

Abstract

My attempt in this dissertation is to study the manifestation of the idea of region in the ballads of Scotland, Great Britain and the *lokgeet* of Kachchh, India. I do this as both Scotland and Kachchh have been making a case for the distinctive recognition of their region. Both these movements looked to their minstrel traditions to articulate and define cultural heritage.

The quest for autonomy and self-recognition have marked the recent histories of Scotland, Great Britain and Kachchh, Gujarat. This study is an exploration of these two regions in their interrelationship with folk genres, and argues that the ballads of Scotland, Great Britain, and the *lokgeet* of Kachchh, India play a similar and crucial role in making a case for the recognition of their respective regions in the contemporary context where these regions have laid a claim to cultural distinction. However, these trajectories are not linear and have undercurrents of politics and cultural dynamics.

This study attempts to understand the politics behind the construction of an identity and imagining of a region. In doing so it explores class and race in Scotland and caste in Kachchh, Gujarat taking them as categories of analysis to read the ballads and *lokgeet* and examine their hegemonic role in constructing a monolithic singular identity. It explores these two regions and these two folk genres in a comparative mode and locates underpinned identity politics in the claims for autonomy in both regions.

I have laid out my central arguments and background to the thesis in the Introduction. This is followed by the first chapter titled “Understanding Folk Literature, *Lok Sahitya* and Region” which discusses folk, *lok*, and region. The chapter consists of a review of literature in these conceptual areas and sets the field for an investigation into the folklore practices of Scotland and Kachchh. This chapter discusses two broad themes of folk and region and examines how they shape each other. It locates the historical emergence of folk as a concept in Europe and the USA, and then looks at the Indian context. Through this, the chapter will develop an understanding of the region through a primary investigation into the category folklore.

My next chapter, titled “Ballads, Literary Imagination and Scotland as a Region,” focuses on Scotland and its long history of claiming independence from England. This chapter explores Scotland, and the fashioning of its identity through the ballad. It attempts to examine the construction of the Scottish social and regional identity and the role played by folk forms such as the ballad in this construction. My close reading of selected ballads

has led me to conclude that folk forms like the ballad remain as arenas where class/race superiority is expressed, shaped and consolidated.

The third chapter, titled “*Lokgeet*, Literary Imagination, and the Idea of Kachchh” following the framework of the previous chapter, examines the Kachchh as a region through the close analysis of the *lokgeet*. It attempts to understand the social, political and regional construction of identity of Kachchh. It locates the idea of caste in the imagining of the idea of Kachchh. It argues that the notion of caste plays an important role in the imagination of the region of Kachchh. “Folk Literature and the Articulation of Autonomy: The Case of Scotland and Kachchh, 1900 to 2023” is the fourth chapter. I unpack the history of the claims of autonomy by both the regions in the first section, and locate the politics of these claims for autonomy. It also compares and examines the structure as well as the themes that manifest regional identities of both regions in folk songs.

The fourth chapter is followed by a concluding chapter, in which key findings and conclusions drawn from the previous chapters are discussed. Although the ideas of identity and region are in constant flux, this chapter offers a set of open-ended conclusions.

Key Findings:

The study, with the close reading of the ballads and *lokgeet* used as a representative of the portrayal of the cultural distinctiveness for articulating autonomy in both regions, concludes that the idea of class/race in Scotland and caste in Kachchh, Gujarat, significantly informs the articulations of autonomy in both regions.

Further:

- The idea of folk and *lok* in Kachchh and Gujarat is translated from the Western/German idea of *volks* or *volkskunde* or folk where the early German understanding of *volk(s)* was defined away from urban and civilized space. In the United States, folk and lore are defined in the contemporary context of race and globalization, whereas *lok* in Kachchh, Gujarat, is not contextualized in the reality of caste. The dominance of the upper caste in the field of folklore in the Indian context since the nineteenth century remained blind to the caste dimension of the category *lok*. In a similar way, the category folk needs to be aware of the significance of race and class to the category folk in the context of Scotland and in the United Kingdom, more broadly.

- In the context of Scotland, through the study of selected folk ballads, it is concluded that ballads brought into public by different modes of recording in the eighteenth and nineteenth century majorly focus on the symbols and imagery that were deemed to be nationalist. The ballads represent this idea of class and race of the leaders and warriors of the battles fought for Scottish independence. The identity that is constructed based on these ballads leads to a narrow and limited sense of identity of the society and nation as whole.
- In the context of Kachchh, folk literature is defined as *lok sahitya*, against the scriptures of the Vedic age in their oral and spoken (*smriti*) form. Upper castes have never been defined as a *lok*. It has been found that the folklore that emerged in certain caste system cannot dodge the dogma and hierarchy. It comes in to underpin *lokgeet* in subtle ways. The conceptualization of folklore based on the western paradigms add layers to the meaning making processes of *lok sahitya* and to the understanding of the people, the *lok* and the region. These understandings of region based on the hierarchy would always remain different from the region discursively and experientially understood by the people, *lok*, who are making and shaping it.
- Through a comparative study of the Scottish ballad and Kachchhi *lokgeet*, I have found that the claims of autonomy in both regions, are connected with various realities and arrangements of power within and outside the region, and these claims are located in social, cultural and political ideologies. Social structures of division in both regions are also crucial in the making meaning of the folklore and the nationalist views read into them to assert a distinct socio-cultural identity while making the case for autonomy.

Finally, I have found that in Scotland, class and race, and caste in Kachchh have remained fundamental identitarian undercurrents that are structural to folklore.