DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the thesis titled "Through the Queer Lens: An Analysis of the Politics of Representation in *Amar Chitra Katha's* Mahabharata" submitted by me to Tezpur University in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Studies under the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, is a result of my own study and research on the subject and that it has not been submitted to any other institution, including this University in any other form or published at any time before.

Date:	(Sreyoshi Dhar)

Place: Registration No. TZU03890 of 2024



DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL STUDIES

TEZPUR UNIVERSITY

NAPAAM, ASSAM

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "Through the Queer Lens: An Analysis of the Politics of Representation in *Amar Chitra Katha's* Mahabharata" 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 Ms. Sreyoshi Dhar under my supervision and guidance.

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

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

Signature of Supervisor

(MOUSHUMI KANDALI)

Date: Designation: Assistant Professor

Place: Department: Cultural Studies

School: Humanities and Social Sciences

DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the thesis titled "Through the Queer Lens: An Analysis of the Politics of Representation in *Amar Chitra Katha's* Mahabharata" submitted by me to Tezpur University in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Studies under the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, is a result of my own study and research on the subject and that it has not been submitted to any other institution, including this University in any other form or published at any time before.

Date:

Place:

Sreyoshi Dhar (Sreyoshi Dhar)

Registration No. TZU03890 of 2024



DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL STUDIES

TEZPUR UNIVERSITY

NAPAAM, ASSAM

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "Through the Queer Lens: An Analysis of the Politics of Representation in *Amar Chitra Katha's* Mahabharata" 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 Ms. Sreyoshi Dhar under my supervision and guidance.

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

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

Moushin Karlali
Signature of Supervisor

(MOUSHUMI KANDALI)

Designation: Assistant Professor

Department: Cultural Studies

School: Humanities and Social Sciences

Date:

Place:

Acknowledgements

It has been almost five years since I began my PhD journey. Looking back, I realise it would not have been possible to come this far had it not been for the help, and support of certain individuals. I shall be forever indebted to them for helping me, and contributing in their own way in making this journey towards a successful doctoral degree easier for me.

This journey would not have been possible without the encouragement and patient guidance of my supervisor, Dr. Moushumi Kandali, Assistant Professor, Department of Cultural Studies, Tezpur University. I am deeply indebted to her for giving me the necessary liberty in writing this thesis, allowing me to explore my areas of research, and guiding me whenever I might veer from my path. From guiding me through the monumental task of studying the entire Mahabharata, to encouraging me in every small academic event of my PhD journey, I would like to sincerely thank you, ma'am, for your continued support, guidance and for instilling in me a passion for research. The bond we have shared throughout the development of this project has been truly an enriching experience.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the Vice-Chancellor, Tezpur University for the opportunity, kind support, and all the resources provided for conducting and completing my research work.

I am immensely thankful to my institution, Tezpur University, for the opportunities, facilities and resources required to complete my work. I am also thankful to the institution for providing me the Institutional Fellowship for a period of four years. The fellowships allowed me to pursue my research without worrying about finances.

I must also name Mr. Deba Kr. Bharali, Assistant Registrar, Tezpur University who has helped me with several official and administrative matters. I owe my sincerest gratitude to him for his ready to help nature and for making these formalities smooth and easy for me.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt gratitude towards the faculty members of the Department of Cultural Studies, Prof. Debarshi Prasad Nath, Dr. Juri Gogoi Konwar, Dr. Parasmoni Dutta, Dr. Mandakini Baruah, Dr. Hashik N.K., Dr. Madhurima Goswami, and Dr. Jayanta Vishnu Das for their wise counsel

and valuable inputs while developing this research. I must also thank all the other staff members of the department for their warmth and support. I would like to extend a special thanks to the office assistants of the department for their invaluable help during this period and for taking care of all my official requirements.

I would also like to acknowledge the help and support of all the staff members of the libraries visited for my research work—the National Library, Kolkata, and Tezpur University Library, Tezpur. Their eagerness and enthusiasm in locating some of the materials for my research which were sometimes very old and difficult to locate, had aided my research process immensely. I am deeply thankful for their cooperation.

I offer my gratitude to the hostel authority of Pobitora Madame Curie Women's Hostel, Tezpur University and all the *mahis* for giving me a home away from home and taking care of my basic and emotional needs all these years.

I also thank all the printing stations, amenities, and food courts for giving me beautiful memories to cherish for life.

I would like to thank my co-scholars and friends Jasmine Vanlalhmangaihzuali, Puwati Dutta, Munmi Rajkumari, Ranjitha Raj, and Bornil Jonak Phukan. I am deeply indebted to them for their continuous support and feedback and for the pleasant memories of their company. I am also indebted to my hostel-mates and friends, Mrigyanka Chakravarty, Aarti Singh, Ribha Arabella Shabong, Priyanjana Chowdhury, and Karishma Das Purkayastha, for being a home away from home and also making hostel life during this journey to be such a fun experience. For a scholar living far away from home, all these people have ensured me a safe and peaceful life in Tezpur these years.

I would like to extend a special mention to Kirti Verma, my ex-roommate, friend, and confidante, for being a part of my academic journey. Since the days of my master's, she has been an indispensable part of my life, academic and otherwise, and has continued to remain so even during my PhD years, providing me with emotional, mental, and even academic support. I shall be forever indebted to her for her help and support.

I extend my deep gratitude to my partner, Sanmit Rakshit, for being a pillar of strength to me throughout, providing me with mental and emotional support, and even helping me navigate some of the technical aspects of my research.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my family for being there for me throughout. Thank you, Baba, Maa, and Shreyansh. I fall short of words to express my gratitude towards you. Thank you for living this thesis with me, staying up nights with me, and listening to me rant about my work in spite of not being from my area of study. There are no words to express my love and gratitude for your endless sacrifices, unfaltering love, unflinching faith in me, and for being the backbone of my life. Your support and love have seen me through all my dark and desperate times and kept my hopes alive so I may reach this day today.

And finally, I must thank *Amar Chitra Katha*. With its mind-boggling plethora of mythological adaptations, the *Amar Chitra Katha* has never failed to enthral me, humble me, and rouse the critic in me. It was a pleasure doing my thesis on the comic giant in India, *Amar Chitra Katha* keeping in mind the remarkable influence they hold in the life of the average Indian.

Sreyoshi Dhar

List of Figures and Illustrations

- Fig. 1.1: Title page of Krishna-Retold from the Bhagawat Puran
- Fig. 1.2: Krishna plays a prank on the gopikas
- Fig. 1.3: Krishna in the Tribhanga posture

(image sourced from https://hinduismstackexchange.com)

- Fig. 1.4: Krishna's Tribhanga posture missing from Amar Chitra Katha
- Fig. 1.5: Krishna is claimed to be a 'wonder boy'
- Fig. 1.6: *Instance of Krishna's violence against animals*
- Fig. 1.7: Title page of Bhagwat- The Krishna Avatar
- Fig. 1.8: Assertion of Krishna's masculinity
- Fig. 1.9: Amar Chitra Katha's depiction of the raas-leela
- Fig. 1.10: Krishna's education as depicted in Amar Chitra Katha
- Fig. 2.1: Title page of Amar Chitra Katha's Amba
- Fig. 2.2: Shiva grants Amba the boon of rebirth
- Fig. 2.3: Shikhandini is born to King Drupad
- Fig. 2.4: Shikhandini becomes Shikhandi
- Fig. 2.5: Shikhandi faces off against Bhishma
- Fig. 3.1: Arjuna 'plans' to be Brihannala
- Fig. 3.2: Brihannala mocked by the Kauravas
- Fig. 3.3: Arjuna storms onto the battlefield in his masculine form
- Fig. 4.1: Title page of Amar Chitra Katha's 'The Churning of the Ocean'
- Fig. 4.2: Mohini's first appearance in Amar Chitra Katha
- Fig. 4.3: Vishnu kills Rahu in Amar Chitra Katha
- Fig. 4.4: Lord Ayyappan is born

- Fig. 5.1: Introduction of Chitrangada in Uloopi—The Naga Princess Who Fell In Love with Arjuna
- Fig. 5.2: Chitravahana asks his grandson to be successor
- Fig. 5.3: Chitrangada mourns Arjuna
- Fig. 6.1: Bhishma takes his oath
- Fig. 6.2: Amba scorned by Bhishma
- Fig. 7.1: Krishna in Amar Chitra Katha's The Gita
- Fig.7.2: Krishna and Arjuna talk in The Gita
- Fig.7.3: Jagannatha of Puri
- Fig. 7.4: Tripura
- Fig.7.5: Elephanta
- Fig.7.6: Vaishno Devi
- Fig.7.7: Thanjavur
- Fig.7.8: Konark
- Fig.7.9: Krishna- Retold from the Bhagawat Puran
- Fig.7.10: The Pandavas in Hiding- Outwiting a Wily Enemy