Chapter 1

Introduction

Making Sense of the Poetics of Resistance:

Contexts, Scope and Method

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 resisté re, meaning to stand against, which denotes a slow but insistent, often invisible but enduring strategy that has the potential to dislodge the dominant stuctures, 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 (Bande 1-4).

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) (Harlow 4). 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 dissertation has been organized into two parts – Part I: Theories of Resistance and Part II: Writing Resistance. The introductory chapter discusses the terms 'discourse' and 'resistance' along with the contexts, scope and method of the study. Part I, beginning with Chapter 2 and ending with Chapter 4, examines in detail the theories of resistance given by Camus, Certeau and Rancière. Part II includes Chapters 5 to 10 which undertake a critical analysis of resistance in the selected texts.

Some of the studies of Indian fiction from the 1980s onwards have contributed to a critique of Western metropolitan culture, particularly its histories of domination and hegemony over its others, its assumption of civilizational superiority, and the discourses that have informed those histories and assumptions. These studies also offer oppositional readings of some texts. Although the first decade of the twenty-first century witnesses the continuing emergence of a body of work informed by postcolonial critiques of Western culture, it departs radically from the preceding work in both narrative structures and the treatment of political, economic and cultural issues. 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 (López and Marzec 677-79).

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.

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 (Bande 5-6, 9, 15-16, 21). 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 focusses 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\(^1\) (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 274). Camus also perceives a sense of solidarity in the rebellious instincts of the weak that helps them in overcoming a multilated understanding and even enables them to fight injustice, servitude, terror or

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1. While *The Rebel* provides the main theoretical framework for the project, we have also used Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays* (1955), *Resistance, Rebellion and Death* (1950), *The Plague* (1948) and *The Fall* (1956) as additional resources to better grasp the framework.
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.

Michel de Certeau glorifies the powerless/ordinary for their strength which he perceives in their everyday practices and modes of consumption. Certeau asserts that the everyday practices of the ordinary people, like speaking, writing, travelling and reading, are tactics that enable them to challenge the strategies of the dominant order. Since these practices also carve out spaces for the weak, Certeau calls them spatial practices. The spatial practices, for him, manifest the resistance of the ordinary. In his most influential book *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), Certeau attempts to outline the way individuals navigate everything, from city streets to literary texts. It is with their spatial practices that the ordinary poach the territories denied to them, manipulate the spaces to create a network of anti-discipline in the imposed order and thus open those spaces to the oppressed. The resulting redistribution of spaces can sometimes amount to subversions that initiate the processes of transformation in the given order. Certeau also reposes great trust in the power of the printed word and of the writer. He claims that a writer creates an ensemble of possibilities in the socio-cultural conditions of a society through his/her writings by opening spaces for the oppressed, and thus the writer restructures a given order. According to him, with

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2. It is not only despair and negation but also the desire to despair and to negate. It is the logic of destruction that legitimizes murder, death, falsehood, violence and injustice (Camus, Rebel 57-58, 285).
narratives of subversions an artist resists the ills of the society as s/he also
reconfigures the given order through the modes of narration. Certeau’s theory of
resistance helps us to examine the resistances embedded in everyday practices of the
ordinary people in the context of Indian fiction.

If Certeau perceives everyday practices as modes of resistance that empower
the ordinary, Jacques Rancière writes about the ways the invisible, the inaudible and
the unsayable are inscribed as resistances through words and actions to change
perceptions, which in turn helps in democratizing an order. Rancière sees the political
and the aesthetic as interwoven in such a way as to bring about new arrangements of
the heterogeneous which provoke a change in perception that can lead to
transformations in the existing order. He also discusses the politics of literature and
the democracy of words that could bring changes in the order. According to him, a
democratic perception challenges absolute power and reinforces the demand of the
ordinary/invisible for equality, freedom and justice. His conviction is that literature
provides new configurations of visibility which shape the ways of seeing, saying and
doing. He refutes the rule-bound conceptions of art and disregards the hierarchies of
power and knowledge.

Rancière's analysis of the modes of appearance, subjectification and
disagreement and his emphasis on the importance of the logic of 'dissensus' in
subverting the power configurations and constructing identities of the 'non-identities'
has significantly contributed to our analysis. The dissertation mainly uses the insights
provided by Rancière in the following works: The Ignorant Schoolmaster (1987), On
the Shores of Politics (1990), Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy (1995), The

The theoretical frameworks provided by Camus, Certeau and Rancière are
significant for the present study because of their unwavering attention to the
imperatives of equality and justice conceptualized in both political and aesthetic terms
in the context of literature. Since they believe in the strength of the oppressed, hold human dignity in esteem and endorse a democratic order based on ethical values, the three theorists with their specific approaches to literary texts offer fresh possibilities to engage with selected fiction.

The word *discourse* takes its origin from old French *discours*, from Latin *discursus*, which means 'running to and fro' (in medieval Latin 'argument'). It denotes a written or spoken communication or debate, formal discussion of a topic in a speech or writing or a connected series of utterances (Pearsall 527). Viewed in a wider perspective, discourses are practically synonymous with the social and political world in that they constitute the fields in which certain statements and ways of making sense become possible. They also shape interpretations that enhance the understanding of socio-political systems. As frames which produce shared comprehension, the discourses motivate and legitimate collective action (Howarth 1-3). Discourses frame the analyses of texts and, consequently, foster common perceptions for specific purposes. These perceptions can expose the mechanisms of deception, which in turn may lead to transformations. It is the uneven distribution of power and domination of an ideology that turns the individuals and groups into subjects. This may provoke resistances and hence other modes of political subjectivity can arise that contest hegemony. The movements of resistance lead to new forms of representations in the social configuration. Hence, transformations in the oppressive order can occur when the subjects resist (105).

Discourses do not exist in isolation: one group of utterances or statements enacted in a social context evokes opposing utterances (Mills 9-10). An ideology framed for domination can give rise to an emancipatory alternative to usher in a transformation in the form of discourse. An ideological struggle which points towards an equal, just and democratic order may be central to these discourses (12). The
analysis of discourses can expose the ways in which language and meaning are used by power to deceive, oppress and marginalize certain groups and individuals. In other words, the discourses of resistance can propose emancipatory alternatives while exposing the mechanisms of repression and deception. Marxism, feminism, race studies and postcolonialism exemplify some discourses of resistance that have gained prominence in recent times.

According to Michel Foucault, a discourse is shaped by social and political structures and institutions (Mills 7). He believes that "power is a key element" in discursive formations (17). Since power is neither fixed nor stable but keeps circulating, the power relations are sometimes negotiated by the powerless through "verbal dexterity" (35). 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" (40). 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 focusses 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 (Howarth 7-8).

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 (Howarth 33). This suggests that regulatory social constraints and academic disciplines can also give rise to discourses (Mills 58-60, 67). 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 52). 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 (104-05). According to Mills, the Marxists relate
discourse to an economic base, whereas Focault 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 (34-40).
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.

According to The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, resistance is the act
or action of resisting, opposing or withstanding; organized covert opposition to an
occupying or ruling power (2562). Resistance is also explained as the refusal to accept
or comply with something; the attempt to prevent something by action or argument, or by armed or violent opposition (Pearsall 1579). Contrary to the conventional definitions of resistance, the present project studies the peaceful and non-violent resistance of the powerless. It regards resistance in positive terms to foreground the constructive and creative force in the multiform resistances of the weak that can reconfigure a given oppressive order. Domination is an unstable configuration which may be challenged by an oppositional force called resistance. However, resistance is not merely an opposition, hostility or refusal to accept power; it is also "an activity and attitude" (Hoy 9). It is not a reactionary phenomena but an emancipatory process that refuses to resign – it ranges from "political demurral" to "refusal" (10).

Resistance aims to emancipate the powerless from the oppressive forces.

The expansion of the processes of globalization that consolidate asymmetrical power relations may prompt the ordinary people to resist through mass movements. Their anti-globalist programmes, for instance, voice their demands for a reversal of the destructive consequences of neo-liberal free market policies of globalization (Steger 122). When power turns into domination, it restricts the constructive possibilities in a socio-political order, which may lead to the emergence of resistance. Resistance can challenge and even destabilize the existing order to force some transformations in it. The emergence of such resistance may not disrupt power but it can still allow individuals the space to enhance the possibilities. Resistance against an unjust and oppressive order can signify and attempt to establish an ethical order (Hoy 66, 92-94, 239).

In recent decades the prevailing order has been largely shaped by the processes of globalization. These processes pose new challenges and create divisions and hierarchies that lead to a disequilibrium which obstructs democratization. The challenges often give rise to united resistances and lay the foundation of new political
organizations that attempt to displace the dominant structures. Such resistances demand democracy in the global order and try to create a society based on equality and justice.

By and large, the contemporary global order is characterized by "asymmetrical conflicts" and a "full spectrum dominance." Resistance brings out the potential superiority of the weak in such asymmetrical conflicts as it transforms weakness into strength. If full spectrum dominance strives to produce docile subjects to make an order totalitarian, resistance of the marginalized converts passive subjects into active ones to democratize that order (Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 53). Though dominance is multidimensional, it always relies on the consent or submission of the dominated. However, the resistance of the dominated limits the power of sovereignty. The resistance of the weak thus becomes their strength. Resistance makes the weak assertive when they refuse to accept a life of submission. It thus empowers the weak and enables them to carve a dignified space in the order. In the era of asymmetrical conflicts the resistances of the weak take the form of a distributed network. Since this network is unevenly distributed, it constantly undermines the stable boundaries of the power structures and transforms them into thresholds (54-55). Hence resistances of the weak confront the strategies of the dominant order and upset the established hierarchies to restructure the unequal order.

Peaceful resistances expose the repressive ideologies and demonstrate the power of the powerless. Non-violent resistances often become more powerful than any weapon. When the weak inscribe resistances with language, demonstrations and other tactics, power is often transferred in a peaceful manner. As these resistances

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3. One combatant has incomparably greater means than the other (Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 51).
4. Unlimited form of dominance that involves all dimensions of social life like social, economic, political, psychological, ideological, along with military dominance (ibid. 53).
shatter the illusion of the system which harmonizes human order with the order of the universe, changes in the power configuration are made peacefully (Havel). The hypocrisy and lies that enslave the weak and spell degradation of class/individual are exposed by such modes of resistance. These modes break the consensual logic that promotes repression of culture in the name of development or expansion of the processes of globalization. When the ordinary reject rituals, rules and oppression, they resist in order to live with truth and hence recover their suppressed identity and dignity. This resistance becomes an assertion of the excluded to live in their truth. This opposition to the alienating pressures of the system or, in other words, the dissent of the excluded has a political import as it enables them to prevail upon the powerful to acquire an equal and just place in the order. Several transformations in the oppressive structures happen through everyday practices and modes of subjectification of the marginalized. Such practices can also modify the prevalent perceptions and hence help to reconfigure the prevalent order.

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 65). 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 (Weiss 96-97). 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 targetted by resistance movements. The peaceful and non-violent resistance of the marginalized attempts to redefine the nature of the existing political, social, economic and religious structures. Since the economic, social and
political questions are inextricably intertwined, articulations of resistance occur at the political, social and even aesthetic level.

An anthology of the voices of dissent, The Verso Book of Dissent, edited by Andrew Hsiao and Audrea Lim documents numerous struggles of the people against those in power across ages and continents. It reverberates with echoes from Ancient Greece, China, Egypt and India with voices of the dissident poets and philosophers. The voices of dissent from every era of human history presented through speeches, pamphlets, poems, songs, plays and manifestos bring out the importance of the resistances of the ordinary people that seek social transformation and attempt to restructure an unjust order. The claims for equality and justice made by Otanes, Calgacus, Spartacus, Civavakkiyar, the Levellers, the Ranters, Andrew Marvell, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, the Chartists, Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx, Muktabai, Mohandas K. Gandhi, B.R. Ambedkar, Simon De Beauvoir, Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Michel Foucault, Arundhati Roy, Sampat Pal Devi and many others seek empowerment of the underprivileged. Every uprising, non-violent resistance and civil disobedience demonstrates the inherent power of the weak and attempts to suggest the following:

5. His speech invokes the Greek idea of equality under the law when he asks neither to rule nor to be ruled in 522 BCE (Hsiao and Lim 4).
6. His rousing speech urges resistance against Roman armies in 83 CE (ibid. 9).
7. He was responsible for slave rebellion known as the Third Servile War that took place between 73 and 71 BCE (ibid. 9).
8. A Tamil Brahmin who argued against institutionalization of religion, efficacy of ritual and the reality of caste in 900s (ibid. 12).
9. They called for the expansion of suffrage, religious toleration and sweeping political reforms in 1647 (ibid. 22).
10. The Ranters (1640-60) asserted the freedom of the human spirit and threatened power, property and privilege (ibid. 24).
11. An English poet (1677) and parliamentarian wrote numerous tracts against the corruption of the English court and defended the individual rights of Puritan dissenters (ibid. 27).
12. In 1855 this dalit woman published essay against the injustices of caste when she was 14 years old (ibid. 69).
13. She is the founder of the Gulabi Gang (Pink Sari Gang, 2008), a group from Uttar Pradesh. The gang seeks to empower the poor, the underprivileged, and the lower castes (ibid. 318).
He who thus domineers over you has only two eyes, only two hands, only one body, no more than the power that you confer upon him to destroy you. . . . How would he dare assail you if he had no cooperation from you? (Hsiao and Lim 19)

If the years around 1800 mark the dawn of industrial capitalism and those around 1900 mark the dawn of imperialism, the early years of the new millennium mark the dawn of globalization and neocolonialism. The ever increasing gaps between the dominant and the oppressed provoke cultures of resistance. Justice and resistance thus get linked in the emerging global system; the non-violent resistance of the ordinary tries to democratize the unjust order (Foran et al. 1-2, 4). Even the globalization literature proceeds usually on the assumption that globalization has weakened the power of nation-states. Though globalization has reduced poverty, the twenty-first century goes down in world history as a period of global impoverishment due to the ever increasing inequalities. In such a situation when state tries to buffer its citizens vis-á-vis dominant global forces (IMF, WTO), it also becomes the locus of resistances. Resistance movements of the oppressed at the grassroots level seek to defend identities, jobs, environment and welfare benefits. These movements do not seek a radical recasting of national societies through seizure of power but seek social justice through peaceful means. Several resistance movements (like that of Zapatistas14) create spaces for free discussion of political, economic and culture alternatives to the processes of globalization (6-12). Such resistances are not driven by a precise vision of future; these are provoked by the unbearable conditions that arise out of the injustices and also by a movement towards social reconstruction to bring the required changes (107-110).

14. The principles of Zapatistas include – for everyone, everything, nothing for ourselves and change is a long and slow process which is not secured by seizure of power or electoral victories (Foran et al. 275-76).
"The ordinary" is defined by extreme suffering, misery, deprivation and degradation across the horizons of class, caste, gender, ability and age. The everyday activities and experiences of the ordinary have always been refigured in extraordinary ways to construct and reconstruct the identities of the non-identities. An interrogation of the "ordinary" dimensions of experience exposes the oppressive ways of various structures. It also reveals those perceptions that are sedimented over time and promote oppression and inequality. It further explores the possibilities available to the ordinary employing which they could break out of the constraints and occupy an equal and dignified space in the order (Weiss 2-6).

In the present study, we consider resistance mainly but not exclusively along the axes of class, caste, gender and the postcolonial condition. The axes of caste, class, gender and postcoloniality broadly but usefully define social stratifications which generate inequality and make the powerless and exploited suffer oppression. However, when the exploited unite and resist against the dominant ideologies that promote oppression, the resistance may bring fundamental transformations in the existing order.

The differences between the class that owns the means of production, the bourgeoisie, and the class that sells labour, the proletariat, lead to various conflicts which often find representation in literature (Day 7, 14-15). The word 'class' is from the Latin classis which refers to a division of Roman people according to grade or quality (Brown 411). According to Karl Marx, a literary work reveals the class relations along with the social constraints that provoke resistance and aims to change the unequal order. Marx also sees the history of existing society as the history of class struggle. When a writer lays bare the inner dynamics of society she contributes to the process of transformation of the unjust order (Eagleton, Marxism 15, 26). The common experiences of exploitation unite the working class in order to strive for equality and justice (Day 1-2, 32, 37). For Georg Lukács, literature, particularly the
nineteenth-century realist novel, penetrates the surface of the society to highlight hidden connections and underlying trends that may lead to transformations in the social order. Louis Althusser, on the other hand, points out the ideological nature of the very concept of reality in literature.

According to Marxist critics, a work of art goes beyond mere reflectionism (Eagleton, *Marxism* 48). Raymond Williams contends that the emergent and residual cultures qualify, and so help in understanding the dominant culture. These also enable an exploration of new structures to establish an equal and just order. Writing, for him, is the active struggle for new consciousness that embodies the excluded (124-27, 212). Such a discourse of resistance along the grid of class is what constitutes the Marxist perspective. It supports liberation from oppression and it favours equality and justice for all.

Inequality in India is not simply the consequence of economic disparities; it is also generated by the unequal order rooted in the system of caste. *Caste* basically refers to a Hindu hereditary class of socially equal persons united in religion and following the same occupations but distinguished from other castes in hierarchy by its relative degree of purity or pollution (Brown 1: 348). Caste discrimination and untouchability marginalize the lower castes. Oppression and exploitation of the untouchables in the name of caste creates an unequal order. This prompts resistance by the sufferers, such as dalits,15 who reject the unequal order and demand social justice. The articulation of resistance on the axis of caste has produced what is known as Dalit resistance. Dalit literature is associated with movements of Dalit resistance that aim to change the prevailing order.

Dalit resistances attempt to develop new consciousness and identity by upholding universal human values. Dalit writers often reject the images, symbol and

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15. The word ‘dalit’ comes from Marathi language and a Hindi synonym of it is ‘damit’ which means crushed, oppressed, tormented and ignored. It includes the deprived, the exploited, the abused, the oppressed, the destitute and the landless (Singh, Karan et al. 43).
language of dominant literature in their writings; they inscribe resistances through the use of new symbols and images in their works. In this way, the dalit writers attempt to carve out some space for the oppressed dalits. Dalit writing advocates the liberation of human beings from caste hierarchies. It rebels against the hegemonic order and strives to establish a classless society that is free of exploitation (Limbale 1-3, 23, 34, 38, 51, 61).

Dalit literature is a literature of protest and rejection. It voices the dissent of the dalits – scheduled castes, and tribes, neo-Buddhists, landless and poor peasants, the working classes and others – and even aims at a change in perception of both the oppressed and the dominant to reform the oppressive order. Dalit literature envisages the reconstruction of the prevailing unequal order (Aston 40). Practically, every dalit resistance supports democratic socialism and is based on liberty, equality and fraternity. Dalits challenge the rampant and unjustifiable social inequalities promoted by the dominant structures and want to carve out an equal and dignified space for themselves (Omvedt 21, 72-73, 90). Since the resisting dalits subscribe to secular human values like liberty and equality, Dalit literature finds an easy passage to the world literature as well.

Dalit aesthetics revolt against the canonical literature and traditional aesthetics of Satyam (truth), Shivam (goodness) and Sundaram (beauty) which, according to Limbale, centres on pleasure and is unrealistic. Dalit aesthetics are based on reality and affirm the greatness of human spirit (Limbale 63). Since Dalit studies familiarize the lower castes with their past and show them the way to resist injustices for the cause of a dignified space in the order, these studies obviously concentrate on the woes and misery of the dalits. One can say that Dalit consciousness is also a revolutionary consciousness motivated by the desire for freedom and equality.

Yet another discourse of resistance considers women to be an oppressed social category and is generally known as feminism. It puts forward the claims of women
Multani 20

and attempts to dismantle the existing configuration of power which is biased against women (Diamond xii). The discourse of feminism demonstrates the attempts of women against the oppressive patriarchal order for the purpose of freedom to construct their self (Mills 71, 84). Feminists essentially advocate women's rights on the ground of the equality of sexes (Pearsall 674). Feminism also resists the gendered language, diagnoses the problem of women's inequality in society and proposes solutions (Barry 122, 127). Feminist studies concentrate also on the repressed feminine voices which disrupt the symbolic order to restructure it – to make it equal and just (Waugh 336). The discourse of feminism snips at the centres of patriarchal power for the cause of women's equality.

The resistant minority of women voices its grievances against unequal treatment and seeks better alternatives for a dignified space (Glover 20, 44). Every wave of feminism has sought equal rights for women to make the world better not just for women but for men as well (Freedman 3, 7). Feminism struggles against all types of oppression and domination to secure an equal place for women. It seeks to change the power relations between men and women.

Just as feminism interrogates the power structures, postcolonialism, another discourse of resistance, challenges the structural inequalities emanating from colonialism and its aftermath. The world, colonialism, comes from the Roman *colonia* which meant *farm* or *settlement* and referred to the Romans who settled in other lands but retained their citizenship. Colonialism refers to the forming of a community in the new land or the unforming and re-forming of the already existing communities through trade, negotiation, plunder, genocide, warfare or enslavement. These formations restructured the economies of other lands due to the skewed flow of human and natural resources between the colonised and the colonial countries. Since
the profit always flowed back to the mother country, it led to economic, cultural and political exploitation of the colonized (Loomba 1-5, 15).

What characterizes the postcolonial condition is that the colonised try to liberate themselves from the dominant colonial ideologies as well as structures. "The postcolonial" refers to a process of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome. If colonialism exploits, dehumanizes and objectifies the colonized subject, postcolonialism marks the resistance of the exploited and enslaved. Postcoloniality marks a movement to liberate the oppressed as well as to restructure the colonised system (Loomba 19, 22). It disregards the dominant ideologies, expresses the protest of the oppressed subject and reframes the oppressive frameworks to radically change the condition of the marginalized. This discourse of resistance traces the connections between the visible and the hidden, the dominant and the marginalized ideas as well as institutions by decentring the postcolonial subject (28, 47). It also delineates the workings of power and locates the forces of resistance in the oppressed to undermine the imperial powers to reconstruct the structures of knowledge.

The processes of reading and writing against the colonial regimes and ideologies constitute a resistance that gives voice to the silenced and the marginalized (Waugh 352). The literary texts which do so reflect the dominant ideologies as well as inscribe aspects of "other" cultures to create new genres and identities. These texts depict the resistance of the oppressed striving to bring equality and justice in the given order (Loomba 70, 75). So the histories from below are often the stories of rebellions and struggles of peasants, workers, women and lower castes that disclose the difference between ideology and reality. Postcoloniality as a site of the discourse of resistance contributes to the reshaping of the physical territories, social terrains and human identities (185, 198, 224-26); this happens because the postcolonial perspective views "otherness" as a source of energy which has the potential to bring transformations (Barry 193, 197).
The postcolonial resistance uses the resources of language also. It tries to reverse the hierarchies of power by seizing the language of the centre by the twin processes of abrogation\textsuperscript{16} and appropriation\textsuperscript{17} (Ashcroft et al. 37, 38). In this way, postcolonial literature negotiates a gap between ‘worlds’ through these twin processes.

The use of untranslated words in the literary works has a political purpose that inscribes resistance and provides distinctiveness and visibility to the other as they embody their culture (65). Therefore, the postcolonial voice abrogates the imperial centre within a text as well as a social order. This reconstruction of language restructures the social relationships and the whole terrain of ethics to make the order equal and just (82, 90). Postcoloniality, like other discourses of resistance (Marxism, Dalit studies and Feminism), subsumes resistance at the plane of language also to reconstruct the world so that the hierarchy between the margins and the centre is undermined and dismantled.

A detailed survey of available critical studies of the selected texts indicates that these texts have been usually studied from specific angles, such as gender, class and caste, but a comprehensive view of the discourse of resistance in them has not yet been undertaken. It may be added here that while a considerable number of studies on The God of Small Things and The Hungry Tide are available, very few studies are available on The Branded, Animal’s People, Govardhan’s Travels and The Assassin’s Song.

A Concise History of Indian Literature in English and An Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English, both edited by Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, give a detailed account of the Indian writing from the 1920s to the 1990s. Mehrotra’s analysis points out an uneasy synthesis of Gandhian non-modern imperatives and Nehruvian imperatives.

\textsuperscript{16} Refusal of the imperial culture – the correct usage and fixed meaning (Ashcroft et al. 37).
\textsuperscript{17} A process by which language is adopted as a tool and used in various ways to express widely differing cultural experiences (ibid. 38).
modernity in the works of the novelists of this period. He believes that the issues of nationalism and untouchability hold the energies of the novelists (194-95). His assessment of the works of Amitav Ghosh, M.G. Vassanji and Arundhati Roy focusses on the themes of a global shift from the centring or centripetal logic of monopoly capitalism to the decentring or centrifugal logic of transnational capitalism that has, according to him, brought significant changes in the political and cultural situation and that drives the protagonist's quest for home and identity (331). Mehrotra interprets Ghosh’s work as attempting to construct a hybrid identity and definition of the nation (366). He reads Roy’s *The God of Small Things* in terms of the dislocations between the "Small God" of individual lives and the "Big God" of the nation. Though Mehrotra views Indian writing in English as coterminous with the India of the political map and also in an imaginative sense, he does not see these works in terms of the discourses of resistance. His studies also do not include several important literary works that have been translated into English.

*A Subaltern Studies Reader: 1986-1995* edited by Ranajit Guha is written in defence of the fragment, secularism, non-violence and peaceful existence. It examines the scars of religious-political strife of the nineteenth-century. *Subaltern Studies IX*, edited by Shahi Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty, examines the "subalternity effect" and Dalit consciousness. It discusses the antagonism between Dalits and Brahmins in the historical context of the 80s and the 90s.

The recent studies on Roy, Amitav Ghosh and Vassanji trace a transnational perspective with a foregrounding of distinct local inflections in *The God of Small Things, The Hungry Tide* and *The Assassin’s Song*. Roy’s work is perceived as a writing back which rewrites to the centre with counter narratives, moving from a hegemonic colonizer/colonized confrontation to open a third space, an in-between space, that accounts for the relocation of new, multiple, and interwoven centres and
peripheries in contemporary global power relations. Tracy Lemaster believes that *The God of Small Things* garnered international media attention for its commercial success, literary merit, and social critique. He analyzes the attraction of a woman to a man of a lesser social stratum as a threat to the stable and conservative definition of citizen and the circumscribed parameters of women’s political and sexual power. He sees the novel as a challenge to the constructs of femininity. He also sees it as a critique of the operations of multinational corporations (788, 791-94).

Dale Luis Menezes discusses the pitiable condition of the Uchalyas and the atrocities heaped on them by the dominant castes in his study of *The Branded*. Freny Manecksha chronicles the pain of the author-narrator for his community and the distress of relocated, dispossessed farmers and of the child workers.

G.J.V. Prasad studies *Govardhan's Travels* as a narrative on injustice that evokes compassion for the downtrodden. He reads the novel as the journey of a victim of the absurdity of the systems of justice. The novel reveals the omnipresent nature of injustice. Prasad considers the novel to be born out of a tragic vision (34).

Reading M.G. Vassanji’s *The Assassin’s Song*, Sanjay Sipahimalani discusses the alienation of the protagonist and the burden of being the first born with little attention to the communal violence (9). Jabberwock considers the novel to be a portrayal of the struggle of Karsan with the burden of divinity. According to him, the novel also shows a struggle between duty and individuality as well as faith and pragmatism. He notices a nuanced handling of the theme of "burden of exile" in the novel and remarks on the clash of ideologies between Karsan and Mansoor. Timothy Peters compares the lives of Karsan and Vassanji in his analysis of the narrative. Giles Foden focusses on the postcolonial experience in the novel and considers the narrative to be a historical *bildungsroman* and a terror thriller that celebrates religious tolerance. James Smart studies the novel as a fictionalized journey of the developing
world into Western modernity. He even draws attention to the comparison between English metaphysical poets and Indian ginans (songs). Terry Hong discusses the double tragedy that strikes Karsan – one in the world he creates and the other in the world he inherits. He also comments on what he describes as the path of renewal at the intersection of faith and knowledge through which Karsan discovers himself.

The critical studies available on Animal’s People mainly concentrate on the atrocities of multinational companies, the state of ill health in Khaufpur and the environmental issues. Laura Mc Gavin discusses the invisible, slow violence of toxicity and the response to it (Suzanne). Mitali Saran’s review of the novel deals with the various maladies that torment the Khaufpuris (4). Kamila Shamsie focusses on Animal’s determination to find justice. Sarah Sacha Dollacker discusses the plight of Animal and sees the novel as a tale of hope and humanity. Animal, according to her, embodies the hope that the weak can inherit the earth.

Contemporary Indian Writers in English: Amitav Ghosh by John Hawley gives a description of the communities facing breakdown or remaking themselves in The Hungry Tide. A few scholars examine the questions that Ghosh asks about humankind’s place in Nature in a drama of love and survival. Supriya Chaudhari sees the novel as a travel narrative that also illuminates the ways the human beings have lived on earth and enjoyed its many fruits. She also draws attention to the histories of Bengal’s partition as used in the novel (16-17). Nishat Zaidi interprets the myth-history interface as a tool for subversion of dominant representations: it is a challenge to the hegemonic nationalist discourse that centres on the notion of fixed boundaries of nations, communities, cultures and individuals and on a hierarchical structuring of the world supported by exclusionist discourses (106). Zaidi also examines the Morichjhāpi massacre in historical terms. For him, the novel is a discourse of the nation in which Ghosh does not confine himself to the nation state but takes into account the nation-people also (108, 112, 116-17).
The political turmoil depicted in the novel finds an oblique reference and most of the critical studies available on *The Hungry Tide* concentrate on the precariousness of life in the Sunderbans. Meenakshi Mukherjee reviews the novel as a "mohona"\(^{18}\) of many currents of ideas with special references to the Morichjhapi massacre (4-5). She mentions the invisibility and powerlessness of the refugees. The intimacy between Piya and Fokir also draws the attention of many critics as they read the novel as a story of adventure and unlikely love. Purabi Panwar notes the proximity of the cetologist Piya and the illiterate fisherman Fokir (217-18). Houghton Mifflin Harcourt analyzes the lives of three different people from different worlds.

Banibrata Mahanta reads the novel as an eco-critical text which explores the barriers of religion, class, language and gender constructed by the onward march of civilization. He sees a syncretism between man and nature that blends human and natural ecosystem (97-99). Christopher Rollason analyzes on the evolution of human relationships and communication in a cross cultural context. He also comments on Kanai’s cumulative reading of extracts from Nirmal’s journal as a trans-cultural shift. He views the revolt and plight of the refugees in a translated/interpreted context in the postcolonial times; he sees the novel as a product and reflection of a translated world that calls upon the global citizens to communicate in new forms – to think transculturally and to build new bridges across the world (86-88). Terri Tomsky explores the global dilemmas of development and ecology in *The Hungry Tide*. Rashmi Gaur studies strains of feminism and environmentalism as reinforcing and complementing each other in the structure of the novel (86-90, 91). Eliza Joseph considers the novel to be a dialogic discourse on the conflict between environmentalists and the refugee settlers (132, 135, 137).

\(^{18}\) Meeting, confluence (Ghosh 7).

Most of the critical studies on *The God of Small Things* focus on the breaking of law and the crossing of forbidden territories by the powerless/deprived. The novel is also read as a fictionalized autobiography of Roy that brings out the brave but unfortunate struggle of the *Mombattis* against caste, class and gender (Dhawan 42, 91, 26). Various critics have also discussed the atrocities of both the state and the police in the globalized order. The marginalization of women and child abuse too have received the attention of the critics (228, 238-40). K.V. Surendran points out the importance of the linguistic innovations made by Roy in the novel. He considers Velutha to be a rebel on account of his "anti-social act" (149).

*Explorations*, edited by Indira Bhatt and Indira Nityanandan, discusses the multiple power structures in Ayemenem, the enclosures (of marriage, caste, class, politics), and the suffering of various characters (39, 60). It examines the dialectics of dominance by those at the top of the ladder and the resistance of the suppressed. It interprets Ammu's radicalism, Velutha’s self-assurance and Estha-Rahel’s incestuous affair as steps to assert and maintain individuality (21, 28). J.M. Verghese considers
the rebellion of characters against conformity to be the reason for their grief and suffering (62). Aijaz Ahmad considers the intermeshing of caste and sexuality to be a rebellion that aims to discover the truth (35). Brinda Bose interprets the social transgression as a politics of desire that proclaims the "erotic as Truth" which rejects the existing truth to explore political possibilities (89).

The "magniloquent" linguistic innovations are seen as devices of intensification that aim to attract the postcolonial reader (Jaydeep 145-47). These are also seen as a marketing strategy of Roy (Dwivedi 94). Some scholars discuss the deterioration of land as a metaphor for the decline of human values and the loss of protection for the weaker sections (Joseph 139). A few scholars have also raised the question of women’s need and of the morality of motherhood in the figure of Ammu (Dhawan 47; Radhika 36-37). *Indian English Literature: Marginalized Voices*, edited by Avadhesh Kumar Singh, studies feminism, the vindication of rights of weaker sections of the society and the valorization of women. *A Critical Response to Indian English Literature*, edited by N.K. Mishra and Sabita Tripathy, studies the erosion of traditional marital and filial relations, social morality and the problems arising out of the situation that defy easy solutions (107, 121-22).

Though Usha Bande calls the child narrator and the women in *The God of Small Things* active resisters, she studies the resistance of women with reference to gender politics only (127-28). She examines Rahel’s incest and Ammu’s affair as rebelliousness that arises out of rejection during childhood (129, 149). The apparently impossible closing of the novel has been interpreted as desubjectivation; such a closing grants the subject either first and final opportunity for eternal living or the opportunity to remake his life (Farred 698-701).

The present project thus goes beyond the range of available scholarship. It studies the typology of resistances in the selected texts to bring out the positive and
constructive role of non-violent resistance in reconfiguring the given unjust order. It also views resistance as the inherent strength of the oppressed which enables them to democratize not only the oppressive structures but also bring a change in the perception of both the dominant and the weak. The modes of resistances of the marginalized which reshape the oppressive structures have also been studied in detail by employing the theoretical frameworks provided by Camus, Certeau and Rancière. The linguistic innovations and techniques of writing have been analyzed as modes of aesthetic resistance through which a writer contributes to the processes of transformation of the unjust order. The interweaving of political and aesthetic resistance that attempts to reconfigure the existing order has been closely examined.

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 postcoloniality. 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 focusses on resistances in terms of thematics, characters and the formal aesthetic structure to bring out the political and aesthetic significance of each text.