

A STUDY OF RESISTANCE NARRATIVES IN CONTEMPORARY INDIAN LITERATURE

THIRUPATHI M

Research Scholar
Shri JYT University
Rajasthan

DR. ANSHU SHARMA

Research Supervisor
Shri JYT University
Rajasthan

DR. A PAVANI

Research Co-Supervisor
Shri JYT University
Rajasthan

ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the evolving landscape of feminist resistance in contemporary Indian novels by analyzing how women navigate both traditional societal structures and digital environments. In traditional narratives, resistance is portrayed through intimate, everyday acts of self-assertion, survival, and storytelling within domestic and marginalized spaces. These narratives often redefine femininity by challenging normative roles of motherhood, sexuality, and obedience, using alternative literary forms to subvert dominant narrative conventions. The paper also explores how the digital realm introduces a new dimension to feminist resistance, offering both empowerment and vulnerability. Social media and online platforms are shown to amplify women's voices, as in *A Burning*, but also expose them to state surveillance and gendered violence. Through a comparative framework, the research highlights that feminist resistance in Indian fiction is multifaceted expressed through silence, speech, mobility, memory, and even digital articulation. These novels not only give voice to historically silenced experiences but also function as literary acts of defiance themselves, critiquing both cultural norms and narrative structures. Ultimately, the study asserts that contemporary Indian fiction remains a vital space for imagining feminist futures while remaining rooted in socio-political realities. Ultimately, this discourse analysis underscores literature's role as a critical space of resistance that questions entrenched hierarchies and amplifies subaltern voices. It concludes that contemporary Indian novels not only document the lived experiences of inequality but also function as transformative acts of defiance redefining both the aesthetics and ethics of Indian writing in English and regional languages.

Keywords: Indian writing, traditional narratives, feminist resistance, contemporary Indian novels

INTRODUCTION

The study of gender, sexuality, and society delves into the intricate relationship between the three, and shares a lot of ground with feminist thought. The course delves into the social construction of gender roles and identities, as well as its intersections with other categories such as sexual orientation, race, and class. Gender studies seek to dismantle rigid gender roles and investigate gender's malleability in order to provide a more complex picture of how gender dynamics play out in different settings. These ideas are elaborated upon in modern Indian literature. A potent medium for investigating and questioning conventional gender roles has emerged in Indian literature, particularly in works penned after independence. They mirror the effects of globalization, the clashes between tradition and modernization, and the changing

positions of women in Indian culture. Gender dynamics are explored from several angles in contemporary Indian writing, which is characterized by a wide range of voices, genres, and topics.

Recent developments in environmental discourse and postcolonial studies have caused a sea change in literary criticism, calling into question the primacy of human-centered accounts in debates about growth and progress. Using modern Indian English novels as a lens, this study will examine how postcolonial Indian literature presents environmental degradation in all its complex manifestations. Using a postcolonial eco critical framework, this study seeks to dissect the intricate relationship that exists among indigenous ecological epistemologies, neoliberal development ideologies, and colonial legacies. A complicated interaction of fast industrialization, urbanization, and economic growth often at the expense of environmental degradation has defined the trajectory of development in postcolonial India. Its development plans have had environmental effects, which the nation is trying to resolve while it tries to transcend colonial exploitation and become a worldwide power. The environmental consequences of postcolonial advancement are examined through this fundamental issue in modern Indian English literature, which is the tension between development objectives and ecological preservation. Research on the ways in which environmental issues, developmental ideologies, and colonial histories all interact has benefited greatly from the theoretical framework of postcolonial Eco critique. Graham states that this method aims to explore "the many ways in which nature and culture, human and non-human, are constructed through complex networks of agencies and interactions." This approach enables a careful examination of the ways in which environmental practices and views in countries that were once colonized are influenced by colonial legacies by combining postcolonial studies with Eco critique. Literature has become an effective tool for voicing environmental concerns in the Indian context, where the effects of climate change, deforestation, industrial pollution, and resource depletion are becoming more visible. Particularly influential in this regard have been Indian English novels, which have provided critical viewpoints on the social and environmental implications of development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vihalkumar Rameshbhai Ratadiya et.al [2025] This research looks at how literary narratives serve as places of opposition against hegemonic systems in modern Indian English fiction, specifically how political awareness and resistance are articulated in works published between 2000 and the present. This study seeks to understand how Arundhati Roy, Aravind Adiga, Amitav Ghosh, and other prominent figures in the field have explored the confluence of artistic innovation with political critique in their works. Through the use of a theoretical framework based on postcolonial theory, subaltern studies, and resistance theory—specifically referencing the writings of Homi Bhabha, Ranajit Guha, and James C. Scott—the research exposes the ways in which modern Indian English literature utilizes narrative techniques to question systemic oppression, economic inequality, environmental degradation, and caste violence. Through the use of fragmentation, polyvocality, and cultural hybridity, these literary works go beyond simple representation and become political discourse agents. They oppose and work within dominant power structures, as articulated in the works analysis.

Vivek Sharma et.al [2024] An important work of Indian English literature, *Untouchable* (1935) by Mulk Raj Anand is a harsh indictment of pre-independence India's caste system and

other societal hierarchies. Anand shows the untouchables' systematic prejudice and daily humiliations via the figure of Bakha, a little Dalit child. This introductory chapter analyzes the novel's plot, themes, and symbols, and places it in the larger framework of Indian reformist thinking and colonial modernity. Anand uses satire and realism to discuss modern issues of identity, dignity, and social transformation while exposing the caste system's moral and spiritual flaws. Using a variety of academic sources, this thesis argues that the novel is still relevant today because of the strong criticisms it issues of societal injustice and the crucial role it plays in the Indian literary and caste debate.

Banani Ghosh et.al [2023] My research interests lie on the ways in which resistance is depicted in a few modern Indian English novels. The "baggy nationalist allegory" that was popular in literature throughout the '80s and '90s portrays the downtrodden as helpless victims of societal injustices rather than a danger to the authority of the state. Mainstream discourses isolate the oppressed from the potentially liberating resistance discourse, according to this line of reasoning. Also worth considering are the "infrapolitics," or the subtle but significant forms of resistance that occur on a daily basis yet pass politically unrecognized. The impossibility of ignoring the "little narratives" of resistance of society's most marginalized members is the central argument of my thesis. At both the micro and macro levels of society, the creation of an individual's identity is influenced by their experiences with rejection.

Tanja Schreiber et.al [2022] This study questions long-held evolutionary assumptions about hunter-gatherer societies' inherent egalitarianism and instead delves into hitherto unexplored facets of social organization, such as the ways in which people in West Siberian fortified settlements consciously manipulated space to perpetuate social inequality. Unfortunately, growing economic disparities in hunter-gatherer communities are frequently downplayed in scholarly discussions as inevitable consequences of agriculturalization and social stratification. But such simplistic accounts that normally classify hunter-gatherers as "simple" or "complex" are challenged by this exploration. This essay argues for a more complex view of social inequality and the range of reactions to it by drawing on Graeber and Wengrow's (2021) criticism of these categories in *The Dawn of Everything*. Foragers in West Siberia constructed fortifications for more than eight millennia, according to a case study that defies prevailing views of human history. Overwhelming archeological evidence points to surplus economies and social and political inequality as causes of such buildings in foraging groups.

Contemporary Indian Novel In English

In the last hundred years, English-language Indian literature has gone through a phenomenal metamorphosis, rising from the obscurity of the colonial era to the forefront of contemporary literary thought. Literary works written by Indians and published in English now provide a fertile ground for thought on the interplay between nationalism, history, culture, and globalization. Fiction written in modern India reflects the diversity, social paradoxes, and global interconnections of the country through its many voices, in contrast to writing from the past that was either influenced by colonial views or written for an elite audience. After India gained its independence, the country's social, political, cultural, and economic landscapes changed, and its literature evolved to reflect those changes. "Contemporary" in the context of Indian literature typically denotes works released after the late 20th century, a time characterized by fast economic liberalization, growing exposure to global media, and fast modernization. Indian sensibilities, experiences, and conflicts are profoundly ingrained in the

narratives written in English during this age, yet they are not constrained by regional linguistic frameworks.

Issues In Indian English Novels

The criminalization of politics, leaders' egotism for vote bank, terrorist acts in the name of Jihad, destabilization of secularism, atrocities against women, corrupt judiciary, paralysis in administration, and other related themes are covered in the novel. Jahan Shah and Parvati's love blooms despite all these differences. The protagonist, Jahan Shah, is portrayed as an ideal brother and a secular being by the writer, who is himself a government worker. The plot revolves around Jahan Shah's negativism. The center of the circle, which represents a positive point. As a symbol of the destruction of all that is good in Indian society, Jaganmohan uses the massive destruction of "Ayodhya" as an example. In literature, society is reflected. Literature is a window into human history, culture, economy, and society. Geographical, national, or cultural boundaries are no longer used to restrict literature.

Social Justice and Equality

Social justice and equality are long-standing issues in Indian literature. As a reflection of India's varied and frequently fractured society, numerous works have tackled socioeconomic disparities and stressed the significance of fairness. Stories like this shed focus on problems like economic disparity, gender inequality, and caste discrimination. An ongoing topic in literature, both ancient and modern, is the pursuit of social justice. This is seen in works such as the "Mahabharata" and the "Ramayana," which explore moral quandaries and the duty to maintain justice. The vast array of stories found in Indian literature not only reflects society's problems but also provides a potent weapon in the fight for equality and social justice. A teenage sweeper in colonial India named Bakha is the protagonist of "Untouchable" by Mulk Raj Anand, a potent book that criticizes the caste system.

Human Values in Indian English Literature

Family and Social Bonds Indian literature highlights the communal core of Indian civilization through its vital function of family and community relationships. With great clarity, the story repeatedly portrays the importance of family, loyalty, duty, respect for seniors, and society as a whole. The novel "A Suitable Boy" by Vikram Seth, which follows four families in post-independence India, is a striking example of how family ties, planned marriages, and societal restraints impact people's lives. The story explores the intricate dynamics within a family, which is a basic part of Indian heritage. Mrs. Rupa Mehra is a moving example of a mother who cares profoundly about her children and wants the best for them, especially when it comes to finding a good husband for her daughter Lata. Family responsibilities and cultural standards are exemplified by Rupa's character. Arundathi Roy's "The God of Small Things" is a great example of a book that explores the complex dynamics of the Ipe family.

METHODOLOGY

The work of Aravind Adiga is characterized by excellent prose and faultless syntax. Success followed him from his days as a brilliant student to his tenure as a journalist and finally to his status as a renowned writer. The Financial Times was Aravind's first employer once he began his career in journalism. Notable newspapers that have published his writings include the Sunday Times, the Independent, and the Financial Times. In addition, he was a literary critic. "Oscar and Lucinda" by Peter Carey, the most recent winner of the Booker Prize, is a well-known example. The following three years, Aravind was the South Asia reporter for Time

Magazine. After a while, he decided to leave Time Magazine and pursue freelancing. During his time as a freelance writer, Aravind penned his first novel, *The White Tiger*, which became the 40th Man Booker Prize-winning novel that same year and made Aravind the fourth Indian writer to get this prestigious award. Adiga resides in Mumbai at the moment. Both novels and short tales are considered to be his literary contributions. Famous people and news outlets' reactions to Adiga's first book, *The White Tiger*, are reproduced below. *The White Tiger* takes readers on a surprising adventure into a modern India; it is compelling, furious, and darkly funny.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Because her father's decision ruined her marital life and caused her a lot of personal suffering, this aggressive speech act displays Kamala's contempt and scorn for him for the first time in the narrative. In this speech act, Kamala criticizes Seshagiri Rao's new approach in an indirect way. Seshagiri Rao treated Vasudeva like an adversary when he was unimportant, unnamed, and unemployed many years ago. Kamala subtly declares her rebellion against her father Rao by asking rhetorically, "Do you think I've forgotten the way you treated him, Father?" This is because she has never forgotten how Rao handled Vasudeva when he came to ask her to be his wife. It appears that Kamala was unhappy with her father's treatment of Vasudeva, but she was unable to express her feelings during that period. The fact that Kamala was too afraid to confront her father about his cruel treatment of Vasu—during which he had requested her marriage—is further implied by this speech act. But today, Seshagiri Rao warmly welcomes him as a great man, as he has returned to Ford after a long time as an ICS. Even though Vasu was mocked when he was a little boy, he is now warmly accepted as an ICS. The way Kamala's father treats Vasudeva is exactly what prompts her to condemn him. Because her husband, Gundanna, has abandoned her, Kamala's life has taken a turn for the worst. Her father should have wed her to Vasudeva; maybe she would be enjoying life more now that her marriage has failed. However, this was not the case. She is effectively belittling and scolding her father in this way. Seshagiri Rao's character is illuminated by this speech act in a roundabout way; it implies that Rao has prioritized Vasudeva's riches and property over his genuine love for Kamala, and that his attitude towards Vasudeva fluctuates periodically. As a result of her father's decision to marry Gundanna, Kamala endures the consequences.

Commissive Speech Acts (COMISAs)

The *Inheritance of Loss* and *Disorderly Women* both feature strong instances of submissive discourse. In the third chapter, this conduct is already covered extensively. Promises, vows, pledges, guarantees, etc., are all part of this category, to put it succinctly. A resolution like this is made by the head of the Gorkha National Liberation Front in *The Inheritance of Loss*, using the commissive speech act. According to context, the Gorkha leader is lamenting the unfair treatment of his people and how they have been treated like slaves. Fighting injustice and taking charge of their own affairs are two things he is pushing the Gorkha people to do.

Furthermore, he is pleading with his fellow Gorkhas to band together as the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF). In addition, the leader is resolving to construct hospitals and schools for the Gorkha people, to employ their unemployed sons, to elevate the status of their daughters and sisters who toil under the sun, crush stones on the highways, and protect their own land. According to the commander, the Gorkha Landers have always lived in this area, and their ancestors have done the same. In addition, the head of state decides that no other language

than Gorkha will be used to manage internal matters. And when the moment comes, he proves that the Gorkhas are willing to lay down their lives for the freedom of their homeland. If it becomes necessary, the leader vows to wash their bleeding kukris in the Teesta's mother waters. If the Gorkhas can't get their freedom via peaceful methods, he says, they will resort to violence. The liberal destiny of the Gorkha country is decided by the leader's resolutions in this case. He committed the commissive speech act with his resolve. This kind of submissive behavior emphasizes the Gorkhas' critical yearning for their free land. Here, the leader—a GNLF member—is hell-bent on overthrowing the current regime in order to free Gorkha territory. The topics of global and regional identities are switched up in the book due to the leader's decisions made through the commissive speech act. In other words, the author uses this action as a control mechanism, shifting the focus from globalization to regionalization and back again. The key significance of this commissive speech act is to demonstrate how intense the need for free Gorkha land is, notwithstanding its long-standing demand. The author's objective to emphasize the strength of regional identity is concealed behind such commissive speaking acts.

Expressive Speech Acts (EXPRSAs)

The *Inheritance of Loss* and *Disorderly Women* has a plethora of expressive verbal acts. Acts like these allow characters to convey their innermost thoughts, emotions, and perspectives on a given situation, as was demonstrated in the third chapter. Words like praise, criticism, lament, apology, etc., fall into this category of speech acts. Biju slips on some spoiled spinach in Harish-Harry's kitchen, races ahead on a narrow green track, and then falls with a loud popping sound in *The Inheritance of Loss*, set in the Gandhi Café just after the day he got his visa. Unfortunately, he hurt his knee. He was unable to stand. If Harry can find a doctor for Biju, Biju will ask him to. Surprisingly, Harry informs him that healthcare costs in the US are extremely high. In response, Biju accuses Harry of being responsible since he skidded in his kitchen. "You slipped in the kitchen," Harry says angrily as he looms over Biju. Who would you call for help if you were to have a road slide, huh? The way Harry puts it to Biju, he has taken him in, hired him without proper documentation, treated him like a son, and allowed him to live in his house for free. Now this is his way of paying it forward. "Would they pay you in India?" he inquires of Biju. So, what exactly is your right? Does it even matter that you don't mop the floor? You ought to compensate me for your lack of cleanliness and slovenliness. Is what I'm about to say "live like a pig"? As Biju listens to these harsh remarks, his aching knee gives him the will to live, reducing him to a beast. In that instant of physical agony, Biju's emotions were visibly strained, and he expressed his anger with the following grimace as he scowled at Harish-Harry.

CONCLUSION

Through amplifying the experiences of marginalized communities, these books challenge the prevailing cultural narrative and assert the authority to tell stories. There is a political and ethical obligation in the act of narrative. The writers fight against erasure and produce counter-discourses that question dominant narratives by building alternate histories. The reader is then encouraged to take part in this process by critically analyzing the book and challenging their own gender, class, and caste-based attitudes. By encouraging introspection, compassion, and societal consciousness, the books serve as both symbols of and catalysts for resistance. Postcolonial discourse is still relevant for assessing modern Indian literature, according to the

results. Although colonialism has officially ended, remnants of it can still be found in power and representation institutions. When patriarchy, capitalism, and caste all come together, it becomes clear that decolonization is not just about achieving political independence but also about reclaiming one's culture, language, and imagination. This study's novels resist the postcolonial state's role in perpetuating inequality and instead propose a new conception of material and discursive freedom. By doing so, they allow postcolonial theory to cover indigenous oppression as well as internal hierarchy. The importance of literature as a platform for social critique and resistance has been emphasized throughout this research.

REFERENCES

1. Vihalkumar Rameshbhai Ratadiya et.al (2025)," Narratives Of Dissent: Political Consciousness And Resistance In Contemporary Indian English Fiction ", International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews: ISSN 2582-7421, Vol (6), Issue (6), Page – 10121-10126.
2. Banani Ghosh et.al (2023),"Critical Resistance To "National Allegory": An Exploration of New Urban Realism in Select Contemporary Novels of Indian English ", Journal of the Department of English ISSN No:2091-1653,Volume 16.
3. Vivek Sharma et.al (2024), "Untouchable: A Chronicle Of The Contemporary Indian Social System", International Journal of Research in English ISSN No: 2664-8725, Vol.7,(Issue No 1): Pages.418-424, DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.33545/26648717.2025.v7.i1g.366>.
4. Tanja Schreiber et.al (2022), "Architects Of Change: Inequality And Resistance Among Siberian Foragers", Hunter Gatherer Research, ISSN:2056-3264, Vol. 8, Issue No. 3, <https://doi.org/10.3828/hgr.2022.4>
5. Thomas Huckin et.al (2012), "Critical Discourse Analysis And Rhetoric And Composition", National Council of Teachers of English, ISSN:0010-096X, Volume 64,p. 107 - 129,DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58680/cc201220861>.
6. Jessie K. Luna et.al (2018), "The Chain Of Exploitation: Intersectional Inequalities, Capital Accumulation, And Resistance In Burkina Faso's Cotton Sector", The Journal of Peasant Studies, ISSN:1743-9361,Volume 46, Issue 7,<https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2018.1499623>.
7. Jane Briant Carant et.al (2017), "Unheard Voices: A Critical Discourse Analysis Of The Millennium Development Goals' Evolution Into The Sustainable Development Goals", Third World Quarterly, ISSN:1360-2241,Volume 38, Issue1,<https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2016.1166944>.
8. Jane D. McLeod et.al (2015),"Why and How Inequality Matters", Journal of Health and Social Behavior, ISSN:2150-6000,Vol. 56, No. 2,pp. 149-165 (17 pages).
9. Jacklyn Cock et.al (2019), "Resistance To Coal Inequalities And The Possibilities Of A Just Transition In South Africa", Development Southern Africa, ISSN: 1470-3637, Volume 36, Issue 6,<https://doi.org/10.1080/0376835X.2019.1660859>.
10. Jairo Baquero Melo et.al (2015), "The Intersection Of Race, Class, And Ethnicity In Agrarian Inequalities, Identities, And The Social Resistance Of Peasants In Colombia", Current Sociology, ISSN:1461-7064,Volume 63, Issue 7,<https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392115586801>.