

# **Echoes of Defiance: Subversive Language, Ritualised Transgression and Place-Making in Mirzapur’s Kajarī Folksongs**



**Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the Award of Degree  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**Supervisor**

Dr Swasti Mishra  
Assistant Professor

**Submitted by**

Milan Chauhan  
Roll No- 19191008

**Department of Humanistic Studies  
Indian Institute of Technology (Banaras Hindu University) Varanasi**

APRIL 2025

## CERTIFICATE

It is certified that the work contained in the thesis titled **Echoes of Defiance: Subversive Language, Ritualised Transgression and Place-Making in Mirzapur's Kajari Folksongs** by **Milan Chauhan** has carried out under my supervision and that this work has not been submitted elsewhere for a degree.

It is further certified that the student has fulfilled all the requirements of Comprehensive, Candidacy and SOTA for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the Indian Institute of Technology (Banaras Hindu University), Varanasi.

Swasti Mishra  
23-04-2025

Signature of Supervisor

सहायक आचार्य/Asstt. Professor  
मानवतावादी अध्ययन विभाग/Department of Humanistic Studies  
भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान /Indian Institute of Technology  
Dr. Swasti Mishra (काशी हिन्दू विश्वविद्यालय) /Banaras Hindu University  
बाराणसी-२२१००५ (उ०प्र०) /Varanasi-221005 (U.P.)  
Assistant Professor

Department of Humanistic Studies

Indian Institute of Technology (BHU)

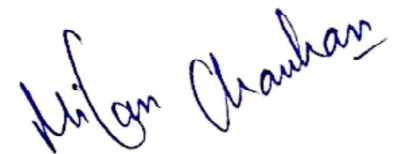
Varanasi - 221005, India

## DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

I, Milan Chauhan, certify that the work embodied in this thesis is my own bona fide work and was carried out by me under the supervision of Dr Swasti Mishra from July 2019 to April 2025, at the Department of Humanistic Studies, Indian Institute of Technology (Banaras Hindu University), Varanasi. The matter embodied in this thesis has not been submitted for the award of any other degree/diploma. I declare that I have faithfully acknowledged and given credits to the research workers wherever their works have been cited in my work in this thesis. I further declare that I have not wilfully copied any other's work, paragraphs, text, data, results, etc., reported in journals, books, magazines, reports, dissertations, theses, etc., or available at websites and have not included them in this thesis and have not cited as my own work.

Date : 23-04-2025

Place: Varanasi



Signature of the Student

(Milan Chauhan)

**CERTIFICATE BY THE SUPERVISOR(S)**

It is certified that the above statement made by the student is correct to the best of my/our knowledge.

*Swasti Mishra*  
23-04-2025

**Supervisor**

**Dr. Swasti Mishra**  
सहायक आचार्य/Asstt. Professor  
मानवतावादी अध्ययन विभाग/Department of Humanistic Studies  
भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान /Indian Institute of Technology  
(काशी हिन्दू विश्वविद्यालय)/Banaras Hindu University  
Varanasi-221005 (U.P.)

**Department of Humanistic Studies**

**Indian Institute of Technology (BHU)**

**Varanasi - 221005, India**

*[Signature]*  
23 04 25

**Signature of Head of Department/Coordinator of School(s)**

**“SEAL OF THE DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL”**

**Head**  
**Department of Humanistic Studies**  
**Indian Institute of Technology**  
**(Banaras Hindu University)**  
**VARANASI-221005 (U.P.)**

## COPYRIGHT TRANSFER CERTIFICATE

Title of the Thesis: **Echoes of Defiance: Subversive Language, Ritualised Transgression and Place-Making in Mirzapur's Kajari Folksongs**

Name of the Student: Milan Chauhan

### Copyright Transfer

The undersigned hereby assigns to the Indian Institute of Technology (Banaras Hindu University), Varanasi. All rights under copyright that may exist in and for the above thesis submitted for the award of the Doctor of Philosophy.

Date : 23-04-2025

Place: Varanasi



Signature of the Student

(Milan Chauhan)

**Note: However, the author may reproduce or authorise others to reproduce material extracted verbatim from the thesis or derivative of the thesis for the author's personal use, provided that the source and the Institute's copyright notice are indicated.**

*This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my Nana Ji, Late Kanhaiya Lal Chauhan, whose love, support and wisdom continue to inspire me every day.*

*Your influence is forever cherished...*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The completion of this thesis has been a journey of learning, patience, and invaluable guidance. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have contributed to its realisation. Its completion would not have been possible without the unwavering support and encouragement of many individuals. A formal acknowledgement alone cannot fully express my deep appreciation for their contributions.

First, I express my deepest gratitude to the Almighty, whose grace has guided every step of my journey. A heartfelt thanks to my family, especially my beloved parents, Shri Hans Ram Chauhan and Shrimati Pushpa Devi, whose unwavering support, love, and sacrifices have been the foundation of all my endeavours. I am equally indebted to my revered gurus, whose wisdom and blessings have shaped my path with light and clarity.

I greatly appreciate my supervisor, Dr Swasti Mishra, for her unwavering support, insightful feedback, and constant encouragement throughout this research. Her expertise and mentorship have been instrumental in shaping my ideas and refining my work. I also extend my sincere thanks to the Research Progress Evaluation Committee (RPEC) members, Dr Sukomal Pal and Dr Sukhada Sharma, for their thoughtful suggestions and critical insights, which helped strengthen the foundation of this study.

I am profoundly grateful to Dr Ram Narayan Tiwari and Professor Smita Tewari Jassal, whose constant guidance and academic wisdom were invaluable in giving this thesis its final shape. I sincerely thank Dr Banibrata Mahanta and Dr Ajit Kumar Mishra for their support and encouragement throughout this process. A special acknowledgement is reserved for Dr Priyadarshini Mishra, whose insightful suggestion was the starting point of this research and the

driving force behind my exploration of this topic. Her keen intuition and unwavering belief in the significance of this study gave it both purpose and direction. More than just an academic inspiration, she has been a constant source of encouragement, pushing me to see the significance of my work. Her support, wisdom, and faith in this research have meant more than words can express; I am genuinely grateful.

I am also indebted to my friends and colleagues, who have been my pillars of strength throughout this journey. I thank Dr Vibhanshu Verma, Ajeet Singh, Deepak Rathore, and Ravikant Dubey. Special thanks to Suman Rawat, Parichiti Saha, Dr Rashmi Patel, Shubham Pathak, Piyush, Juhi Singh, Dr Akanksha Yadav, Nikita Mittal, Dr Vandana Dwivedi, and Dr Sooraj for their constant support, encouragement, and constructive discussions. A special mention goes to special friends Dr Niwedita, Pritam Rawat, Mukesh Jaiswar, Rahul Gupta, Manish Yadav and Rajat Vishwakarma for their unwavering belief in my work and constant motivation to finish this project.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the people whose support and willingness to share their cultural wisdom acted as the foundation of this work. I am thankful to the people of Gaura, Bandhwa, Shivpur, and Madguda villages of Mirzapur and the residents of Varanasi, Bihar, and Ghazipur. Their hospitality, generosity, and insights into folk traditions have greatly enriched my research. Their willingness to share their experiences and cultural heritage has been instrumental in shaping the core of this study.

My siblings, Ajay Chauhan and Shivangi Chauhan, have consistently shown their unconditional love, patience, and belief in me. I extend my deepest gratitude to Parasnath Chauhan (uncle) and his mother, Chamela Devi, whose unwavering support and blessings have been the foundation of

my academic and personal journey. Without their constant encouragement, sacrifices, and belief in my abilities, I would not have been able to embark on this path, let alone see it through to completion. My most significant motivation sources are their love and strength; I am eternally grateful.

Finally, I extend my gratitude to all those who, directly or indirectly, have supported me throughout this academic endeavour. This thesis would not have been possible without their encouragement, patience, and unwavering faith in my journey.



## NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION

This thesis employs a systematic approach to the transliteration of non-English terms, particularly from Sanskrit, Hindi, and Bhojpuri, using the Latin script. Sanskrit terms follow the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST) to ensure phonetic accuracy. For Hindi and Bhojpuri, words are transliterated based on standard pronunciation practices. Diacritical marks are not applied to place names.

All Sanskrit, Hindi, and Bhojpuri words are italicised to distinguish them from English. While Indic languages do not use uppercase letters, the first letter of proper nouns, such as *Kajarī*, *Kanyādān*, and *Vindhyācala*, is capitalised to align with English usage.

Unless otherwise indicated, all English translations are original to the researcher. These translations prioritise literal accuracy over literary style. Terms that do not have direct English equivalents or are more meaningfully expressed in their original languages are transliterated throughout the text. Their meanings are clarified through brackets or footnotes when necessary.



## LIST OF FIGURES

### Chapter 3

- Figure 3.1: The shoots of barley seeds planted on the *Nāga-pañcamī* festival are revered as *jarāī* mata.

### Chapter 4

- Figure 4.1: The procession of cross-dressed women leading to the marketplace on *Kajarī* festival.
- Figure 4.2: Sunita Devi assumes the role of a joker in the Madguda village while chasing male relatives of the groom (Jata Shankar and Jagdish Sonkar) at the *Tij* festival.

### Chapter 6:

- Figure 6.1: A women's group singing in a natural setting without artificial light, complex setup and musical instruments.
- Figure 6.2: Men's performative group singing and playing instruments like a microphone, harmonium, cymbals and a two-headed drum (*dholak*).



## LIST OF TABLES

### Chapter 1

- Table 1.1: A concise overview of the objectives, methodology, results, and key research gaps of the studies examined in the literature review. Additionally, a detailed discussion of the existing literature on *Kajari* folksongs is included.

### Chapter 2

- Table 2.1 briefly describes the field details, data collection process, and respondents.

