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Topic of Research: Subaltern Cosmopolitanism in Kochi: Re-Examining the In/Visible City as Decolonial Space

Findings

This study found the following findings:

- Located archipelagic Kochi as a distinct cultural space through select Malayalam texts. This archipelagic Kochi stands in contrast to the popular and conventional portrayal of Kochi as a postcolonial cosmopolitan urban city in mainstream films and cultural discourses.
- Identified and analyzed subaltern cosmopolitanism as emanating from archipelagic Kochi as depicted in select Malayalam literary texts that portray coastal communities living on the backwater islands.
- Traced subaltern cosmopolitanism through the historical experience of caste, slave trade, and creolization among coastal communities to tease out the visible and invisible aspects of marginal cultures, which would together constitute archipelagic Kochi as decolonial space.

This thesis examines contemporary Malayalam writers, Ponjikkara Raphy, N.S. Madhavan, P.F. Mathews, and Johny Miranda to understand the socio-cultural world of non-urban spaces in Kochi. Non-urban spaces such as coastal villages and archipelagos are alternative sites for exploring marginalised histories and silenced voices. The thesis first explores the development of the coast as a marginal space constructed by caste dynamics that remains alienated from mainstream society. The Introduction attempts to place the thesis in perspective by examining the notion of subaltern cosmopolitanism as developed by theorists like Walter Mignolo, Enrique Dussel, Minhao Zeng, Pheng Cheah, VK Gidwani and others to trace how it repurposes older understandings of cosmopolitanism to lend it to decolonial

ends. The first chapter of the thesis attempts to examine the novel *Litanies of Dutch Battery* by N S Madhavan using the theoretical frame of archipelagic thinking offered by Glissant. The second chapter of the thesis attempts to unravel the subaltern cosmopolitanism of Kochi by focusing on its creole identities. For the purpose, the chapter analyses Johny Miranda's novel *A Requiem for the Living*. The third chapter of the thesis undertakes an analysis of Malayalam novel *Chaavunilam* by P F Mathews. Chapter four of the thesis concerns itself with the myths and legend that circulate in littoral spaces and their association with maritime history of the place. The novel analysed in the chapter is *Oro Pro Nobis* by Ponjikkara Raphy which deals with the spirit of Kappiri *Mutthappan*, a slave spirit worshipped by the subaltern communities of coastal Kochi. Finally, the Conclusion sums up the findings of the all the chapters to argue that the colonial/postcolonial frames usually applied to represent Kochi as a cosmopolitan space fall short of doing justice to its many-faceted subaltern life-worlds.