

DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the thesis titled “Caged Flesh: Reading Female Body Politics in Contemporary Translated Assamese, Bengali, and Odia Fiction by Women Writers” submitted to Tezpur University in part fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Studies under the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, is a result of my original research work on the subject. It has not been submitted in any form or part for any diploma or degree of any other institution, including this University.



(Barsha Nayak)

Date: 01-07-2024

Place: Tezpur University

Registration No.: TZ203889 of 2022



तेजपुर विश्वविद्यालय/ TEZPUR UNIVERSITY

(संसद के अधिनियम द्वारा स्थापित केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालय)

(A Central University established by an Act of Parliament)

तेजपुर-784028 :: असम/ TEZPUR-784028 :: ASSAM

Dr. Mandakini Baruah
Assistant Professor
Department of Cultural Studies
Tezpur University

Email: mb@tezu.ernet.in
Phone: +91 3712 5160 (O)
+91 98643 63466 (M)

Certificate of the Supervisor

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “Caged Flesh: Reading Female Body Politics in Contemporary Translated Assamese, Bengali, and Odia Fiction by Women Writers” submitted to the **School of Humanities and Social Sciences**, Tezpur University in part fulfillment for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in **Cultural Studies** is a record of research work carried out by **Barsha Nayak** under my supervision and guidance.

All help received by her from various sources have been duly acknowledged.

No part of this thesis has been submitted elsewhere for award of any other degree.

Date: 01-07-2024

Place: Tezpur

(Mandakini Baruah)

Acknowledgment

From very early on in my life I was made aware of the body I live in and how it must look or behave to appease the onlookers. Out of all the weight that came with my puberty, perhaps the heaviest was the weight of the social expectations people in my vicinity had inflicted on my body. It has since been a longstanding personal project for me to engage with how women's bodies are caged, tamed, threatened, and stifled in all social contexts. This research therefore has been one of the most special, intellectually stimulating, and fulfilling experiences of my life. And it probably would not have seen the light of the day had it not been for the immense support of many people.

First and foremost, I am grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Mandakini Baruah for her valuable mentorship, and patience, and for being a stark support to all my academic dreams ever since I embarked on this beautiful journey with her. I am thankful to her for all the times she was so readily on board with my research ideas, inspiring me to think more creatively, and for the freedom she gave me throughout this period to work at my own pace. Dr. Baruah created a very inclusive workspace for me and continues to be one of the first people I will turn to when I am in academic distress. I am truly indebted to her for giving wings to my long-cherished dream of researching women's body politics and for being equally enthusiastic about the way my work has evolved over the past five years. I am also grateful to all the faculty members of the Department of Cultural Studies at Tezpur University, Prof. Debarshi Prasad Nath, Dr. Parasmoni Dutta, Dr. Madhurima Goswami Sharma, Dr. Juri Gogoi Konwar, Dr. Hashik N.K., Dr. Jayanta Vishnu Das, and Dr. Moushumi Kandali for engaging with my work and rendering me with valuable comments during progress seminars that further motivated me. I can't be thankful enough to Dr. Amiya Kumar Das from the Department of Sociology at Tezpur University for his unwavering support throughout my stay at the campus and for being so readily available to resolve any of my administrative or academic queries. I would also like to express my gratitude towards the administrative authorities of Tezpur University for offering me the institutional fellowship and other urgent aid whenever I required any official formalities to be done. I must also thank Prof. Amit Rahul Baishya from the Department of English at the University of Oklahoma and Dr. Shailendra Kumar Singh from the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology, Tirupati for investing their precious time in providing constructive feedback on my research which further helped me improve my critical analysis of the gendered body. I also would like to

thank all my friends and colleagues at Tezpur University for their enjoyable company. This thesis would not have come to its fruition without the emotional support that I have been lucky enough to get from multiple sources in my life. None of the things that I have achieved in my life would have been possible without the blessings and immense support of my parents, Dr. Upendra Prasad Nayak and Kishorimani Nayak. My parents have taught me the virtues of honesty and hardwork, two qualities I swear by for any task I take up in life. I dedicate all my successful ventures to the sacrifices of my mother and to the compromises my father made in his career to give us a better future. I am also extremely lucky to have been raised by four motherly sisters, Dr. Sasmita Nayak, Bandita Nayak, Deepa Nayak, and Sipra Nayak, who have been my pillars of strength growing up and who have been sources of inspiration for me. Whenever research became too monotonous I had them at the other end of my phone and I am simply thankful for their presence. I am truly blessed to have a partner like Rishav Chand who has quite literally lived this thesis with me. From going through my rough drafts to having long conversations on a raw idea, to checking my citations till late at night, and even attending with me the Annual South Asia Conference in Dublin, Ireland, Rishav accompanied me in all my scholarly adventures. Despite coming from a hard science background, Rishav has been there through my highs and lows during this entire journey and I could not have done this without him. I would also like to thank my friends Mitali Padhi, Sweta Mishra, and Dibyanita Panda who irrespective of their location or time of the day were always available for a stress-busting banter and kept me entertained on the loneliest days at campus.

I could not have asked for more support, love, or understanding than this. This thesis comes as a result of a collective effort of all these people and I thank everyone from the bottom of my heart.

Barsha Nayak