Imagining Alternatives: Exploring Postcolonial Paradigms and Resistance in Indian Science Fiction Narratives

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Abstract:

The proposed research aims to establish science fiction as a critical framework that can challenge preconceived notions of Western science fiction and provide alternative possibilities of existence. The study involves reading various SF narratives from different ages, including *Sultana's Dream* (1905), *Calcutta Chromosome* (1995), *Escape* (2008), *The Island of Lost Girls* (2015), and *The Woman Who Thought She Was a Planet and Other Stories* (2008). The goal is to show how this subgenre reflects a postcolonial society's struggle to establish a foothold in the new world order. These works present a vision of national consciousness that is influenced by the Western canon but is proud of its traditions.

The study also examines how an emerging subgenre of "postcolonial science fiction" offers valuable conceptual tools for imagining postcolonial relations. By critiquing the genre's colonial drive, postcolonial science fiction questions several of the assumptions that underpin science fiction. This includes the genre's colonial gaze, the appeal to an ideology of progress, the focus on the "future," and the construction of an assumed cosmopolitan future, as well as an implicit faith in technological solutions or the inclination towards the West. Postcolonial science fiction links these generic qualities to the dominance of certain ideological frameworks, revealing the colonial underpinnings of both genre and the "real-world" socio-historical contexts from which genres emerge. Importantly, postcolonial science fiction is also constructivist, offering alternative epistemological frameworks for understanding our relationship to the future beyond colonial paradigms.

The study looks forward to postcolonial science fiction produced from diverse national contexts as expressions of a transnational desire to understand questions such as: what do we need to do so that tomorrow is not characterized by the violence against others we exhibit today? Or, more specifically, how can we create new visions of "postcolonialism" that will provide us with more possibilities? By explicitly foregrounding these questions, postcolonial science fiction transforms the genre's capabilities to understand the complexity of problems faced by diverse communities of different nations.

Finally, the study emphasizes postcolonial science fiction as both a subgenre and a process, strategy, or mode of relation established between people committed to imagining less exploitative futures. The goal is to encourage postcolonial studies to think through the lens of science fiction, where creative projects function as ethical experiments towards mapping out the possibilities of attaining national affiliation.

Keywords: postcolonial, science fiction, alternative possibilities, resistance, paradigms.

Introduction:

Science fiction (SF) has emerged as a subgenre within postcolonial literature. Despite its futuristic and subversive potential, it has not received much attention from experts working in various indigenous languages and literatures, except for the Indian Science Fiction Writers Association. This lack of attention is not limited to Indian science fiction alone but is true for postcolonial science fiction across the world. In recent times, there has been a growing trend of consciousness in postcolonial nations to reclaim their lost histories and identities. This has led to recognisable links between SF and colonialism, as well as between Western and postcolonial SF.

The study aims to highlight the importance of researching postcolonial literature produced by Indian writers, particularly science fiction written in English, which has been actively resisting social and political hegemony for the past two decades. Unfortunately, this genre has received limited attention from scholars to date. Therefore, this proposed research will conduct an extensive study of Indian science fiction to contribute to this often-neglected area of literature.

The study contends that science fiction as a genre challenges the predominantly history-oriented and presentist discourse of postcolonial Indian literature and shifts the focus to the country's future. It also argues that the generic devices of science fiction, such as manipulation of spatio-temporal constraints, creation of alternative worlds, and defamiliarization, make it possible to explore this national future. Furthermore, the study suggests that this reframing arises from a shift in India's status from a country trying to overcome the stigma of colonialism to a new world power. The SF texts analyzed in this study challenge the traditional dichotomies of the Western world and promote the creation and imagination of alternative futures or parallel universes that could lead to a better tomorrow. Western science fiction has recently become interested in exploring the discourse on the future of India, given its rising importance in the global stage. However, there are differences between how Indian futures are envisioned and those typically found in Western science fiction. In the depictions of the East by Western writers, there is a tendency to fall back on Orientalist stereotypes, resulting in a biased image. Edward Said's book Orientalism (1978) explains that the West tends to portray the East in a formulaic and oversimplified way. In his book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said argues that the Western culture industry serves as an ideological tool for imperial powers. It reinforces cultural stereotypes of non-Westerners and tries to make them feel inferior. This not only affects the way people in the West view other cultures but also influences the non-Westerners' perception of themselves. The Western science fiction genre does not entirely follow Said's formulation, but it often displays an affinity to it. Therefore, the study highlights the significance of Indian science fiction in fostering a proper futuristic postcolonial dialogue. These works not only straddle the intersection of postcolonial and science fiction studies, but they also theorize the interaction of Western and Indian traditions and negotiate the balance between both.

Since the social dynamics of postcolonial India have been irrevocably affected by Western influences, the future can only be imagined through a medium that can synthesize Western and Indian cultural values. Science fiction provides an important platform for envisioning this national future because of its freedom from a variety of generic constraints associated with realistic literature. In essence, these science fiction texts are responses to the hybridization of Indian culture resulting from the mixing of Indian and Western influences. They speculate what the future society will look like, and they stem from the rapid technoscientific development and fast modernization of the country. Lastly, they use the English language to present this new national identity to a wider international audience.

To put it differently, the study attempts to examine how Indian science fiction historicizes within the context of postcolonial literature while also exploring how science fiction transforms and intervenes in postcolonial discourses. Indian science fiction draws influences from both traditional Indian imaginative literature and Western scientific ideas. The genre is shaped by the ancient precritical traditions of myths and legends of the country such as fantasy, ghost stories, folk tales, fairy tales and mythological narratives, as well as the "cognitive" mode of Euro-American science fiction. Postcolonial Indian science fiction subtly challenges the normativity of Occidental literary forms and ideas while not fully rejecting the western form, which Darko Suvin describes as "cognitive estrangement". This term explains the effect that science fiction has on its readers. Darko Suvin defines SF as a literature of 'cognitive estrangement' in his study entitled "Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre (1979). He remarks that SF works on a critical and dialectical interaction of two opposing forces.

Some Indian science fiction texts are influenced by the idea of Vedic science and the ancient Indian tradition, which posits India as the originator of all scientific thinking in the world. This tradition rejects anything that is considered "contaminated" by hybridity. Science fiction studies and postcolonial studies share an inherent affinity since both fields challenge prevailing power structures. Despite science fiction's origins in the West, it adopts a dialectical approach towards authority and subversion. This genre conforms to the logics of rationality while simultaneously undermining the notions of reality through its estranging devices, which makes it a potent tool for subversion. Similarly, postcolonial studies employ various strategies to challenge and subvert Western domination. Indian science fiction exists at the intersection of these two fields. Therefore, this research aims to provide a brief exposition of the salient features of both these fields.

Defining science fiction is not an easy task. Brian Aldiss, in his book Trillion Year Spree (1986), defines it as a literature that comes from the Gothic mode and is concerned with man, his knowledge, and his place in the universe. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) is often considered the starting point for science fiction, as it contains some Gothic elements, although these elements are only one type of element that emphasizes the inscrutability of the human mind and adds a subversive quality to the novel.

Ursula K. Le Guin, in her introduction to *The Norton Book of Science Fiction* (1993) and her introduction to *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1968), emphasizes the element of thought experiment that gives the genre a unique ability to explore the human condition in its myriad manifestations. Samuel Delany, Darko Suvin, and Tom Shippey provide varied dimensions to this genre. Suvin defines science fiction as a specific mode of literary practice characterized by the interaction of "cognition" and "estrangement" and creating something new and distinguished from the author's daily reality.

During the modernist era, science fiction transitioned into its present form and sowed the seeds of logical formation and structural conformism in the genre. This was facilitated by the spirit of the time marked by a desire for cognitive structures, legitimized by Enlightenment rationalism and its grand metanarratives that codified every cultural phenomenon under some universal scheme of things.

Science fiction is a genre that combines two opposing tendencies - a programmatic and logical approach dominated by scientific concepts and a subversive, estranged approach that displaces the fictional universe from our empirical milieu. The genre emerged in the 19th century Europe and America, and colonialism played a significant role in its development. It arose as a part of the drive to explore the white spaces on the map or to justify colonial rule by exoticizing the Other and asserting white European supremacy. However, since the post-structural "rupture" and the postmodern fragmentation of the overarching metanarratives in the 1960s, science fiction has taken on a dissident quality. It utilizes the fantastic mode

and modernist techniques to question, comment on, and satirize the real social and political status quo. Feminist critic Sarah Lefanu argues that science fiction is not a "literature of authority" but rather a genre that thwarts the hegemony of mainstream mimetic fiction.

Despite this dissident quality, the dialectic of the propensities toward authority and subversion remains the core of science fiction, even in its most radical manifestations. The genre owes much to the gothic fiction of the early 19th century, which dealt with the subversive, the macabre, and the unconscious. The co-existence of these two opposing tendencies distinguishes science fiction as a genre, and other supplemental forces such as political revolutions help promote this contradiction.

Science fiction is a genre that has always had an undercurrent of nonconformity. This tendency has been challenging the Western dominance over all fields since Shelley's Frankenstein in 1818 and continues to do so. At different moments, this tendency has defied the logics of totalization. Different narratives, particularly feminist science fictions, postcolonial science fictions, and science fiction horror, have been engaged in resistance against this colonial sway. Using estrangement as its fundamental component, science fiction is bound to be subversive. It draws on conceptual resources from the progress of science and philosophy that can challenge stereotypes and systems by literalizing metaphors and constructing alternative scenarios to empirical reality. These scenarios are conducive to subversive thought experiments that would not be possible in mainstream mimetic literature.

Science fiction texts coming from postcolonial countries question the world's power relations structure. Science fiction is often identified as a Western mode of literature due to its use of scientific and technological metaphors. However, Patricia Kerslake argues that science fiction and colonialism are fundamentally linked. According to Kerslake, science fiction can be used as a tool to explore notions of power within the construct of empire, particularly when examined through the general theories of postcoloniality. Science fiction can be used by both proponents of empire to project distorted views of the Other and by those who resist such stereotyping and cultural hegemony. Michelle Reid's argument echoes Kerslake's when she points out that postcolonial science fiction can subvert the premises of Western representation modes by employing mimicry. Homi Bhabha describes mimicry as a method of resisting ideological subjectification, where the colonial subject is supposed to imitate the master, but can never be the original. Mimicry approximates the original, yet corrupts it by using its very own logic Postcolonial science fiction uses the same techno-scientific metaphors as Western science fiction but challenges the idea that Western civilization is superior and creates an independent future. This process involves questioning the concepts of subversion and conformity. Nalo Hopkinson discusses this in her preface to *So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Science Fiction and Fantasy* (2004). She quotes Audre Lorde's famous lines "massa's tools will never dismantle massa's house" (7) and explains that she wants to see what would happen if people were given these tools and told to build something new. In science fiction from developing countries like India, you can see this conflict between conforming to Western ideals of development and rejecting them. This is reflected in the tension between technological rationalism and pre-industrial mysticism, which appears in different ways like programmatic societies, hybrid styles, and interest in a mechanized future.

Indian science fiction exhibits this dialectical tendency, just like the Western version, if not more. The creation of a schematic society involves a surface conflict between authority and dissidence, as the fictional universe has its own logic and requires a radical separation from empirical reality. Negative utopias, or dystopias, go deeper than this mechanistic level because they involve creating a negative scenario by extrapolating contemporary social traits. This suggests a desire to subvert it. Examples of such

texts include George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1935), Zamyatin's *We*, and later feminist works like Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). Indian dystopian writing like Rimi B. Chatterjee's *Signal Red* (2005) and Priya Sarukkai Chabria's *Generation 14 (*2008) follow a similar vein. Indian science fiction has adopted and adapted the form, and its practitioners have become adept with it while subverting it at the same time.

Postcolonial studies pay attention to issues of authority and subversion, emphasizing the discourse of hybridity. Theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak employ post-structural approaches to challenge the essentialist philosophies of the imperialist and colonialist powers. They aim to create a constructive space and locate gaps and disjunctions in the dominant ideologies. These theorists attempt to renovate and appropriate the dominant English language and literature of the empire as a method of questioning the existing power relations. They also reinvest concepts such as subalternity, hybridity and mimicry with new subversive connotations to undermine the essentialist and dualistic ideologies of domination. Postcolonial fiction often rewrites to resist and challenge the assumptions made by the colonial masters.Postcolonial fiction often uses literary techniques such as magical realism to create a sense of unfamiliarity or estrangement. Science fiction, and increasingly, fantasy, can also effectively express fundamental postcolonial concerns while being different from their mimetic counterpart. In her essay "Postcolonial Science Fiction," Michelle Reid argues that the estranging capabilities of science fiction can debunk the history of the real world. It can create worlds unburdened by colonial oppression and where colonization never happened or where the power relations of the real world are reversed and re-examined. Reid emphasizes that the theme of colonization of other planets is significant in this aspect, as it raises questions about how these imagined worlds relate to real-world colonial legacies and situations. The trope of "Alien as the Other" is another potent science fiction strategy that can be used to examine identity politics, such as racial, cultural, national, and gender. Reid contends that this strategy of literalizing otherness can encourage mainly white, Western science fiction audiences to confront prejudices and assumptions that they might be reluctant to face head-on. Science fiction is a genre that imagines the future, including a postcolonial future. While postcolonial fiction often examines the present reality as a legacy of the colonial past, very few texts consider the future. This is a problem, as postcolonial writers must imagine their futures or risk having them written by others.

In the context of postcolonial literature, Indian science fiction narratives question the stereotypes created by the exclusionary and homogenizing principles of the West. They emphasize difference, draw attention to the periphery as opposed to the centre, and break down any form of authoritative structure in favour of "slippages" and "interstices."

However, some of these narratives present alternatives through which the colonial subject can constantly challenge the primacy of imperialist doctrines. This approach can sometimes degenerate into provincialism and ultimately fall back to the exclusionary dualistic ideology of domination, only in an inverted manner.

To defy imperialist ideologies, these texts break down the binaries on which Western epistemology functions and set them into play. Indian science fiction is embedded within a postcolonial discourse, exhibiting the unmistakable characteristics of hybridity and subversion. It works through a dialectic process, connecting the fields of science fiction and postcolonial studies. Therefore, the genre has proved enabling for writers seeking to question hegemonic regimes and systems of thought. Science fiction has been known to reinforce societal stereotypes and tired notions of identity. Therefore, it is important to continue exploring new perspectives and challenging established ideas within the genre. In the field of

postcolonial discourse, science fiction has made a significant contribution by offering alternative visions of the future. Vandana Singh, in her review essay of 'Mithila Review', highlights the importance of the resurgence of Indian science fiction, which she calls the 'spiral of silence', as it can address several issues ranging from climate change to growing polarization and violence in society, amidst a climate of fear. Thus, she emphasizes the genre's significant role, especially at a time when there is an observable trend towards irrationalism and bigotry, often with tacit state sanction.

One of the pioneers of science fiction in the Indian context is Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, from what is now Bangladesh. In 1905, she wrote and published a novella called *Sultana's Dream*, which depicts a futuristic feminist utopia. *Sultana's Dream* (1905) envisions a technologically advanced country called Ladyland, where science and technology are harnessed solely by women for the country's sustainable and nonviolent progress. Hossain's utopian vision of Ladyland, free of foreign influences, mirrors India's desire for independence. The novella is a critique of patriarchy, modern science and the ideology of empire, which oppresses women, nature, and the poor. Hossain proposes an alternative vision of science that challenges the Western and imperial models of science. The novella challenges the notion that Western scientific models represent the pinnacle of development, exposing it instead as a materialistic, profit-hungry endeavour destined to result in disaster. The utopian imagination of Ladyland achieves two goals by challenging patriarchal assumptions about the superior intellect of men, supposedly making them better suited for scientific pursuits, and dismantling the notion that Western scientific models represent the pinnacle of development. Thus, Sultana's Dream works as a medium of counternarrative to resist Western ideology, presenting an alternative vision of science in the early twentieth century.

The author chosen for the proposed research is Amitav Ghosh, a renowned Indian writer. He has won numerous national and international awards, including the prestigious 54th Jnanpith Award in 2018. Ghosh's novels explore the complexities of national and personal identity in India and Southeast Asia through complex narrative strategies. One of his most notable works, *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996), challenges the universalist claims of Western science and questions the tendency of historians to view scientists as geniuses who work alone for the betterment of mankind. In the novel, Ghosh experiments with the genre of science fiction to explore the boundary between scientific truth and fiction, weaving together information about the history of science with imaginative stories about a subversive counter-scientific cult.

The vulnerability of women's bodies is a significant topic in literature, including science fiction. Manjula Padmanabhan, a South Asian writer, explores this theme in her feminist dystopian novels, *Escape* (2008) and its sequel *The Island of Lost Girls* (2015). The study argues that Padmanabhan's work highlights how the idea of womanhood intersects with concepts of vulnerability and resistance in the context of female genocide in India. By examining sexual violence through the lens of aligned resilience in solidarity, the novels demonstrate how victims can achieve empowerment. The presence of trans protagonists in the novels challenges the gender binary constructed by society.

Manjula Padmanabhan is an Indian author who wrote two novels titled *Escape* (2008) and *The Island of Lost Girls* (2015). These novels address various issues such as gender, sex, ethnicity, and exclusion, primarily based on the representations of the gendered body. Women's bodies have been objectified and consumed, often acquiring transactional value as a womb. However, they also serve as a tool to resist established power structures. Professor B. Parvathi remarks that Manjula Padmanabhan belongs to a generation of Indian women writers in English who boldly address issues of gender, woman, her body and its behaviour, and its exploitation in a family and social setting. Parvathi also mentions that Manjula

Padmanabhan has opened a fresh dialogue on a new angle of feminist concerns.

The novel *Escape* tells the story of a girl named Meiji who embarks on a journey to a supposedly safe place. She is the only girl to have survived the extermination of women in a country under a totalitarian, military regime. The novel exposes the transactional value ascribed to women's bodies. It is reminiscent of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and posits a dystopian world where women have been exterminated. Padmanabhan, through her protagonist Meiji, allows readers an insightful response to gender in a society that has outlawed an entire gendered identity and reduced a few others to powerlessness.

The protagonist Meiji and her uncles symbolise secret resistance and a strong desire to escape from governmental tyranny on the part of the modern citizen. Meiji is the only female survivor in the Forbidden Land, and her mother had publicly immolated herself, sacrificing herself to save Meiji's life. As Meiji grows into puberty, her three uncles decide that she needs to be escorted outside the Forbidden Country so that she is not discovered by the Estate General on one of his frequent visits. Youngest, one of the uncles, is appointed to accompany her and keep her safe during a long, extremely dangerous journey across a wasteland and the Zone, to finally reach the Island, a place of scientific experimentation and relative safety for the mutilated trans and cis women of the world. The writer explores how concepts of womanhood intersect with those of vulnerability and resistance in Manjula Padmanabhan's dystopian novels. Furthermore, it addresses how Padmanabhan brings out the gendered resistance to the neo-colonial dimensions of techno culture in the context of female genocide in India, by examining sexual violence under the analytical lens of resilience, a condition that enables the victims' healing and empowerment.

In the novel *The Island of Lost Girls*, which is a continuation of *Escape*, Padmanabhan offers a powerful resistance against various power structures of society. This is the story of Meiji, who is the only girl who has remained untouched and unmutilated in a country that has savaged its entire female population. Her guardian, Youngest, has transported her to the only place where she can remain safe – an Island where wounded girls are, sometimes literally, stitched back together and given a new life. However, the Island itself is a menacing place, and Meiji may be in more danger than ever before. To see what has become of his beloved girl, Youngest must find a way to infiltrate its odd environs while keeping the constantly assaulting voice in his head at bay. His struggles against the surreal inhabitants of a world gone wrong and with his own transformed identity only serve to steel his efforts to find the girl and escape once more. *The Island of Lost Girls* showcases Manjula Padmanabhan's brilliance in empowering women to perform and resist against societal odds. Padmanabhan challenges the notion of fixed gender identities, highlighting the gradual acceptance of "deviance" and diversity in society, and emphasizing the fluidity of gender that must be constantly questioned in modern times. Additionally, she raises critical discussions on body image, aesthetics, and related issues. These debates are woven into the narrative's vivid scenes, where the island's inhabitants are trained to embrace their imperfections. In postcolonial feminist science fiction (SF), gender questions have been deeply analyzed in the works of authors such as Manjula Padmanabhan, Margaret Atwood, and Doris Lessing. They engage in debates about the subaltern status of women in the colonial and patriarchal setup. Another noteworthy figure in the present literary scenario is scientist-writer Vandana Singh, an Indian science fiction writer and physicist. Her short story collection, "The Woman Who Thought She Was a Planet and Other Stories" (2008), is a critical addition to the field. At least half of the stories can be classified as domestic fiction, situated in the home, and dealing with the ever-present dilemma between the home and the external world.

Singh's short story collection engages in questioning and refusal of normative body formation. In the short

story 'The Woman', Kamala, a housewife, mother, and a lifelong upholder of middle-class marital peace, finally proclaims, 'I know at last what I am. I am a planet' (Singh 2008). She begins to take off her sari, the garment most frequently associated with respectable, middle-aged Indian women. This sparks absolute fear and despair in her husband, for whom clothes, particularly on a woman's body, are markers of respectability as well as patriarchal control. As Kamala stands in the sun, rotating like a planet, her husband watches in horror, plagued by the threat of scandal and social humiliation. Kamala, trained in the role of a mother, transforms rather easily into a body that is inhabited by a species alien to earth. Thus, Vandana Singh posits the idea of a syncretic existence, and peaceful coexistence of humans and aliens. Aliens live within Kamala's body, freeing her of societal pressure while finding in her husband a new creature/satellite to colonize. Science fiction (SF) themes have been used to explore future possibilities of society and to examine current conditions of existence. The stories analyzed in this paper focus on the position of women, using standard themes of domestic fiction, such as caste/class romance or an unhappy domestic life, but with a twist of the uncanny. SF emerges as a suitable medium to explore feminist themes in an ingenious manner, allowing writers to imagine, re-imagine, and represent the female body while acknowledging its transmutability. These texts feature women who have experienced different types of violence, including physical, sexual, and mental abuse and have been marginalized, excluded, and oppressed. However, they have also used their selfhood and bodies as a potential locus for resistance and political action. In these narratives, women play diverse roles, such as planets, snakes, mothers, or climate activists. They are no longer invisible within the story but instead claim space, change form, and invert the narratives. Overall, SF texts imagine futures or parallel worlds by extending or extrapolating aspects and offer possible alternatives for the future.

Review of Literature:

Postcolonialism refers to the representation of race, ethnicity, culture and human identity in the modern era after the colonised countries gained independence. As a literary theory, Postcolonialism deals with literatures produced by the milieu that was once colonies of the European imperial powers. Postcolonial Criticism encompasses the literatures written by both the colonizer and the colonized and their various interactions and conflicts. The broad umbrella of postcolonial writings brings in vast scenarios of experiences, especially of indigenous people and women writers. The third group, migrant or diaspora writers, also share their perspectives.

Women writers as a part of the postcolonial credo have been significant in sharing their unique experiences, shedding light on their deplorable conditions, and the quest for identity. Under the wide corpus of postcolonial literature, there are various literary branches. India SF is one such branch that answers many postcolonial debates of representation. Indian Science Fiction has aroused rising critical interest in the last two decades, reflected notably in many scholarly writings by Suparno Banerjee, Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, Bisnupriya Ghosh, Sami A. Khan, Jessica Langer, Anwesha Maiti, Uppinder Mehan, and Debjani Sengupta, among others, as well as few dissertations including Suparno Bannerjee (2010), Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay (2013), and Sami.A Khan (2015). However, limited scholarship has been witnessed in this field. The review of literature for the proposed research consists of works, critical writings, web sources, and a few anthologies and critical texts written by Indian writers. As the study is related to postcolonial discourse, many theoretical texts like Homi. K Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* (1990) and Location of Culture have been considered for examining the texts. Further, the introduction to the *Gollancz Book of South Asian Science Fiction* (2019) edited by Tarun. K. Saint offers valuable insight

into the contribution of Indian SF writers to the development of this genre. Suparno Bannerjee's *Indian Science Fiction: Patterns, History, and Hybridity* (2020) interrogates the most probable aspects of the forms with the intent to build a conceptual foundation for truly Indian SF. Apart from this, the book discusses different ways in which the SF texts chosen for this study imagine and re-imagine the nation across its temporal dimensions.

Several other books, such as *Science Fiction in India: Parallel Worlds and Postcolonial Paradigms* (2022) edited by Shweta Khilnani and Ritwick Bhattacharjee, Sakshi Dogra and Shweta Khilnani's *Imagining Worlds, Mapping Possibilities: Select Science Fiction Stories* (2020), Sami Ahmad Khan's *Star Warriors of the Modern Raj: Materiality, Mythology, and Technology of Indian Science Fiction* (2021), and *Science Fiction and Indian Women Writers: Exploring Radical Potentials (*2022) by Urvashi Kuhad, make an earnest effort towards filling up the academic gap and bringing Indian SF into the academic discourses of the world.

Thus, the book *Science Fiction in India: Parallel Worlds and Postcolonial Paradigms* proves that SF in India allows an imagination of the Indian nation to overarch temporal distinctions of the past, present, and future. The Indian nation, through such a critical intervention, 'comes into being' (Anderson 1983) as a pan-temporal entity, reaching both into its histories and futures from the current existential coordinates. The chapters in this volume question and interrogate the most probable aspects of the forms and also build a conceptual foundation of how the SFs are capable of providing a platform for resistance.

Another remarkable book on Indian women SF is Urvashi Kuhad's *Science Fiction and Indian Women Writers*. This book presents an in-depth study of Indian women's science fiction. It offers a critical analysis of the works of major female India writers of the SF genre. The author not only considers the evolution of science fiction writing in India but also discusses the use of innovations to write back to the empire. The book further goes on to offer various representations made by the women practitioners in this field and how their radical works represent the nation as well as offer freedom of expression to the women community.

Although these scholarly voices provide some excellent analyses of Indian SF, a unifying and broad discussion of such trends from a 'national tradition' is still lacking. The aforementioned scholarship suggests that the SF texts chosen for the present study are canonical in establishing the genre amidst the postcolonial paradigm.

Hypothesis

The proposed study is grounded on textual representations of different dialectics of postcolonial theory and politics of identity and representation. The research project undertaken proposes to study the growth and evolution of science fiction in India as a literary genre which accommodates the duality of the national consciousness as it simultaneously gazes ahead towards the future and glances back at the past. The study will also explore the resistance strategies adopted in these chosen SF texts to subvert and revert back to the oppressive narratives which undermine the natives.

Methodology:

For developing the research thesis, the study undertaken would adopt a qualitative analysis and study of postcolonial problems of marginality, hybridity, idea of space, nation, rewriting and reframing as well as different strategies to deconstruct the established Western norms. Besides, an analytical method of study based on a thorough textual reading, analysis and interpretation of primary texts would be adopted while

undertaking this research project. Further, the study would align its focus on the counter-discourse method which is deeply associated with postcolonial writings. The counter-discourse technique acknowledges the whole scenario of Empire writes back and provides a voice to the cornered milieu. Being a dynamic operation, the counter-discourse method does not seek to subvert the dominant to take its place, but, evolves textual strategies which continually consume their own biases at the same time as they expose and erode those of dominant discourse. Additionally, secondary sources like reference books, articles from journals, magazines, essays, book reviews and useful resources available in the internet would be consulted alongside the primary sources.

Conclusion

The proposed research aims to shed light on the contributions of Indian science fiction writers such as Begum Rokeya, Amitav Ghosh, Manjula Padmanabhan, and Vandana Singh to the growth and development of the emerging subgenre. The selected texts emphasize the genre's unique ability to carve out a distinct space in the current literary landscape. Additionally, the study will examine how skilled practitioners of the subgenre can use it to challenge the colonial legacy and rewrite history.

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