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REVIEW ARTICLE

**A STUDY ON SELECTED INDIAN FICTION AND
DISCOURSE OF RESISTANCE**

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A Study on Selected Indian Fiction and Discourse of Resistance

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This research project aims to study the discourse of resistance in selected Indian fiction. The focus is specifically on resistance articulated in terms of caste, class, gender and postcoloniality. The fiction selected for the purpose includes Laxman Gaikwad's *The Branded* (Marathi, 1987), Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (English, 1997), Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (English, 2004), P.

Sachidanandan's *Govardhan's Travels* (Malayalam, 2006), M.G. Vassanji's *The Assassin's Song* (English, 2007), and Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* (English, 2007). The analysis of diverse forms of resistance, especially those inscribed by the ordinary people to challenge the authority of the dominant structures, is important since they attempt to transform the given order in historically specific ways.

Resistance exposes the unjust practices, undermines the power of the dominant structures, and may eventually carve out an equal place for the ordinary people and their practices. In the present study, the theoretical frameworks of Albert Camus, Michel de Certeau and Jacques Rancière have been employed to analyze the selected texts. The three have theorized the nature of resistance. They have also examined the role of the writer as a figure of resistance. The insights of the theorists have helped us to arrive at a nuanced understanding of the discourse of resistance in the selected fiction.

Dissenting voices and rebellions against the structures of domination have always existed in one shape or another (Hsiao and Lim vii). Many injustices perpetrated under colonialism and imperialism, for instance, constitute a broad context for the aggregate of unaligned and irregular discourses of resistance.

Marxism, Feminism, Postcolonialism and Dalit Studies are the principal discourses of resistance that arise from a certain condition of oppression and marginalization. The interface between these discourses in the globalized context forms the analytical ground for the present study. The study, moreover, analyzes resistance as articulated in both political and aesthetic terms. It is believed that the

imperatives of saying 'No' give impetus to the writing of resistance in literature. Conventionally, resistance has been studied in negative terms; it has been associated with refusal and interpreted as a destructive force. However, it has a positive and constructive dimension also. In addition, because of its sensitivity to the marginalized and oppressed 'other,' resistance is also associated with the attempts to foreground multiplicity, particularity and heterogeneity in the projects of enhancing the scope of freedom and justice.

As mentioned above, 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 *resistē re*, 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. Since resistance recognizes the need to hear the voices of the dispossessed and aims to bring the marginalized into the centre, it confronts the dominant and oppressive structures, both overt and concealed. Basically, it is the disequilibrium of power at the social, political and economic levels that provokes multiform resistances. Thus one can say that domination and resistance are interlinked, and power is central to both. Resistance

engages with oppressive power structures and questions the injustices perpetrated under those

structures. It consequently reshapes the spaces available to the marginalized and thus helps to transform the existing order .

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.

Some of the texts exemplify resistance against the neo-liberal character of globalization and do so at both political and aesthetic levels. The texts demonstrate struggles against the oppressive power structures and the attempts of the ordinary people to carve out spaces and construct identities on their own terms as far as possible and thus win an equal space in the given order. Our critical analysis particularly brings out the significance of non-violent resistance in democratizing an unjust order. The selected texts are thus shown as attempting to redefine equality and justice in the globalizing order.

Since the study seeks to examine the discourse of resistance in the selected Indian texts, the distinction between "Resistance Literature" and "literary resistance" needs to be made at the outset. "Resistance Literature" stands for definitive texts which examine the relationship between literature and the Third World liberation movements, whereas "literary resistance" is used for a genre of oppositional writing (a writing meant not only to protest but also to change the existing situation to allow empowerment). Although a considerable amount of literature of resistance has been written in English, the present study chooses to mainly examine literary resistance in selected fiction.

The recent literature can be seen as significantly focussing on the struggles of the most vulnerable people. It deals with the discontent of the masses, their resentment against the processes of globalization, and their struggle to win a space for themselves. Thus, the lucid portrayal of the discontent and dissent of those living in global urban centres

against the politics of neoliberalism moves beyond the previous limited focus (colonial/national histories and diasporas) of postcolonialism. As the study of postcolonial literatures moves beyond Commonwealth Studies and reactive anticolonial models, the fictional works produced in the past two decades challenge the easy binary notions of the colonizer versus the colonized. Rather the works examine the ways in which colonialism and its legacy have irrevocably transformed colonial subjects as well as their erstwhile masters. A generation that includes Arundhati Roy, Indra Sinha, Amitav Ghosh and M.G. Vassanji and others pushes back the old boundaries of the postcolonial critique to explore the exigencies of life under neo-colonial globalization and its aftermath. The works of these writers,

articulated from within the erstwhile master's language, grapple with the lived realities of struggling subjectivities under the current situation.

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