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**A STUDY ON THE POETICS OF JUSTICE: THE
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A Study on the Poetics of Justice: The Discourse of Resistance in Selected Indian Fiction

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Abstract – *The present study regards the political and the poetic (or aesthetic) as inseparable in the space of literature. The political project of the quest for justice is also, at the same time, a poetic project that recasts the orders of vision and visibility, indeed the entire range and scope of the relationship between human sensibility and the world. Recent Indian fiction, as the analysis in the following pages demonstrates, exemplifies the finest melding of the political and the aesthetic in a veritable poetics of justice articulated as a vibrant, layered and many-sided discourse of resistance.*

The word resistance is derived from the Latin root word resister, meaning to stand against, which denotes a slow but insistent, often invisible but enduring strategy that has the potential to dislodge the dominant structures, if not dismantle them. Resistance may involve a re-interpretation of the hegemonic biases that regulate the identities of the subaltern groups and thus silence those groups.

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INTRODUCTION

The existing critical and scholarly work, however, mainly discusses cultural imperialism and the resistance of the natives. The modes of resistance to other forms of social, political and cultural hegemony have drawn the attention of Ranajit Guha and other subaltern studies scholars. Feminist resistances find expression in individual actions and women's movement, but their main concern arguably remains assertion of the self and the search for personal freedom. Dalit literature voices anger against the oppressive caste system, but Dalit resistances have been mainly studied as protests. Broadly speaking, the scholarship available on the selected fiction is thus limited to the accounts of atrocities and injustices perpetrated by the dominant groups on the weak groups. The present study, hence, moves further and analyzes the resistances, in action and words, of the weak both at political and aesthetic levels. It focuses on resistance as the power of the powerless and the modes of resistance as the inherent strength of the weak that enables them to win a dignified space in the world. It also brings out the significance of non-violent resistance in democratizing an unequal and unjust order. Contrary to the conventional approach that perceives resistance as a reactionary phenomenon, the present work explores a range of theories of resistance to comprehensively bring out its positive and constructive nature and its role in establishing a just order. For this purpose, the study chooses the path-breaking theoretical contributions made by Camus, Certeau and Rancière as the framework for critical analysis of the selected literary texts.

Camus considers a moderate and non-violent ethical resistance to be the logic of creation which enables the common person to fight oppression and to restructure the oppressive order. *The Rebel* (1951) by Camus provides an appropriate framework for a typology of resistance. He distinguishes the "literature of consent" from the "literature of rebellion" and considers every significant creative work to be also an aesthetic resistance. According to him, an artist fabricates universes and intervenes in the perceived order to bring unity in a disorderly world. This is aesthetic resistance, according to Camus. He asserts that resistance is a pre-condition for both civilization and art. He is of the conviction that a good literary work maintains a balance between the real and the imaginary. When an artist narrates accounts of injustices and indignities heaped on the oppressed, he intervenes in the given reality to bring about a reconfiguration of that reality (Camus, *Rebel*). Camus also perceives a sense of solidarity in the rebellious instincts of the weak that helps them in overcoming a multi-lated understanding and even enables them to fight injustice, servitude, terror or falsehood. He distinguishes non-violent resistance from the violent revolutions and advocates a moderate resistance which he calls authentic rebellion. Such rebellion, for Camus, becomes an essential dimension of the desire to establish the kingdom of justice in the world. Unlike the revolutionary movements that demand totality and justify murder and death, the authentic rebellion advocated by Camus goes beyond nihilism to engender positive action for transformation. Camus emphasizes the inherent human strength with which even the oppressed can hold off gods and tyrants

and transform the inhumanity of the world into humanity. Thus Camus's faith in ethical values and non-violent resistance lays the foundations of an ethical order.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

According to Michel Foucault, a discourse is shaped by social and political structures and institutions (Mills). He believes that "power is a key element" in discursive formations. Since power is neither fixed nor stable but keeps circulating, the power relations are sometimes negotiated by the powerless through "verbal dexterity". Following Foucault, it may be asserted that a discourse transmits as well as produces power. It may become an instrument of struggle, "[a] point of resistance" and "[a] starting point of an opposing strategy". For Foucault, a discourse narrows one's field of vision and even delimits the field of objects. Such delimitation influences the thought and action of individuals, which gives rise to exclusion. Foucault holds that exclusion, paradoxically, can also produce a discourse. He focuses on the way discursive practices project subjects of discursive formations.

According to him, discursive rules enable subjects to produce objects, statements, concepts and strategies which together constitute a discourse. He notes that a discourse shapes social relationships and institutions and is itself shaped by social practices. It is because of the social structure which determines the meaning and function of the individual elements of a system that Levi-Strauss also notices the oppositions and correlations between the basic elements of the system beneath the static social structure. This suggests that regulatory social constraints and academic disciplines can also give rise to discourses (Mills). A discourse, points to the mutual relationship between social structure and human agency. The correlation confirms that a discourse is not confined to an inner realm or some mental phenomena.

In Jacques Derrida's opinion, when the meaning of a sign fixed by its context acts as a constraint, it produces a language which "differs" and "defers," and this becomes a discourse. If, for Foucault, discursivity is the law of difference between what one could say correctly (under the rules of grammar and logic) and what is actually said; for Derrida, it is the play of difference, deferral, undecidability and plurality that produces a discourse (Howarth). According to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, discourse is a publicly available, incomplete framework of meaning that enables social life to be conducted. It is vulnerable to rebellious forces because of the political nature of the social systems. Resistance occurs when those who are excluded from political processes constitute new ways to secure identities and devise new forms of representation. According to Mills, the Marxists relate discourse to an economic base, whereas Foucault sees it as a type of power relations that involve both a "powerful" participant and a "powerless" one. Since every power relation is unstable and contains the force

of resistance which can challenge and overthrow it, resistance becomes the starting point of an opposing strategy. Since a discourse is shaped by socio-economic or cultural factors, the study of discursive structures can help in interpreting events and objects. It can bring out the struggle of the subjects against the dominant order. It can also demonstrate the resistance which has the potential to shift power and reconfigure the unequal and unjust order.

HYPOTHESIS:

This project proceeds on the hypothesis that the Indian writing produced during the period 1987 to 2007 may be broadly read as constituting a complex and multi-layered discourse of resistance against both old and new forces of domination in the emerging global order which is increasingly being perceived as unjust and violent. Conventionally, the recent Indian fiction has been perceived as a middle class phenomenon, but a careful study reveals that this fiction allows considerable representation to the marginalized and oppressed also. Though the present study mainly examines the articulation of resistance in terms of gender, caste, class and the postcolonial condition, the linguistic, cultural and ecological inflections of resistance have been taken into account. The specific contexts of recent Indian history have also been particularly studied, wherever relevant, against the backdrop of an emerging neo-liberal ideology and its manifestations. With an emphasis on the study of various discourses at their points of intersection, the texts are thus examined for the various forms of resistance.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The study of the discourse of resistance helps in understanding the subjectivities capable of creating a new world or leading towards a new visions of a democratic order (Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*). When an artist makes linguistic and other innovations in a fictional work, she establishes patterns that can bring ethical and political transformations within the oppressive structures. Such works demonstrate the manner in which the marginalized challenge the dominant authorities in order to bring changes or transformations that point to democracy and freedom. It is, therefore, often the undemocratic character of the oppressive structures that is targeted by resistance movements. The peaceful and nonviolent resistance of the marginalized attempts to redefine the nature of the existing political, social, economic and religious structures. Since the economic, social and The study, accordingly, amplifies the field of analysis and enhances its interrogation of neo-liberal globalization without abandoning the relatively more limited critiques of caste, class, gender or post-coloniality. The trans-geographical influences and aesthetic resistance are studied in the contexts of political, religious, and economic structures to yield a nuanced study of the discourse of resistance in the selected texts. The study exposes the consensual logic of the dominant

structures that leads to oppression and also illuminates the dissensus that inscribes resistances to reconfigure the power structures at various levels. The analysis focuses on resistances in terms of thematic, characters and the formal aesthetic structure to bring out the political and aesthetic significance of each text.

CONCLUSION:

This study of the selected Indian fiction of the period 1987 to 2007 shows that it constitutes a complex and multi-layered discourse of resistance against both old and new forces of domination, particularly against the backdrop of the emerging global order. Our endeavor has been to bring out the articulation of resistance mainly in terms of gender, caste, class and the postcolonial condition in the specific contexts of recent Indian history. As noted in various chapters, the articulation has specific linguistic, cultural and ecological inflections which can be often better appreciated if one places these in the context of the prevailing politics and economics of neo-liberal ideology. The analyses of the selected texts bring out various discourses at their points of intersection as well as the multiform resistances of the ordinary people struggling to construct their identities and carve out spaces for themselves and others in their pursuit of justice. The study foregrounds the non-violent, often symbolic and subtle, personal and isolated struggles of the common people against the power of oppressive structures. It highlights how those struggles, usually unnoticed on the vast canvas of history, contribute in little myriad ways to the project of democratizing the order of the world.

The selected literary texts exemplify resistance at both political and aesthetic levels while exploring everyday life under the conditions of neo-colonial globalization and its aftermath. The lived realities of struggling subjectivities under the current situation, the discontent of the masses, their resentment against the processes of globalization, and their struggle to win a space for themselves – these are the common elements running through the texts under study. Each text has a specific context and it varies in its articulation of resistance. For example, though Arundhati Roy, M.G. Vassanji and P. Sachidanandan make use of history, each gives a diverse treatment to it. Even the linguistic innovations made by Roy, Ghosh, Indra Sinha and Sachidanandan, that manifest aesthetic resistance, find different expression in their works.

The theorists who were chosen for the purpose of a theoretical framework have distinctively contributed to a better and more nuanced understanding of the question of resistance. Albert Camus provides an appropriate framework to analyze the typology of resistance. His faith in ethical values, moderate, non-violent resistance and the inherent human strength

help to make the ethical power of the resistance movements of the oppressed publicly recognized. Camus's ideas have helped us to better understand the role of an artist in reconfiguring an unjust order. Michel de Certeau's glorification of the strength of the ordinary as manifested in their everyday practices and modes of consumption makes the study of the spatial practices in the selected works more sensitive and nuanced. His conviction – that a writer, through his/her writings, creates an ensemble of possibilities in the order, opens spaces for the oppressed and restructures a given order – enables us to undertake a better interpretation of the texts. Jacques Rancière's analysis of the modes of appearance, subjectification and dissensus – based on the distribution of the sensible – contribute towards a novel interpretation of some important texts of Indian fiction. The interweaving of the political and the aesthetic in Rancière's theory enhances the comprehension of the selected texts. It also establishes a new ground for looking at the politics of literature, provides new configurations of visibility and brings out the role of the artist in transforming the given, unjust order. The theoretical framework enables us to hear the murmurings of the silenced and, in this way, helps us to break new ground in the project by departing from the usual elitism.

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