# Research lines - RATNAKARA:

Taking the Indian Ocean as our starting point, we analyse the literary and cultural productions originated in/from the porousness, permeability and connectedness that defines Indian Ocean studies (Vink 2007). The “ocean” becomes a trope whereby spatial configurations are conceptualized as open, flexible and essentially transnational.

The monsoons enabled trade across the Indian Ocean rim and together with the spread of Islam from the eighth century onwards gave rise to the establishment of a series of cosmopolitan port cities. As a result of this proliferating cosmopolitanism, a cultural and historical network emerged whose rhizomatic nature linked not only land masses but also and, we would like to add, more significantly, oceans and islands.

Ratnakara explores the aquatic cartographies that are forged within colonial and postcolonial histories that feature the “ocean”, both literally and figuratively, as the propeller of cultural contact. With the advent of European imperialism, new ways of understanding the aquatic medium materialised, and hence identities had to be re-formulated, geographical displacements had to be re-assessed and cosmopolitanism demanded to be addressed under the lens of hydrocolonialism, that is to say, colonization by way of water (Hofmeyr 2022). Ultimately, what we propose is to open up a dialogue wherein the Indian, Atlantic and Pacific oceans are constructed as a unique and multifarious rhizomatic canvas.

- Construction of the “communal self”
- Aesthetics of remembering: empathy, identity and mourning
- South Asian diasporas in the Western Indian Ocean
- Forced displacements: the Chagos Islands case
- Literary representations of trauma
- Historical memory and Life Writing
- Translating oceanic writing: constraints and latitudes