



Notice for the PhD Viva Voce Examination

Mr Sarath S Kumar, Registration Number: 2070506, PhD Scholar at the Department of English and Cultural Studies, School of Humanities and Performing Arts, CHRIST (Deemed to be University) will defend his PhD thesis at the public viva-voce examination on Tuesday, 30 June 2026 at 11.00 am in Room No. 05, Ground Floor, R&D Block, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru - 560029, Karnataka, India.

Title of the Thesis	:	Political Zeitgeists of Post-Independent India: Tracing the Trajectory of (Dis)guised Authoritarianism through Select Post-Independent Indian Fiction
Discipline	:	English Studies
External Examiner - I	:	Dr Alagesan M Associate Professor Department of Language, Culture and Society SRM Institute of Science and Technology SRM Nagar, Kattankulathur - 603203 Chengalpattu District Tamil Nadu
External Examiner - II	:	Dr Prantik Banerjee Professor Department of English Hislop College Temple Road, Civil Lines Nagpur - 440001 Maharashtra
Supervisor	:	Dr Sreejith D Assistant Professor Department of English and Cultural Studies School of Humanities and Performing Arts CHRIST (Deemed to be University) Bengaluru - 560029 Karnataka

The members of the Research Advisory Committee of the Scholar, the faculty members of the Department and the School, interested experts and research scholars of all the branches of research are cordially invited to attend this open viva-voce examination.

Place: Bengaluru
Date: 24 June 2026

Registrar (Academics)

ABSTRACT

India has always stood steadfast to the ideals of democracy to a large extent. However, contrary to its democratic stature, India has been in the limelight for the phenomenon of authoritarianism in varied forms since its independence. This research looks into various manifestations of authoritarianism, which defined three watershed political periods of post-independent India: namely, the Emergency, the Rise of Right-wing politics and the ambience of hatred in the socio-political milieu of contemporary Kashmir, wherein overt and covert hegemony can be seen. This study attempts to trace the history and trajectory of authoritarianism of post-independent India through close textual analysis of *A Fine Balance*, *In Times of Siege* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, which are representative of three watershed events in India's political history. Placing these periods under the purview of new historicism helps to unveil polyphonic narratives and voices that challenge history's position as unequivocal, objective and monolithic, thereby highlighting the fact that our identity is deeply intertwined with our history. The primary objective of this study would be to probe into those crucial post-independent periods where a wavering between discursive and performative hegemonies can be seen, which eventually culminated in an overt form of performative hegemony in contemporary times.

Keywords: Authoritarianism, Post-Independent India, Democracy, New Historicism, Hegemony

Publications:

1. **Kumar, Sarath S**, Sreejith Kadiyakkol, and Remya R. "Imagined Communities in Bollywood: A Contrapuntal Reading of *The Kashmir Files* and *Mulk*." *Asiatic: IIUM Journal of English Language and Literature*, vol. 19, no. 2, 10, Dec. 2025, pp. 176-192. <https://doi.org/10.31436/asiatic.v19i2.3954>.
2. **Kumar, Sarath S**, and Sreejith Kadiyakkol. "Systemless Authoritarianism, Counter-Archives, and Literary Witnessing: A New Historicist and Cultural-Political Reading of Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*." *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2026, article 2652710. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2026.2652710>.