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Title:	RITUAL AS COMMUNICATION AND RELIGIOUS MULTIPLICITY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF IMAMBADA.
Authors:	Ali., Rashid.
Keywords:	Communication. Imambada Religious.
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Abstract:	<p>The thesis investigates mourning spaces of Shia Muslims called Imambada in North India as site of communication where a distinct dialogicity operates amidst diverse cultural and literary tropes. This site over centuries emerged as syncretic with the participation of people from other religious denominations of which lamentation poetry is classic example. As meeting ground of various religious faiths, Imambadas have the propensity to be transgressive, subversive and accommodative. The research accommodates various philosophical moorings of critical thinkers such as Habermas' Public sphere, Walter Benjamin's porosity, Mikhail Bakhtin's carnivalesque and Victor Turner's liminality as the conceptual craft to study these architectural spectacles into cultural and literary domains. Using ethnographic studies in ten cities of North and South India, the research asserts that much of the rituals of Imambadas are of recent origin shaped by the nobility after the decline of Mughal empire rooted in pre-Islamic pagan society, other Abrahmic faiths and Zoroastrianism. However, these architectural sites have transcended their own 'heretic' roots and emerged as the 'preserver' of multiplicity in a world which is strife ridden. The thesis argues that Urdu language which suffers invisibilisation at this critical political juncture, munificently thrives in Imambadas. On the other hand, the same language has increasingly become 'hegemonic' when it comes to engagement with other vernaculars in its ritualised setting. The fundamental question this research asks is in what ways Imambada ritual subverts its own aniconic basis to embark upon a tough journey of multiplicity. This argument is in tandem with what scholars like Talal Asad and Mahmood Mamdani have asserted in framing the question about secular formation. The thesis also argues that rituals and literary craft lie not in religions or priestly class but in transmission of rituals via class ridden statist formations which make the people of the rituals the basis of their survival. However, when people turn into reified rituals, they also go beyond their own governing edifice and construct new interpretations of their faith. While this is true of other religious denominations too. which may have deployment of pun and humour to transgress, Imambada rituals offer such innovations in a very solemn and sombre setting which makes it unique. With an interface of Sanskrit and Persian cosmopolis as encapsulated by Pollock and Eaton, the research brings various nuances of Imambadas' history to a fresh scrutiny.</p>
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