

CERTIFICATE

I certify that **Mrs. Laboni Sarkar** has prepared her thesis entitled “**REPRESENTATIONS OF RAILWAYS IN LITERARY TRADITIONS OF BENGAL: 1854-1947**” for the award of Ph.D. degree in Department of History, Faculty of Arts, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara (390002). She has carried out original research work under my guidance and supervision and that this work has not been submitted anywhere for any degree.

PROF. ARUNA AWASTHI

Guide

Place: Vadodara

Date: 22.04.2024

DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled “**REPRESENTATIONS OF RAILWAYS IN LITERARY TRADITIONS OF BENGAL: 1854-1947**” has been prepared by me under the guidance and supervision of **Prof. Dr. Aruna Awasthi**, Department of History, Faculty of Arts, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara (390002). No part of this Thesis has been submitted anywhere for any degree.

Mrs. Laboni Sarkar

Ph.D. Scholar

Place: Vadodara

Date: 22/04/2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Gratitude pours forth to those who fueled my Ph.D. journey. Prof. Aruna Awasthi, my beacon, guided me through every twist and turn, her wisdom illuminating the path. Without her invaluable guidance, navigating the intricacies of data analysis would have been daunting. Her steadfast encouragement ignited my passion for research and ensured its timely fruition.

Heartfelt appreciation goes out to the esteemed faculty members of the Department of History at The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara. A special mention to Dr. Maitree Vaidya, whose invaluable guidance steered me through challenges, despite not being my official mentor. Gratitude also extends to the dedicated non-teaching staff, including Mr. Nilesh Dave, Mr. Rameshbhai, and Mr. Naresh, whose support was instrumental. Thanks to all the staff members for their contributions to my academic journey.

I express sincere gratitude to Mrinalini Datta Mahavidyapith, the institution where I work, and all its stakeholders for their steadfast support during my Ph.D. journey. I extend heartfelt gratitude to my esteemed colleagues, Dr. Pravat Roy, Dr. Sohini Sinha, Smt. Tanusree Bose Saha, and Dr. Subrata Roychowdhury, whose unwavering support was instrumental in bringing my research to fruition. A special mention to my diligent student, Sangita Kundu, whose assistance in scouring old newspapers was invaluable.

My special thanks are also due to all the libraries and repositories I visited, especially Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Kolkata; National Library, Kolkata; the State Central Library, Kolkata; the State Archives, Kolkata and National Archives of India, New Delhi. I would also extend my gratitude to the online libraries, archives, or repositories.

My heartfelt appreciation extends to my husband, and my brother whose unwavering support bolstered me, and to my cherished family members who cheered me on. Extended appreciation to Olivia, my daughter, who is a never-ending source of motivation.

To my wonderful friends at Maharaja Sayajirao University and Mrinalini Datta Mahavidyapith, Kolkata, your camaraderie was a vital ingredient in my success. To anyone I've inadvertently overlooked, please accept my apologies – your contributions are deeply valued.

Laboni Sarkar

PREFACE

The rumble of iron wheels, the whistle's shrill cry, and the rhythmic chug of locomotives - railways, a symbol of progress and transformation, have left an indelible mark on the literary landscape of Bengal. In this thesis, titled "Representations of Railways in Literary Traditions of Bengal: 1854-1947," I embark on a journey through the rich tapestry of Bengali literature to explore the multifaceted portrayals of railways from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century.

Railways arrived in Bengal in 1854, heralding a new era of connectivity and modernity. Yet, beyond their physical presence, railways became a potent metaphor in Bengali literature, symbolising not only technological advancement but also social changes, cultural encounters, and ecological impacts. This thesis delves into the diverse ways in which railways were depicted, interpreted, and critiqued by Bengali writers across different genres, including novels, short stories, poems, and essays.

Drawing upon a wide array of literary texts, archival materials, and historical sources, this study seeks to unravel the complex interplay between railways and Bengali society, highlighting their role in shaping perceptions, ideologies, and identities. Through meticulous analysis and contextualization, I aim to illuminate the evolving representations of railways in Bengal's literary imagination, shedding light on the intersections of literature, history, and culture.

As we embark on this intellectual voyage, I express my gratitude to the scholars, writers, and researchers whose works have paved the way for this study. I also extend my heartfelt appreciation to my mentors, colleagues, and loved ones for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout this endeavour.

May this thesis serve as a tribute to the enduring legacy of railways in Bengali literature and as a testament to the power of literature to capture the essence of a bygone era and illuminate the complexities of human experience.

Laboni Sarkar

DEDICATION

Dedicated to

Two unwavering pillars of my life,

Kallol Sarkar (My brother)

And

Shyamal Biswas (My husband)