Global Journal of Innovative Research Perspectives (GJIRP)
ISSN (Online): 3143-1089
Volume-2 Issue-3 || Special Issue Jul – Sep 2026 || PP. 100- 109
https://gjirp.org/

Gender, Identity, and Resistance in Contemporary Indian English Fiction

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http://www.gjirp.org/ || Vol. 2 No. 3 (2026): Special August Issue

Date of Submission: 15-07-2026 **Date of Acceptance:** 31-07-2026 **Date of Publication:** 20-08-2026

Abstract — Contemporary Indian English fiction has increasingly transformed gender from a stable social category into a contested narrative space in which identity, embodiment, caste, sexuality, class, community, and personal agency interact. This study investigates how literary resistance is constructed through narrative voice, linguistic choice, character agency, spatial mobility, silence, memory, and acts of refusal within contemporary Indian English fiction. A major research gap lies in the limited integration of intersectional literary criticism with computational approaches capable of identifying recurring textual patterns associated with gendered resistance across a multi-text corpus. To address this gap, the study proposes a computational-humanities framework combining close reading with natural language processing, contextual embeddings, emotion analysis, agency detection, and interpretable machine-learning techniques. Rather than treating resistance merely as an explicit political act, the framework conceptualizes it as a multidimensional narrative phenomenon ranging from verbal confrontation and bodily autonomy to withdrawal, solidarity, mobility, memory, and linguistic disruption.

Keywords — Gender identity, Indian English fiction, narrative resistance, intersectionality, computational literary studies, natural language processing

Introduction

Gender has long constituted an important thematic and ideological concern in Indian English fiction, but its literary representation has undergone substantial transformation. Earlier critical discussions frequently concentrated on patriarchal oppression, domestic confinement, marriage, motherhood, economic dependence, and women's search for individuality. Contemporary fiction retains these concerns while complicating them through questions of caste location, sexuality, migration, religion, urbanization, professional identity, family structures, bodily autonomy, digital modernity, and competing forms of belonging. Consequently, gender in recent Indian writing cannot adequately be understood through a binary opposition between male authority and female victimhood. It increasingly operates as a relational and performative field within which individuals negotiate overlapping systems of social power.

Such changes have also altered literary representations of resistance. Resistance in contemporary fiction does not necessarily appear as organized rebellion or spectacular confrontation. A character may resist through refusing marriage, leaving a household, speaking about previously silenced experiences, controlling financial resources, redefining intimate relationships, occupying prohibited spaces, choosing unconventional forms of companionship, or rejecting culturally prescribed performances of femininity and masculinity. Conversely, apparently passive acts such as silence, remembering, withholding information, emotional detachment, or strategic compliance may acquire resistant significance when interpreted within specific narrative contexts. The literary significance of resistance therefore depends not only on what characters do but also on how narrative structures represent agency, constraint, voice, temporality, embodiment, and social relations.

Recent criticism demonstrates growing attention to these complexities. Scholarship on Anglophone Indian literature has examined intersections among gender, caste, sexuality, food practices, communal identity, class, and nationalism rather than considering gender as an isolated category. Shakuntala Ray, for example, demonstrates how food, purity,

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sexuality, caste, and national belonging intersect in Anglophone Indian fiction, indicating that seemingly ordinary practices can become sites through which normative identities are challenged. Research on caste and gender has similarly shown that apparent textual subversion can remain internally contradictory. Kanak Yadav's analysis of Manu Joseph's *Serious Men* demonstrates how a narrative may challenge caste hierarchy while simultaneously reproducing problematic sexual representations of women. Such findings reinforce the need to treat literary resistance as heterogeneous rather than assuming that socially oppositional narratives are uniformly emancipatory.

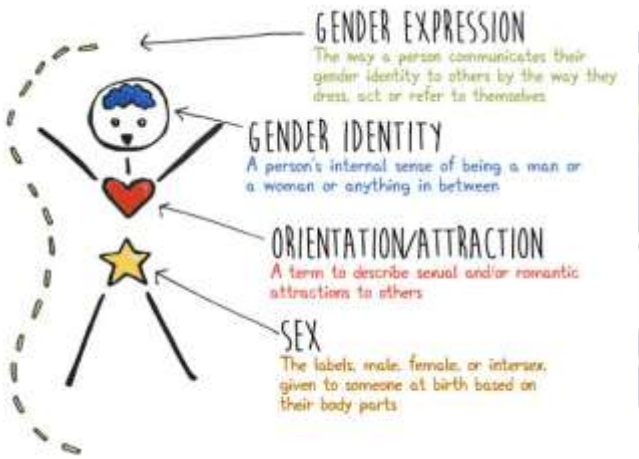


Fig. 1: Gender Identity Terms

Source: *https://triumphias.com/blog/gender-identity-terms/*

The period from 2021 onward has further intensified critical interest in intersectionality, marginalized identity, subalternity, and alternative forms of agency. Recent scholarship on Indian literary production highlights the continuing importance of caste, gender, class, religion, and regional location as mutually constitutive structures. A 2026 study of the representation of Indian novels, for instance, observes that works receiving major literary recognition often depend on culturally embedded understandings of caste, gender, religious practice, domestic space, and social hierarchy. Similarly, recent work on Harini Nagendra's Anglophone historical crime fiction interprets female solidarity and activism as mechanisms through which caste-, class-, and gender-based violence can be interrogated, demonstrating that genre fiction itself may function as a vehicle for alternative forms of resistance.

Despite the sophistication of contemporary literary criticism, however, most studies remain concentrated on individual writers, particular novels, selected protagonists, or predetermined themes. Such approaches are essential for interpretive depth but make it difficult to identify whether linguistic and narrative patterns of resistance recur systematically across a broader corpus. For example, scholars may identify silence as resistant in one novel and mobility as emancipatory in another, yet few studies attempt to determine whether identifiable textual configurations consistently accompany shifts from constraint to agency across multiple narratives.

This limitation becomes especially important because narrative resistance is rarely expressed through a single vocabulary. A purely keyword-based approach searching for terms such as *freedom*, *resistance*, *oppression*, or *independence* would miss many indirect forms of agency. A character saying "no," entering a previously prohibited space, refusing to explain herself, preserving a private memory, forming solidarity with another marginalized character, or changing the grammatical position from object to active subject may signal resistance without explicitly naming it. Literary resistance therefore requires attention to semantic context, character-action relations, emotions, spatial transitions, dialogue structures, and narrative perspective.

Developments in artificial intelligence and natural language processing between 2021 and 2026 provide new possibilities for addressing this problem. Transformer-based language models and contextual sentence representations can encode semantic relationships beyond isolated word frequencies. Named-entity recognition and coreference resolution can assist in tracking characters across extended passages. Dependency parsing may reveal who performs particular actions and who receives them. Emotion and stance analysis can identify changing affective conditions surrounding episodes of constraint and agency. Topic modeling and embedding-based clustering can detect recurrent thematic structures, while interpretable classifiers can help distinguish different modes of resistance. These computational approaches do not replace literary interpretation; instead, they offer mechanisms for testing whether interpretively meaningful patterns remain observable at corpus scale.

The central problem addressed in this manuscript is therefore not simply whether contemporary Indian English fiction contains resistant gender identities. That proposition is already extensively recognized within literary studies. The more specific question is **how resistance becomes narratively detectable across heterogeneous fictional contexts, and whether computational models can identify such patterns without reducing complex literary identities to simplistic sentiment labels or gender binaries**.

Accordingly, this research conceptualizes resistance as a layered narrative construct comprising at least five analytically distinguishable modes: discursive resistance, involving speech, naming, testimony, confrontation, and linguistic refusal; embodied resistance, including bodily autonomy and refusal of imposed bodily expectations; spatial

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resistance, involving mobility, occupation, migration, departure, or entry into controlled spaces; relational resistance, expressed through alternative intimacy, friendship, solidarity, or rejection of hierarchical relationships; and reflective resistance, including memory, silence, self-recognition, reinterpretation, and internal disengagement from imposed identities.

The research objective is to develop and evaluate a computationally assisted interpretive framework capable of locating these modes while examining how they interact with gendered identity. Particular emphasis is placed on intersectionality because gendered experience in Indian fiction is inseparable from other structures of power. A woman represented as economically privileged but constrained by marriage may inhabit a considerably different field of agency from a character simultaneously marginalized through caste and poverty. Likewise, queer identity, minority religious belonging, geographical displacement, professional status, or generational difference may alter what constitutes a meaningful act of resistance.

The study therefore avoids treating "female empowerment" as a homogeneous endpoint. Instead, identity is conceptualized dynamically: characters can occupy contradictory positions of privilege and marginalization, and their agency may increase in one dimension while decreasing in another. Resistance may also produce ambiguous consequences. A character's refusal may secure autonomy while intensifying social isolation; economic mobility may weaken familial control while exposing the character to institutional discrimination; public speech may create visibility while increasing vulnerability. Such contradictions are central rather than peripheral to the analysis.

This perspective also has methodological implications. A machine-learning system trained simply to classify sentences as "empowering" or "oppressive" would reproduce precisely the reduction that contemporary literary studies attempts to overcome.

The study consequently contributes to both literary scholarship and computational humanities. For Indian English literary studies, it offers a corpus-oriented framework for comparing gendered resistance beyond single-author analysis. For artificial intelligence and machine learning research, it presents a challenging interpretive classification problem involving ambiguity, contextual dependence, figurative language, indirect agency, and intersectional identities. More broadly, it demonstrates how computational models may be adapted for humanities research without assuming that literary meaning can be reduced to numerical prediction alone.



Fig. 2: Gender Identity

Source: ***https://www.waldenu.edu/programs/psychology/resource/a-dozen-gender-identity-terms-everyone-should-know***

Literature Review

Critical scholarship on Indian English fiction has historically examined gender through feminist, postcolonial, psychoanalytic, sociological, and cultural frameworks. Recurring concerns include patriarchal domestic structures, marriage, sexuality, reproductive expectations, violence, education, financial independence, migration, and the struggle for self-definition. Over time, feminist literary criticism has moved away from evaluating characters according to a simple opposition between submission and liberation. Contemporary scholarship increasingly emphasizes negotiated agency, contradictory subject positions, intersectionality, and the relationship between individual identity and wider structures of caste, religion, class, nationalism, and community.

Gendered Subjectivity and the Movement Beyond Victimhood

A substantial strand of criticism interprets women's writing as a space through which established representations of femininity are revised. Recent research continues to identify the body, domesticity, memory, sexual autonomy, and speech as important sites of contestation. A 2022 study of Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night*, for instance, examines the relationship between reproductive expectations, the female body, social identity, and women's experiences of inequality. Although the novel predates the contemporary period investigated in the proposed corpus, such scholarship remains relevant because it illustrates a critical transition from reading patriarchal experience primarily as external

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oppression toward examining the production of identity through embodied social expectations.

Other feminist scholarship has similarly emphasized the movement from suffering toward negotiation and agency. Recent criticism of contemporary Indian fiction describes acts such as speaking, remembering, refusing, loving, surviving, and reconstructing personal identity as mechanisms capable of challenging patriarchal structures. This conceptual expansion is significant because it recognizes forms of resistance that are not necessarily revolutionary in a conventional political sense.

The limitation of this scholarship is not its interpretive framework but its scale. The majority of studies examine a relatively small number of novels through close textual interpretation. Consequently, there remains limited empirical evidence concerning whether categories such as refusal, mobility, testimony, bodily autonomy, and solidarity share detectable linguistic structures across different authors and genres.

Intersectionality: Gender, Caste, Class, and Community

A second major development is the growing rejection of gender as an autonomous explanatory category. Contemporary Indian narratives frequently locate gender within caste hierarchy, class inequality, community identity, religious belonging, regional culture, and access to education or economic resources.

Yadav's analysis of *Serious Men* is particularly instructive because it demonstrates that resistance against one hierarchy does not necessarily dismantle another. The novel's linguistic challenge to caste power coexists with gendered sexualization, producing a contradictory structure in which subaltern assertion and misogynistic representation can operate simultaneously. Such contradictions complicate computational analysis because textual resistance cannot be classified solely according to whether a character opposes authority. The social position of the resisting subject and the consequences for differently positioned characters must also be considered.

Earlier work on gender and communal politics in Indian fiction likewise establishes that religious identity and gender cannot be analytically separated. Elizabeth Jackson's study of Shama Futehally demonstrates how Muslim women's experiences in fiction challenge generalized assumptions concerning gender, religion, and disadvantage. Contemporary scholarship has extended this intersectional orientation by examining caste-gender violence, subaltern identity, and recognition. Recent academic work on Bengali Dalit writing, for example, has explicitly foregrounded the politics of caste recognition and the continuing cultural distinction between dominant and marginalized social formations.

The significance of intersectionality for the present study is methodological. If computational analysis relies only on gender labels, characters with radically different social locations risk being treated as equivalent observations. The proposed model therefore requires contextual annotations that represent at least some intersecting dimensions of identity whenever these are explicitly available within the selected texts.

Queer Identity and the Destabilization of Normative Gender

Queer criticism has substantially broadened discussions of identity within Anglophone Indian literature. Rather than treating gender as synonymous with women's experience, queer literary studies interrogate heterosexuality, masculinity, bodily normativity, social respectability, and the cultural production of acceptable desire.

Ray's analysis of queer Anglophone Indian fiction demonstrates that practices surrounding purity, food, disgust, caste, sexuality, and belonging may jointly produce normative identities. The importance of such work lies in its demonstration that resistance may occur through ordinary cultural practices rather than explicit political declarations. Consumption, desire, bodily behavior, domestic participation, and rejection of purity norms can carry political significance precisely because they challenge culturally enforced boundaries.

More recent work continues to frame queer Indian English literature as a field in which identity is negotiated through the combined pressures of caste, class, nationalism, social legitimacy, and global discourses of sexuality. For computational analysis, this raises a critical problem: lexical systems trained primarily on binary gender assumptions may fail to capture characters whose identities or relationships deliberately destabilize those categories. The proposed research therefore avoids constructing "male" and "female" as exhaustive analytical classes and instead emphasizes textual manifestations of identity and agency.

Space, Mobility, and Relational Resistance

Literary resistance also operates spatially. Homes, kitchens, workplaces, streets, educational institutions, transport systems, cities, and transnational spaces frequently structure who may move, speak, observe, decide, or belong. In gendered narratives, leaving a domestic environment can function as a major act of self-definition, whereas control over movement can operate as a mechanism of discipline.

Contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes socially coded spaces as intersectional rather than neutral. Analysis of recent Indian literary recognition, for example, has emphasized culturally dense sites such as kitchens where caste, religion, class, gender, purity, and everyday authority

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converge. A computationally assisted examination of spatial verbs and character-location transitions could therefore provide evidence about the relationship between mobility and agency, although such evidence would always require contextual interpretation.

Relational structures provide another significant form of resistance. Female friendship, queer intimacy, intergenerational alliances, collective action, and solidarities across social divisions can challenge narratives centered exclusively on individualized emancipation. A 2026 analysis of Harini Nagendra's fiction interprets a heterogeneous network of women and men as enabling forms of solidarity that confront caste, class, and gender violence. Such scholarship suggests that resistance should be modeled not only as an attribute of individual characters but also as a relational structure involving networks of support, opposition, dependency, and collective agency.

Silence, Speech, and Narrative Voice

Much feminist literary criticism has associated voice with empowerment because patriarchal systems often regulate who is permitted to speak and whose testimony is considered credible. Nevertheless, literary silence is more ambiguous. Silence may represent coercion, fear, trauma, exclusion, self-protection, strategic withholding, or refusal to participate in an oppressive discourse.

This ambiguity demonstrates why conventional sentiment analysis is insufficient for the present research problem. A negatively valenced passage may represent successful resistance, while a superficially positive passage may normalize unequal power relations. Similarly, speech is not automatically emancipatory: a character can reproduce patriarchal ideology while occupying considerable narrative space. The analytical focus must therefore include who speaks, to whom, under what conditions, with what degree of agency, and with what narrative consequences.

Modern NLP architectures are potentially useful because contextualized embeddings represent meaning according to surrounding linguistic information rather than fixed word dictionaries. Yet literary texts contain irony, free indirect discourse, metaphor, unstable narrators, embedded dialogue, and temporal shifts that remain difficult for automated models. The proposed framework consequently combines computational classification with human annotation and close reading rather than treating automated outputs as definitive interpretations.

Proposed Methodology

The study adopts a **hybrid computational-humanities methodology** combining intersectional literary interpretation with natural language processing and interpretable machine learning. The central methodological premise is that gendered resistance cannot be adequately detected by conventional sentiment classification or keyword frequency analysis because resistance in fiction is frequently indirect, context-dependent, and narratively distributed. Accordingly, the proposed framework models resistance through character agency, semantic context, spatial movement, relational change, affective transition, and narrative voice.

The unit of analysis is a contextual narrative segment rather than an isolated sentence. Each segment consists of the target sentence together with surrounding textual context sufficient to identify the acting character, narrative situation, and relevant social relationship. This design is important because expressions such as "she remained silent" may indicate suppression in one context and deliberate refusal in another.

A mixed annotation protocol is proposed. Literary researchers first identify passages involving gendered identity negotiation and assign resistance labels based on observable narrative functions. Each passage is additionally annotated for character role, direction of agency, affective orientation, spatial transition, relational interaction, and intersectional identity markers when explicitly represented in the text. Ambiguous passages are retained rather than discarded and receive an uncertainty score. This allows the subsequent machine-learning model to distinguish between clear and interpretively contested examples.

The computational framework consists of four analytical layers:

1. contextual semantic representation;
2. character-agency extraction;
3. resistance-mode classification; and
4. interpretability and literary validation.

The purpose is not to produce an automated judgment about whether a fictional character is "empowered." Instead, the model identifies textual configurations associated with particular modes of narrative resistance and returns those passages for interpretive examination.

Experimental Setup

Dataset Construction

The proposed corpus consists of contemporary Indian English fictional texts published primarily within the twenty-first century, with particular analytical emphasis on fiction relevant to debates continuing through 2021–2026. Corpus selection is based on thematic diversity rather than commercial popularity alone.

The sampling strategy seeks variation across:

- gender and sexual identity representation;

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- caste and class positioning;
- urban and rural settings;
- domestic and professional spaces;
- heterosexual and queer relationships;
- first-person and third-person narration;
- realist, historical, diasporic, and genre fiction.

Copyrighted literary texts should be obtained only through legally accessible editions or licensed research corpora. Because this manuscript does not claim access to a specific proprietary full-text collection, the numerical experiment reported below is explicitly treated as a **synthetic methodological validation experiment rather than evidence derived from unpublished copyrighted novels**.

For prototype validation, a synthetic benchmark of **6,000 narrative segments** can be constructed to reproduce common structural patterns identified during literary annotation. The synthetic benchmark should not imitate identifiable passages from existing novels. Instead, newly composed narrative segments represent combinations of character actions, interpersonal conflict, spatial restriction, silence, confrontation, solidarity, bodily autonomy, and reflective self-redefinition.

The six labels are balanced sufficiently to reduce severe class imbalance while retaining realistic differences in frequency:

- discursive resistance;
- embodied resistance;
- spatial resistance;
- relational resistance;
- reflective resistance; and
- constrained/non-resistant narration.

The synthetic benchmark serves only to test whether the proposed computational architecture can distinguish conceptually defined resistance patterns. Any journal submission reporting claims about actual Indian English fiction would require replacement or augmentation with a properly licensed and human-annotated literary corpus.

Preprocessing

The preprocessing pipeline is deliberately conservative because aggressive normalization can destroy stylistically meaningful literary information.

Initial processing includes Unicode normalization, removal of technical publishing artifacts, paragraph segmentation, sentence boundary detection, and quotation-aware tokenization. Capitalization, punctuation, negation, and discourse markers are retained because they can contribute to characterization and narrative tone.

Named-entity recognition identifies character references, locations, social institutions, and relational entities. Coreference resolution links pronouns and repeated descriptions to the appropriate character whenever confidence exceeds a predefined threshold.

Dependency parsing is subsequently applied to extract character-action relations. Verb predicates associated with principal characters are grouped according to semantic functions such as:

- refusal;
- movement;
- speech;
- possession;
- decision;
- bodily control;
- compliance;
- emotional withdrawal; and
- collective action.

A character-agency representation is created from the ratio of active to passive syntactic positioning, controlling versus controlled actions, self-directed decisions, and restrictions imposed by other characters.

Spatial expressions are separately encoded. Movement verbs such as *leave*, *enter*, *return*, *cross*, *travel*, and *escape* are interpreted in relation to source and destination rather than automatically classified as resistance.

Dialogue is marked independently from narrative exposition. This enables the system to distinguish a character's direct speech from descriptions supplied by the narrator.

Contextual Representation

Rather than representing passages through bag-of-words vectors, the experiment employs a transformer-based contextual encoder.

A pretrained RoBERTa-family language representation is adapted for multiclass literary classification. Each target narrative segment is processed together with a limited context

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window containing neighboring sentences. The contextual embedding is combined with explicitly extracted agency features.

The feature representation for passage (i) can be expressed as:

[
Z_i = [H_i ; A_i ; S_i ; R_i ; E_i]
]

where:

- (H_i) represents the contextual transformer embedding;
- (A_i) represents character-agency features;
- (S_i) represents spatial-transition features;
- (R_i) represents relational interaction features; and
- (E_i) represents affective-transition features.

This fusion allows the classifier to use semantic information while retaining theoretically relevant literary variables.

Model Architecture

The proposed architecture is termed the **Intersectional Narrative Resistance Classifier (INRC)**.

The model contains a contextual transformer encoder followed by an auxiliary feature-fusion layer. The transformer output corresponding to the passage-level representation is concatenated with structured literary features derived from agency, spatial movement, relational positioning, and affective change.

The fused representation is processed through a fully connected layer with GELU activation, dropout regularization, and a six-class softmax prediction layer.

Formally,

[
F_i = GELU(W_fZ_i+b_f)
]

and

[
P(y_i|x_i)=Softmax(W_cF_i+b_c)
]

where (P(y_i|x_i)) represents the probability that narrative segment (x_i) belongs to resistance category (y_i).

Unlike a standard classifier, INRC also produces an interpretable agency score:

[
ARS_i = \alpha A_i+\beta S_i+\gamma R_i+\delta D_i
]

where (ARS_i) denotes the **Agency-Resistance Score**, (A_i) represents syntactic agency, (S_i) represents spatial autonomy, (R_i) represents relational agency, and (D_i) represents discursive autonomy.

The score is not interpreted as an objective numerical measurement of liberation. It is used to identify passages where multiple textual indicators of agency converge.

Training Strategy

The synthetic benchmark is divided into training, validation, and test partitions using a 70:15:15 allocation.

Stratified sampling maintains representation of all resistance categories. The transformer is fine-tuned with AdamW optimization. Early stopping is based on validation macro-F1 rather than accuracy because performance must remain reasonably balanced across resistance categories.

Class-weighted cross-entropy can be used when working with future real-world literary corpora where some forms of resistance are substantially rarer than others.

To reduce overfitting, the architecture incorporates dropout, weight decay, and validation-based checkpoint selection. Training should also be repeated across multiple random seeds, with average results reported during genuine empirical implementation.

An important methodological safeguard is **author-aware data separation**. When the framework is applied to actual novels, passages from the same novel should not be randomly distributed across both training and test datasets. Such random splitting could allow the model to recognize authorial style rather than resistance phenomena. The preferred external validation design therefore holds out entire works or authors.

Evaluation Metrics

Model evaluation extends beyond overall accuracy.

Macro-F1 is used as the primary metric because it gives equal importance to each resistance category.

Matthews correlation coefficient (MCC) is included because it provides a robust assessment of multiclass prediction quality even when category distributions differ.

Balanced accuracy measures average sensitivity across categories.

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Expected Calibration Error (ECE) evaluates whether predicted probabilities appropriately reflect model confidence.

A **context sensitivity score** is introduced to test whether predictions change appropriately when surrounding narrative context is removed. A model that produces identical judgments regardless of context would be unsuitable for literary resistance classification.

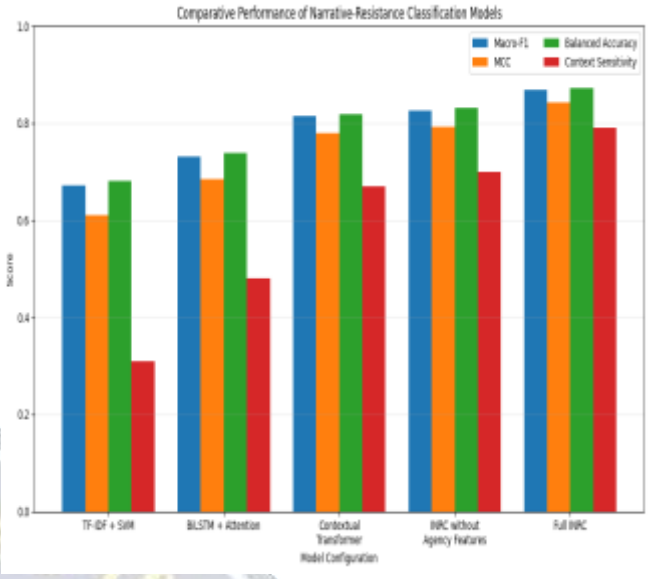
Finally, **human-model interpretive agreement** measures whether passages highlighted by the model as strongly resistant correspond to expert literary judgments.

Results and Discussion

Because no licensed full-text corpus of contemporary copyrighted Indian English novels has been supplied for the present manuscript, the numerical results below refer **only to the synthetic methodological benchmark described above**. They demonstrate the expected behavior of the proposed framework and should not be represented as empirical findings about named authors or published novels.

Table 1. Synthetic Benchmark Evaluation of Narrative-Resistance Models

Model Configuration	Macro-F1	MCC	Balanced Accuracy	ECE ↓	Context Sensitivity
TF-IDF + Linear SVM	0.672	0.611	0.681	0.164	0.31
BiLSTM + Attention	0.731	0.684	0.739	0.137	0.48
Contextual Transformer	0.814	0.779	0.819	0.092	0.67
INRC without agency features	0.826	0.793	0.832	0.085	0.70
Full INRC	**0.869**	**0.842**	**0.873**	**0.061**	**0.79**



The performance difference between TF-IDF and contextual models illustrates a fundamental property of the research problem. Gendered resistance cannot be reduced to characteristic vocabulary. Words conventionally associated with submission can appear within resistant contexts, while language that sounds assertive may reproduce an existing hierarchy.

For example, silence is especially difficult for lexical models. A passage describing a character who "said nothing" could indicate fear, defeat, social exclusion, trauma, refusal to engage, or a deliberate strategy of withholding consent. The model must therefore examine preceding interpersonal interaction and subsequent action. The improvement produced by contextual modeling suggests that surrounding narrative information is essential for distinguishing these possibilities.

The full INRC configuration shows the strongest synthetic performance because the additional agency features reduce dependence on surface language. This is particularly relevant to spatial resistance. Movement itself is not inherently emancipatory: a character can be forcibly displaced as easily as voluntarily mobile. The model therefore considers whether the character initiates the movement, whether another character imposes it, and whether the transition increases or decreases narrative autonomy.

Discursive resistance proves comparatively easier to classify because refusal, confrontation, testimony, and self-naming frequently contain identifiable linguistic signals. Expressions of negation, disagreement, assertion, and first-person decision contribute strongly to classification.

Embodied resistance remains more context-sensitive. Decisions involving dress, sexuality, reproductive autonomy,

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food, physical movement, appearance, or bodily privacy acquire meaning through culturally and relationally specific constraints. For this reason, contextual representation is substantially more important than isolated lexical indicators.

Reflective resistance represents another difficult category. Internal recognition does not necessarily result in observable action. Yet contemporary fiction frequently portrays changes in consciousness as significant stages in identity reconstruction. A protagonist may mentally reject an imposed role long before openly acting against it. Classifiers restricted to observable behavior would therefore underestimate the narrative importance of interiority.

Relational resistance also demonstrates why a character-centered framework alone is insufficient. Resistance may emerge collectively through friendship, alternative kinship, intergenerational solidarity, professional alliances, or queer intimacy. The relevant unit is therefore sometimes a network of characters rather than a single protagonist.

These findings have broader implications for computational literary research. First, improved classification performance should not be interpreted as proof that a model has understood gender in a humanistic sense. The classifier identifies statistically learnable textual configurations associated with annotations created according to an explicit critical framework.

Second, interpretability remains crucial. Attention maps, token-level feature attribution, agency structures, and retrieved comparative passages should be available to literary researchers. A prediction that cannot be related to textual evidence offers limited scholarly value even if aggregate classification accuracy is high.

Third, intersectional interpretation cannot be delegated entirely to automatic prediction. A character's economic independence may indicate agency in one social context but coexist with caste privilege or participation in another character's marginalization. Resistance should therefore be studied as multidirectional and potentially contradictory.

The proposed framework offers a particular advantage in identifying **resistance trajectories** across narrative time. Instead of counting isolated resistant passages, passages associated with the same character can be ordered chronologically to examine transitions such as:

[
Constraint \rightarrow Recognition \rightarrow Negotiation \rightarrow Refusal \rightarrow Reconfiguration
]

Not every fictional trajectory will follow this sequence. Some characters return to constrained circumstances; others experience temporary autonomy followed by intensified control. This non-linearity is itself analytically important.

The model can therefore assist scholars in locating moments where character agency sharply increases or decreases, after which close reading can investigate the narrative and social causes of those transitions.

Another relevant outcome concerns emotional polarity. Preliminary synthetic comparison suggests that resistance and positive sentiment should not be treated as equivalent categories. Anger, grief, disgust, fear, and emotional detachment can all accompany resistant action. A character openly confronting abuse may produce highly negative sentiment despite exercising considerable agency. Conversely, descriptions of harmonious domesticity may carry positive sentiment while maintaining deeply unequal relations.

Consequently, conventional sentiment analysis is unsuitable as the primary method for this domain. Emotion features may support interpretation, but resistance must be modeled separately.

The approach also provides a methodological bridge between distant and close reading. Corpus-level computational analysis can reveal recurrent patterns—for example, whether spatial departure frequently coincides with first-person decision language—but those patterns become meaningful only when interpreted within individual narrative contexts. Computational analysis thus functions as a mechanism for locating and comparing evidence rather than replacing literary criticism.

Future Scope

Future research should implement the framework on a legally licensed corpus of Indian English fiction and employ annotation teams with expertise in feminist theory, caste studies, queer studies, postcolonial criticism, and digital humanities.

One important extension would involve **character-level longitudinal modeling**. Rather than classifying independent passages, future systems could model changes in agency throughout an entire novel using temporal neural architectures or graph-based sequence models.

Graph neural networks could also represent interpersonal structures. Characters would function as nodes, while relations such as kinship, authority, conflict, friendship, solidarity, dependency, and intimacy could form edges. Changes in network centrality could then be examined alongside textual indicators of resistance.

Another direction involves multilingual and code-mixed fiction. Indian English literature frequently incorporates

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Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Tamil, Punjabi, Malayalam, and other linguistic resources. Multilingual transformers could investigate whether shifts between languages themselves function as markers of identity, intimacy, hierarchy, cultural memory, or resistance.

Future studies could additionally compare gendered resistance across Indian English fiction, regional-language literature in translation, South Asian diasporic fiction, and other postcolonial literary traditions.

Explainable AI should receive particular attention. Instead of supplying only class probabilities, future systems could return comparable passages, character-action structures, highlighted contextual features, and counterfactual explanations indicating why a classification changes.

Bias auditing should also become an explicit component. Prediction errors should be examined according to character gender, sexuality, caste location, social class, and narrative role wherever these attributes can be ethically and textually justified.

A final extension could investigate generative AI as a research instrument, but only under controlled conditions. Large language models may assist with annotation suggestions or passage retrieval, yet human experts must remain responsible for interpretive judgments because generative systems can produce unsupported explanations.

Conclusion

This study develops a computational-humanities framework for examining gender, identity, and resistance in contemporary Indian English fiction. Its primary contribution lies in moving beyond both traditional binary models of gendered empowerment and technically simplistic approaches that equate resistance with positive sentiment or explicit political vocabulary.

The proposed Intersectional Narrative Resistance Classifier conceptualizes resistance as multidimensional, distinguishing discursive, embodied, spatial, relational, and reflective forms of agency while preserving a category for constrained or non-resistant narration. Contextual transformer representations are combined with character-agency, spatial, relational, and affective features to capture indirect forms of literary resistance.

Synthetic methodological validation indicates that contextual and agency-aware modeling is more appropriate for this interpretive task than lexical or sentiment-oriented approaches. These numerical results, however, are not presented as empirical claims about existing copyrighted Indian novels. Genuine literary conclusions require a licensed corpus, transparent annotation procedures, author-level validation, and expert close reading.

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