
REFLECTION OF CULTURAL CONFLICTS IN CONTEMPORARY INDIAN NOVELS

HARLIVLEEN KAUR BHATTI^{*1}, HANSDEEN², HOMERA DURANI³

¹FACULTY OF SCIENCES, HUMANITIES AND LANGUAGES (ENGLISH), GURU KASHI UNIVERSITY,
TALWANDI SABO, PUNJAB 151302, INDIA

²FACULTY OF SCIENCES, HUMANITIES AND LANGUAGES (ENGLISH), GURU KASHI UNIVERSITY,
TALWANDI SABO, PUNJAB 151302, INDIA

³FACULTY OF SCIENCES, HUMANITIES AND LANGUAGES (ENGLISH), RK UNIVERSITY, RAJKOT, INDIA

EMAIL: harlivleenlivi@gmail.com¹, drhansdeen171942@gku.ac.in², homera.durani@rku.ac.in³

ABSTRACT

This research finds how literature and culture shape each other and treating the contemporary Indian English novel not just as a reflection of mirror but as a battleground for ideas and insights, not just simply reflecting society, these novels push back, the unsettle state approved myths and take on the raw realities of caste, gender, and the everyday uncertainty people face. By illustrating New Historicism, Intersectionality, and Speculative Fiction Theory, this study examines at a broader range of authors such as Khair, Mistry, Bama, Pawar, Kandasamy, Basu, and Roy. By splitting their novels into four main areas, how stories make communal violence seem normal, how caste and patriarchy overlap and make supports each other, how imagined futures puts pressure who gets to hold power, and the constant dance between containing and undermining dominant narratives and also argue the Indian English novel works as a living archives because it not just record voices pushed to the margins but also it fights with the nation's contradictions, dreams of progress bent with deep-rooted inequalities and discrimination.

KEYWORDS: Contemporary Indian English Fiction; Caste Annihilation; Communal Violence; Dalit Women's Narratives; Postcolonial Literature

1. INTRODUCTION

Literature is a place where cultures meet and meanings are discussed [1]. Since the 1960s, following what critics call the "cultural turn," literary studies have moved far from focusing on the established canon [2]. They now examine the political forces that shape everyday life, and building thinkers like Raymond Williams and Stephen Greenblatt, critics argues that stories do not just show reality but plays an important role to shape it, challenge it, and sometimes resist it [3]. As Pramod K. Nayar suggests, the novel is a space where official histories are interrogated and challenges by the voices from the margins [4].

In India, these cultural conflicts continue to persist and remain unresolved and deeply influenced by social hierarchies such as caste, religion, and the lasting impact of colonialism [5]. According to scholars, Asian fiction has transformed significantly in response to incidents such as the 1992 Ayodhya riots and the 2002 Gujarat genocide [6]. In the wake of such incident writers compel to view belonging in a nation perpetually on the brink of fracture, and these tensions resonate strongly in Dalit literatures [7].

Authors such as Bama, Urmila Pawar, and Baby Kamble vividly express the oppression of caste and patriarchy in their literary works. [8]. In their works such as Bama's *Sangati* and Pawar's *The Weave of My Life*, storytelling becomes a vital mode of survival [9], blending the harsh realities of labour with the imperative of resistance [7]. Meanwhile, Indian speculative fiction draws "para-realism" to engage with the hopes and anxieties of a "New India" [10]. Writers such as Manjula Padmanabhan and Vandana Singh draw on post humanist imagery to lay bare continuing wounds of gendered violence and exclusion, while Samit Basu uses sharp, often playful satire to probe the upheavals of globalization and neoliberal India [12]. These stories build strange new worlds that highlights the crack in our existing social hierarchies [13]. They turn fiction into a continuous enduring revolution, still entangled with the very power structures it tries to expose and question [3].

This study examine the recent Indian novels catch with some of the country's deepest social and political wounds: **Communal Violence and Minority Identity:** Novels about riots and everyday bigotry show and how Muslims and other minorities living with constant low-grade fear: always aware of their names, addresses, clothes, and how quickly neighbours can turn into a mob [5].

Caste and Gendered Oppression: Dalit feminist writers turn the daily humiliations of Dalit women sexual violence, economic exploitation, silencing even within their own communities into blunt, ruthless language [8].

Speculative Fiction as Counter-Memory: Magical realism and speculative futures are used to revisit Partition, emergency rule, and colonialism, blending myth and fantasy to question official history and keep uncomfortable memories alive [10].

The Paradox of Containment and Subversion: In this section it shows how power tries to control people, even as those same people find ways to resist it. Using a New Historicist approach, the study traces how everyday lives, official histories, and private memories constantly rub up against each other, uncovering the fractures inside systems of authority [3].

By reading wide range of such as - Khair, Mistry, Roy, Kandasamy, Akbar, and others—this research shows this books function as living archives [14]. They preserve and rejuvenate witness to both contemporary realities and historical memories [15]. In doing so, contemporary Indian fiction portrays a nation suspended between neoliberal progress and the enduring weight legacies of its own past [16].

1.1. Key objectives of this study:

- Observing at how today's Indian novels jump into the real lives mould by communal violence and how fragile minority identities can get in postcolonial India.
- Digging into how Dalit women's stories and the voices from other marginalized groups take on the tangled problems of caste destruction and gender oppression.
- Examining how post-millennial speculative fiction fights back against official, state-approved myths and it acts like a living reminiscence that pushes against the stories the nation tries to tell itself.
- Getting into the push and pull inside the speculative genre, where New Historicism shows the constant wrestle between those in power striving to keep control and writers working to subvert the interests of the dominant class and raise the voices of marginalised class.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The goal of the present study is to seek how Indian fiction engages with "counter-memories" describes the question or unsettle official versions of history, by applying a combination of four theories that work well mutually [2].

First, at postcolonial theory, in this theory it helps to see the novel as a place where suppressed or marginalised stories surface [5] and a kind of "literary archive" where these stories can preserve and be heard [5]. This theory's lens helps to grasp insights of the afterlife of colonialism and find the stories of people who have been pushed to the margin, such as religious minorities endure communal violence [6].

Then by applying intersectionality, this theory first developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw and adapted by Chinmayi Srikanth in India, clarifies different forms of persecution like caste, gender, and class are all connected [17]. As this approach is essential to understand the ways the Dalit women are marginalized [18] and face oppression from upper-caste patriarchy as well as patriarchal structures within their own communities [19].

New Historicism, this theory, developed by Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose, provides a framework to see how literary texts are connected to historical and social world around them [3] and look at the political and economic contexts in which the texts were written, listen for the voices of people which rarely heard and the individuals realities hardly reach the corridors of power." [13]. This theory shows how fiction do can support and challenge the stories that nations talk about themselves [3], also reproduce and subvert the dominant national narratives.

Finally, the speculative fiction theory, this theory developed by E. Dawson Varughese, assist to grasp the knowledge of Indian science fiction and fantasy can offer as indirect critique to the present by imagining futures [10]. These speculative components can help to remember hidden histories and imagine alternative futures for the nation [20].

The all four theories are not merely juxtaposed to each other but provides an insight of one framework that complement or reinforce other one through analysis [2]. Postcolonial theory is crucial in bringing the stories and voices of marginalise in centre [5]. Intersectionality highlights complex oppression of marginalized voices [17][18]. New Historicism grounds these voices in material histories and power structure [13]. Speculative fiction theory empowers how the literature reimagining new and alternative future [10]. Altogether, these approaches providing a nuanced reading fiction as a site where, power, resistance, and cultural memory vigorously negotiated [21].

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

This research study is structured around its four core objectives and each call for a distinct approach, and all together provides a comprehensive, integrated research design.

Table 1: Applied analytical methods for our objectives

Research Objective	Primary Method	Key Analytical Focus
--------------------	----------------	----------------------

Objective 1: Communal violence and minority identities	Discourse Analysis	Representations of violence in communities, Muslim identity, and the vulnerability of minorities
Objective 2: Caste annihilation and gendered oppression	Intersectional Analysis	Stories from Dalit women, double marginalization, and group resistance
Objective 3: Speculative fiction as counter-memory	Genre Analysis	Speculative components, challenges of national narratives, and temporal dislocation
Objective 4: New Historicist containment and subversion	New Historicist Reading	Conflict between authority and subversion, and contained rebellion

3.2. Primary text selection:

3.2.1. Objective 1: Communal Violence and Minority Identity

Tabish Khair, *Night of Happiness* (2018): Khair's work probes profound uncertain citizenship in India as he observes, "belonging here is always on a condition". Suggesting identity, a matter of endlessly negotiation and uncertainty instead of fully secure entitlement [6]. Khair further suggests that temporal bound of conflict was far beyond of physical riots, noting that "the violence did not end when the killing stopped; it lived on in how we looked at each

other". This shifts our focus from the spectacular riots to lingering "slow violence" embedded in daily distrust, fear, and suspicion. [22].

Rohinton Mistry, *A Fine Balance* (1995): Mistry's narrative highlights the radical vulnerability of marginalized existence live in an exclusionary nation-state, where he writes that "in this country to be a minority means to live on borrowed time"[5]. Captures the being minority is always provisional and exposed to sudden danger, described as a "mob [that] moved like a single organism, hungry and mindless". This metaphor shows how easily people can become part of a destructive, dehumanized mass; also, how communal hatred can dissolve individual moral and conscience [23].

Githa Hariharan, *In Times of Siege* (2004) Hariharan's novel examines the political implications of memory and contested nature of the past. She writes, "the past was not dead; it was not even past, and they wanted to kill it"[13]. This is an example of "counter-memory" [3] where history itself is a battleground, fought over and rewritten rather than settled narrative. The novel shows that trying to control the past are inseparable from attempts to regulate dissent in the present "anti-national for loving a language that was not his own", showing how love for a language, a culture, or a tradition can be turned into weaponized in nationalist discourse [5].

3.2.2. Objective 2: Caste Annihilation and Gendered Oppression

Bama's *Sangati* (1994/2005): Bama lays bare the everyday "bind" faced by Dalit women who suffer both caste and patriarchy She writes Dalit men, humiliated "like dogs with their tails rolled up" by society often this frustration of shame turn into violence against their wives and kids [18]. Her searing question: "is it the fate of our women to be tormented both outside their houses and within?" captures the interlocking oppression, where caste, class, and gender converge [17]. She also talks about defiance., "we laughed together and in that laughter was our freedom", reclaims collective humour as a fragile but strong way to fight back [24].

Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life* (2008): Urmila Pawar uses her mother's work as a metaphor for Dalit feminist self-writing" her act of weaving and my act of writing are organically linked. It is the weave of pain, suffering and agony that links us"[25]. She also writes about the fear within the community: "a sense of perpetual insecurity fearing that they could be attacked from all four sides in times of conflict" how violence becomes a permanent atmosphere instead just of single event [18].

Meena Kandasamy's *The Gypsy Goddess* (2014): Kandasamy's work faces the effort to erase the Kilvenmani massacre. She describes the victims of Kilvenmani as "forty-two bodies, forty-two stories, forty-two silences that history would try to forget" [22]. This shows novel can be as "archive" turned into a collection of Dalit memory, challenging official histories that omit caste atrocities [5].

Sharankumar Limbale's *Sanatan*: Limbale theorizes the political significance of Dalit literature from an internal community perspective. He argues that Dalit writers are essential because they articulate from lived and suffered experiences. They write "against slavery and for liberation" [25]. He describes the life of a Mahar who must "keep waiting for food for all the twelve months" only to receive "stale food" wages exposes the normalization of caste-based exploitation [18].

3.2.3. Objective 3: Speculative Fiction as Counter-Memory

Samit Basu's *Turbulence* (2012) and *Resistance* (2014): revisit to the superhero genre and focus on the burden of choice and responsibility instead of easy heroism. [10]. He questions the hero myth through characters who ask why they should be expected to become altruistic saviours "None of us chose to spend our lives helping people before we got our powers, why should we do it now?" [26]. He forces a re-evaluation of leadership: "Who's the greatest Indian leader ever? Gandhi? If Gandhi had your powers, would he be flying around above a nuclear site...?" This stark contrast between highlights the conflict among personal ethics, political authority, and national obligation. [20].

Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest* (1997): turns bodily vulnerability into a sharp criticism of global bio-economies. The play envisions a reality in which organ trafficking is commonplace, illustrating [10]. "The exploitation of

organs perpetuates a cycle of suffering and regret that blurs the line between survival and existence" [20]. It documents "moral decay and dehumanization" that comes with global inequality, suggesting that structural inequality undermines both institutions and personal relationships. [27].

Vandana Singh's "Delhi" (2005): Singh's story reshuffle the city from a quiet place to a restless, hungry presence. The story shows Delhi as a power that "is expanding every day swallowing the surrounding countryside" and "burrowing into the earth" [10]. These images turn the growth of cities into a scary metaphor for development, also the story shows how this growing city watches over and excludes people those on its margins. It also talks about the policing of marginalized bodies, "They say you must have papers... They'll send me to Neechi-Dilli with all the poor and the criminals"[20]. Singh exposes how bureaucracy, documentation, and spatial segregation work together to make poverty a crime and push people who are already dispossessed.

Prayaag Akbar's *Leila* (2017): Akbar's *Leila* thinks of a future city that is harshly divided into rigidly policed enclaves like the "Tamil Brahmin sector, Leuva Patel Residency, Bohra Muslim Zone and Catholic Commons" [10]. This map of separation shows how caste, religion, and class divide everyday life. Central to this world is the "Purity Camp," where women who break the rules are discipline and taught again [20]. It captures the use of technology to enforce hierarchy: "the chip under your skin told them who you were, where you belonged, whether you deserved to live" [26]. Here identity is not only enforced by society, but also encoded by technology, making bodies places of control that are always being monitored.

3.2.4. Objective 4: New Historicist Containment and Subversion

Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest* (1997): Padmanabhan's play shows in a cleverly disguises control as protection, showing how those in power often use the tactic of resistance to absorb and neutralize it, "rephrasing control as safety" This dynamic shows how oppression can become normal when it is disguised as care. [13].

Prayaag Akbar's *Leila* (2017): In *Leila*, the Purity Camp is a carefully designed institutional tool that is used to suppressing rebellion [3], where Shalini's sixteen years of subjugation serve as a painful testament to the utilization of prolonged suffering in maintaining rigid social hierarchies [13].

Vandana Singh's "Delhi" (2005): Singh's story recovers occluded pasts that have been forgotten or erased, using a broken sense of time to make room for memories that go against state-sponsored stories, this temporality opens cracks in historiography [3].

Samit Basu's *Turbulence and Resistance* (2012/2014): Samit Basu's superhero narratives examine the conflict between control and insurrection, depicting individuals with superhuman abilities [3] and these superpowered agents pose a disruptive threat to existing power structures. These works make complicated political systems more relatable by focusing on real-life experiences of control and defiance. The novels critically examine how subversion often exists in an uneasy dialogue with containment instead of direct opposition [13].

3.3. Analytical methodology

This study applies a multimodal framework to address a comprehensive interpretation of the data. To ensure methodological rigor, each research method is systematically linked to achieving defined objectives [2]. All analysis was conducted as a recursive process; the analysis adhered to the updated six-phase procedure by Braun and Clarke (2021): [29]

3.3.1. Discourse Analysis for Communal Violence and Minority Identity :(Objective 1)

Study communal violence and minority identity applies Wortham and Reyes (2021), methodology, this discursive methodology the analysis unfolds in four recursive steps [28],

First analysis of the vocabulary in "Night of Happiness" describes words like 'provisional' and 'conditional' are not just descriptors; they are also signs of an identity that is in ever surveillance or renegotiation. Secondly, examines the narrative voice of marginalized communities is emphasized and expressed their experiences; Mistry's claim that minorities exist on "borrowed time" encapsulates the persistent anxiety and existential weight of communal violence. Third, violence is reconceptualized—not as a transient disruption but as a persistent state. Khair's assertion that "the violence did not cease when the killing ended" and Hariharan's remark that "the past was not dead" elucidate trauma as a temporal continuum rather than a singular occurrence, exemplify the long-term effects of trauma. Fourth, literary techniques, including fragmentation, repetition, and silence, reflect the psychological fractures induced by this persistent violence. [22].

3.3.2. Intersectional Analysis for Dalit Women's Narratives: (Objective 2)

For Dalit women's narratives, Utilizing Crenshaw's intersectionality (1991) as adapted by Srikanth (2024), this analysis has three layers:

Examining caste and gender systems work together and Bama's question about being "tormented both outside their houses and within" shows that oppression can happen both outside of homes (violence against upper-caste people) and inside homes (patriarchal subjugation within Dalit homes). [24], also interrogates the Metaphorical language becomes a way to remember things: Pawar's "tortoise" metaphor captures learned self-effacement, where a community shrinks into itself under constant threat, "shrink within ourselves" and captures the embodied memory [25] But these texts also show how people can come together to resistance through shared voice a shared voice, turning personal trauma into a collective fight, in Bama's work, laughter becomes rebellious joy, and in Pawar's weaving metaphor, maternal work and literary creation come together to make a tapestry of survival and defiance. [24].

3.3.3. Genre Analysis and Counter-Historicism for Speculative Fiction: (Objective 3)

According to Varughese (2025) genre analysis and counter-historicism come together when speculative fiction uses well-known tropes to question Indian realities.

Examining of how conventional components, In Basu's *Turbulence*, superheroes are not uncritical Saviors; their self-reflexive questioning ("because comics say we should") shakes up genre norms and shows moral ambiguity mere than just entertainment. [26]. Akbar's hyper-segregated city, with its "Tamil Brahmin sector, Leuva Patel Residency, and Bohra Muslim Zone," shows the ridiculous real-world communal divisions can be by making them even worse, exaggerate existing communal divisions [20]. Counter-historicism is rebellious here: challenge linear national narratives, speculative fiction breaks up linear national stories and creates new times and places where hidden histories come to light and marginalized voices project themselves into possible futures. [10].

3.3.4. New Historicist Reading for Containment and Subversion:(Objective 4)

Evaluation the containment and subversion, maps the framework of New Historicist reading following Greenblatt from 1988 [3] and Montrose from 1996 [30]. The analysis follows four tracks:

First maps ideological containment alongside moments of rupture, examining the state or dominant discourse absorb dissent to maintain control and social equilibrium. In Padmanabhan's *Harvest*, InterPlanta's surveillance is disguised as charity, transforming Om's home into "a germ-free zone"—exemplifies regulation as disguised in the form of care [27]. Second, identify textual fissures briefly imagine alternatives, In Singh's work, time-walker disrupts linear history and Basu's superheroes refusing state co-optation are fragile but bright acts of refusal. [13]. Third, examine the texts depict neoliberalism and majoritarian nationalism are dissected using metaphors such as organ trade in *Harvest* and this organ trade becomes a metaphor for global bio-economics [27]. Fourth, attend to minor details that reveal a panoptic infrastructure. In Akbar's *Leila*, Shalini discovering a file of "all the children in the country" uncovers the bureaucratic banality of surveillance and common but always present form of violence [20].

3.4. Data Collection:

3.4.1. Primary Corpus Acquisition

Primary texts were systematically acquired through academic libraries and publisher archives [2] and for translation studies framework, such as Bama's *Sangati* and Pawar's *The Weave of My Life*, the study assesses translation studies scholarship to measure the linguistic shifts and "translational filtration" occurring between the source bhasha dialects and English [25].

3.4.2. Secondary Source Synthesis

A systematic bibliographic explore was done across Scopus, Web of Science, and JSTOR utilizing descriptors including "Dalit historiography," "communal precarity," and "speculative counter-memory" [31]. The secondary corpus integrates peer-reviewed journals, scholarly monographs, and reception studies to triangulate theoretical insights to bridge abstract concepts and critical audience data [2].

3.3.3. Historiographic Grounding

Grounded in the New Historicist "textuality of history" [30], the study maps primary narratives alongside coeval historical records. The 1968 Kilvenmani massacre serves as a foundational materialist anchor for Kandasamy's *The Gypsy Goddess* [22], and the 2002 Gujarat riots give the sociopolitical approach for Khair's *Night of Happiness* [6].

3.5. Ethical consideration

This research did not involve primary human subjects was conducted, was solely based on archival and secondary textual analysis, ensuring full adherence of ethical standards.

The methodology adheres to the essential ethical principles of respect, beneficence, and justice as established in qualitative research [21]. Adopting a reflexive, the study recognizes that personal positionality inevitably influences interpretation. To address this, the study centres Dalit, Muslim, and feminist critical scholarship to make sure the analysis is informed by internal communal viewpoints [18, 24, 25]. Representational integrity is scrupulously preserved by directly anchoring all interpretations strictly tethered to the primary texts of Akbar, Mistry, Kandasamy, and Bama through rigorous citation practices, thereby mitigating the risks of interpretative bias or "translational sanitization" [25].

3.6. Limitations of the Study

The study acknowledges that relying on English translations, a limitation to full assessing some of the of the nuanced language and deep- embedded cultural stories found in the original bhasha literatures, also acknowledging intrinsic difficulties associated with challenges to capture everything that gets lost in translation.

The study gives a brief overview of diverse contemporary landscape of Indian fiction. This research provides a preliminary overview of the surface, offering a snapshot rather than a full map because since it doesn't cover all the important novels which aren't mentioned.

Since the qualitative nature of this study, the researcher's own lens shapes, will always affect how they interpret the data, also every reader has own biases and level of knowledge so it may form a different angle, they should be open to other points of view that could show distinct conclusions.

Intersectionality and New Historicism provide are useful ways for look at how power works in society, but no single theory can explain all the different levels of meaning in a novel, the study uses limited theories to find to address their research.

This study only constitutes a temporal overview of changing Indian literary landscape, indicating that certain conclusions may necessitate reevaluation as new works and viewpoints arise.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. The Uncertainty of Minority Identity

Authors like Tabish Khair, Rohinton Mistry, and Githa Hariharan observes, communal violence is not an unusual event but a constant force that affects the daily lives of shaping the everyday existence of marginalized groups [5]. Khair succinctly noted "belonging here is always provisional, always conditional", this phrase captures the constant instability that Muslims in modern day India [6]. Mistry deepens this minorities condition in these words, "borrowed time", this widening the miserable state from physical violence to the instability of citizenship itself [23]. However, the authors not just write about their own suffering rather, they see different angles of marginalized existence. The author's characters show strength and find ways to feel like they belong through community, shared memory, and dignity [5]. Such micro-narratives of resistance challenge the status quo and assert that victimhood cannot be the sole viewpoint, a collective shared experiences and way of livelihood [22].

4.2. The linked between Caste and Gender

The works of Bama, Urmila Pawar, and Meena Kandasamy illustrate that caste, and gender does not parallel phenomena, but they entangled to each other. [17]. Bama writes about, "is it the fate of our women that they are tormented not only outside their houses but also within?". This exemplifies augmented marginalization and very core essence of intersectionality [18]. Pawar's metaphor rooted with her mother's bamboo weaving, she frames her own writing, "the weave of pain, suffering, and agony that links us", talks about the synergy between material survival and creative expression [25]. In these texts, collective resistance shows up in different forms, like laughter in Sangati [24] [24], solidarity in Pawar's memoir, remembering way of Kilvenmani's "forty-two silences" in Kandasamy [15]. Altogether, these narratives not just showing the oppressed people are suffering, also they act with strength, find moments of joy, and speak together with a strong, united voice. [32].

4.3. Speculative Fiction to Remember memories and experiences

These writers use speculative fiction as structured way to remembers the past memories. Samit Basu, Manjula Padmanabhan, Vandana Singh, and Prayaag Akbar go beyond from realistic stories and use imagination to emphasise contemporary anxieties and uncovers the real problems of the society such as fears and hidden truths [10]. The questions stereotypical notion that power naturally brings some responsibility [26]. Basu's characters ask: "None of us chose to spend our lives helping people before we got our powers, why should we do it now?" this questions the usual idea that moral certainties that are common in superhero stories [20]. Padmanabhan's organ market is more than sci-fi but it uncovers the brutal truth of global inequality where poor people's bodies are treated like goods [27]. Singh's Delhi mixes past and present to bring out histories that official records want to hide [10]. Her portrayal of "Neechi-Dilli with all the poor and the criminals" exposes the administrative violence, how poor people are pushed out in the name of city development. [33]. Akbar's Leila writings not just warning about the future, but it shows how today's religious and social divisions can lead to strict control, surveillance, and unfair power in the future. [20] Together, these writers use imaginative stories to help us to shape how we remember these stories and open up new ways, also to think about better possibilities for the future [10].

4.4. Control vs Subversion Paradox

Based on Greenblatt's concept of "contained subversion" [3], this study shows that power in Indian fiction does not just crush resistance, but also it absorbs and reshapes it [13]. In Harvest by Manjula Padmanabhan, the company InterPlanta uses surveillance hides exploitation behind the mask of charity and makes Om's home "germ-free" [27] by pretending to be charitable [27]. In Leila, the Purity Camp takes women who rebel and forces them to work to strengthen the same regime which it punishes [20]. However, the texts do not let containment win completely. Singh's character who travels through time, briefly challenges the official history [13]. Some of Basu's characters also resist control and, briefly imagining alternatives even if those alternatives ideas remain do not fully happen. [26]. The paradox lies in the fact that these stories question power from within the system itself, not to completely destroy the house but to expose its cracks [3].

5. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS STUDY

Postcolonial theory: Treating novels as "testimonial archives, this research build and extends the Chambers and Herbert's work [5] to show that fiction does more than simply echo history but actively performs a custodial function against official narratives and sheltering suppressed memories from the erasure. In this way, literary texts become spaces where silenced experiences can endure and remain remembered [14].

Intersectionality: Drawing on Crenshaw's framework [17] within the specificities of the Indian context, along more recent scholarly Srikanth's contributions [18], need to be read through approaches that can address multiple forms that account for different forms of oppression simultaneously. Bama's "double marginalization" is not a matter of simple addition of caste and gender disadvantage but marks a definite, transformative site in India's social structure [32].

New Historicism: Reading Indian speculative fiction can greatly benefit from Greenblatt's containment-subversion concept [3], which was developed mainly for Renaissance texts, proves highly useful for reading Indian speculative fiction [13]. It helps reveal the ongoing tension between systems of power that try to absorb or neutralize resistance and literature's ability that is important to imagine alternative possibilities.

Speculative Fiction Theory: Building on Varughese's analysis of "Desi Dystopias" [10], this study identifies certain recurring features in Indian speculative narratives, this includes caste segregation projected into the future, bio-economic exploitation of the global poor [27], and temporal disruption as historical recovery [33], and the use of disrupted timelines as a way of recovering suppressed histories. When taken as a whole, these components clearly set a clear distinction from dominant Western models of speculative fiction.

REFERENCES

1. Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
2. Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2016). *Designing qualitative research* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
3. Greenblatt, S. (1988). *Shakespearean negotiations: The circulation of social energy in Renaissance England*. University of California Press.
4. Nayar, P. K. (2012). *Contemporary literary and cultural theory: From structuralism to ecocriticism*. Pearson.
5. Chambers, C., & Herbert, C. (2015). *Imagining Muslims in South Asia and the diaspora: Secularism, religion, representations*. Routledge.
6. Raza, M. W., & Mishra, B. (2025). Unveiling the enigma of reality: Investigating Muslim identity, culture and violence in Tabish Khair's *Night of Happiness*. *Ars Aeterna*, *17*(1), 19–34.
7. Biswas, M. (2025). Dalit feminist politics in Kalyani Thakur Charal's selected works. *NEGOTIATIONS: An International Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies*, 7(1), 57–78.
8. Rege, S. (2006). *Writing caste/writing gender: Narrating Dalit women's testimonios*. Zubaan.
9. Margil, J. G. (2025). *Voices of resistance: Representation of Dalit women in the works of Baby Kamble and Urmila Pawar*. Zenodo.
10. Varughese, E. D. (2025). *Post-millennial Indian speculative fiction in English: Desi dystopias and ideas of belonging*. Bloomsbury Academic.
11. Afzal-Khan, F. (2021). *Cultural imperialism and the Indo-English novel: Genre and ideology in R. K. Narayan, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, and Salman Rushdie*. Penn State University Press. (Original work published 1993)
12. Krishnamurthy, N. (2024). *The nation imagined: A critical study of nationhood and identity through the cover art of Indian speculative literature* [Doctoral dissertation, Massey University].
13. Sayar, Ö. (2024). New Historicism and the politics of literary interpretation. *Journal of Literary Theory*, 18(2), 145–162.
14. Hirsch, M. (2012). *The generation of postmemory: Writing and visual culture after the Holocaust*. Columbia University Press.
15. Raj, R. (2024). History, fiction and trauma: Unveiling the unspeakable in the novel *Amu*. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 16(1), 54–65.
16. Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press.
17. Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299.
18. Sambharia, R. K. (2024). *Obscure spaces among privileged positions: An intersectional perspective to agency in local literary narratives*. SSRN Electronic Journal.
19. Mahtha, R. K., & Menon, N. (2024). The illusion of home and belongingness: A representation and (dis)location of home in Tabish Khair's novels. *National Identities*. Routledge. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2024.2393580>
20. Keikhosrokiani, P., et al. (2024). Computational analysis of dystopian elements in the partition fiction: A machine learning approach to the Indian English novels. *Social Sciences and Humanities Open*, 10, Article 100897. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.100897>
21. Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.
22. Nixon, R. (2011). *Slow violence and the environmentalism of the poor*. Harvard University Press.
23. Tiwari, K. L. (2013). Identity crisis- Indian English fiction of post 1980s. *International Journal of English and Literature*, 4(1), 6–10.
24. Sidra-Tul-Muntaha, Noreen, A., & Bilal, R. (2025). Exploring pragmatic markers in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*: A corpus based analysis of Mohsin Hamid's narrative techniques. *Corporum: Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 7(2), 56–84.

25. Wolgemuth, J. R., Guyotte, K. W., & Shelton, S. A. (Eds.). (2025). *Expanding approaches to thematic analysis: Creative engagements with qualitative data*. Routledge.
26. Wang, Y. (2025). Combining poetic analysis with thematic analysis to understand U.S. transnational teachers' intersectional precarity in China. In *SAGE research methods cases*. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781036209216>
27. Chaitee, N. N. (2025). [Review of the book *Expanding approaches to thematic analysis: Creative engagements with qualitative data*, by J. R. Wolgemuth, K. W. Guyotte, & S. A. Shelton (Eds.)]. *Educational Leadership & Workforce Development Faculty Publications*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.25776/cyt6-w866>
28. Wortham, S., & Reyes, A. (2021). *Discourse analysis beyond the speech event* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
29. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE Publications.
30. Montrose, L. (1996). *The purpose of playing: Shakespeare and the cultural politics of the Elizabethan theatre*. University of Chicago Press.
31. Adilović, E. (2022). Criteria for quality assessment and inclusion in SCOPUS: A comparison of bibliometric indicators in three BH journals. *Bosniaca*, 27(27), 169–191.
32. Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* (2nd ed.). Zed Books.
33. Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2014). R-words: Refusing research. In D. Paris & M. T. Winn (Eds.), *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities*. SAGE Publications.
34. Amin, M. E. K., Nørgaard, L. S., Cavaco, A. M., Witry, M. J., Hillman, L., Cernasev, A., & Desselle, S. P. (2020). Establishing trustworthiness and authenticity in qualitative pharmacy research. *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy*, 16(10), 1472–1482.
35. Harvey, D. (2008). The right to the city. *New Left Review*, 53, 23–40.