-Jun 2018 issue)*. She was actively associated with the ambitious ELPC programme at ILLL (Institute of Life-Long Learning, University of Delhi) as a materials developer, teacher and mentor. She has also developed material for DU-TISS project on language proficiency. She is a member on the Editorial Board of FORTELL. She has been Principal Investigator for Delhi University Innovation Project on Dilli Haat, where she led a team of colleagues and student researchers from the College. She has contributed to the corporate life of the college as a convener for various significant committees and has also served as Secretary, Staff Council.

Prem Kumari Srivastava

Prem Kumari Srivastava, a recipient of several postdoctoral fellowships and awards, with three decades of research and teaching experience at IIT Delhi and University of Delhi, is Associate Professor of English. With more than 85 research publications to her credit, some of her seminal works are *Leslie Fiedler: Critic, Provocateur, Pop Culture Guru* (2014), McFarland & Inc. Publishers, North Carolina, USA; three volume series (co-edited) *Cultures of the Indigenous: India and Beyond* (Vol. I), 2014, *De-territorialising Diversities: Literatures of the Indigenous and Marginalised* (Vol. II), 2014, and *Re-storying the Indigenous and the Popular Imaginary* (Vol. III), 2017; *Spiritual Ecology and Sustainability: Practice and Confluence* (co-edited) 2017, Authorspress publishers, Delhi and *Revisiting American Literature* (Co-edited) Macmillan Publishers India (2018). Her research displays an overarching focus on gender, the popular and the indigenous; American Literature and Innovative English Language Materials.

Sangeeta Mittal

Sangeeta Mittal is Associate Professor in the Department of English. She has over 25 years of experience of teaching English literature, with the Jacobean Age, Restoration Literature and the Romantics as her favourite areas. Her dissertation on “Delhi Culture: A Literary Perspective” undertakes an in-depth interdisciplinary analysis of “Delhi Culture” using Cultural, Urban and Memory studies to encapsulate the historical, topical, material and urban aspects of this complex and layered phenomenon. She has been extending her research on Delhi through research papers. Having been member of organizing committee, chair, paper presenter and invited speaker at Interdisciplinary National Conferences on *Biodiversity and Climate Change* and *City Lives: Spaces and Narratives*, she plans to continue her work on city and environment. With passionate interest in institution building, she has courses in educational leadership to her credit. She has contributed extensively to the corporate life of the College by serving in most portfolios and positions. She has taken up new writing papers in CBCS curriculum viz. Creative Writing, Academic Writing, Travel Writing and Translation Studies and wishes to strengthen this interest and expertise through resource building and FDPs.



Shashi Prava Tigga

Shashi Prava Tigga is currently working as Assistant Professor in the Department of English. She has translated Dr Francisca Kujur's "Kurukh ki Anugoonj" and worked on subaltern literature for her MPhil dissertation. She has been associated with UNPFII, IFAD and Caritas Asia. Her areas of research interest are postcolonial literature, translation studies, oral literature and subaltern literature.

Shilpa Gupta

Shilpa Gupta has been teaching at the Department of English at since November 2008. She has also been the teacher-in-charge of 'Equal Opportunity Cell', 'Program Officer – NSS' and 'Nodal Officer' to monitor the implementation of reservation policies of persons with disabilities in the college. She has presented research papers in several national and international conferences. Her areas of interest are Eighteenth-Century British Literature, Indian Writings in English and Indian Literature in Translation and Contemporary Literature.

Subodh Kumar Upadhyay

Subodh Kumar Upadhyay is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English. He completed his Masters in English in 2005 from CCS University Meerut, (U.P) and has been teaching since then at undergraduate level. He was awarded his PhD on Khwaja Ahmad Abbas on the topic "Social and Political Aspects in The Major Novels of Khwaja Ahmad Abbas" in 2012, from CCS University Meerut. His research interests are Postcolonial and Transnational Literatures in English.

Vinod Verma

Vinod Verma, Associate Professor of English 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 English Department, Delhi University.



Bio-notes: Invited Speakers

Aditi Maheshwari-Goyal

Aditi Maheshwari-Goyal is Director, Copyrights & Translations, Vani Prakashan. She holds a Master's degrees in English literature (Hansraj College, University of Delhi) and Business Management (Strathclyde Business School, Scotland) and a Pre-doctoral/ MPhil. degree in Social Sciences (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai). She also holds a diploma in Public Relations and Advertising. Aditi heads the Department of Copyrights and Translation at Vani Prakashan and is the Managing Trustee at Vani Foundation. She taught a unique course on 'Narrativising, Editing and Book Manuscript Creation' at the Cluster Innovation Center of University of Delhi in the years 2014 and 2015, and also taught it at the prestigious Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi in 2016. She is an Executive Advisor to Jaipur BookMark- South Asia's largest publishing platform, Mumbai Lit-o-Fest, Kumaon Literature Festival and Indore Literature festival. She also manages the award secretariat of Vani-Samanway Distinguished Translator Award. She is the Curator of India's first Hindi literary festival 'Hindi Mahotsav', organised in association with the Oxford Bookstore.

Advaita Kala

Advaita Kala is a best-selling and internationally published novelist. Her debut novel *Almost Single* has sold over 150,000 copies in India alone and has been translated into multiple languages, including French, Marathi and Hindi. It was also selected for the Bantam Discovery Program, a prestigious publishing program run by Random House USA, that introduces new voices in fiction to the American reader. Advaita is an award-winning screenwriter, most notably of the film *Kahaani*. Unique to Advaita's writing is her ability to cross genres, she has written a TV show for prime-time television, film, fiction, numerous columns in leading publications on a range of issues from politics to social concerns and women's rights. Her film and literary work has focussed on themes of female empowerment and experience. She is also a popular food columnist. A regular on television news debates, she is a commentator on wide ranging social issues. Possibly the only working writer in India who is writing and has written in multiple genres. She also curates *Words Count - The Festival of Words* and a podcast called *The Democrat* that engages diverse ideological viewpoints in conversations on the issues that impact Indian Democracy. She has several awards to her credit including The Zee Cine Award, Screen Award, Times of India Film Award, Femina Power List (2015) Award, Inspira Award, 100 Women Achievers (2016) by Ministry of Women and Child Welfare, Luxury League Award 2017 (Writing), News 24 Jash-ne-Yongistaan Award for Meaningful Writing 2017, Daughters of Uttarakhand Award by Garhwal Post (2017) and Hill Ratna (Uttarakhand) 2017.

Anuradha Marwah

Anuradha Marwah is the recipient of Fulbright-Nehru Academic and Professional Excellence (FNAPE) fellowship. During her fellowship, she went as Visiting Faculty to the Interdisciplinary Centre for Study of Global Change (ICGC) at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis in the Fall Semester of 2017. The courses she taught there were in the area of Creative Writing and Drama which have also been her lifelong passion. She is the author of three novels - *The Higher Education of Geetika Mehendiratta* (1992), *Idol Love* (1999) and *Dirty*



Picture (2007); some plays including *A Pipe Dream in Delhi* and *Sarkari Feminism* that have had several public performances in India and abroad; and several short stories and popular articles. Her play *Ismat's Love Stories* was one of the three shortlisted for the Hindi Playwright Award 2016. Her PhD (Jawaharlal Nehru University) is in the area of the Market for Contemporary Indian Fiction. Her other research interests include the pedagogy of Creative Writing and Women's Writing. She has published several articles in reputed national and international journals. She is co-author of the Creative Writing textbooks used in Delhi University and the NCERT. Dr. Marwah is also a development activist and runs a community NGO in Ajmer (Rajasthan) that works on education and development of rural and underprivileged adolescents.

Deepa Agarwal

Deepa Agarwal has over fifty books published, mainly in the genre of children's literature. She also writes poetry and fiction for adults. Among other awards, she has received the NCERT National Award for Children's Literature in 1993 for her picture book *Ashok's New Friends*. Her historical fiction *Caravan to Tibet* was on the IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People) Honour List 2008. Her work has been translated into several Indian and foreign languages.

Devapriya Roy

Devapriya Roy is an Indian author best known for her books *The Heat and Dust Project* and *Indira*. Roy began her career with *The Vague Woman's Handbook*, a quirky novel that was published by Harper Collins in March 2011 and subsequently appeared on the India Today Bestseller List. Her second book was *The Weight Loss Club: The Curious Experiments of Nancy Housing Cooperative*, yet another quirky novel published by Rupa & Co. in July 2013. Her most successful book is *The Heat and Dust Project* (along with husband Saurav Jha), that chronicles the story of travelling through India on local buses "on a very very tight budget" which debuted at No.1 on the Hindustan Times-AC Nielsen list and also got excellent reviews. *The Heat and Dust Project* is also a first-of-its-kind dynamic book as the couple used Facebook to document their journey even as it was underway. A teaser for the sequel of *The Heat and Dust Project*, called *Man. Woman. Road.* was published in Indian Express recently.

Karan Verma

Karan Verma is a young entrepreneur, public speaker, national best-selling Author of the novel *Jack & Master– A Tale of Friendship, Passion and Glory*, published by Rupa Publications. A Software Engineer and Management Post Graduate, Karan has pioneered initiatives in the field of training and counseling with his specialized workshops (over 1000) for students, corporates and PSUs. A regular columnist for *Business World* Magazine and other newspapers like Millennium Post, Karan is also Brand Consultant for national and international brands.

Karthika VK

Karthika VK is currently the Head of Publishing at Westland. She started her career in publishing at Penguin Books India in 1996 and moved to HarperCollins in 2006 to head its publishing programme in India. She has acquired and published several major writers of fiction and non-fiction including Anita Nair, Anuja Chauhan, Manu Joseph, Hartosh Singh Bal, Rana Dasgupta, S Hussain Zaidi, Sarnath Banerjee, Amruta Patil, Vishwajyoti Ghosh, Karthika Nair



and Booker-prize winner Aravind Adiga, among others.

Manasi Subramaniam

Manasi Subramaniam is Senior Commissioning Editor at Penguin Random House India, where she acquires literary fiction and nonfiction. In the past, she has worked with HarperCollins Publishers India.

Niraj Srivastava

Niraj Srivastava is an international award-winning author, hailing from an illustrious family of eye surgeons. He has a Master's in Business Administration from Motilal Nehru Institute of Research & Business Administration, Allahabad University. Thereafter, he completed his Doctoral Degree in International Management from the University of Canterbury, England. He is also a member of the Royal Society of Literature, England. He has been a businessman but turned to writing at the age of fifty. His debut novel, *Daggers of Treason*, is a historical fiction on the life and reign of Emperor Khurram Shahjahan and has won eight international book awards. *Daggers of Treason* was also shortlisted in 2017 for the prestigious M.M. Bennett Historical Fiction Award of the United Kingdom, as well as the Maharana Mewar Foundation Historical Award, Rajasthan. In September 2017, this award-winning book was signed for a Hollywood Production.

Raj Kumar

Raj Kumar is Professor and Head at the Department of English, Delhi University. His research areas include autobiographical studies, Dalit literature, Indian writing in English, Odia literature and post-colonial 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*, and *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences*. 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 Blackswan, 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 Blackswan, New Delhi in 2019.

Simi Malhotra

Simi Malhotra, Professor at the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia is also the Director, Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research, Jamia Millia Islamia. She has also been the Advisor [Academics, Media & Culture] to the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi from 2014-16. She has published many books and scores of articles in reputed journals and publications.

Surendra Mohan Pathak

Surender Mohan Pathak is considered the undisputed king of mystery writing in Hindi. He has recently completed 59 years writing full length whodunits and has been the flag-bearer of popular literature in India. His first story, *57 Saal Purana Admi* was published in the year 1959



in the very popular monthly magazine *Manohar Kahaniyan* published from Allahabad, whereas his first full length mystery novel titled *Purane Gunah Naye Gunahgaar* was published in the year 1963 from a publication house in Delhi. In these 59 years, he has written more than 275 novels, 45 short stories, 15 novellas and 26 joke books, 10 being in English; and is still going strong. Some of his best-selling books have been translated into English and Gujarati. Almost half of his books - 122 to be exact - feature a press reporter as a pivotal character and the format was immensely popular as it inspired the younger generation to adopt journalism as a profession. His books have transcended boundaries - from pulp to white paper and now on the screens of mobiles/ tablets/kindle. A few of his select books are being published as audio books by Storytel, Mumbai. Presently his books are being published by Penguin Random House and Rajkamal Prakashan.

Vishwajyoti Ghosh

Vishwajyoti Ghosh is an Indian graphic novelist and cartoonist working in the realm of social and political themes. He is author of the graphic novel *Delhi Calm* (2010). In it, Ghosh brings together realistic comic passages with political commentaries and fantastical elements in order to remember a particularly incisive period in more recent Indian history, referred to in India as 'The Emergency'. In 2013, he curated *This Side That Side: Restorying Partition*, an anthology of graphic narratives by 48 illustrators and authors from Southern Asia. With impressive diversity of styles and perspectives, it deals with relooking at partition of the Indian subcontinent. In addition to this, he is also the author of a visual book of postcards *Times New Roman & Countrymen*. Many of his comics have been published in magazines and anthologies in India and abroad and he has worked and collaborated on many occasions with other comic artists across the globe. Ghosh lives and works in New Delhi.



Concept Note

Indian Popular Fiction: Redefining the Canon

(January 16 & 17, 2019)

Flourishing in non-academic registers and trashed as low brow literature unworthy of literary attention and critical gaze, Indian Popular Commercial Fiction seemingly should suffer from a huge identity crisis. Instead, it stands tall amidst market forces, laughing its way to the bank. Dismissive of the criticism, unfettered by pretentious launches and awards; and indifferent to meritorious reviews that matter to literary pundits, it dominates the publishing industry by vetting the voracious appetite of its readership constituencies albeit in cheap pulp on which it is printed.

Both domains - Canonised Literary Writing and Popular Commercial Fiction - though not mutually exclusive have been categorised and segregated by the academia. The foster child, Popular Commercial Fiction is governed by market forces wherein the publisher/editor is supreme. Here, as Suman Gupta demarcates, "...publishing professionals increasingly partake of a sort of greater authorship: they seem to speak as authors of a commercial field of literary production and reception in which the immediate authors - the functional writers of commercial fiction - contribute in a subsidiary way". The erstwhile predominance of localised formulaic fiction in the likes of Om Prakash Sharma, Ved Prakash Kamboj, Surender Mohan Pathak, Raj Bharti, Anil Mohan etc found prolifically at Wheeler's stands at Railway Stations, Book shops at Bus Stops, Traffic-Light vendors, Pavement Bazaars and the like, picked for the instant gratification they offered, paved way for a more 'respectable' global platform. Reprinted and translated in several languages, the assembly line production though mass produced and consumed was given a short shrift by academics and literary critics. Such popular writings were as Pathak comments "harlots who are looked down upon by the high-nosed English-speaking crowd". Fortunately, this is no longer the case.

The immense popularity of Indian Commercial Fiction both as literary enterprise and as commercial venture has attracted global publishers: Penguin, HarperCollins, Hachette, Random House etc., vindicating both the merit of the author and the taste of the readers. The incognito writer now has a face and more significantly, a voice. Sisir Kumar Das, Suman Gupta, Buddhadev Bose, Tabish Khair amongst several others are the eloquent participants in the debate that blurs the hiatus between literary merit and commercial success. The former is often associated with the Salman Rushdie, Amitava Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy bandwagon and the latter with the Anuja Chauhan, Chetan Bhagat, Advaita Kala, Shobha De, Anurag Mathur, Ashwin Sanghi, Ravinder Singh, Durjoy Dutta brigade. Today, the latter are not just names churning pulp at the altar of commerce. They are names to reckon with and are dismantling categories and rebuilding hierarchies. What was dismissed earlier as low brow simply because it was popular can no longer be wished away and the fact that the reading public is just a mindless mass sans aesthetics holds no water in contemporary context. Though not credited as literary crusaders they are localised, rooted in India and as Claudia Kramatschek succinctly puts it, "...they write about this sense of connection in new and innovative – and at times surprising - ways. A marked turn towards localism is observable, meaning toward the micro cosmos of one's lived world..."



Indian Popular Commercial Fiction has spawned successful genres and formulas. In addition to the popular habitat occupied largely by Detective and Science fiction, today, Mythological Series, Chick Lit, Campus Novels and Fantasy Fiction have invaded book shelves and must-read lists not just in the vernacular and regional spaces but also in Indian English. Erotic Fiction of course continues to remain a safe venture, be it in Tamil Nadu, Kerala or Maharashtra. Furthermore, the emergence of social media and new web spaces such as blogs, Tumblr etc., along with self-publishing facilities, book reading mobile apps and gadgets, democratisation and globalisation of writership and readership is near complete.

The key question also arises, what is the gratifying impulse behind this commercial success? Why is the Indian youth, the middle classes and even the alleged elite in academic circles fascinated with this so-called sub/low/cheap/para literature? Todorov while writing on whodunit mysteries said that the fact that popular literature is being referred to as some kind of literature is of course, a way of giving it the currency denied to it. So, in the last few decades, literary criticism has trained its lens on this cultural production with serious theoretical rigour and systematic textual and contextual engagement to examine the osmotic divides, expressive imperatives, urban phenomenon and libidinous urges enshrined in it. This conference seeks to open the debate surrounding the potent, fertile and pulsating site visited by many: Indian Popular Fiction. Drawing on both the key aspects: literary and the commercial, the Conference attempts to explore the legitimacy, literariness and popularity of this terrain. There is no denying that a systematic critical engagement needs to be carried forward: both synchronically and diachronically, replicating and innovating the parameters/tools used to critique serious and meaningful literature. This is not just about giving the devil its due but perhaps acknowledging the vitality and tenacity of a huge terrain in the literary domain that academia can no longer ignore.

The conference will focus on all aspects of Indian Popular Fiction: The forms, authorship, reader base, and the publishing industry which govern most of what is written in postmodern times as well as the alternative routes offered by technology. The conference will engage with the following critical perspectives/ tracks which are in no particular order:

1. Literary Popular and Commercially Popular
2. Historicising Popular Fiction in the Indian sub-continent
3. Who is writing for whom: The key connections between authorship and readership
4. The local and the glocal
5. Publishers as key voices
6. Giving the Devil its Due
7. The 'Indian' in Popular Commercial Fiction
8. Moving Beyond: Social Media and the Web space
9. Voices that Matter: Regional Languages and Spaces
10. Genres and Formulas
 - a. Mythological Fiction
 - b. History and Pulp
 - c. Detective Fiction
 - d. Science Fiction



- e. The Fantasy Novel
- f. Thrillers and Suspense
- g. Chick Lit
- h. Romance
- i. Erotic Fiction
- j. Graphic Novel
- k. Serialised Magazine Fiction
- l. Campus Novels
- m. Web Fiction



Abstracts

Postmodern Mythology in Amish Tripathi's Novels

Abhinaba Chatterjee

Amish Tripathi is a popular Indian writer, considered so in terms of the market value. However, he is not yet part of the academia. Does this imply that his novels lack the depth and layers that the academia seeks in any work of literature, as was brought out during the recent controversy surrounding the inclusion of Chetan Bhagat in the syllabus of English Literature? This paper argues that the novels of Amish Tripathi do raise serious issues and concerns due to which these novels are so popular. In arguing thus, this paper proposes to discuss the novels in terms of humanization of the deities described in the mythologies and also in their depiction of the postmodern self.

The characters in Amish's novels, Shiva, Ram or Sita, may be characterized as 'expressivist', that is, as having a postmodern self, having the desire and capacity to actualize self-constructions or identities of the well-known Hindu trinity. Greater levels of knowledge flow driven by new technologies are producing a 'runaway world' in which modernity's promise of a world in control is unhinged as its very forces manufacture uncertainty, risk and disorganization. At the level of the individual this is producing selves that are disembedded from traditional structures and loyalties but empowered to be reflexive of new knowledges. By analyzing the well-known mythical characters of Amish Tripathi in these terms, this paper will attempt to bring forth the reasons for popularity of his novels.

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The Use and Abuse of 'Abuse' in Making Popular, 'Popular'

Abhinav Anand

The following paper is an attempt to understand the dynamics of language being used in the 'Indian Popular Fiction'. However, it will mainly focus on the use of abusive and 'immoral' language in these works. Recently there has been an increased use of abusive language in the Indian literary as well as cinematic landscape. Also, with series like *Sacred Games*, *Mirzapur* and stand-ups by comedians like Biswa Kalyan Rath, Sorabh Pant, Zakir Khan, the use of abuse has taken an altogether different meaning. In popular fiction these days, the offensive words are not reserved for the 'bad guy', in fact its use at both the ends of this binary has somewhere tried to dismantle this very binary. Instead of the 'good' and 'bad' guys, we now have, 'good-bad' guys. This paper tries to explore how use of cuss words affects the characterization, reception and 'popularity' of these works of fiction.

Also, it is interesting to note that these cuss words, although are used in 'English' fictions, are *not translated*. For instance, the 'c' word is usually preferred by the writer than writing its English equivalent, 'dumbass'. The paper will also try to understand the reason for the popularity of these words and what inference can we draw about the writers and the readers if we can prove that these words play a significant role in the popularity of these novel.



Are these words as Manto pointed out, a part of who we are and need not necessarily be offensive? Have we grown tolerant, or rather 'inclusive' when we read these words and don't get offended? Is their acceptance; and the 'laughter' invoked by these words, 'just' and 'innocent'? Or is there a politics involved? Is the writer conscious of his audience (predominantly and 'preferably' (?) men) while creating his work? The paper will try to highlight these complex problems and endeavour to arrive at some possible solutions; with keeping in mind the key question: *when the use of abuse becomes the abuse of abuse?*

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Interrogating Social Media and Romance: The Case of Durjoy Dutta

Aisha Qadry

With several bestsellers to his name, Durjoy Dutta has become a name to reckon with in the context of Indian Popular Fiction. With poster boy good looks and a dimpled smile, Dutta has gained thousands of followers on various social media platforms. Often using social media to promote his newest book or to post about his appearances, Dutta's social media presence is commendable. The rapport he shares with his readers/fans/followers can be seen as one of the many contributing factors to his literary success.

His persona of a writer is commingled with his sensational presence on media. Therefore, the paper shall attempt to analyze the phenomenon of Durjoy Dutta as a literary author and/or a Star. Is social media an effective and an essential tool in Dutta's literary success? Much like a Star, Dutta's phenomenon can be broken down in two categories, i) Literary author and ii) Popular Romance writer, both the categories will be examined closely in the paper to understand the author's undisputed position as a bestselling author. Furthermore, his texts will be analyzed to understand the continuing popularity of the genre of Romance. The paper will examine how his texts are redefining the Romance genre in terms of characterization, plots and/or contexts.

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Literary Popular and Commercially Popular

Akshita Singh

“We are a nation of forgetters” - Salman Rushdie

One has to find a way to remember things and this is exactly what both serious and popular forms of literature attempt to do in their own ways. Writers belong to both of these categories and they are masters of their own stories and language. None cannot be denigrated and sidelined because they cater to different readerships. A book itself doesn't advertise itself as serious or commercially popular; often the readers play a role in legitimizing a book as literary or popular. As Shakespeare says “All that glitters is not gold”: that is true even with these categories. Some literary books may not have enough substance or sophistication to be



considered literary enough, and every work of popular fiction may not be liked by the masses. There is a test of quality and worth involved for works in both categories.

Serious literature is generally regarded as a body of literary texts across times and cultures, which have lasted because they articulate some of the most enduring concerns in human existence and relationships. They have value because they allow their readers to glimpse some very profound and worthwhile truths. They are often complex and challenging, but as they say, nothing worthwhile is ever achieved without due effort. The effort required in the pursuit of this kind of serious reading is a task fairly daunting to most people, especially those who wish to read merely for entertainment: Which is what explains the limited if discerning readership of such books.

On the other hand, popular fiction is said to be written for the masses, keeping popular tastes and preferences in mind. Most popular commercial fiction also is remarkably good literature and the serious/ popular divide is really a false one. As is often suggested, Charles Dickens "novels" move from popular to serious status. And same is the case with Salman Rushdie book *Midnight's Children* which was as popular as it was formidable in terms of its artistic seriousness and craft as well as in terms of the attention it commanded from most critics.

I wish to explore the writings of Chetan Bhagat whose novels have appeal to a vast cross section of young readers. He may be considered abysmally ordinary by many, but still he rules over the mind of young generation and equally importantly, the market. I propose to investigate the merits of Bhagat's writing as valuable and valid as literature, since in his own simple and accessible way, he seems to hold out meanings and answers that his readers fail to find elsewhere, and how that in itself is a fairly important legacy to remember.

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Examining Author-Reader Relationship and the Shift in Reader's Choice through Selected Works of Preeti Shenoy

Amima Shahudi

A noticeable shift has occurred in Indian writing, and also in the tastes and trends of readership. Though, some critics consider popular commercial fiction as texts with 'bad writing, terrible story-telling, pathetic language and clichéd and hackneyed themes' but their acclamation from the readers makes these texts an important part of the contemporary Indian literature, and their authors earn literary stardom. Nevertheless, authors and readers of such popular fiction largely include youth, and this correspondence influences the publishing and distribution process to a great extent, which a critic criticizes by saying that rather than being a good writer, one needs to be a good salesman first.

The paper would analyze this shift in readership through Preeti Shenoy's *34 Bubblegums* and *Candies and Life Is What You Make It*. The paper would briefly look into the premises and attempt to establish what factors made them bestselling. Besides, assessing the reader's response to Shenoy's works, it would observe how these popular writers have reshaped author-reader relationship. The paper would determine how commercial fiction uses rather constructs



language to reach the 'fringe' readership and youngsters of the small towns, who do not prefer those outside 'popular non-commercial' category probably because of their language. Finally, by exploring the patterns and trends in authorship and readership, the paper would try to predict the transitions in publishing and readership in the days to come.

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Politicizing the Popular and Popularizing the Political: Interrogating the Making and Negotiations of Neo-liberal Female Subject in Anuja Chauhan's *The Zoya Factor*

Aneesha Puri

The urbane and metropolitan cities of India appear to beckon with their razzmatazz of swanky lifestyles, promises of upward social mobility, infinite possibilities and plethora of choices only if one is supposedly gung-ho about them. The female millennials who have been the beneficiaries of liberal feminist reforms acknowledge their ever-increasing dependence on the world of the internet where the mind-boggling explosion seemingly bridges barriers of highbrow and lowbrow culture and consequently, triggers a vast spectrum of conceptual possibilities and scope for critical engagement. Though feminists' most crucial combat has been to secure an equal footing with men while choosing, a schism seems to have opened between what is dominantly understood to be "academic feminism" and what is celebrated and vilified in the same breath as "popular feminism." The patriarchal institutions and their multiple manifestations have often re-invented themselves to cater to rapidly transitioning realities and ideologies in the wake of economic liberalisation and cultural globalisation and therefore, necessitate revamped counter-narratives with an even more nuanced understanding that can resist the majoritarian homogenised worldview with a thrust on neo-liberal subject-making.

Keeping the given socio-cultural climate in mind, this paper intends to draw attention to the emergence of new paradigms of female subjectivities in what has been touted as one of the most celebrated Indian "chick-lits," Anuja Chauhan's *The Zoya Factor* (2008). The idea is to critically scrutinise the discursive unease that accompanies the construction of heterosexual female subject that simultaneously incorporates and abandons feminism by analysing the representation of the eponymous protagonist as she juggles the often complicated and contradictory emotions while navigating the labyrinthine terrains that have been made accessible and rendered visible in the wake of a reality that is saturated with media images and popular cultural references. The attempt is to tease out potential avenues of resistances and moments of contradictions that rupture the broader narrative that charts the trajectory of Zoya's romance with the captain of the Indian Cricket Team, Nikhil Khoda, and the rhetoric of happily-ever-after in a somewhat Bollywood-like manner of modern equivalent of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

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Pushing Literacies Through Popular Reading: The Curious Case of Vishwajyoti Ghosh's *Delhi Calm*

Anupama Jaidev

The new emergent category of popular reading, which is not necessarily only fiction, deserves careful attention. This is the space populated by figures like Sir Ken Robinson, Yuval Noah Harari, Stephen Hawking, Stephen Grosz, and Andrew Solomon etc., experts from diverse fields and disciplines whose initial visibility and acceptance could in part also be attributed to their exponential success on social media platforms. Over the years these writers have produced tremendously popular, bestselling reads from fields such as education, history, theoretical physics and applied psychology, thus offering 'pop' versions of academic output in the said disciplines. This endeavor that some of these finest minds in their fields undertake to make diverse epistemes accessible to general readers, is by no means a mere commercially driven enterprise: it is about pushing what Stephen Hawking calls 'basic literacy' about various knowledge systems into the domain of popular imagination. Hawking's last book *Brief Answers to The Big Questions* is not technically a science book; it is a book about science. Its purpose clearly being to promote scientific literacy. The issue at hand is fairly simple: the space of popular creativity and entertainment can and ought to be used to push literacies, and there is nothing inferior about that objective.

The legendary success of Terry Deary, whose *Horrible Histories* series sold more than 25 million copies in 40 languages, is an instructive case in point. Deary made history about people and he made it accessible and fun for generations of young students. An Indian experiment which comes curiously close is Vishwajyoti Ghosh's attempt at storying a difficult bit of contemporary Indian history in *Delhi Calm*, a hugely successful graphic novel, with equal measures of élan and acumen. *Delhi Calm*, one could argue, is popular fiction with a difference: This is popular fiction that doesn't succumb to formulaic popular defaults; it pushes for an imperative social/historical literacy, and again, there is nothing inferior about that objective.

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Indian Erotic Fiction by Women Writers: An Explosion of Expression

Aparna Bhatt

Very often in reviewing the literature around us we tend to pass over popular fiction. Popular fiction has been marginalized by literary history, pushed to the dark, dusty corners of a reading space. Literary history has not been kind to popular fiction, and it has often treated it like a pariah, a subaltern figure in the realm of the mighty literary fiction so to say. Similarly, women's voices and their desires (sexual desires in particular) have commonly been branded as immoral and have always been blatantly disregarded. Just like popular fiction, women and their desires have been pushed to the silent periphery. And when the two meet, an explosion of expression happens so to say!



My paper will be dealing with selected Indian erotic fiction written by women writers. My aim is to analyze the articulation of female yearning, sexuality and desire in these pieces of popular fiction, the depiction of female gaze and the expression of female sexuality in a way that is free from judgment. I will also analyze social context, cultural traditions and the ambit of female sexual experiences across a range of class and age and go on to establish these erotic fictions penned by women as a vehicle for defiance against oppressive conditions and a site of exploration of female expression, empowerment and sex positive feminism. Some of the works I will be referring to are *Erotic Stories for Punjabis Widows* by Balli Kaur Jaiswal, *The Pleasure Principle – The Amaryllis Book of Erotic Stories*, edited by G.Sampath, *Panty* by Sangeeta Bandhyopadhyay and selected works of Dr. Sarojini Sahoo and the like.

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Sita as the Warrior of Mithila

How Indian Commercial Fiction Re-imagines the Epic Heroine

Archa Bhatnagar

What images does 'Sita' conjure in our minds? Sita---the devoted wife of Rama; the one born of the earth and who descended into the earth; the beautiful queen abducted by Ravana; the wife who underwent a fire ordeal to prove her chastity; the wife betrayed by her husband for upholding his dharma as the king; and so on. But would you imagine her as a muscular, agile, stick-wielding, knife-throwing warrior? Bestselling author Amish Tripathi's *Sita: The Warrior of Mithila* does precisely that - this book is a thrilling account of an adopted child, Sita, who goes on to become the prime minister and then a goddess.

In my paper, I look into how this 'strong' Sita is constructed and built into the genre of popular mythological fiction by a bestselling author, whose books have sold more than 4 million copies and have been translated into more than 19 languages. From the dutiful, enduring, self-sacrificing, chaste wife to the warrior of Mithila, Sita has come a long way. Amish spices up the sati and shakti hybrid in the image of Sita with the virangana or the superheroine paradigm to produce what could easily be the screenplay of a Bollywood 'masala' movie.

Focusing on Amish's Sita, my paper looks into aesthetics and stylistics of mythological fiction and attempts to examine how the publishing industry influences it, with online versions available for reading on smart phones and kindles in our 'free time' (Adorno) and with the social media playing a crucial part in book promotions and in finding newer audiences. Does the audience dictate the formula or the genre commands a certain power over the tastes of its audience? What is the culture industry's (Adorno) role in this? I shall attempt to answer all these questions in my paper.

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Feluda's Serialised and Celluloid Selves: A Tale of Literariness and Patrilineal Legacies

Arunabha Bose

I would like to see Feluda, the eponymous Bengali detective as a doppelganger of Satyajit Ray himself. Ray's suave and debonair detective has both Bengali and English antecedents; Nihar Ranjan Gupta's fictional detective, the hyper-masculine and anglicised Kiriti Roy, who comes closest to being a colonized replica of Holmes and a cultural variation on the Hard-Boiled detective, Narayan Sanyal's Sherlock Hebo, a decolonised parody of Conan Doyle's hero and of course Saradindu Bandyopadhyay's Byomkesh Bakshi were formative influences for Ray's private eye. However, it's possible to assume that Ray borrowed the fictional structure of a truth seeking and crime foisting trio from Hemendra Kumar Roy's literary canon whose amateur detective Jayanta is aided by a redoubtable assistant/narrator Manik and the comical and blundering Sundar Babu. At the same time Feluda's literary ancestry can be traced to Premendra Mitra's Ghanada, a gifted raconteur with a prodigious ability to spin yarn customised to satisfy a Bengali readership and entertain an audience exclusively composed of young boys. Mitra's unique generic fusion of the *bhromonkahini* (travel writing) with *rohosyomancho* (mystery and thriller) form a seminal influence on the generic evolution of the Feluda series. Feluda's anglicised last name Mitter being a corruption of the nativised Mitra. But, Feluda's chief literary antecedent has to be Sherlock Holmes; Feluda's precocious ability to retrospectively reconstruct personalities from the most commonplace objects owned by them, his puritanical and almost monastic existence transfixed in the unchanging/unchangeable status of an eternal bachelor are reminiscent of Holmes.

I would like to see Feluda's world as an exclusively androcentric world seen through the narrative lens of the adolescent male narrator, Feluda's nephew and sidekick Topshe. Ray is singularly preoccupied with the creation of a forbearing model of male virtuousness for the middle-class Bengali boy to emulate; I would like to see Feluda as a counter-pedagogue who instructs and moulds Topshe's adolescent mind fuelled with non-libidinal and purely academic desire with a demonstrative and exploratory approach to Anthropology, Musicology and History. Ray reconstitutes the young adult genre of Bengali detective fiction by shifting the structural elements of the narrative from a whodunit to a thriller because Feluda's evolution on the pages of Ray's family magazine *Sandesh* was in constant interaction with his celluloid reincarnation in *Sonar Kella* (*The Golden Fortress*) and *Joy Baba Felunath* (*The Mystery of the Elephant God*). The paper also explores how male homosociality in the exclusively Bhadrakol adventurism of Feluda is reinforced by the cultural ecosphere in which the stories unfold. The Sinha-Roy family in *The Royal Bengal Mystery*, the Ghosals in *The Mystery of the Elephant God* and the Duttas in *The Mysterious Tenant* who make up Feluda's clientele form an exclusively androcentric world insulated from femininity in which ageing patriarchs serve as custodians of a chequered family history and colonial legacies imported into Calcutta, the erstwhile capital of British India.

I would also like to see Feluda's birth on the pages of *Sandesh*, the family magazine started for young adult readers (read boys) by his grandfather, Upendrakishor, passed onto his gifted father, Sukumar who remains the greatest exponent of the nonsense verse in Bengali and



revived by Satyajit for his young son Sandip as a patrilineal legacy in itself bequeathed to male inheritors within the Ray family.

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Popular Literature as the Second-Class Citizen to Classical literature

Arushi Brotia

In my essay, I have drawn a parallel between the position of Popular literature in the literary world to that of females and the dominated and celebrated Classical literature to that of males. The imbalance in the sexes existing from man's first disobedience to Legend Literatures- women are blamed for the loss of paradise and reason behind huge wars such as Trojan War or *Mahabharata*. Although blamed for the cause yet remain as mere supporting characters with their counter sex. Hence never getting their due, just like popular literature.

The culmination of my paper is a discussion on *The Vinci Code* by Dan Brown. Hegemony is prevalent in religion as well. The existence of Mary Magdalene as the wife of Jesus undermines His independent supremacy as she's frequently termed as a repentant prostitute and Jesus' association with her attaches a "sinner" tag to Jesus himself. Just as sex sells, popular literature sells. And the commodity is always the women in both fields. And hence, beauty is very loosely etched with female characters and their valour overshadowed by the same. Popular culture presents these female identities with high beauty standards (Draupadi and Cleopatra both as fair skinned women, when in reality this belief is contradictory) just because it is more appealing. Interestingly, one path where both the genres intersect is the representation of women – either deification or domestication of them. I support this statement by picking up female characters such as Ammachi or Nalini in Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* and Kannaki in Tamil's classical literature *Cillapatikaram*.

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Indian Popular Fiction

Who is Writing for Whom? The Key Connection Between Authorship and Readership

Ayush Chaudhary

In Indian Popular Fiction, there is everything by everyone for almost every strata of the society. However, we can still find some patterns by shifting our perspectives and applying correlations supported by reasons. The classification depends upon which criteria we choose. Identity of the author plays a key role in authorship. The same person can be a youngster, female, economically and socially backward at a same point of view. It depends upon what identity an author decides for himself. Nowadays, it is interesting to witness a totally reverse side of this trend. We are



witnessing writings with lead characters different from the identity of the author.

Another target of any author is values and beliefs. Authors try to exhibit their beliefs to a particular target audience. In India, the main target audience is the youth which gets influenced by the views presented through the medium of lead characters. It is interesting to see fiction works from the perspective of subaltern classes gaining more popularity in India. Corporate influence and Globalization had a major impact in Indian Popular Fiction in the past decade. Several fiction writers try to be pragmatist and strategist in their fictions. For such themes, a popular reader base lies in working class, business enthusiast and youngsters.

In the land of three thirty million Gods, spiritualism and mythology is something which spares almost no one. From children to older generation, everyone gets enthusiastic for the mysticism they produce. The readers who otherwise hide behind their veil of ignorance when it comes to raw mythological texts suddenly feel 'enlightened' after reading such themes. The authors being aware of their mindset never fail to disappoint them.

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Linguistic Parameters Compromised While Placing Dalit Autobiographies Within Global Popular Literature

Charu Arya

Autobiographies have always been popular amongst thoughtful literature readers. Truthful narrations by writers expressing their personal experiences become popular soon. But that's not enough in the global world. What is now needed is that they can serve tasteful content!

With the changing norms nowadays, autobiographies are not written but they are produced. Readers become important and are targeted as buyers. Many publishers do not publish autobiographies which attack the social system. Sharan Kumar Limbale for his autobiography, *The Outcaste* found himself in a similar state, when he was turned down by many publishers because he refused to change the truth and mould incidents according to the publishers. They wanted him to make it 'Readable!'. Om Prakash Valmiki realized while writing *Joothan* that it would be immoral for him to pen down those abusive words in his autobiography, words that he had heard throughout his life.

Language barriers created because of these circumstances lead to voice barriers. If the truth needs to be written, the language has to be harsh. If there is influence of constraints of class, caste, social norms and rightful conduct then autobiographies cannot bring out the truth of lived realities.

Translation of these autobiographies into English language is another commercial exercise. The urgent need to increase readers and to make it widely known and acceptable, these autobiographies came under the lens of 're-revision'. Dialect used and expressions narrated are revisited so that they do not become reason for any, so called, wrong opinions! Autobiographies



represent truth not fiction, but to make them part of popular literature, there are compromised at the level of language, tone, vocabulary and content. This globalization of autobiographies has decreased their indigenous identities and has started establishing them as products which should be 'saleable'! In the present paper discussion will lead to understand the complexity faced while containing honesty towards readers of autobiographies, where their originality should not be reflected as a danger to the literature canon.

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From Canon to Canaan: The Question of Canonical Literature as Breeding Ground for Elitism – A study of Suresh Joshi's Gujarati novellas

Chirag Trivedi

The role of literature in civil society as an informal roster of socio-cultural processes is an intriguing arena of study for exploring the complex web of relationships between literature, its reader, its author and the cultural context as well as for investigating into construction of identity and shaping of the society.

Literature created in Gujarat undoubtedly would form an integral part of the shaping of the mind of Gujarat as a society. This paper attempts finding responses to the question of in what ways the canonical literature written and published in Gujarati language associates or disassociates with the readers and on account of what value statements. In this regards, what value statements do the canonical works of Gujarati literature make, whether these value statements provide a sense of relatability, connection and kinship to the readers form the heart of this research.

Through detailed literature survey, study of theoretical framework and considering selected literary works as primary texts to provide empirical ground for this research this paper attempts highlighting elitist implications in the works of Suresh Joshi – a celebrated litterateur in Gujarati. The paper assesses if high-browism in Suresh Joshi's novellas was a political device and his modernism was an attempt of creating an imposed 'uppishness' in intellectuality of the Gujarati literati through obscurity in his writings.

This research evaluates canon formation processes, critiques the class that is called 'canonical' and discusses whether the clandestine attempt of abstraction of literary language or modernity in style becomes conscious or unconscious self-built hegemony, whether open-endedness and oblivion in the means of expression are understandable for the 'people', if striving for experiment and innovation that made it hardly reachable, make literature reserved only for those who are deeply within what literature is and what literature should aspire to be. The paper interrogates Modernism in literature as a notoriously elitist affair.

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Feluda's Rendezvous with Heirlooms and Tradition: A Contextualized Reading of the Detective Thrillers of Satyajit Ray

Debalina Pal

The success of the amateur detective in the classic 'whodunit' format, (canonized through repetitive practice by the extremely popular authors during the Golden Age of western detective fiction) lies in his intimate knowledge of the moral and ethical codes of behaviour that govern the particular social group represented in the narrative. Through his feverish activity, the detective espouses 'right behaviour', condemns the offenders, thereby enforcing the code of ideal masculinity, which is framed by a collective consciousness indulging in self-fashioning to a socially approved degree but also feeling suspicious of anybody who does not fit in or happen to observe widely different codes.

Satyajit Ray's detective fiction, coming years after the prolific Golden Age, shares some of the socio-ethical concerns of the 'whodunit'. Like its Western (dominantly British) predecessors, his narratives are self-invested with a didactic responsibility of preaching, by example, a set of values, ethical codes, ideal behaviour, appearance and ways of living held dear by the society represented through the stock characters.

This paper attempts to locate the fantastically unruffled, tranquil and self-assuredly quaint world of Feluda (the detective persona of Ray's stories) in a dialectical relationship with the tumultuous socio-political and economic context in which a majority of these detective thrillers were conceived. From this perspective, it will be argued that the idealism professed in these stories, chiefly through the impeccable persona of the detective, is in fact affected and motivated by the author's troubled sense of being ambushed by a vortex of extremely unsettling events. Textual veneration for significant material and cultural wealth, often conceptualized in the form of heirlooms and familial legacies, along with penetrative study and segregation of the desirable and undesirable social types, constitute Ray's contribution to the cultural politics of the Bengali middle-class who were facing major disillusionment in post-independent, post-Nehruvian India, and waking up to nightmares of various kinds, ranging from domestic crisis to international border wars.

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Literary Fiction as Popular Fiction: Reading Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* as a Bridge Between High Culture and Mass Society

Deblina Rout

Popular commercial fiction in India has more often than not, been viewed as unworthy of literary attention, and is often cast aside as lacking the moral assertion that is the hallmark of the highbrow of literature. Jhumpa Lahiri's anthology, *Interpreter of Maladies*, has been one of



those landmark works which has negated this assertion. It won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award in the year 2000 and has sold over 15 million copies worldwide; Oprah Winfrey included it in her Top Ten Book List. These statistics show how the canon of popular literature is not utterly irrelevant and can be moulded to cater to both mass society, and high culture.

The nine stories included in the collection bring up motifs of loss and belonging; the stories are about the lives of Indians and Indian Americans who are caught between their roots and the "New World." These stories focus on the lives and cultures of ordinary individuals in transition, echoing the ethos of dislocation and the fragility of emotional bonding. All the while, amidst its melancholic overtones, the collection dwells upon the hope for a better future, a tomorrow that seems promising. In this thematic concern, it mirrors its targeted readership: the emerging urban middle class, fraught with flaws, yet ambitious enough to dream high.

Adorned with a stunning prose, which neither lingers unnecessarily nor is tight enough to demand heavy intellectual investment, the stories are written for the layman, in his language. The characters echo the flesh and blood dilemmas of the readers, reflecting the flavour of popular fiction. Yet, the literary value of the book cannot be underestimated. Thus, the aim of the paper is to address the book as popular fiction mingled with literary merit.

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Versions of *Thakurmar Jhuli* and Bengali Identities: A Study of the Changing Bengali Society through the Popular Bangla Childrens' Tales

Debosmita Paul Lahiri

The Bengal region – the region lying on the eastern border of the Indian sub-continent, has gone through dynamic changes over the ages. The fluidity of the political boundaries as well as of the identities of the people has resulted in these changes. These shifts in Bengali identity can be traced since the establishment of the Janapadas until the recent times, with the Partitions of Bengal – in 1905, 1947 and 1971 – playing a crucial role in the transformations the identities have had to go through.

Thakurmar Jhuli (Grandmother's Bag of Tales) is a popular title under which several versions of Bangla children's stories have been published. The first and the original version, *Thakurmar Jhuli: Banglar Rupkatha*, (Grandmother's Bag of Tales: Fantasy Tales from Bengal) was published in 1907 by Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar. Mitra Majumdar through his anthology wanted to provide the urban bourgeoisie children the taste of the forgotten Bangla oral stories emanating from rural Bengal. *Thakurmar Jhuli* was the Swadeshi (indigenous) answer to the British/European children's stories that were being fed to the nineteenth century bourgeoisie children in urban Bengal.



The popularity of the anthology was such that in the later years it led to a spurt in the publication of several printed versions and audio-video versions of the folk tales for children under the same title. These collections, like the original, include fantasy tales about young princes fighting demons, demons transforming themselves into human beings, children being transformed into flowers, and the most enthralling of them all – several categories of ghosts. Therefore, one assumes that the fantasy tales, included in the versions of *Thakurmar Jhuli*, also represent the identity-politics of the Bengal region. These collections are an important resource to study the transformations the Bengali society has gone through. The proposed paper attempts to study the available versions of *Thakurmar Jhuli* to trace the changes the Bengali society has gone through.

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Contemporizing Mythology: A Critical Study of Amish Tripathi's Works

Dipanvita Sehgal & Naresh K. Vats

Myths are a community's legacies that are passed on over generations. They are open to interpretation, re-interpretation, re-creation, and review. This gives myths a transient quality and the narrators and writers of myths a license to revitalize them and change who the reader sees as hero, villain, reliable, un-reliable, good, bad, deity and human. Literary retellings of myths often focus on specific characters and tell their story from a perspective that may or may not have been told in a dominant narrative. The retelling of myth also contemporizes it in so far as it includes the contemporary socio-cultural sensibilities in it.

The paper shall focus on how certain modern retellings of ancient Indian myths contemporize the context so that the reader is no longer reading the epic or a moral fable but rather an interesting novel that serves as a constant companion during lunch breaks or during metro rides. Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy that focuses solely on the life and actions of Shiva as a human, his Ram Chandra Series with focus of one book on Ram's tale, another only on Sita's perspective and the third that is due sometime this year from the point of view of Raavan are but a few examples of writings that make a shift from the normative narrative of epics. Devdutt Pattanaik's books on Indian myth, Anand Neelakantan's partisanship of the so-called villains from the epics, Kavita Kane's and Anuja Chandramouli's excavation of the minor women characters from myth and epic, Amruta Patil's subversive graphic texts that delve deep into the Mahabharata and the Puranas, Samhita Arni's *The Missing Queen*, which takes the end of the Ramayana further, show their readers how retelling of myth lays emphasis on contemporizing it and making it relatable in the present context. A major part of making re-creations relatable is of relieving characters from the roles of Devas and Danavas.

The paper proposes to focus on the fiction of Amish Tripathi and engage with the contextualization of characters according to the contemporary times for contemporary readers. In the retelling of the story of Shiva, Ram and Sita the author creates humans who are not invincible, incorruptible and are prone to folly. This shift from an exalted position of God to the



status of human charters a new character in a new light for the readers. This moves away from the brahmanical, patriarchal dominance in the Indian epics and system as Badri Narayan states in his work *Honour, Violence and Conflicting Narratives: A Study of Myth and Reality* (Narayan 22). These are a few issues that the paper proposes to discuss.

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Orijit Sen's *The River of Stories*: The 'Politics' of the 'Popular' in Indian Fiction

Elizabeth Varkey

Orijit Sen's masterpiece, *The River of Stories* (1994) was published by the NGO, Kalpavriksh and partially funded by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, under the National Environment Awareness Campaign. However, the same government seems to have played a hand in clamping down this graphic narrative that exposed some unpalatable truths behind the construction of big dams, environmental degradation and tribal displacement in India. The graphic novel was loosely based on the Narmada River Valley Project which had faced harsh criticism in the early 1990s from various quarters, be it the local activists such as those spearheading the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) or writers, thinkers, ecologists and human rights supporters all over the globe.

This paper seeks to examine the politics behind some works getting recognized as 'popular' in the Indian fiction market while others are systematically erased not only from bookshops but also from popular, public memory. When Sarnath Banerjee's heftily priced graphic novel *Corridor*, set in the urban locales of Delhi and Calcutta, was published by the publishing giant, Penguin in 2004, it was received with great fanfare and hailed as the first graphic novel on the Indian literary scene. In the process Orijit Sen's graphic novel published almost a decade ago, was conveniently sidelined, raising crucial questions regarding what makes something 'popular' and the 'invisible' forces responsible behind the process of 'popularizing' certain narratives and effacing others. *The River of Stories* has long been out of print and can be accessed only through popular online resources like SCRIBD, thus highlighting the growing importance of alternative routes offered by technology when big publishing houses turn a blind eye to works of literary and sociological merit that ought to reach the masses.

In this work which seems to be way ahead of its times, both in terms of 'form'—the graphic novel—and 'content'—ecological crisis and the need for sustainable development models; Sen also attempts to break away from the tropes and conventions of comic-storytelling in India established by Amar Chitra Katha (ACK) – described as “the classic popular” by Nandini Chandra in her detailed analysis of ACK.

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The Reader has moved on. Long live the Reader

Giraj M Sharma

William Dalrymple teaches me history; Ashok Banker narrates the Ramayana to me and the likes of Chetan Bhagat and Anuja Chauhan define contemporary Indian society to me. So, what if all this does not make me a Suitable Boy (apologies, Mr Sheth). I am socially upwardly mobile and am content.

The times have changed and have changed dramatically. Not just the millennials but a large section of our population live a life that is inordinately diverse from how it used to be a decade back. Newspapers are a drag, magazines too boring and films are passé. TV is virtually dead as people now binge on a web-series at a place and time of their choice. They do not want to own a car but hail a cab from Uber and they do not want to cook but order food through Zomato. Most of the young people have been brought up by over-indulgent parents because of whom they feel 'entitled' in every which way. One may scorn at them for being highly opinionated, but it just doesn't bother them.

Now, if everything about young people has changed so much – why should they stay fixed on their choices of fiction. It is time that the so-called purists of literature concede legitimacy to popular, mainstream Indian writing. We have, perhaps, crossed the threshold where the reader ceases to be just a 'reader' and has metamorphosed in to a 'consumer' wanting fiction to be written the way she wants to 'consume' it. And why just fiction – every art form is catering to a larger, common denominator. The lines distinguishing 'art house' cinema from commercial cinema have blurred. Traditional designs are being reinvented to modern tastes and what was trashed as kitsch today finds a place in leading designers' contemporary fashion line ups.

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Making of a 'Millennial' Hero: Reading Amish Tripathi's *The Immortals of Meluha*

Indrani Das Gupta & Shashi Prava Tigga

Mythic retellings and recreations have become the new idiom of contemporary times and it has taken the world publishing market by storm. The world-wide popularity of mythic narratives has also changed the Indian publishing scenario, so much so that even the Western influenced genres like science fiction, fantasy novels, spy-fictions, and thrillers written by Indian authors in recent times have all drawn from the vast resources of Indian myths to explore notions of heroism, power and identity.

This paper examines the immense popularity of Amish Tripathi's first book of the Shiva Trilogy titled *The Immortals of Meluha* (2010) amongst the Indian readers by reflecting on the re-visionings and re-interpretations of the mythological trope of Shiva in all areas of popular culture. The paper explores the changing iconography, character and representation of Shiva in popular fiction and culture against the larger popular depictions of Shiva in Kalighat paintings, sculptures, calendar art and other representative art forms. The paper discusses this representation of Tripathi's Shiva in a narrative that interrogates myths and its relevance within the contemporary global world.



Myth and fantasy while being understood as 'nowhere' and often thought of as illustrations of divine truths have also been classified as symbolic of 'somewhere', encapsulating the historical, political and cultural realities of our own day. This paper attempts to read this mythical trope of Shiva in Tripathi's fiction as having emerged out of the contested debates of climate change, environmental pollution, habitat extinction, migration and the capitalist ideology impinging on the natural and the supernatural to safeguard its own interests. Tripathi's fiction is identified in this paper as being more than a publishing gimmick to position it as a narrative that explores, examines and interprets a vision of change. In its social criticism of the geo-political realities of the day, this fiction embodies a history that is different and so articulates a vision whereby an ordinary human can become a God. Resisting against the mainstream political, historical and cultural systems, the paper examines the mythological motif of Shiva within the changing paradigms of the narrative of the 'making of a millennial hero'. The paper reads this 'making of the millennial hero' as a figure that questions authority and instead, charts its own alternative history. Shiva's identity as a God is transformed to situate him within the social realities of a marginalized subject. And in so doing, this novel re-writes a religious myth to initiate a popular understanding of what it means to be human at a time that Amitav Ghosh has dubbed as "The Great Derangement".

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Pangs of Diasporic Existence of Glocals in *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri

Ishrat Fatma & Shivani Vashist

Writers of the Indian Diaspora acclaim great importance and value because of the theories propounded by their writings. Language and cultures are transformed when the expatriates started living in host society leaving behind their home society. These writers are obsessed with the memory of their native land, an everlasting nostalgia, providing them relief as they try to locate themselves in new cultures. Their protagonists, in their effort to negotiate with the new culture struggle hard in the quest of their lost identity and attempt to restore the dignity of their culture. The immigrants, facing the trauma resulted from identity crisis, lead a divided life between the host land and the homeland. Their dislocation and displacement from their native land and starting lives in an unknown land, made them harp upon memories. The sense of homelessness which every immigrant suffers is genuine and intense.

Jhumpa Lahiri, born to Indian parents in London and raised in Rhodes Island, has made a deep impression on the literary works of the 'Alienation' and her novels honestly depict the issues of her own cultural location in West Bengal in India, her displacement from her land of origin to London and again from London to Rhodes depicts the true picture of expatriates' experience. Lahiri's characters move to United States in the pursuance of economic growth.

The present paper would attempt to find out the protagonists' complex experience of migrancy involving both cultural hybridization and cultural assimilation. This study displays the expatriate's sensibility of immeasurable human loneliness lost in nostalgia and their sense of uprootedness resulting into a kind of schizophrenia- "a body without a heart, a heart without a body."



All this will be done by exploring the important fictional work of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, presenting the traumas of the entire diaspora and the pangs of the alienated human psyche. The dispossessed personality's search for identity and cultural dislocation suffered by the diaspora people will be analysed in this paper.

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Role of Trauma in the Making of a Nation

Jayashree Hazarika

Vikram Seth is one of the leading contemporary writers of Indian English literature. In his memoir *Two Lives*, one of problems dealt by Seth is the trauma of separation. This paper shall deal with the role of trauma in the making of a nation. In Seth's *Two Lives* we come across the character of Aunt Henny who faces the trauma of separation due to the Holocaust. In the role of making a nation, trauma plays a very significant part. A nation's history marked by traumatic events form a dominant and looming presence in the memories and the imagination of the population related to it. In literature the trauma of the nation is enacted through the trauma of the family. In *Two Lives*, Vikram Seth shows the trauma of the Jewish population through his great aunt Henny Greda Caro. The family of Henny can be seen as a metaphor for the nation that becomes a site for trauma as well as the fragmentation that occurs in the wake of an event like the Holocaust. Vikram Seth subtly resists the events of the Holocaust by showing the trauma associated with it. He gives a detailed account of how his aunt Henny's family, her mother and sister Lola, who were Jews, would have been treated in Germany during the Holocaust.

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Ravana and the Unveiling of the Abject: A Critical Study of Anand Neelakantan's *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished*

Kanika Lakra

The mythological figure of Ravana has been looked upon as an embodiment of evil by traditional Hindu morality. It is indoctrinated through various forms of art and social practices that Rama represents all that is good and Ravana stands as his foil. The function that such rigid formulations perform is that the dominant needs to construct the 'Other' in order to absolve itself of all its unacceptable parts. A particular culture, consciously or unconsciously, tends to push the evil of an entire community upon certain individuals or groups. The boundary between self and the other is annihilated as the traits one cannot accept in oneself, one projects into an 'Other', such as Ravana. The contemporary re-tellings of the epic in their diverse interpretations



challenge the evil embodiment of Ravana, which in turn will disrupt the process of identity formation and social order. It will create, in the words of Julia Kristeva, spaces of abjection where “meaning collapses”. The present paper aims to study Anand Neelakantan's *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished: The Story of Ravana and His People* (2012) in the light Kristeva's formulation of the abject. The paper also seeks to analyze the social process by means of which Ravana is demonized.

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Indian Chick Lit: The Commercial or Literary Canon?

Karan Tekwani

“Indian bookstores these days are stocking up on a new kind of English-language novels in which twenty something urban women put their careers first, ridicule arranged marriages and wrestle with weight gain.” -Rama Lakshmi in The Washington Post

The paper is an enquiry into this popular emerging genre of 'chick-lit' in India. The paper will explore reasons that lead to the rise this new writing style, incidents that offered rich plots to these literary pieces and socio-economic factors that contributed to the production of its wide reader base in India. The paper will also try to understand the features that resemble or distinguish this popular genre from the high English literary canon.

The paper will interrogate these ideas through a close study of Anuja Chauhan's *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* (2013). The paper will examine elements that made the book a commercial juggernaut and explain its quick adaptation into a prime time Indian television daily soap. The paper will endeavor to compare Chauhan's novel to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. In this process the paper will posit the question: Can a popular 'chick lit' survive the onslaughts of time and enter the literary canon? What then is the qualifying factor that differentiates a popular fiction from the high literary canon? Is it possible that Chauhan's novel enjoys the similar literary status as attributed to *Pride and Prejudice* two centuries down the road? The paper will also attempt to register the essential components required in making of a popular Indian 'chick-lit'. The paper will suggest that this popular category be read as latent feminist literary fiction. The paper will also investigate the various aspects of appropriating the western brand of 'chick-lit' within the Indian market.

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Quissa Tota Maina Ka: Rise of Popular Literature in Colonial North India

Kuntal Tamang

It is a well-established fact that the industrialization of Print in the nineteenth century Europe



led to a decrease in printing costs and an increase in readership. Since costs decreased and demand increased, books gradually became cheaper and the tremendous expansion of the book market through cheap paperbacks became an international phenomenon. This led to what is known as a 'reading revolution'. The introduction of the new publishing formats was accompanied by the rise of romance, spy fiction, detective fiction, and science fiction. One could say that there is a direct connection between the expansion of the book market and the rise of popular literature.

In light of the above formulations my paper will discuss the industrialization of book production in colonial India and the rise of popular literature in the two north-Indian languages, Hindi and Urdu. The paper will specifically look at the Naval Kishor Press of Lucknow (est. 1858), the largest Indian owned press and publishing house in the subcontinent at the time and will analyse the role that it played in creating and feeding the demand for Quissas and Dastans, the most popular genres of 19th century north India.

The paper will conclude with a brief discussion of *Chandrakanta*, the first best-selling serial novel in Hindi (1892), and its author Devkinandan Khatri, who used the income from his novel to found his own press, Lahiri Press (est. 1898) that churned out a continuous stream of fiction and became one of the foremost commercial presses in Benares.

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Social Media, Online Publishing and Democratization of Fiction Writing

Manjari Chaturvedi

Defying the high-brow fortress like business of writing and publication, the spurt in online publication on social media has turned into a massive phenomenon in the last decade. A new chapter in the history of the publication industry, the hitherto hallowed term 'published' writer is now within the reach of anyone with an idea, a laptop, and free time. Plenty of online writing platforms like Nanowrimo encourage and even promote ordinary people to pen down the stories within them providing them with group support and even mentorship.

What drives these writers to tell their stories? Is it a desire for posterity which is conflicted in the era of instant fame when even the list of top ten titles is updated daily on online shopping platforms like Amazon, or a need to express their creativity? What is the journey of an online published writer like? Is it similar to the proverbial poverty, multiple rejections and then a chance break that propelled famous authors to bestseller lists or is writing now merely a hobby to be pursued in part-time?

In my paper, I will look at the whole phenomenon of online publication of popular fiction in India from the perspective of the writer who seeks to simply express an untold story out there. Through personalized interviews with selected published authors both struggling and those who have gained a reasonable foothold and readership I endeavour to gauge the extent of democratization that the online publishing world in India promises to offer.

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Subverting the Genre: An Exploration of Kishwar Desai's Detective Novels

Mariyam Parveen

The twisting, turning and thrilling world of detective fiction is a widely celebrated form of crime fiction. It started in the west with Willkie Collins, Edgar Allan Poe and Agatha Christie and the genre has its emergence in Indian literature through Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay's *Byomkesh Bakhshi* and Satyajit Ray's *Feluda*. But the detective fiction written by women writers is a new form in this field. From the 19th century till the present time detective fiction seems to be written by men, for men, about men but in 21st-century Indian women writers are coming to the fore with female detectives as central character in their works thus subverting the existing notion that women are not intelligent enough to solve crime cases. Their stories have set the Indian literary canon in a new direction. Writers like Kishwar Desai and Deepanjana Pal have used this genre as a vehicle to explore some pivotal issues of women in more detail.

The present paper endeavors to analyze the degraded status of women and to expose the different ways in which they are subjected to violence. Bringing to the surface the depiction of various issues of female foeticide, rape and commodification of female body, this paper will intensively scrutinize Kishwar Desai's detective trilogy *Witness the Night*, *Origins of Love* and *The Sea of Innocence*. Desai started her career as a Journalist but her rage against the increasing violence against women in the country prompted her to be a writer. She has tightly woven some of the nefarious gender issues in the thread of detective plot. The paper also intends to examine the importance and place of feminist detective fiction in Indian literary oeuvre.

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The Calcutta Chromosome and *Circle of Reason*- An Amalgamation of Science and Suspense; of Known and Unknown Trajectories

Meetu Bhatia Kapur

It is argued that superficial descriptions of the natural, human or built environment are not enough. An explanation and understanding of geographic phenomena and an insight into 'why' questions are needed to make investigation become process driven. The approach to these questions can be divided into two majors of behavioral geography- scientific and positivist and phenomenological – humanist. These both are united in believing that 'we' must understand the ways in which human beings come to understand the geographical world in which they live and that such understanding is best approached from the level of the individual human being.

Amitav Ghosh undoubtedly takes the lead in such a contemporary form of writings. He is, in fact, most involved in the quest for narrative significance, in trying to find a place for himself and another human being in the universe. He is interested in unraveling existing (Meta) narratives and understanding the ways in which the roles are narrated. It is this quest which is covered on



a wide canvas in his works. From magic realism, rituals, occultism to science, Ghosh emerges as a major storyteller of the world. All his stories come out of his life and experiences. These are the stories that emanate from and deal with the stuff of humanity- human yearning, emotions, all spiritual yearnings that create humanity.

The focus of the paper would cover the novels- *The Circle of Reason* (1986) and *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996). In *The Circle of Reason*, he introduces weird and bizarre happenings and achieves a remarkable original synthesis of two different concepts of time whereas in the novel *The Calcutta Chromosome*, sub-titled as *A Novel of Fever, Delirium, and Discovery*: it has metaphors and motifs used in plenty. Time is used as an important element along with myth, superstition, science and grandma's tale combining to make an entire novel.

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Nrittya-Nattya: The Text and its Performance

Mihika Banerjee

This paper attempts to explore the interface of politics and aesthetics. It does so by looking into the genre of Nrittya-Nattya ; whose English transliteration would be 'dance drama'. However, this paper wishes to interrogate into such translation/s. That is, it wishes to draw out the techniques and grammar that define, and probably distinguish, Nrittya-Nattya from other literary and performatory genres. The Nrittya-Nattya is said to be conceptualized and cultivated by Rabindranath Tagore, in Bengal, in the nineteenth-twentieth century. Thus, an exploration of this art form propels us towards an interrogation of the social, cultural and political conditions that births this particular genre of performance. Tagore justifies the advent of Nrittya-Nattya in his *Sangeetchinta* (1966) whereby he exclaims both poetry and music to hold prodigious power for aesthetics, since both are capable of transcending grammar. Tagore through his disdain towards grammar consequently inscribes poetry, music, performance into a common platform of Nrittya-Nattya. This paper would probe into the possibilities and problems of such hybridizing genres.

This paper wishes to delve into the formative and performative aspects of Nrittya-Nattya. It wishes to situate this genre a) among other literary works, especially those of Tagore himself. Within the plethora of Tagore's works, consisting of numerous novels, poetry, short stories, plays; Nrittya-Nattya is recognized to hold a distinct and different aesthetical, political and literary essence. Both in form and content Tagore is seen to valorize this prodigy; b) among other performatory genres, Nrittya-Nattya can be seen especially congenial to the Musicals that too emerged during the same time in America and Britain. A parallel reading of these genres may help reveal the intricacies and intimacies of local and global powers that lead to the production of a certain kind of (aesthetical) knowledge. This paper wishes to draw out the nuances and negotiations of these interactions.

This paper wishes to probe into the text and its performance, in the multiple sense of these terms, which converges within a genre especially that of Nrittya-Nattya.

This paper would be qualitative in its methodology, that primarily involves critical appraisal of various literary and performatory texts. Ancillary readings will be used for secondary references.

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Romance is not Dead: Long Live Mills and Boon!

Mona Sinha

The Mills and Boon romances were popular across English speaking countries and continents much before the term chick-lit gained currency in contemporary times. More than a century old, they continue to thrive and are published from various parts of the world, including India. In a world that is increasingly becoming glocal, several writers from India have also been recruited to write about the Indian experience. As its readership faces challenges from new genres of the popular as well as other forms of media and entertainment, it would be imperative to examine the role of Mills and Boon in catering to a large section of women readers and its role in the present. While popular fiction has now gained sufficient respectability to create its own niche, women's romances such as Mills and Boon continue to be dismissed as inferior and unintellectual. Janice Radway rightly argues in her seminal work, *Reading the Romance* (1984) that the romance novel is not to be dismissed as just escapist fiction for women, but critical attention must be given to the complex social event of reading it. The present paper shall examine the raging popularity of M&B amongst Indian women in the seventies and the eighties, the sisterhood that it created and offer insights into its survival in the new millennium.

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The Palace of Illusions: Redefining *Mahabharata* in Popular Fiction

Mridula Sharma

The Mahabharata is often described as a living text with digressions into countless other subjects that permeates contemporary thought and spirit. In the original canonised Sanskrit edition, having several later interpolations for the perpetuation of myths and archetypes related to specific clans, the Mahabharata war is shown as the inevitable result of a sequence of events that serve to mark the end of an epoch for a new beginning of the human race. Serialised adaptations and popular fiction often modify the original text. One such text is *The Palace of Illusions*, which attempts to provide a glimpse into the narrative from Draupadi's perspective. The first-person narration fully exposes Draupadi in her flawed self: pride, jealousy, vanity and stubbornness pervade her mind. Her reaction to the self-destruction of 'her' palace in Indraprastha just before Duryodhan comes to claim it highlights her vanity despite the trajectory of events in the assembly hall that lead to her humiliation. Her incessant obsession with the palace, which essentially stands for materialism, contradicts her refusal of Dhritarashtra's third boon. Draupadi's relationship with Dhristadyumna is dextrously displayed by Divakaruni: their refusal to leave each other's hand at the time of their birth, thereby forcing Drupada to accept her as well, and their subsequent interactions help to underline the intensity of bonding that they share. Interestingly, Divakaruni builds up her plot in support of the supposition that Draupadi constantly pines for Karna. The ending, wherein both the lovers unite in heaven, is probably constructed to be in congruence with popular fiction's tendency to project a 'happy ending'. This paper is a re-reading of the classic



Mahabharata story as depicted in *The Palace of Illusions* to examine the characterisation of the narrative in popular domain with an interrogation of idealised femininity.

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The Politics of the Dalit Popular: Reading *Bhimayana* as a Counter-Discursive Narrative

Mukesh Kumar Bairva

Popular culture is a deeply contested, contentious and dynamic concept. In Stuart Hall's words, it is a constant site of tension and struggle. It signifies constantly shifting relations of domination and subordination. It acquires more complexity in a caste society like India. It is really difficult to differentiate between the popular culture and the dominant culture in a Brahmanical society because culture in the Brahmanical society is inflected by caste. The paper explores *Bhimayana* as a counter-discursive narrative. It reflects how culture, power and narrative are interwoven. Unlike other Indian graphic texts, *Bhimayana* uses tribal *Pradhan Gond* art to narrate the life of Bhim Rao Ambedkar. The logic behind using tribal art is to foreground the common experience of the two subaltern groups in India. The tribal artists do not confine the characters in boxes unlike in the conventional graphic texts. Their art is embedded in the everyday life of the common masses. Their imagery is largely drawn from nature. By representing Ambedkar as a Dalit hero, whose harrowing experience in caste society stands for the discrimination faced by majority of India's 170 million Dalits; the text aims to create a Dalit epic, so to speak. The title of the book entails counter-discursive resonance and enunciation. It counters the great Hindu epic the *Ramayana* which elides Dalit presence. As a subaltern popular narrative, *Bhimayana* is a radical pedagogic intervention because it has potential to reinscribe the Indian popular imagination by ushering the caste question in the 'secularized' Indian public sphere.

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Revisiting *Ramayan* in Amish Tripathi's 'Popular' Space

Nisha Misra

Last few years have witnessed the coming-of-age of the step-child of the traditional literary canon—the 'Popular Fiction'. Making its foray into the established tradition has been and still is an ongoing struggle for it, a war in its own right. The subalternity of the Popular Fiction becomes evident in the reluctance to even incorporate it in the syllabi or select it as a topic of research. No wonder its journey from demanding acceptance to commanding one has resulted in the creation of its own space, its own tradition. One such 'Popularist' owning this space is Amish Tripathi. An alumnus of Indian Institute of Management Calcutta with fourteen years of service in the



finance industry, Amish's non-literary background does not become obvious in his work[d]s. Among the swarm of 'Popularists' he has secured for himself a respectable position owing to the typical Amishian tadka that he gives to the established mythology. He has been immensely successful in reinstating in the common psyche the popular myths that define Hindu culture and tradition. Be it the Shiva Trilogy or the Ram Chandra Series, each transports the reader to a familiarly different world. Very smartly he has lured, in particular, the young Indian minds smitten by the 'unIndian' to fall in love with the Gods, the Kings, and the Queens. Unfollowing the trodden path Amish beautifully recreates the ancient divine beings. The present paper, thus, seeks to explore the Popular Space through Amish's rendition of *Ramayan* in the Ram Chandra Series.

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Dexter's Design: Crime, Morality and Violence in Dexter

Neha Singh

The depiction of crime, whether explored through writing in the print medium or through other media, has enjoyed an extremely high demand in the market for at least two centuries, maybe even more. Crime writing in the form of novels and short stories, and also newspaper reportage, entertained readers through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and continues to do so. However, the introduction of the sound film in the 1920s and the popularization of the television in the 1950s and 60s took the representation of crime to another level. What had earlier been imagined and mentally constructed from the pages of printed texts became immediately available to the eye. The visual appeal of the television further enhanced the demand for fresh and reworked writing around crime. As more and more print material was adapted to create films and televised series, increasingly experimental methods and techniques were employed in order to bring greater authenticity to the viewing experience. In the twenty first century, as the media market is thriving in competition with multiple media provider services such as Netflix and Prime video, crime series are being churned out at an unbelievable pace. Even in this abundant market teeming with series on crime, Showtime's Dexter boasts of a high Internet Movie Database (IMDb) rating of 8.7 and has been made available on various leading television and media provider platforms, thanks to an extraordinary demand even after eight years of the airing of its last episode on 22 September 2013.

This paper aims to examine Dexter amidst an ever-expanding market of crime films and series from the perspective of its representation of crime. Beginning with an overview of crime writing, the paper will attempt to examine it as a popular literary form that has portrayed violence in varying degrees and ways over different spatial and temporal contexts. Further, a detailed analysis of Dexter will be used to examine social codes that affect and are affected by criminality, with specific instances from the show. Through this detailed study, the paper will seek to ascertain and highlight reasons behind the popularity of the show and examine it with reference to its representation of morality and violence.

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Giving the Middle Child its Due

Ojasvi Kala

Crawling out from the dark crevices of negligence, Popular commercial fiction now demands its dues. The main question then arises should we let these dues stack on or finally pay them off? And why now more than ever. In this paper I have interpreted Popular commercial fiction as the middle child of the literary family. What it is like to exist in the middle, shrouded in the cloak of invisibility and humiliations. Burdened under the pressure of being either as brilliant and reputable as the eldest sibling, “the Classics”, existing in the world of literary artistry, or fitting in with the “out of the box” approach, the risk taker, robust younger sibling. Looking at the literary world as a family provides an insight into the psychological makeup of its various categories which helps us in finding the microscope under which we could analyze and understand the importance of credit, acceptance and acknowledgement of each other. Because what kind of individuals are formed and shaped up in a family where discrimination and biased behavior runs rampant. A family is only as strong as its members.

What I have tried to encompass in the paper is how the birth order, affects the type of qualities one acquires by the virtue of its place in the sibling hierarchy, and how those same acquired traits shape one's inner strengths and weaknesses. And similarly, how commercial popular literature absorbs and uses these qualities of a middle child to survive in the literary family. Another focus of my study also encapsulates the differences that exist in Popular literature and Popular 'commercial' literature. The same as the one that exists between a second child and the middle child. In the conclusion I have tried to answer the question, whether real distinctions can truly exist, or whether the true nobility of literature lies in its blurred lines and undefined worlds.

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Normalising the 'Abnormal'

Pallavi

'Literature has the power of breaking social barriers stronger than any existing politics'.. Popular fiction, as the name itself, is supposed to be a part of the fictional art that is read, watched and enjoyed by the masses as a whole. One of the most defining features of popular fiction can be said to be its primary objective; to entertain and appeal to their target audience by sticking to predictable and consistent themes. Thus, this classification of fiction can be used a tool for the enrichment of the society, spreading the word to every watching eye and listening ear. The word 'popular' itself symbolizes the impact that popular fiction can have over the way we live our lives and how we perceive the world around us.

Indian popular fiction, as per the discussion under the topic 'The 'Indian' in popular commercial fiction', often takes the backseat when it comes to voicing the vulnerabilities of the suffering classes, being a ladder to the marginalized minorities and being the reflection of the society, but rather, it routes often towards a more romanticised, spiced up view of the world, taking away the golden use of popular fiction as a learning and teaching aid for the society as a mass. The more we read and watch about the world that exists outside our walls, the more we expand our



horizons and become accepting towards ideas we might have never entertained before.

In this paper, the main point of discussion will revolve around the ways in which popular fiction can be used as a mirror to our society reflecting back to the people and how it can normalise issues that are considered rather taboo in our country. The aim is to play with the idea of popular fiction becoming something more than just leisure time read but rather also a way to encourage the audience to be more accepting and open for discussion about unconventional themes, something we often lack in the fiction produced in our country.

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Quick-pick v/s Substantial literature

Pooja Gupta & Shalini Vohra

As rightly remarked by the literary critics 'Indian popular commercial fiction' is gaining momentum in publishing as well as readers' market, this paper attempts to explore the psychology and mindset of a particular group i.e., youth, in order to find out their exact preferences and the reasons for reading material. This research is a critical case-study based analysis of the choice of preferred literature amongst the youth. For this study two focused groups will be analysed i.e., a group of undergraduate students who are a part of the literary club and are voracious readers and writers as well, and in the other hand another group which comprises of students not so interested in literary activities but are readers. This study will be the base of discussion for the pro and cons of quick-pick literature versus substantial literature.

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'Online Writer': The Most Popular Writer in the Age of Social Media

Prachi Sharma

This paper talks about a relatively modern realm for writers and poets. The realm of social media and the web space: a free-spirited platform which allows an individual to "take liberties, be irreverent and switch linguistic registers as he wishes" as put by Akhil Katyal. Talking about the aforementioned liberties, it explores areas such as liberties taken in grammar and spelling, incorporation of the internet slang and analyses its immediate effect on students' formal academic writings backed up by various research data. It also explores if this democratisation, an easy alternative for traditional publishing, has happened at a cost to 'quality' and fundamentally changed what we once understood as 'good writing'. The motive of this paper remains to deliberate on why and how writing on and in the age of social media must be parallelised with loosening the boundaries of the literary canon and also how for any kind of popular literature, social media is the most essential tool in the 21st century.

The inevitable need for a social media writer, to master the use of various tools and techniques



for reaching an appropriate audience with the purpose of community building, is also discussed. Combining various art forms with writing in order to create eye-catching content, the art of marketing that content and maintaining a social media presence are studied as very essential to web space writing. This inference is based on the public writing pages of renowned 'online writers' such as Rupi Kaur, Najwa Zebian, Sarah Kay and Phil Kaye. Several forms of writing on the internet such as opinion articles, news blogs and 'micro-poetry' are examined in this paper. The contribution of social media writers in creating 'online activism' and awareness about social issues, generating a new energy in the feminist movement for an instance, has been widely recognised. This is owed to more author-reader engagement than is possible in the print media and has been explored as a quintessential aspect of online writing based on the excerpts from the interviews of various Indian online writers like Harnidh Kaur and Akhil Katyal.

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Treatment of Female Sexuality in Indian Popular Fiction: A Feminist Enquiry in Writing of the Body

Pragya Singh

Popular fiction as a genre has the merit to reinforce 'role-confirming' 'stereotypical' notions of female sexuality. The consumption of popular fiction leads to 'dominant' knowledge formation and reproduction of such notions which takes place within asymmetrical power relation of 'dominant' and 'dominated'. The treatment of female body and sexuality is no different in literature than the rest of the expressive spaces. Female body often gets objectified, contested like a piece of land and their sexuality gets roped and robbed. The stereotypical representation presents women without agency and her sexuality as a threat to the society, hence the need to control it. However, some writers have used writing as a tool to assert female sexuality, to 'write the body' in masculine culture in order to contest the sexual norms and narratives. It is very important to understand and initiate a critical debate on how sexuality is treated and represented in popular fiction.

In my proposed paper have examined the treatment of female sexuality in Indian popular fiction using gender-sexuality based frame of analysis with representationist approach. I have analyzed the works of Tamil writer Perumal Murugan, Assamese writer Temsula Ao, Shobha De, and Khushwant Singh. The questions surrounding my paper are; what are the power dynamics in the representation of female sexuality? How is this power relation affecting the treatment of female sexuality? What are the class and caste dynamics in such treatment and representation? I have also proposed that sexuality is not free from politics, hierarchy, power and ethnicity. There is a difference between how different sexualities are shaped, approached and represented in terms of hierarchy. In my study of the chosen popular fictions, I have attempted to analyze these aspects of sexuality.

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India's Tryst with Flash Fiction: A Terribly Tiny Tale

Rachit Raj & Pranjali Gupta

Ernest Hemingway was probably the first writer to write what has now been called flash fiction. He wrote a six-word story and probably opened the eyes of many for the first time on what can be achieved in few words. Since then, flash fiction has taken a lot of time to find its footing. With some people debating over traces of flash fiction in 'Panchatantra' and 'Jataka Tales', flash fiction has made its appearance with full vigor in the twenty-first century.

Any change in literature has always found its roots in the changing socio-cultural dynamics. Europe in the era of Hemingway was grappling with the trauma of World War and a character like Septimus reflected the vulnerability of European masculinity.

Twenty-first century has seen life become a fast-paced affair where letters have been replaced by tweets. In an era where people are struggling to read a bulky text, flash fiction has become the preferred form of literature which demands less time from its readers. It has a simplistic vocabulary which invokes emotions that the majority of readers can connect with. Rupī Kaur's *Milk and Honey* is a prime example of how flash fiction is succeeding in finding global success in an era when readers look for short, relatable texts. Flash fiction with its one-sentence style does not beat around the bush, leaving you vulnerable with its brusqueness, making it a popular form of fiction.

This paper will talk about how flash fiction is dominating world literature and analyze India's contribution with *Terribly Tiny Tales*, which has found immense popularity on social media platforms. With *Terribly Tiny Tales*, India is emerging as a prime contributor in the growth of flash fiction as it stands at the cusp of becoming the next significant change in the story of the evolution of literature through centuries. This paper will look at how Indian literature is driving the world to what can be the next step in the proud timeline of literature.

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Brecht's "Notion of Popularity" and its Appropriation by the Right through the 'Popular' Means of Social Media

Rajarshi Kalita

Brecht, in the part "Notion of Popularity" in his essay "Against Georg Lucas" talks of how the popular should be associated with the people, in ways they understand, so that the popular can be a means of progressive growth. In the same part he also calls out to be careful against the popular that is driven by emotional attributes, the "mighty institutions" that keep the masses as the "subjects of politics" rather than becoming the "objects of politics". Basically, Brecht wants the popular to be polemical rather than being the vehicle of ideological machinations. However, it is seen that the popular, instead of being a beacon of the masses, is more of something that is



selected by the people themselves, out of many products in the market. Social media and the internet are such forms of popular culture which has been made popular by the people. It has led to a democratization of opinion, and more importantly, has challenged the commodified structures of leisure held by publishing houses or recording studios. However, in recent times, the social media has been used to erode the leadership of the progressives and leaning more towards the emotive popular issues that Brecht had warned before. The internet, which was supposed to be a vehicle of freedom, was appropriated by the right to become a vehicle for restrictive thinking. What Brecht wanted of the popular, to be a means of emancipation, now turns out to be a vehicle for right wing ideological growth. This paper attempts to explore this phenomenon of the popular as a bridge for the right, and how it has been done through a convoluted path of constructed truths, misinformation and ideologically coloured news and articles.

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'Popular' and 'Classic': Deconstructing the Categories

Ruchi Nagpal

“The growing interest among humanistic scholars and teachers in popular culture is one of the more exciting academic trends of the present day”, writes John G. Cawelti in his essay 'The Concept of Formula in the Study of Popular Literature', which confirms to the growing trend of popular literature as a discipline in various universities and academic institutions. But often, we find a comparison between popular fiction and mainstream English literature, which is inevitable. English literature as a dominant field of study in English language hardly provides a space for popular literature as the conventional notions despise popular fiction as common literature, which they feel is not suitable for interpretations and analysis. “The identity of English literature as an intellectual discipline is, in part, dependent on a 'significant other'- popular literature or 'paraliterature'- whose absence from the conventional syllabus is crucial in helping to constitute the dominant literary culture”, writes Pawling. Classical literature which reigns the literary world is looked as the dominant literature which takes over popular in any given moment. But how do we define classic? What is classic? How does a text become a classic? When one probes into the idea of classic and what the word and concept entails, one finds that the categories seem to be shifting and intermingling. Problematic or assuring as it may sound the categories of popular and classic are the construct of a discourse which bars the 'other' and entertains the one in a more compelling manner. Problem arises when the term 'popular classics' is used with nonchalance and the irony is that the term refers to texts, which were 'popular' at a point of time and became 'classics' over a period of time. The category and the term thus stand contested and this paper thus looks at the terms 'popular' and 'classic' and then probes deeper into the idea of 'popular classics' and the postmodern manifestations of it.

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The Envisioned 'Tomorrow' in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

Saima Debbarma

“Tomorrow”, with this word Arundhati Roy's novel ends by giving us a hope that a “utopian” world is waiting for us, that kept the love of Velutha and Ammu alive, the hope Roy gives the readers till the last page that the puzzle will be solved like every other conventional novel but the end itself gives a reality check.

Roy takes her readers on a roller coaster of emotions, tangled relations, layers of realities and politics within personal relations. She has portrayed the existing political tumult of our society in a subtle way which gives an impactful blow in every page we turn. Estha and Rahel, one of the main characters, shows us their journey of life. From traumatic incident(s) of childhood to confusing and lonely adulthood. Roy has vividly portrayed the idea that how an incident of childhood can truly affect the ongoings of the future. The sexual harassment of Estha is something that he has never spoken about and that somehow becomes the sole reason that he never speaks again. That incident strangles his will to ever make any contact with any other soul alive. Rahel, on the other side, just cannot function due to the rust-ridden memory. Patriarchy has definitely a substantial role to play in Roy's novel. Characters like Pappachi, Baby Kochamma, etc are the flag bearers of it here. Be it the jealousy of a woman being successful or for being just there. Even the “myth” of female sexuality is shown to us through the character of Ammu. Her brother could sleep with several and no one bats an eye but the desperate crave she had in her soul for intimacy is highly frowned upon. And Roy has connected all these incidents with just one string that is slowly unveiled to us: Death of Sophie Mol.

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Popular Fiction and the Purpose of a Book: A Consideration

Samriddhi Raj

The appeal of the genre/formula fiction and its alarming commercial success against the rather 'deserving' high literary writing is astonishing yet considerable. The distinction of the two demands one to re-evaluate the fundamental purpose of a text. It is undeniable that books are written for the readers. However, the question focuses on the 'purpose' a book intends to serve to the reader. Is it reachability, mere storytelling, contemporary relevance, leisure, pleasure or is it a mindful skeptic reading, influence, representation and point of view? The literary writings of the likes of Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Amitav Ghosh, Neel Mukherjee et cetera encapsulate vision and relevance to socio-economic politics of the nation yet their readership remains restricted to the elite scholars. This inefficient reachability to the populis challenges the primary purpose of their books. Likewise, the likes of Chetan Bhagat, Durjoy Dutta, Preeti Shenoy et cetera have an established control on sales yet their writing is crippled by the paralysing fixation to a derived formula for sales. What is then the 'purpose' of a book? How does Popular fiction define that 'purpose' and how accountable is it to that 'purpose' in the face of



abundant readership? How the difference in the purpose of the text as compared to another become a factor to its sales? Thus, with this regard the relation between readership and authorship becomes a subject of scrutiny.

This paper would assess these questions and in doing so determine the purposefulness of popular fiction in itself. The paper would confine its assessment within the Indian sub-genre of popular fiction and its references to the meritorious literary writing would also consider the Indian sub-genre as its primal focus.

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Gendering the Genre: Indian Chick Lit in English

Saneya

Chick Lit denotes fiction by, about, and for women: popular novels exhibiting a coming-of-consciousness story of its protagonist who is an urban, educated, single woman, encountering hurdles in her professional and love life. Tracing its origin to the novels of Jane Austen, this new writing about women and their daily encounters, told with an element of humour and engaging with issues of identity, self-image, and a new brand of feminism, ensured phenomenal popularity and colossal commercial success for the genre: *Sex and the City*, *Bridget Jones Diary*, *The Devil Wears Prada* to name a few.

In Indian Chick Lit, the generic features remain intact, the prefix 'Indian' seems to have brought significant transformations. With Indian locations and backdrops such as cricket and Bollywood, has Chick Lit truly adapted to the urban Indian city-soil? This paper seeks to investigate the popular fiction genre of Chick Lit as it has emerged in English in India. The objective is to examine the acclimatization of the genre – allegedly imported from the West – in the Indian context. The cultural adaptation/adoption raises several relevant questions. How relevant is the genre in the Anglophonic Indian social, cultural, and literary context? What are the points of departures and what reasons—social, cultural—necessitated these changes?

Equally interesting is the commodification of the genre in exclusive gendered terms. The fluffy pink/pastel books with martini glass/shopping bag/stiletto on the front cover have brought a new visual element in the market, giving the genre a distinctly recognizable appeal. The content is as fashionable as the form, treating commodity culture and consumerism as an important part of the genre. But can the same be said of Indian Chick Lit?

The paper will address this cultural adoption/adaptation of the genre to an Indian context, in an attempt to define the popular in India through the changes and modification made in the course. The subsets like Detective Chick Lit, Paranormal Chick Lit, Ladki Lit, will be examined to understand the realities of women (reader/writer/protagonist) in India of which the genre is an overlooked source of socio-cultural commentary. It will be examined as the source, and simultaneously, the product of significant demographic shifts and social phenomenon in urban Indian society like the rise of single women in metropolitan cities. Chick Lit's alliance with popular culture makes it easily adaptable to other forms of popular media like film, television and vlogs.

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Towards a Hybrid Identity: Analysing South Asian Muslim Women Writers of the Twenty-first Century

Sanjukta Naskar

In the wide spectrum of this new age fiction writers which covers almost all areas of literary examples and experiences, a very pointed group of young women Muslim writers have emerged from the South Asian Muslim nations. Taslima Nasreen naturally heads the list and she has also been a trend-setter in many ways, taking on the daunting task of both challenging and questioning the oppressive nature of states and societies. Nasreen has definitely eased out a direction and a clear path for later day Muslim writers like Tahmima Aman, Monica Ali, Kamila Shamsi, Fatima Bhutto among many.

In a world where women still face economic disadvantages, this new group of young women writers have contributed hugely with their prolific literary outputs. It is interesting to note that the women writers have formed a new colony of Diaspora mostly settled in London, which by itself reflects the problematic relationship the writers share with their home nation. The subject is usually mnemonic in nature attempting to recreate a quotidian life that the writer has left behind and is essentially a narrative of their lived tradition and experiences. Notions of identity, uniformity and conformity are crucial to the manner in which Muslim women writers depict character in the post 9/11 era. A certain sense of caution and precaution prevails in this line of depiction, which brings out the contradiction and stigmatization that unfolds in their layered existence. Not necessarily situated in New York the characters in these novels blur the line of assimilation and display a multifaceted self.

In my paper I intend to discuss the works of Tahmima Aman, Monica Ali and Kamila Shamsi attempting to address the tensions within this inherently Islamic narrative in a post 9/11 era.

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The New Woman in Advaita Kala's *Almost Single*

Santosh Bharti

This paper investigates the rise of 'Chick lit or chick-literature' as popular fiction in Indian English literary canon. This body of writings is considered post-millennial and post-feminist literature that delves into the women's identity and role in post-modernist society. The narratives do not project female protagonists as oppressed or suppressed by society but portrays them as frozen in indecisiveness as they are caught in a transitory phase where old values are being challenged by new sensibilities. Aisha- a protagonist in *Almost Single* by Advaita Kala- is a 29-year-old woman on a look out for a suitable match and who is struggling to cope with the tension borne out of the conflict between the old and the new.

In doing this, the author brings in the idea of single woman, which is still taboo and criticised by the society. The narrative brings out the complexities, challenges and issues faced by young



women and certainly questions the identity and existence of women. Though such women are no longer direct victims of the society, they are caught up between being strong and independent while accommodating the concerns of their family.

Although Chick-lit is read alongside other female narratives like Shashi Deshpande, Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai among several others post-Independence writers in India, what makes chick lit distinct is the way it addresses women's concerns and life choices in contemporary India. This paper examines in detail the idea of 'new woman' propagated by chick-lit with reference to Advaita Kala's work *Almost Single* (2007). The effort will help throw new light on the life journey of women in post-Independence India.

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Literature to Cinema: An Insight into Bengali Detective Fiction

Shatarupa Sinha

Bengali detective fiction has traversed a long and an interesting journey – from children's literature to mainstream Bengali cinema. This is what makes it stand out as “popular” cultural text. As a sub-genre of the popular fiction, detective fictional writing in Bengal has germinated within the domain of children's writings, alluring them to the magical, yet adventurous world of thrill, crime, mystery and excitement. There have been generations of children who have grown up on this literary genre. For them, their imagination provided a cinematic effect to their readings. They have read these books as if imbibing them as part of the canonical literature. Over the years, detective fiction has attracted adult readers alike. However, in recent times it has gained an iconic stature, catering to both young and adult minds simultaneously.

With the gradual decline in the reading habits of young minds, there have been ceaseless attempts at preserving this vast plethora of literary production through the medium of cinema. Made popular by Satyajit Ray to begin with, and thereafter, several detective fictional characters have come to life on the big screen. This cinematic representation of popular Bengali literature has added a new politics vis-à-vis cultural practices. It is also interesting to note how the Bengali audience specifically has identified their favourite character with popular faces. What was once a part of children's literature, has now become the formula for a successful Bengali movie.

Keeping in mind this remarkable journey of the detective fiction in Bengali, this paper proposes to question how this genre came to be a formula for commercial cinema. The creation of larger than life detective protagonists has become inseparable from their reel faces. For the present generation, the popular exists only in the realm of cinematic adaptations rather than their literary manifestation. This cultural tussle between children's literature and cinematic rendering has given birth to a new kind of specialised popular fictional narrative.

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Reinterpreting Indian Mythology for Contemporary Readership

Souparni Paul

Mythological fiction is steadily gaining immense readership among the masses around the nation. The appeal which comes out of it is mostly because of the reinterpretation of ancient heroic mythological characters as common individuals who have their struggles in their quest for glory which makes it all the more relatable to the modern reader.

In my paper I have tried to explore the world of mythological fiction by addressing some major aspects of its appeal and influence on the Indian audience. I have started with discussing the difference between myth and history, and the reasons why myths are modernised and are written in a new way. The major reasons for its immense allure among the readers have also been addressed in the project. I have also included Devdutt Pattanaik's views on the difference between mythological fiction and mythology and further, the differences and similarities between the traditional narratives and the new interpretations with references to Amish Tripathi's works, being a frequent reader of those. These fictional narratives also echo the contemporary events of the times, thus increasing their appeal and consequently increasing their readership. Since we are talking about popular fiction here, and I have concentrated on fictional mythology as made for contemporary times, I have also tried to venture into the televised versions of traditional mythology and their appeal and influence on the modern audiences. We can find fictional mythology in televised serials as well and I have thrown some light upon that aspect and how people are buying what they are being sold and eventually developing a liking to such shows. Lastly, in the conclusion I have tried to outline such aspects of modern fictional mythology for contemporary readers and viewers, their increasing market and this turning into a full-fledged business and industry with new interpretation on old tales and mythological Gods in modern avatars selling like hot cakes. By exploring such points, I wish to acknowledge this growing trend and its influence on the minds of 21st century readers.

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Mytho-Nukes: Aryavarta Chronicles, Shiva Trilogy, and the Indian Nuclear Debate

Souvik Kar

The commercial success of Indian popular fiction in English, within India, as Suman Gupta noted, could be majorly credited, among other factors, to a familiarised Indian context. A genre premised upon such a sense of "Indianness", configuring the space of Indian popular commercial fiction as a site of Indians talking with Indians, about India, in India, but in the most international of languages, is the mythological fantasy. With its rapidly expanding reader base, and also because of its tendency to structure a "technologically advanced" antiquity from which India had purportedly fallen, it offers fertile ground for important critical engagement with 21st century Indian topics. This paper concerns itself with such an important matter-Indian



attitudes to nuclear issues in India. With chief attention to the Shiva Trilogy and the Aryavarta Chronicles, the paper examines the ways in which Indian mythological fantasy grapple with modern Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and especially, the debate on nuclear power. The paper takes into account the extant public surveys and polls which seek to unravel Indian attitudes on a range of nuclear issues as its basis for discussion of the nuclear debate in these novels. Departing from the criticism that the novels simply rationalize mythical weapons in the epics and the puranas, this paper seeks to look at the Firstborn-Firewright politics regarding such weapons and their depicted use in the Kurukshetra war in the Aryavarta Chronicles, and Shiva's climactic use of the pashupatiatra along with the preceding debates on the issue in the Shiva Trilogy as an allegory of modern Indian public engagement with nuclear issues, and the national narratives that continue to be constructed around them. Finally, this paper seeks to unravel the tension between the idea of a technologically advanced antiquity and the “Kali Yuga” that the use of WMDs in both fantasies seem to engender.

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Representational Politics of the New/Neoliberal Indian Citizen and the Popularity of the Indian Commercial Fiction: A Study in Chetan Bhagat's *One Night @ The Call Center*

Suchismita Ghosh

The economic and social transformation of the nation from a restrictive regime of the License Raj and the old centralised, bureaucratic state, which stifled industry to being a vibrant, free-market democracy with the 1991 economic reforms led to India being reckoned as 'new' in the global platform and to the rise of the new Indian middle class. After decades of the initiation of the neoliberal economy in India, we see that the politics of the rise of the popular Indian commercial fiction is mired in its localised thrust to address the paradigmatic shift in the roles, attitudes, lifestyles and consumption practices of the new dominant class in collusion with the state and corporate media generated mainstream national political discourses that posit urban middle class as the representative citizens of liberalising India. Thus, in the given context, this paper would seek to propose that now, with a stated shift in the Indian English fiction, from the grandiloquent historical reservoir to concentrate on the anxieties of the present, embroiled in national politics and with a stated focus on the politics of visibility of the new Indian middle class, ambivalences towards the cultural effects of consumerism, moral anxieties over shifting gender roles and changes in youth culture, the new Indian commercial fiction, owing to its representational dynamics, its drive to become self-consciously less literary in its simple, pragmatic approach to the English language to be more relevant to the new young readers as also to survive in competition alongside print, television and online media, attempts to aid and participate in the discursive hegemonic construction of a particular segment of the consumerist middle class—one that represents the promise of the liberalising Indian nation—as the new middle class, signifying the promise of the new materialist Indian dream.



In the light of this observation, this paper would seek to analyse Chetan Bhagat's *One Night @ the Call Center* (2005) touching on the pertinent issues like what is commercial fiction, how such fiction departs from our understanding of fiction and how despite their shallow literary content, they are significant for the analysis of the ideological construction and representational politics of the proposed new Indian citizen.

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Brechtian Epic Theatre and *Jatra* in Bengal

Sushruto Chattopadhyay

Abstract: Production of knowledge of a certain space and its cultural faculty is characteristically chameleonic and is directly cognizant of the ebb and flow of the relations of production in the given geopolitical location. While maneuvering through the layered negotiation of the local tradition of *jatra* and the global Brechtian 'epic theatre' on the post-Colonial Bengali stage this paper would trace the search and production of a deliquescent identity of the Bengali stage that is yet to find the certainty of having an identity of its own.

Theatre in Bengal (British India) was predominantly a colonial enterprise. Dearth of plays written in the native tongue of Bengal offered the British to sow the seeds of a colonial stage to usurp the cultural resource of the native land, appropriate it and facilitate in the rise of a certain 'babu' culture which would become the connoisseur of this colonial theatre and that which would reject the 'lower' traditional forms of *jatra*, *kavigan* and the like. Later during the early twentieth century India witnessed the emergence of cultural movements that were inclined towards 'other theatre'. This is when translation of playwrights predominantly from the West was initiated and revival of the traditional forms, such as the *jatra* found its way on the Bengali stage. An entire project was under way in order to find an identity of the Bengali stage. It is in this juncture that Brechtian 'epic theatre' could be brought into a negotiation with *jatra* in Bengal thus identifying the contemporary stage of Bengal in its quintessentially amalgamated identity.

Through parallel analysis of Brechtian 'epic theatre' and *jatra*, it would be possible to explore its rigid spatial and temporal location, socio-cultural context and its underlying linguistic registers that make these two types of theatrical practices unique and separate in its form. The fluidity with which Brechtian 'epic theatre' unconsciously finds semblance in 'the traditional' *jatra* on the 'new' Bengali stage (not without its own limitations) departs for something new and *avant garde*.

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Contemporary Indian Detectives: The Case of Vish Puri and Perveen Mistry

Vaibhav Parel

The popularity of detective fiction as a popular genre has been unprecedented. Over the years, detective fiction in India has enlisted a faithful audience that looks forward to every new twist in



the tale. Contemporary Indian writers like Bhaskar Chattopadhyay, R V Raman, Somnath Batabyal, Mukul Deva, Ankush Saikia and Abir Mukherjee among others have written detective fiction in a variety of styles and formats.

This paper is interested in juxtaposing two contemporary authors who have a strong Indian connection, but have been based, for the most part, outside India. They now write detective fiction with a keen eye towards Indian realities – either contemporary or historical. Tarquin Hall (b. 1969), a British journalist, created the 'Indian Poirot' in his detective Vish Puri. His books *The Case of the Deadly Butter Chicken* (2012) and *The Case of the Love Commandos* (2013) are examples of Delhi being seen through the eyes of Vish Puri, a fictional insider. Sujata Massey (b. 1964) was born in England and is based in America. Her recent book, *A Murder on Malabar Hill* (2018), portrays Mumbai of the 1920s through her female detective, Perveen Mistry, with intricate details about architecture, food and cultural mores of the Parsi community (which by her own admission) she has gleaned through research.

What are the politics of the cultural gaze being employed to write about India through a genre like detective fiction? Is this gaze a form of appropriation and presentation for a Western audience? Or is it the politics of the Indian market that makes these texts consumable with ease for a readership that is easily drawn to this genre? It is to these and related questions that this paper will turn in an attempt to read contemporary detective fiction and the purposes it is being made to serve.

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Visual Art Ontology and Liberation: Lines, Shapes, Colours and Visual Space of *Bhimayana*

Vinod Verma

Bhimayana, a dalit graphic novel, redefines graphic narratives by situating it to the micro-sociological caste contexts and experiences both in content and form in the modern India. Graphic novels may differ in style because of the significance assigned by the elements and the principles of visual arts but usually majority of graphic novels acquire their depth of 3D by using perspective of European renaissance arts origin giving it visual art ontological stability and putting the visual narrative in a certain way of meaning making. *Bhimayana* does not borrow the perspective to narrate the experiences of untouchability and explores the pradhan gond art form of the gond tribal visual art practices of lived experiences in the tribal visual imagination and medium. The question of being is readdressed by *Bhimayana* in the graphic language of the gond art. The dalit and tribal worldview of existence as a whole and interdependent finds its voice in the graphics of *Bhimayana*. Caste as an institution and practice creates hierarchies and impacts individuals and groups both at micro and macro levels of existence. The gond art form and composition of visual space of *Bhimayana* opens up probabilities of reading and liberation of meaning from the framed visual order.

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From Detective to Vigilante: An Examination of Vimal Series by Surendra Mohan Pathak

Zainab Abrar

Hindi crime fiction is a genre which veritably preserves the duplex of slick, debonair detectives and sly, cold blooded criminals. It is a progeny of the golden age of American pulp fiction which saw stalwarts like James Hadley Chase and Jackie Collins. As a rule, the genre supplies amusement in the form of crude sensationalism and eroticism. It also gives an impression of 'savoir faire' as discerned within the world of crime and detection. Over and above all, it provides a sense of an all-encompassing justice when the detective restores society back to its status quo by catching the culprit. These instill, in the unsuspecting reader, a wish to participate which he/she indulges in vicariously through the detective of his choice. Within this sphere of Hindi crime fiction, Surendra Mohan Pathak is a much celebrated and prolific name. He often ruled the roost throughout the 70s and 80s with his detectives 'Sunil', 'Sudhir' and 'Vivek Agashe.' At present, he is still popular amongst the masses as can be gauged from the unprecedented scale of re-marketing and re-publishing of his books by Harper Collins India.

However, the paper would focus on another of Pathak's creations whom he, interestingly, named 'Sardar Surinder Singh Sohal' AKA 'Vimal.' Except, diverging from popular representations of the genre, 'Vimal' is not a detective let alone a police officer of the State. He is the anti-establishment hero who does not take into cognizance the many state apparatuses when meting out justice to his villains. The argument of the paper then would be to look at 'Vimal' as a vigilante whose birth breaks the sanctity of the genre-confirming norms of Hindi crime fiction and upon whose law-defying shoulders, ironically, majorly rests Pathak's humongous popularity.

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Keep the Change: An Exploration of the Legitimacy of Chick Lit as a Mode of Literary Expression

Zakra Saiwa

The validation of popular fiction as a bonafide artistic endeavour has been a contentious issue in the academia. The present research paper endeavours to explore the legitimacy of popular fiction as a mode of creative expression, with special regard to the subgenre of 'chick lit'-a rather pejorative marketing label loosely used to refer to contemporary women's fiction. For this purpose, I have taken up the novel *Keep the Change* by Nirupama Subramaniam as a representative of this genre and shall seek to identify both elements of popular fiction and chick-lit therein as well as elements that enable it to transcend the so-called limiting definitions of its generic label and cement its place as a work of enduring literary merit. The term 'popular fiction' has often been used as a negative contrast to the mainstream elite canonically privileged fictional corpus. Though enjoying immense commercial validity, chick-lit became an easy target



for critics' derision –relegated to both subordinate spaces-the popular and the female.

Keep the Change as a narrative, foregrounds the professional and romantic travails of its heroine B. Damayanthi, within the context of an India grappling with time honoured and culturally codified modes of existence and the fast-paced neo-liberal corporate way of life. A central concern of the novel is its exposition of the clash between the raging postfeminist celebration at the turn of the millennium and the still pervasive patriarchal archetype of 'ideal womanhood'. Using humour as its satirical weapon and an intimate conversational style it dexterously uncloaks the contradictions, tension and hypocritical societal expectations that beset young women's lives in India today. The endeavour of this research paper has been to demonstrate that chick lit novels like *Keep the Change* deal with pertinent issues and within their 'limited fictional mould' seek to explore such themes that have yet to receive creative expression.

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Acknowledgements

Several of us in the department are keen students and teachers of Popular Fiction. For years we agonized over the fact that the academia treated 'Popular' as a dirty word not considered fit for the literati since it was consumed by the masses. We wondered like several scholars of Popular Culture and Popular Fiction why what the majority of the reading public was reading was ignored by the academia. There was some respite when the University Curricula took cognizance of what was gaining a lot of literary currency in the West in particular, problematized by the Frankfurt school of Germany and the Bowling Green University critics of America. In India, it was in the early 1990s that a disbanding of literary hierarchies, a movement away from the centre and an inward focus led to the incorporation of a paper in Popular Fiction in the undergraduate syllabi at honours level albeit as an optional paper. But this created even more stereotypes and boundaries. Posited as it was vis-à-vis the Classical Literature Paper, it meant an even greater struggle to remove the slurs attached to the popular. Fortunately, the University of Delhi shared our concerns and Popular Fiction came into mainstream teaching in a slightly broader format bringing in the study of a graphic Indian text, and a novel set in Sri Lanka by a Canadian novelist along with the regular Agatha Christie and Lewis Carroll. From 'Popular Fiction' it became 'Popular Literature' under the erstwhile FYUP and the current CBCS.

And classroom discussion, academic endeavours, literary pursuits amongst both students and teachers alike brought the literary popular to the fore. Yet, there were gaps! What was being sold and read by the masses, picked up from Wheelers Stands and airports and traffic light vendors led the best-selling lists but still did not really find space in academic forums. Spirited discussions in the English Department room over cups of tea and samosas fructified in this vibrant and dynamic forum wherein authors, readers and publishers come together to discuss the various issues raised by this attempt to deconstruct categories.

A venture of this nature is the result of the collective synergies of the team and leadership. Organising a conference is a pleasure when all possible permissions are granted speedily. We are grateful to Mr Siddharth Verma, the Chairman, Governing Body and Dr Sunil Sondhi, the Principal for their continued support to all our endeavours. The conference is as good as its speakers, both invited and paper presenters. We were very fortunate that our invited speakers accepted our invitation despite their busy schedules and commitments in various literary festivals and book fairs. We were also fortunate that our speakers covered a wide array of genres and issues thereby making this conference meaningful and enriching. Mr Surendra Mohan Pathak, the iconic popular Hindi Detective Fiction writer was the most apt choice for a keynote speaker, and we are grateful for his presence and perspective. Sincere and heartfelt gratitude to our best-selling authors; Advaita Kala, Anuradha Marwah, Deepa Agarwal, Devapriya Roy, Karan Verma, Niraj Srivastava & Vishwajyoti Ghosh who were a huge value addition to this conference. It was important that we factor in voices from the publishing world, since they dictate what is read and more important what is written. These voices were represented by three seniors from the publishing world, Senior Commissioning editor Manasi Subramaniam from Penguin Random House, Director, Vani Prakashan in Aditi Maheshwari-Goyal and Karthika VK, Head, Westland publishers. Their views are pertinent to this conference and we

truly appreciate their taking time from their busy schedules. Academia is represented by Prof Raj Kumar, Head, Department of English, University of Delhi and Prof Simi Malhotra, Jamia Millia Islamia. Both are old friends of the Department of English at MAC and have been a part of all our four interdisciplinary conferences. Both have been our mentors and advisors and an integral part of all our endeavours. We hope to benefit from their continued patronage.

Our department has been appreciated time and again for its cohesiveness and unity. We are truly blessed, that each one of us contributes to any such venture in the best possible way. Every member of the department took on the onus of various components that are a part of this conference. Off days did not matter nor did strikes, every member pitched in. It did not matter who was assigned what, eventually it became everyone's baby; nurtured and taken care off by all of us. Sangeeta, Anu, Vinod, Charu, Shilpa, Debosmita, Subodh, Indrani, Guntasha, Shashi and Aditya! We are truly blessed to be one big family with a common vision and shared dreams.

The Accounts and Administrative department of the college spearheaded by Mr Rajinder Bisht along with his team members smoothened the financial process of the conference. They are a silent and invaluable support to all of us. Dr Satyaprakash, Librarian helped us curate the book exhibition which has been an added attraction to this conference. A special mention is due to Mr Raj Kumar, Office Assistant who willingly gave up his lunch hours and several evenings to design our conference material. This is not the first time nor the last definitely! With Murthy serving us sumptuous meals, our cup, rather belly is truly full.

Sangeeta Mittal and her ECA team deserves accolades and applause for taking on the responsibility for organizing the cultural event and the heritage walk despite her other commitments to this conference.

Last but not the least, we are thankful to Vani Prakashan for partnering with us in this conference and sponsoring the lovely hamper-gifts to all our delegates and invitees. Forum for Teachers of English Language and Literature (FORTELL), our old and trusted friend came forward to give the best paper award with a cash prize of Rs 5000/- rupees to the most deserving paper blind reviewed by a Screening Committee comprising of faculty from MAC, Fortell and one university colleague from Orissa. Many thanks are due to these members of the Screening Committee.

This conference has been an attempt to bring together our shared concerns and to engage meaningfully in what we believe in the most. And this was possible only because all synergies conjoined and that is the only reason for the success of any such venture.

Truly grateful!

Gitanjali, Prem & Mona



Maharaja Agrasen College
(University of Delhi)
25th Anniversary
1st INTERDISCIPLINARY NATIONAL
CONFERENCE
INDIAN POPULAR FICTION:
Redefining the Canon
16 & 17, 2019
Organized by
Department of English

MAHARAJA AGRASEN COLLEGE
(University of Delhi)
25th Anniversary
Indian Popular Fiction: Redefining the Canon
Day 1: Wednesday, 14 January 2019
Venue: Seminar Room
INAUGURAL SESSION
Shri Surender Mohan Motilal - Keynote Speaker
Ms Advaita Kala - Honorary



Maharaja Agrasen College
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Maharaja Agrasen College (University of Delhi) established in 1994, is located in the hub of urban development in Delhi- the East Delhi area- home to residential, commercial and institutional hotspots of the city. It has a new, modern and spacious building complex sprawling over 10 acres in Vasundhara Enclave, Delhi. The College is a research-driven learning community where students, teachers and staff collectively develop their intellectual and social capabilities. We believe that path to individual and community success lies in accepting the challenges as opportunities for growth. Our institution tries to inculcate the values of knowledge and diligence amongst its students and staff enabling them to overcome obstacles and set new benchmarks. The College has been accredited 'Grade A' by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in 2016.

MAC ECA IN ASSOCIATION WITH SPIC MACAY VIRASAT PRESENTS SUSHRI RANI KHANAM IN A SCINTILLATING KATHAK PERFORMANCE

Rani Khanam is one of the astute and sensitive interpreters of LucknowGharana of Kathak today. Her style reflects deep comprehension of the dance tradition which has set new dimensions and source of inspirations to younger generation. A powerful and imaginative dancer, Rani Khanam displays a breathtaking technique in both pure dance and in the art of abhinaya.



A cultural visionary, beside an outstanding exponent of Kathak, her contribution to the field of art is profound and unparalleled in traditional dance history. An unwavering belief in herself and courage to follow her aspirations have made Rani Khanam the only Indian Muslim Kathak Dancer to dance on Islamic and Sufiana verses.

Rani Khanam is the recipient of many prestigious awards like 5th National Women Excellence Award. For decades, she has been performing at all major national and international festivals. She is the founder of AamadKathak Dance Centre and as a revered guru, has shaped the talent of many well known Kathak exponents in India and abroad.

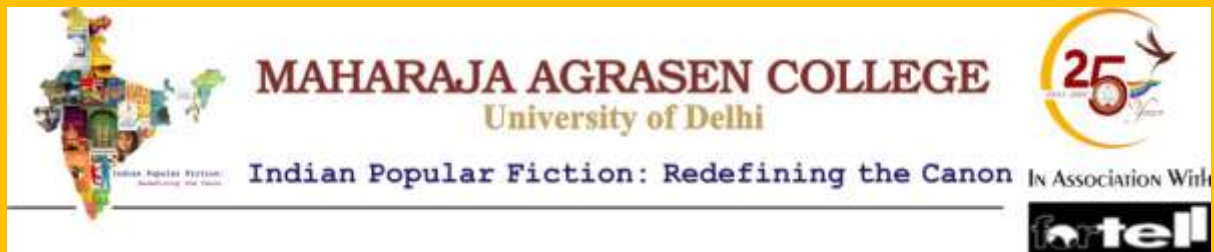
As a choreographer, Rani Khanam has excelled in fusing the traditional and innovative to produce a ground breaking repertoire of traditional, contemporary and issue-based productions. Being a sensitive individual, she has used her artistic aptitude and instinct to raise awareness regarding rights of Muslim women, women in general, HIV AIDS and dance in education.



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PRESS RELEASE

The Department of English, Maharaja Agrasen College, Vasundhara Enclave, New Delhi 110096 is organizing the 4th Interdisciplinary National Conference, *Indian Popular Fiction: Redefining the Canon* on 16 & 17 January 2019. The immense popularity of Indian Commercial Fiction both as literary enterprise and as commercial venture has attracted global publishers; vindicating both the merit of the author and the taste of the readers. Advaita Kala, Anuja Chauhan, Chetan Bhagat, Shobha De, Anurag Mathur, Ashwin Sanghi, Durjoy Dutta amongst others are not just names churning pulp at the altar of commerce. They are names to reckon with, who are dismantling categories and rebuilding hierarchies. Drawing on both the key aspects: literary and the commercial, the Conference will focus on all aspects of Indian Popular Fiction: The forms, authorship, reader base, and the publishing industry which govern most of what is written in postmodern times as well as the alternative routes offered by technology. From best-selling authors like Surender Mohan Pathak to Advaita Kala to voices from leading publishers and eminent persons from the academia, all will grace the event. There shall also be a Cultural Programme organized in association with SPIC MACAY on 16 January 2019 post 5 PM and a specially curated book exhibition to be held on both days.

Media representatives are cordially invited for this event.

Date: 16 and 17 January 2019 (Wednesday & Thursday)

Time: 10 AM Onwards

Venue: Seminar Room (Room No. 212), Committee Room (Room No. 124), ICT Room (Room No. 19)

Cultural Programme: Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Auditorium

Maharaja Agrasen College

For more information, kindly contact:

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