

INTRODUCTION

Freedom is in complete awakening, in full self-expression

- TAGORE

*The heavy-hanging chains will fall
The walls will crumble at a word
And Freedom greet you in the light
And brothers give you back the sword*

- PUSHKIN.

Freedom is an enchanting word. It always had a sort of mystique associated with it. A mystique that has fascinated poets like Tagore and Pushkin across ages and nationalities, enriched philosophical thinking and empowered political leaders. In any discussion on the topic, the important question that arises is – how to define freedom?

Accepting the common usage of the term, freedom means first of all being free in the ordinary sense—unconfined, unfettered and unrestrained. In formal terms, freedom will mean “the condition of being free or unrestricted.” The other dictionary meanings are 1) personal or civil liberty and absence of slave status 2) power of self-determination 3) the state of being free to act. So defined, the common ideas of freedom emerge—freedom ‘from’, freedom ‘to’ and freedom ‘of’. It follows that freedom consists in doing what is right and good by the standards of the thinker.

In the case of India, when did India actually achieve freedom? The fact is that India as a nation achieved freedom on 15 August 1947, according to the official records. The fact is also that India is an ancient nation, which is at least 5000 years old. In other words, did we gain freedom or merely regained it in 1947? And how many different freedoms competed together to win political freedom for India? The answer to these questions will help us to understand the true essence of India’s freedom.

When we turn to literature for insights into freedom, the first thing to be noted is that the process of writing is itself a release, a liberating experience. Secondly, when we speak of the novel form, the word ‘novel’ itself means new, and whatever is new, in terms of creativity, has to be understood as a medium for asserting one’s freedom. In the

chapters that follow, freedom as it appears in Indian English fiction shall be examined. The novels are arranged chapterwise in the chronological order to show the growth and development of the novel and the changing perspectives with regard to freedom. An attempt is also made to identify and analyse the thematic and stylistic features which are integral to an understanding of freedom as it develops in the novels. With this objective in view, I have chosen a period of about fifty – nine years from 1938 to 1997 to arrive at an assessment. I have selected only those novels which seemed to be path-breakers, which established their own routes to freedom and which can rightly be called as trail blazers. Although the topic demands exhaustive study on a wide variety of novels, I have limited my study to seven novels which are representative of the topic I seek to examine. It is hoped that such a selective scrutiny of novels will help to highlight the various aspects of freedom and as G. R. Taneja says, it will “determine the extent to which certain milestones individually contribute to and modify the pattern that becomes discernible at the end of a decade of major achievements” (92).

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Before understanding the concept of ‘freedom’, it is important to realize that there are many freedoms—political, social, economic and so on. And as time passes on, we feel the need for new freedoms that did not exist in the past. The desire for freedom arises from the experience of oppression. The source of oppression are many and varied. It might come from the family itself with its oppressive overload of expectations or else, it might come from a source difficult to locate. We tend to identify this source as social oppression, resulting due to the existence of society. Thus, freedom is not a single idea, it includes many ideas. There is political freedom – the right of a people to determine their own destiny, free from the alien conquest and domination. There is constitutional freedom – the right of the whole body of citizens to manage their political affairs through representatives of their choice. There is also individual freedom—freedom of expression, thought and religion. The present age has witnessed the evolution of another freedom—economic freedom, the freedom of the whole people from the oppression of poverty, of ignorance, of a degrading environment. And without doubt, the coming centuries will give rise to new freedoms or aspects of freedom unimagined until now.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, India raised its emphatic voice for freedom especially with the appearance of a large body of political writings by Indian nationalists like Tilak, Gokhale, Tagore, Aurobindo, Gandhi and Nehru. Referred to as the modern Indian renaissance, the explosive release of thoughts and ideas raised significant questions regarding the need for freedom. These gifted leaders used the medium of English to communicate their message of freedom to India and the world. A survey of history would however make it clear that the paths to freedom which the nationalists propagated, were widely different. For Gandhiji, individual freedom came before the other freedoms; Tagore felt that lack of freedom is based on the feeling of being alienated. A man of action like Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was diametrically opposed to the non-violent strategy of Mahatma Gandhi. With his charismatic leadership and his courage, he followed his own route to freedom. There were also men like Ambedkar, the leader of the Dalits, for whom freedom also meant social justice. There are also the traditional views on freedom such as the spiritual freedom or liberation which forms the core of Indian philosophy. In my first chapter titled “The dream of freedom”, I propose to examine this significant legacy of social, political and philosophical thought which infused the spirit of freedom into the people of the country.

The development of Indian writing in English can be traced to the firm establishment of British colonial India. And therefore, the writers became active participants not only in the historical process, but also in the representation of the two sides – the colonial India and the post-colonial India.

The ensuing chapters present a systematic study of select novels written by Indians in English which have the quality of self-expression and maturity. Freedom is a subject of supreme importance and most of the writers have dealt with this theme in one way or the other. Many talented novelists have contributed to the growth of the Indian English novel as well as the resurgence of freedom itself. Some of the writers like Raja Rao, Attia Hossain, G.V.Desani, Shashi Tharoor, Arundhati Roy, Salman Rushdie and others have enriched the Indian English novel with their rich harvest of talents.

M.K.Naik justifies their contribution by saying:

Perhaps the best argument in support of the view that Indian writing in English is a body of works worth serious critical consideration is the fact that the best in it has been taken seriously and subjected to minute appraisal by critics in both India and abroad --- The steady interest it has aroused, in recent years, in English speaking countries shows that it has merits other than those of sheer novelty and exoticism (3).

The dream of freedom could be fully realized only when there was a self-conscious assertion of freedom. The Gandhian movement for freedom, significantly became the starting point of this assertion of freedom. It also brought about significant changes in the Indian English novel. Whatever novels were written before these significant periods were imitative and lacked maturity. The writers were uncertain about the language and there was no variety with regard to themes. For the earlier writers, writing in English was itself a handicap, which curbed their freedom to express themselves. Further, they had their limitations in plot-construction and characterization. In the literary field, the Gandhian charisma unleashed a new spirit of freedom. As William Walsh maintains:

It was in the 1930s that the Indians began what has now turned out to be their very substantial contribution to the novel in English and one peculiarly suited to their talents(66).

The second chapter titled "Self-conscious assertion of freedom" selectively studies three major works – Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, G.V.Desani's *All about H Hatterr* and Bhabani Bhattacharya's *He who Rides a Tiger*. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* was an early example of the experimental novel with a specific Indian orientation. He shows how the English language, though not native to the Indian soil, could be effectively adapted to express the subtle nuances of Indian thought and tradition. The novel portrays the freedom movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi and its impact on the Indian people.

Myths and legends are liberally sprinkled over the novel to elevate the freedom struggle, within the framework of the Indian cultural tradition. Raja Rao modifies the whole language structure of the English language in order to liberate it from its Western links.

What is worth noting is that there is an objectivity as well as universality in Rao's treatment of the freedom struggle. As Meenakshi Mukherjee points out:

The novel, in the sense we understand it today is concerned with circumstantial reality, with the concrete and the particular, which are influenced very largely by time and place. In this sense, *Kanthapura* is a modern novel and its oral tradition of mythicising facts is a well-chosen technical device (150).

Like Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, Desani's *All about H Hatterr* stands out as a unique literary piece where all the freedom of linguistic experimentation is made use of by the author. Mr. Hatterr is the narrator hero who moves through life and mixes freely with the people only to be duped by them. His encounters with a series of fake sadhus forms the main theme of the novel. Written in a mock-serious style, the distinctive language used in the novel is Hatterr's own. This fact is admitted by the author in the novel itself:

This book isn't English as she is wrote and spoke. Not verbal contortionism, I assure --- There are two of us writing this book. A fellow called H.Hatterr and I --- As for the arbitrary choice of words and constructions --- they are there because, I think, they are natural to H.Hatterr(17).

With individual variations, *All about H.Hatterr* thus became one of the most daringly experimental novels in Indian English literature.

The tradition of social realism established in Indian English fiction by Mulk Raj Anand received further momentum by novelists like Bhabani Bhattacharya. Bhattacharya's canvas is rural India, and the characters he portrays are from the vast majority-poor, oppressed and deprived. Through *He Who Rides a Tiger*, Bhattacharya in

fact, demands the recognition of the right of human being to be free. The novel is a bold attempt to uncover the drawbacks of Hindu caste system and superstition. It also shows a conflict between two sets of values—supremacy of social hierarchy and emergence of the individual. Thus, the broad ideals of progressive liberalism resulted in the shock of self-recognition. To writers like Bhattacharya and Mulk Raj Anand, art had a social purpose. It must be an instrument for social and moral transformation as well as freedom. Anand beautifully expresses his view:

The search for freedom by each individual is the only way by which the struggle to live a possible existence of calmness may fructify. Compassion for the suffering may heal pain somewhat, and love for others may save the individual from self-torment. The struggle for higher consciousness is the only possible way for the good life (95).

To emphasize this objective in his novels, Bhattacharya points to the various sources that result in lack of freedom – poverty, tyranny, poor economic opportunities, social deprivation, intolerance as well as famines, which deny to millions of people the basic freedom to survive. In *A Goddess Named Gold*, Bhattacharya stresses upon the importance of faith, through a most appropriate social comment:

Without acts of faith, freedom is a dead pebble tied to the arm with a bit of string, fit only to be cast into the river(303).

In strong contrast to the idealism and sentimental concerns evident in Raja Rao and Bhabani Bhattacharya, the novelists of the 80s represent the dissonant, dissenting voices of multicultural India. The third chapter titled “Memory and Nostalgia after Freedom”, seeks to analyse two major works – Rushdie’s *Midnight’s children* and Gita Mehta’s *A River Sutra*. Significantly, the earlier writers originated a tradition of creativity in the English language. It was left to the new writers to demonstrate the finer possibilities in the creative use of the language. Rushdie’s *Midnight’s children*, published in 1981, freed Indian writing from all its inhibitions; it gave the Indians the confidence to believe that English can be an Indian language. Rushdie manipulated the language, took liberties, and made it India’s own language.

The international literary success of *Midnight's children* was further established when it won the Booker award as well as the James Tait Black Memorial Prize. The title refers to the children born in the midnight hour of India's 'Tryst with Destiny' on 15 August, 1947. The narrator hero Saleem Sinai becomes one of the elect 580 children born on that historical day. The strength of the novel lies in Rushdie's attempt to weave a narrative by linking the life of his narrator Saleem Sinai with history. The high cosmopolitan style of writing which Rushdie introduced into the Indian English novel reveals his mastery of the language. Further, the feeling of repression and a sense of nostalgia for a lost world is clearly evident when Rushdie focuses on the reality of free India.

It is not surprising that the challenge to the idealistic notion of a free India should also come from women writers; in the process demanding a re-visioning of the past. Their writings suggest the beginnings of a fresh awakening. Gita Mehta's *A River Sutra* probes deep into the intricacies of Hinduism as well as man's quest for freedom, peace and tranquility. The novel is a major inquiry into different facets of freedom and is worthy of analysis.

Coming to women's writing in India, it is flourishing as never before. Writers like Arundhati Roy, Gita Hariharan, Gita Mehta have voiced their concern for the problems faced by women. The fourth chapter titled "Reinventing womanhood" takes into account two novels – Gita Hariharan's *A Thousand Faces of the Night* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. This chapter represents the voice of women writers involved in making themselves heard.

Gita Hariharan's novel *A Thousand Faces of the Night* succeeds in bringing out the contemporary issues concerning educated women into sharp focus. She portrays women who are brought up strictly according to the traditional codes. However, Hariharan also asserts their individuality and makes them participants in decisions that affect their life, thereby giving them freedom. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, captivatingly, raises questions regarding the world of women. The highly rated Booker Prize which was awarded to the novel shows that at last women's writing has earned its

rightful place in world literature. No inquiry into freedom can ignore women's freedom and it is women's writing alone which can give a truthful picture of the world of women.

Thus, the contribution of women to fiction in Independent India is commendable. They are counted among the significant writers of the young generation. Their writing provides powerful insights into the position of women in society. In short, it provides the platform to understand the strange and puzzling concept of freedom from the woman's point of view.

All the seven novels selected for study in this thesis represent a radical departure from what was written previously by their predecessors. With the ingenuity of their technique, they made attempts to break the old fictional form. The concluding chapter, titled "Reinventing freedom" is a combined study of all the seven novels in terms of experiments with new techniques and approaches to handle selective themes. All of them, despite the differences natural to writers, represent the same fierce passion for liberty and equality and of a genuine internationalism that does not demand the sacrifice of dignity or equality.

It is evident that despite all problems and challenges, a number of talented novelists have contributed significantly to the Indian English novel. Certainly, barriers still need to be broken. However, considering the fact that only three percent of Indians are comfortable in using English, yet, Indian English writers of fiction have made their mark on wider canvass of world literature. Whatever we have done in Indian English fiction is an achievement. We can look back and forward with equal comfort. Surely, we have our reasons to celebrate.

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1. THE DREAM OF FREEDOM

*Freedom from fear is the freedom I claim for you, my Motherland! fear,
The phantom demon, shaped by your own distorted dreams*

- TAGORE

A study of the history and emergence of freedom shows that man has a natural passion for freedom and has always dreamt of attaining it. The word freedom therefore, has meant different things to different people. The present chapter attempts to bring together the ideas of freedom as envisaged in Indian thought from the ancient to the contemporary age. These different perceptions regarding freedom clearly brought about a linguistic and poetic renaissance and awoke the sensibilities of literary communities all over the world. The differences in views, instead of promoting discord, have encouraged a great deal of creative diversity. In order to understand the complexity of views regarding freedom, this chapter has been divided into five sections. The first section deals with the idea of spiritual freedom in ancient Indian thought. The second section deals with the history of the struggle for freedom in India. The third section examines the views of Indian political leaders. The fourth section concerns itself with the quest for freedom by Indian English writers. The chapter is also an attempt to show how the elite English language was eventually used against the Englishmen, against their roles and their intentions. Ultimately, English became the language of resurgence of nationalism and political awakening, helping India realise the dream of freedom.

[1]

In the history of philosophy, almost all the philosophers have dealt with freedom and have tried to define it in their own way. In the Indian tradition, the idea of spiritual freedom or liberation is conveyed by the term *moksha*. *Moksha* means freedom from the bondage of body. Bondage is due to attachment towards worldly objects and liberation is achieved through the direct realization of God. It means that there is some entity that may be called soul or spirit or self that gets its freedom from its association with the body, which is bondage. This theory of freedom considers man in three dimensions individual, social and spiritual. The first two dimensions are linked together and culminate in the spiritual. The freedom which the Indian tradition advocates is positive

because freedom here is claimed for attaining a spiritual value. It is not negative because it does not merely mean freedom from something. This theory of freedom is also valuable because it integrates man with society and uplifts him spiritually. Surendranath Dasgupta explains the concept in the following manner:

God alone is the cause of all bondage as well as of all liberation; When one directly realizes the nature of God, there arises in him devotion to the Lord: for without personal, direct and immediate knowledge of Him there cannot be any devotion --- And when such a devotion arises, the Lord is highly pleased and it is when God is so pleased with us that we can attain salvation (317).

The Indian systems of philosophy deal at length with what a man ought to do in order to gain true happiness or what he should realise by direct experience in order to free himself completely from suffering. According to the Indian tradition, the life-activity of man is a pursuit of four values – *dharma* (duty), *arth* (material goods), *kama* (pleasure) and *moksha* (liberation). The pursuit of pleasure is common to both human beings and the animal world. However, for a man to become human, he should not be a slave to the basic needs alone such as hunger, sleep and sex. A man has to inculcate the higher values into his life. All the higher values of life can be brought under *Dharma* and *moksha*. In other words, they either deal with *Dharma* or the moral value of virtue, or *Moksha* the spiritual value of freedom. The Indian *Dar'sanam*, the name for philosophy in Sanskrit, are rightly termed as philosophies of life. It takes a comprehensive view of man's life comprising individual, social and spiritual aspects of life. In fact, Indian *darsanas* are *moksha shastras* ie. Treatises on liberation. As it considers the entire life of man as a preparation for the attainment of the final goal of liberation.

It is necessary to consider the role of Indian philosophy for the liberation of man. The Indian schools of thought accept the theory that man is a complex combination of spirit and matter, the self and the psycho – physical. The psycho – physical is a combination of mind, sense and body. An important feature of Indian philosophy is the distinction between spirit and body. This distinction is intended firstly because body is

considered as subordinate to the spirit and secondly, for the gradual dissociation of the spirit from the body after death.

Regarding the concept of freedom, the Indian thought places *moksha* or spiritual freedom at the apex of the hierarchy of values. However, it has not ignored or minimized the importance of other values. There are many kinds of freedom – political freedom, economic freedom, religious freedom and so on. The enumeration of the different kinds of freedom shows that each one of these freedoms is indispensable for the spiritual perfection man aims at. Just as man should be free to choose his own form of government, to acquire material goods, to profess and practice his religion and so on, he should also be free to seek and abide in the spirit. It means that man demands freedom in his entire life – activity for the pursuit of values ranging from physical and economic freedom at one end and spiritual freedom at the other.

There are some presuppositions implicit in the theory of freedom formulated by the Indian schools of thought. The first presupposition is that man has the competence for the performance of any work and the pursuit of knowledge and that he is a moral person, that is to say, in possession of will and reason. Secondly, a moral person is capable of rights. He acquires the capacity of rights by virtue of his membership in society. Thirdly, in the absence of rights, he ceases to be a moral person. He cannot pursue *artha* and *kama*, *dharma* and *moksha* without rights. Fourthly, the moral person should be given a guarantee of justice. Justice means giving every man the indispensable conditions for reaching the goal. In this sense, it means equality. It also means equal opportunities to everyone for the fulfillment of man's vocation as a moral being.

Moksha-marga is essentially a discipline for the regulation of one's own consciousness by which one's fluctuating desires, attachments and interests are negated. The original drive of the self is towards the state of liberation, the state of discovery. In the Indian tradition, *yoga* was accepted as the technique of self-realization. The aim of *yoga* is not to make one's awareness vanish into a state of ecstasy but to attain absolute freedom, a new view of one's life in the world.

The gravest problems of life and death are dealt with in a detailed manner in the

Upanishads. As A.G.Krishna Warriar states:

The Upanishads, for the first time, refer to the mysterious powers of karma and their sway over the destiny of man. Intimately bound up with karma and transmigration is the doctrine of Samsara – the rounds of birth and deaths in bondage to the laws of karma (4).

The *Upanishads* state that deep down in the human self, there is a vast expanse. The self's journey into this expanse is not a journey of no return. Man must reach this expanse, realize its divinity and limitless power and come back to the world. To complete the circle, the self, which is withdrawn from the reality of the world and probing its own freedom, must be brought back to the world. It is the world where man emerges as a mind, awareness, and a volume of possibilities.

It is important to realize that the search for a precise definition of freedom is a complex task. P.H. Partridge tries to differentiate between the different freedoms and says:

Freedom in the abstract is a class comprising many species – freedom of thought and speech, freedom of association, freedom of assembly, freedom of worship, freedom of movement, freedom in the use or disposal of one's property, freedom in the choice of one's employer or occupation and so on. In every case, there is of course, a reference to the absence of coercion or interference (96).

Here, absence of coercion refers not only to that which is imposed by others but also what freedom is being claimed for.

[II]

In understanding the history of freedom as it exists in India, we should first of all realise that freedom has its application in radically different contexts. The demand for freedom arises when there are unreasonable restrictions on man. The primary historical

source of such restriction, especially in India, has been political power. The beginnings of British Imperial rule and its consequent restrictions on freedom in India can be traced back to the year 1498. It was the year which brought Vasco da Gama and his tiny fleet into Indian territory at Calicut. Unknown to anyone at that time, this was the beginning of European domination on India. Over two centuries later, after Aurangzeb's death, the mighty Mughal empire began to diminish and the Europeans took their place. Gradually, they became masters of a vast Indian empire. A fact to be noted is that during all the previous invasions, the invaders had assimilated themselves into the Indian scene and lost touch with their own roots. For instance, the Mughals were thoroughly Indianized, despite their foreign origins. But unlike them, the British showed no inclination to assimilate themselves. Thus, for the first time, Indians felt that they had lost their freedom under an autocratic rule which imposed its own values upon them.

Freedom has its own avenues for resurrection. The political colonization of India began in 1757 when the British won the Battle of Plassey and got control of Bengal. Until then, they were merely traders. After this victory, the British started the administration of revenue and criminal justice in Bengal. Some of the contributing factors of the British rule were – the principle of equality before law, the establishment of All India Services, National Economy, a network of railways and introduction of English. All these administrative measures increased the dominance of the British on the Indian people. Ironically, these were also the very reasons which decreased their hold on the Indian people.

The British rule placed the whole of India under one paramount power for the first time in history. The new political and economic order kindled new aspirations in the minds of the countrymen. Allan Octavian Hume, a Scotsman, started a forum for the discussion of political reforms and patriotic projects. Thus, the Indian National Congress was formed which became the driving force of the freedom movement. The Congress Working committee met at Lahore and decided to declare 26 January 1930 as the Purna Swaraj Day. The Lahore Pledge States:

The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the

exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe therefore that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or complete Independence (114).

This emphatic pledge marked the beginning of that movement which brought independence to the country. It demanded freedom as a right and urged to be provided with the full opportunities for growth. Through this pledge, the Congress working committee also asserted its right to alter or abolish the Government. The Lahore Pledge of 1930 thus became a landmark in the history of India's struggle for freedom.

The cultural colonization of India began in 1780 when India's first newspaper, Hicky's Bengal Gazette, was published in English. In 1817, the Hindu college later known as Presidency college, became the premier educational institute of Bengal. Later, the introduction of English education on western lines by Macaulay in 1835, opened up fresh insights into art, literature, thought, culture, science and technology. The English language became a powerful liberating force and brought about a harmonious interaction of Indian and European cultures. Rabindranath Tagore aptly says:

When I was young we were full of admiration for Europe, with its high civilization and its vast scientific progress and especially for England, which had brought this knowledge to our doors. We believed with all our simple faith that even if we rebelled foreign rule, we should have the sympathy of the west. We felt that England was on our side in wishing us to gain our freedom (qtd. in Kumar: 6).

The question that arises is – what were the prominent factors, which gained freedom for India? Surely, English education was the primary one, mainly because it opened up opportunities, which were essential for winning India's freedom. Introduction of English education created a new educated elite who supplied the leadership in the freedom struggle, after being fascinated with England's political ideals such as democracy and national patriotism. An environment for cultural and intellectual upheaval was thus created.

The struggle for freedom, however, gained momentum only when the great Indian leaders realised the importance of a reliable news along with education. Freedom could not be achieved until both these important factors were taken into account. This fact is substantiated by Harold J.Laski when he states:

For political liberty to be real, two conditions are essential. I must be educated to the point where I can express what I want in a way that is intelligible to others. The second condition of political liberty is the provision of an honest and straightforward supply of news (79).

Emphasising the relevance of quality and trustworthy news, Laski further points out: “A people without reliable news is, sooner or later, a people without the basis of freedom”(79).

In keeping with this view, Raja Rammohan Roy, the founding father of Renaissance in India, started several schools, wrote textbooks and published weekly newspapers in Bengali, English and Persian. He also made efforts to improve the educational, social and political conditions of Calcutta. Of particular significance was the contribution of Aurobindo. Aurobindo was the first person who eloquently and directly attacked the British through his writings. Until then, the Indian leaders voiced their disapproval in an indirect, muted and heavily camouflaged manner so as not to incur the wrath of the British. Aurobindo made a new beginning. His articles in the *Indu Prakash* were bold and direct. They were aimed to achieve two major objectives – one, to strengthen the anti – British sentiment in the country and second, to break the myth of British superiority. He wanted complete freedom for India and pointed out that the people of India should try to remove their own weaknesses if they wanted to make India free. In his own words:

Our actual enemy is not any force exterior to ourselves, but our own crying weaknesses, our cowardice, our selfishness, our hypocrisy, our purblind sentimentalism (qtd. in Singh:56).

Thus, freedom for Aurobindo was not something to be received as charity from the foreign masters, but through India's own inner strength and power. While Aurobindo drew inspiration from the spiritual strength of India, Ambedkar, on the other hand, felt himself battling against the injustice of the age old caste system in India. Ambedkar's message to the people for obtaining freedom from social oppression was to 'Organize, Educate and Agitate.' Thus, by asking the oppressed people to organize themselves and to agitate for their rights, Ambedkar raised the banner of revolt. In a mass gathering at the Town Hall of Nagpur, Ambedkar exhorted the public:

Can you not be freed from this slavish subjection? Think of freedom, of liberty, of human dignity! Let us march out towards those humanistic goals (95).

Mahatma Gandhi and Tilak also used the medium of newspapers to impart their message of freedom to the Indian people.

The Renaissance in India had serious limitations because it had to strengthen its roots under a foreign rule. As a result, two main conflicting trends emerged. The first trend was the passion for social reform as evident in the efforts to ban *sati*, system of child marriage, polygamy, reducing caste restrictions, liberation of women etc. This kind of social reform was naturally justified by the power of reasoning. The second trend comprised of a general appreciation of past glories along with a revival of faith and spiritualism.

Thus, the efforts of the great leaders created the feeling of patriotism towards their motherland among the Indians that finally succeeded in ousting the very people who inculcated the feeling. Homi Bhabha has dealt with this issue in his essay 'Of Mimicry and Man.' As Christopher Bracken states:

Homi Bhabha explores the ironic self-defeating structure of colonial discourse in 'Of Mimicry and Man.' He notes that when English administrators dreamed of converting India to

Christianity at the end of the 18th century, they did not want their colonial subjects to become too Christian or too English. Their discourse foresaw a colonized mimic who would be almost the same as the colonial but not quite. However, since India's mimicry of the English blurred the boundary between ruler and ruled, the dream of anglicizing Indians threatened to Indianize Englishness – a reversal the colonists found intolerable (qtd. in Das : 222).

The young men of this period who got higher education were men of liberal thought and believed in the brotherhood of the human race. Armed with a new awareness and outlook towards life, these leaders began the arduous task of reawakening the Indian people through their speeches and writings. Most of them were western educated intellectuals and. seemed to say like Caliban (Shakespeare, *The Tempest*):

You taught me language; and my profit; on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!

[III]

In examining the views on freedom by the Indian leaders, we understand that the leaders of the Renaissance movement mainly thought in terms of the spiritual orientation of the Indian classical philosophies. As a result, whenever they voiced their opinions, it came across as a clarification or reaffirmation of the classical philosophies. Foremost among the leaders was Raja Rammohan Roy. He succeeded in making pioneering reforms in religion, morals, journalism, education, the status of women and legal and political thought. His most important contribution was that he wholeheartedly supported the cause of women's freedom. In fact, Rammohan Roy provided a new approach to the problem of women's freedom of choice. He emphasized the fact that women were denied the opportunity to show their talents. Commenting upon women's inferior position in

society, Rammohan Roy remarked:

As to their inferiority in point of understanding, when did you ever afford them a fair opportunity of exhibiting their natural capacity? How then can you accuse them of want of understanding? (qtd. in Hay : 26)

In the political discussion on freedom, the arguments raised by Rammohan Roy revolved around the limits of the governing authority, the limits of its power to rule and to legislate. When the East India Company promulgated an ordinance in 1823 restricting the freedom of the press, Rammohan Roy responded vehemently. According to the Ordinance, all newspapers were to be licensed under terms laid down by the government. Rammohan Roy warned that the ordinance would make the Indian community hostile towards the British rule because it was the enjoyment of those civil liberties which made them loyal to the British. Speaking in favour of freedom of the press, he said:

After this Rule and Ordinance shall have been carried into execution, a complete stop will be put to the diffusion of knowledge and the consequent mental improvement now going on, either by translation into the popular dialect of this country from the learned languages of the East, or by the circulation of literary intelligence drawn from foreign publications (qtd. in Hay : 27).

In order to achieve his objective of social freedom, Rammohan Roy founded the Brahma Samaj which was the most striking manifestation of the new spirit of the age. The Brahma Samaj led a movement for the improvement of the status of women in Indian society. They demanded a greater degree of social freedom for women and exercised pressure for the abolition of the purdah system, which restricted the freedom of women.

Besides the Brahma Samaj, several other factors also contributed to the movement for social freedom. Some of the contributing factors were – the growth of the middle class, the process of urbanization, the spread of western education and values of

life, as well as the break – up of the joint family system. Another off-shoot of the Brahmo Samaj was the Prarthana Samaj which gave emphasis on cultural and humanitarian nationalism and asserted the common man's right to freedom. The Prarthana Samaj sprang up in Maharashtra at the beginning of the 19th century. Around this time, Bombay University was established. It produced the first batch of four arts graduates – Mahadev Govind Ranade, Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, Bal Mangesh Wagle and Waman Abaji Modak. These four graduates played a significant role in the development of the Prarthana Samaj. Being educated, they were also able to give a proper direction to the struggle for freedom.

The role of education in the movement for freedom is very significant. It gave the Indian people more opportunity, more power to carry out their purposes. Herbert J. Muller makes an emphatic remark in this regard:

Effective freedom requires opportunities as well as rights. From this point of view, the major historical barrier has been not merely political oppression but poverty and ignorance. All other things equal, a man with money is freer than an illiterate (78).

In any discussion on social freedom, the influence of culture and tradition in limiting freedom has to be considered. Any inadequacy in the social sphere has to be eradicated first if we are to achieve political freedom. The Prarthana Samaj ultimately became a centre of reform activities in western India. They fought for the abandonment of caste, the abolition of child marriage, the elevation of the depressed classes and the encouragement of women's education. The cultural and humanitarian nationalism, propounded by the Prarthana Samaj, undoubtedly helped the nation's struggle for freedom. Govind Ranade was the chief exponent of the Prarthana Samaj. Asserting the right of the Indians to be free, he explained in his own words what he meant by freedom. He explains:

Freedom means making laws, levying taxes, imposing punishment and appointing officials. The true difference between a free country and an unfree one is that in the

former, before punishment is given, a law must have been made; before taxes are levied, consent must have been secured; before making a law, opinions must have been taken (qtd. in Iyengar : 49).

Thus, freedom meant different things to different people. According to Aurobindo, freedom was a necessity not only for India but also for the whole world because only a free India could spread her spiritual light through out the whole world. The first active step, which Aurobindo took, was to send a young Bengali soldier of the Indian army, named Jatin Chatterjee to form a secret revolutionary group in Bengal. This decision of Aurobindo was firmly based on his study of the British attitude. As Dr. Karan Singh points out:

He (Aurobindo) had studied the temperament and characteristics of the British people and the turn of their political instincts and he believed that although they would resist any attempt at self – liberation by the Indian people --- still they were not of the kind which would be ruthlessly adamant to the end if they found resistance and revolt becoming general and persistence, they would in the end try to arrive at an accommodation to save what they could of their empire or in an extremity prefer to grant independence rather than have it forcefully wrested from their hands (57)

The secret revolutionary group, started on the insistence of Sri Aurobindo, gained foothold in Bengal. In 1905, Lord Curzon's decision to partition the province of Bengal acted as the catalyst for the spread of radical ideas. Aurobindo spread his ideas on nationalism and the need for freedom through out India. Nationalism, according to Aurobindo, was a spiritual necessity, a virtually religious practice. Thus, it was a much more deeper and more profound concept than mere patriotism.

While Aurobindo drew inspiration from the spiritual strength of India, Ambedkar, on the other hand, felt himself battling against the injustice of the age-old

caste system in India. According to Ambedkar, freedom also meant equal justice for all. Distressed at the caste divisions prevalent in Indian society, he asked the people:

You untouchables, have you ever realised that even at the height of the freedom struggle, you have been treated worse than animals? Have you realised that the doors of the schools and educational institutions are all closed for you? --- If this is your real condition, what makes you identify yourself with the nationalist struggle? Freedom for what? And freedom for whom? (35)

It is evident that for Ambedkar, political freedom was not enough. He felt that basic socio – political rights of citizens was also important. Ambedkar got the first opportunity to realise this objective when he became Chairman of the Drafting committee of the constitution from 1947 to 1949. He thus became the torchbearer of the reform movement that was to take place in independent India. Through the constitution, Ambedkar strove to provide social and political rights to the people of India in the shape of Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles.

As the leader of the dalits, Ambedkar made the most important contribution to eradicate the evils of the caste system. He worked out the system of reservations for the socially and educationally backward sections into the constitution. Ambedkar rightly felt that in order to grant a greater degree of freedom to the deprived classes, some of the freedom enjoyed by the privileged people had to be curtailed. As Isaiah Berlin points out:

Since justice demands that all individuals be entitled to a minimum of freedom, all other individuals were of necessity to be restrained, if need be by force, from depriving anyone of it (88).

Ambedkar also emphatically voiced the question of women's freedom. Speaking once on the inequalities, which naturally exist in the Hindu Society, Dr. Ambedkar defined sacramental marriage as "polygamy for the man and perpetual slavery for the woman."(16). Social freedom for women gained a greater degree of acceptance when

Dr. Ambedkar introduced the Hindu code Bill which included equality in marriage rights and property rights for women. However, the code could not be passed during the provisional parliament. Later, the Hindu code was divided into two separate Bills, one on marriage and the other on property Rights, and both these Bills were enacted in the first parliament.

However, real freedom could be gained in totality only when Indians could hold their head high, become independent and avoid slavish imitation of others. This could only be achieved when all the people of India were united by the strength of Indian culture and tradition. Many efforts were made in this direction. It was at this time that Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, with his simple devotion and traditional concepts became a powerful force, which revived Hindu nationalism. Ramakrishna explained the concept of freedom in such a simple and straight forward manner that even the illiterate people could understand it. He said,

Everything is in the mind. Bondage and freedom are in the mind. By the mind one is bound, by the mind one is freed. If I think I am absolutely free, whether I live in the world or in the forest, where is my bondage? I am the child of God, the son of the king of kings, who can bind me? He who asserts with strong conviction: "I am not bound, I am free", becomes free (qtd. in Hay : 67).

Among Sri Ramakrishna's disciples was Swami Vivekananda. He told his countrymen that they themselves were largely responsible for their condition and exhorted them to help themselves. He said:

Oh India! With this mere echoing of others, with this base imitation of others, with this dependence on others, this slavish weakness, this vile detestable cruelty, wouldst thou, with these provisions only scale the highest pinnacle of civilization and greatness? Wouldst thou attain, by means of thy disgraceful cowardice that freedom deserved only by the brave and the heroic? (qtd. in Hay : 81)

Like Vivekananda, Subhash Chandra Bose was also certain that only a consistent demonstration of will by the Indian people could give them complete Independence. Bose is chiefly remembered for his unceasing pursuit of freedom and his army known as the Azad Hind Fauz, which had strength of 3500. In an address delivered on 29 Nov, 1929 as the President of the Youth Conference of the Central Provinces, he said:

We are not satisfied any longer with marching only halfway; our demand is for complete independence in every sphere of life. Once we have loved freedom for freedom's sake, we could never endure anything that fostered bondage or inequality. We should be always on our guard so that we might apply the basic principles of total freedom to all spheres of our life, be that political, economic or social. Our motto would be to allow every opportunity to the flowering of the inborn potentiality of all human beings, irrespective of sex (qtd. in Grower:233).

Another patriot who had his own singular views on freedom was Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Tilak strongly felt that freedom does not descend to a people, the people must rise to it and wrest it from unwilling hands. He was arrested many times and once, he gave a 21-hour address to the jury, which is a part of history and a testament of liberty. Tilak died twenty-seven years before India became free. His life thus spans the major part of our struggle for freedom. He created in his countrymen the urge to freedom; he made it vocal and demanded freedom as a birthright.

While Tilak laid the foundation of India's freedom, Mahatma Gandhi carried it forward. Gandhiji's views on the extremely important question of freedom was largely influenced through his study of Christianity and the *Bhagvat Gita*. Gandhiji stressed upon individual freedom when he says:

Individual freedom alone can make a man voluntarily surrender himself completely to the service of society. If it is wrested from him, he becomes an automaton and society is

ruined. No society can possibly be built on a denial of individual freedom.

The word 'swaraj' as used by Gandhi meant self-rule or self-control. Freedom lies not in merely liberating ourselves from foreign rule, but from controlling the passions. Thus, Gandhi not only stressed on the political but also the cultural and spiritual freedom of India. As Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya says:

When Gandhiji's leadership emerged, I was largely attracted because he was the first and the only leader of that period who seemed to identify himself with the people, who seemed to define and interpret freedom in terms of the everyday life of the people, which others had not done (253).

The basic facts of freedom, as explained in Gandhiji's *Hind Swaraj* has been overlooked with the result that India after Independence has been totally different from the India of Gandhiji's dreams. *Hind Swaraj* was written by Gandhi in 1909 during a sea voyage from London to South Africa in the form of a dialogue between himself and a friend. It clearly brings out Gandhiji's conception of Indian freedom, which he held till the end of his life. He argues that Indian civilization is the best of all, but his friend is not satisfied and raises a question. This leads Gandhiji to explain what he understands by freedom.

Hind Swaraj is a careful study of the issue of political and economic freedom confronting India at that time. Modern civilization, for Gandhi, resulted in a loss of simplicity and innocence. Significantly, Gandhi foregrounds tradition in the individual's bid to seek direction. As a critic of modernity, he felt that the road to modernity was one of complexity and degeneration. Modern civilization adds to our miseries and results in a situation when individuals lose their equality and freedom. It is interesting to note that Gandhi considered colonialism as a product of modern civilization. He felt that modern civilization was a greater threat than colonialism. Gandhi feels that modern civilization has made man a prisoner of his craving for luxury and self-indulgence resulting in his loss of freedom. *Hind Swaraj* is a direct plea for a return to the simple self-sufficiency of

traditional village life. Gandhi thus defines swaraj as self-rule or the rule of the self by the self.

Regarding political freedom, Gandhi tries to explain what he means by passive resistance, which alone can win freedom for India. He explains the term further:

Passive resistance is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is reverse of resistance by arms. When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force. For instance, the government of the day has passed a law, which is applicable to me. I do not like it. If by using violence, I force the government to repeal the law, I am employing what may be termed body-force. If I do not obey the law and accept the penalty for its breach, I use soul-force. It involves sacrifice of self. Everyone admits that sacrifice of self is infinitely superior to sacrifice of others (102).

The question of women's freedom was also raised by Mahatma Gandhi and other political leaders during the period. The need for a change in the condition of women was first felt because of the new intellectual upsurge in the early 19th century. The presence of foreigners and foreign missionaries, introduction of English language, English education and self-examination by the educated intelligentsia contributed to the need. Ironically, it was argued that the old customs in India were meant to free women from their sufferings. For instance, the system of *Sati* was upheld as the means to liberate women, to free them from the miseries of life as a widow. At that time, widows were humiliated by the society. If she lived, she was shunned, abused and disfigured. Therefore, *Sati* offered her the romantic death of a devoted wife, a freedom she could not hope to get while alive. Thus, the custom seemed to offer a physical liberation for the woman, although in reality, it was denying her the very freedom to exist. As Herbert J. Muller points out:

Human freedom does require a measure of rationality; a man governed by impulse or passion is obviously limited in his ability to choose his purposes; and it may be argued that no kind of freedom is more important than freedom from bondage to unconscious or irrational desire (80).

Thus, true freedom depends on living a life in dignity and so; efforts were made to stop the disgraceful custom of *Sati*. *Sati* was finally legally abolished in 1829. With the end of *Sati*, efforts for widow remarriage were carried on. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, a social reformer, started the demand for legalizing widow remarriage. Finally, in 1856, widow remarriage got legal sanction through the Widow Remarriage Act. It took a long time for widow remarriage to become a reality in India. Society had its own vested interests in keeping a woman as widow because she acted as free labour in the household.

Another evil custom, which was opposed, was polygamy. Linked to polygamy was the question of child marriage. Initially, child marriages were meant to free the child from any sense of insecurity in case her father died. However, in reality, child marriage denied a girl the physical freedom she could enjoy. She was denied even her childhood. The Child marriage Restraint Act of 1929 limited the age of marriage of girls to 14 and that of boys to 18. As the efforts for social change gained momentum, there began a growing awareness that women had as much responsibility as men to fight for and attain freedom. An authentic voice to the whole movement for women's liberation was given by the National Social Conference. The demands raised by the conference were varied. They sought to destroy taboos on inter-marriage between different castes, foreign travel, abolition of dowry and bride price, raising the marriage age to 18 for girls and recognition of the widow's right to be socially treated like other women. Thus, the movement strived for complete equality and freedom along with men in all spheres.

However, true equality and freedom could only be gained through education. Women were perpetually kept in ignorance because it was the only means to keep them servile and obedient. Education for women was considered dangerous because once the girls experienced the excitement of learning; they became their own promoters. An All India Women's Education Conference was convened in Pune in 1927 to lead the

women's movement for liberation. They started a number of short publications to inform and educate women on the various issues facing them.

With the struggle for Independence reaching its peak, 'Swadeshi' was encouraged. Apart from its contribution to the political cause, 'Swadeshi' helped in the economic betterment of women. It gave a boost to the local hand made products in the making of which women made a major contribution. Thus, gradually, women began to demand their rights and to establish their presence. They also became active participants in the larger goal of political freedom. Freedom was finally attained yet, many things needed to be done. As Mulk Raj Anand rightly observes:

Though we attained political freedom after the Second World War, it was a truncated freedom. And the many other freedoms, which were to come with independence, have not come, through the mechanical manipulation of votes in the parliamentary democracy, borrowed from our erstwhile masters (qtd. in Kumar : 35).

IV

While the political struggle for freedom was going on, there started another struggle by Indian writers to establish their own independent and distinctive identity and to show their competence in the language of the rulers. In this respect, noted writer Mulk Raj Anand asserts:

And, if we are honest, we must accept the fact that, through out the century of struggle for the achievement of many freedoms, we have benefited from the adoption of Indian English as our medium of expression among the intelligentsia (qtd. in Kumar:35).

The beginning of novel writing in India, whether in English or in any other Indian language started in the late 19th century. The Anglicization of Indians was an important precondition for Indian literature in English to flourish. This happened more than 150 years after the East India Company was chartered. The process of Anglicization began

when British changed from traders to rulers. Raja Rammohan Roy was the first great Indian writer of English prose who exerted a paramount influence on the social, political and literary scene of India. However, the first Indian, English novel was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohun's wife*, published in 1864. What is notable is that most of the novels written in the earlier phases of fiction writing were historical in nature. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohun's wife*, Jogendra Singh's novel *Nurjehan*, S.M.Mitra's *Hindopore*, S.K.Ghosh's *The Principle of Destiny* and Dharendra Nath Paul's *The Mysteries of Moghul Court* were much influenced by the history of India. During this period, the Indian writers wrote as much to arouse Indians as to impress and interest the westerner. The establishment of the universities of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras in 1857 ensured that these writers could be judged by an Indian readership. Indian English fiction was mostly written by writers who had the longest contact with the English themselves, mostly through education, religious beliefs, inter-marriage and travel. The writers imitated English forms and expressions but they could not convey effectively the Indian modes of thought and feeling.

It is Bankim Chandra Chatterjee however, who deserves credit for raising patriotic sentiments through the medium of literature. The poem 'Bande Mataram' which appeared in his novel *Anandamath*, became the fighting spirit behind the nationalist movement. In *Anandamath*, Bankim Chandra takes as his subject the Sanyasi rebellion in Bengal of the 1770s attributing to the Sanyasis a sort of religious nationalism to win widespread support in the opening decade of the 20th century. With a fusion of patriotic and religious devotion in his novel, Bankim Chandra succeeded in giving a new direction to the freedom struggle. The writers of this period, influenced by the Arya Samaj and Prarthana Samaj movements as well as the teachings of Ramakrishna Paramhansa, tried to counter the religious and materialistic challenge of the West. Through their fiction writing, they attempted to demonstrate their intellectual equality with the Europeans.

It was this combination of educational progress and spiritual awakening as well as the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1888 which acted a catalyst for India's struggle to attain freedom. In the first decades of the 20th century, many writers began to be appreciated worldwide. Rabindranath Tagore, who won the Nobel Prize for

Literature in 1913, put Indian literature on the international map. On freedom, Tagore said:

The science and the art of building up Swaraj is a vast Subject. Its pathways are difficult to traverse and take time. For this task, aspiration and emotion must be there, but no less must study and thought be there likewise. For it, the economist must think, the mechanic must labour, the educationist and statesman must teach and contrive. In a word, the mind of the country must exert itself in all directions. Above all, the spirit of inquiry through out the whole country must be kept intact (qtd. in Kumar : 284).

For Tagore, freedom is not a mere combination of external circumstances. It is a condition of our being. This inner awareness of freedom is possible only if we view it as an aspect of the total harmony. Tagore believed that lack of freedom is based on the spirit of alienation, on our imperfect realisation of unity. In other words, bondage has its stronghold in our own personality, not in the world outside.

Tagore's views on freedom is brought out clearly in his Nobel Prize winning work *Geetanjali* *Geetanjali* or Song Offerings is the most famous of Tagore's English works. In the poem 'Where the mind is without fear,' Tagore expresses the view that the true nature of reality is pure freedom which means unconditional power to act, infinite spontaneity, completeness, perfection and absolute independence. More freedom for the individual means more and more to be himself. Freedom is not to retreat into one's egocentric isolation and become indifferent to and independent from everything. Freedom is to transcend the "narrow domestic walls", grasp more truth about reality and try to work and live in harmony.

In examining the phenomenon of Indian fiction in English, we became aware first of all to the fact that the idealization of history and romance was gradually replaced by the nationalist cause and its implications. The subject matter of fiction became harnessed to the cause of Independence. Some of the important books of the period are Raja Rao's

Kanthapura (1938) and K.S.Venketaramani's *Kandan, the Patriot* (1932). Rama Kundu makes an interesting point when she states:

During the early phase of post colonialism one finds a self conscious assertion in the writings of Indian authors who introduced carefully built constructs in order to epitomise the Indian space in microcosms, like 'Malgudi' or 'Kanthapura' for example. It was their own loveable loved space despite its inadequacies. It was a proud, rather emphatic way of inscribing one's own space (29).

After 1947, the assertion of cultural independence began to replace the fight for political independence. Indian English writers attempted more natural forms of expression, as evident in Venu Chitale's *In Transit* (1950), Abbas' *Inquilab* (1955) R.K.Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* 'and' Bhabani Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh*. 'Freedom' had been attained but social injustice was still prevalent. So, we have the literature of protest, greatly evident in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and *Coolie*. English language thus, began to be used in furthering social reform and freed itself from any kind of imitation.

The achievement of freedom rekindled all the hopes of the masses. The writers could now analyse events of the Post – Independence period from the vantage ground of freedom. However, nothing could prepare them for the shock of partition and what followed. There was an endless stream of refugees on trains and on foot. The death of Gandhi, the wars with China and Pakistan and the unexpected demise of Lal Bahadur Shastri brought patriotism to the fore. But the period also represented a loss of innocence for the young nation. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Manohar Malgaonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* and Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers* are some of the writings of this period. These novels envelop the fervent mood and temper of the time and depict the various phases of the freedom struggle with a desire to make people

conscious of the cause of freedom. Mulk Raj Anand speaks for the downtrodden people when he states:

They have been decimated in wars, they have been wiped out in flood, famines and droughts, they have suffered and persisted perhaps in larger numbers than any other people, but they have survived and multiplied And we have to expiate them in our art (qtd. in Kumar:61).

The growth, development and consolidation of Indian – English fiction writers, in many ways, also gave expression to nationalism in India. Realistic and contemporary themes were brought into sharp focus. Indo English fiction of the late 20th century gave expression to the Indian experience of the modern predicament. A new crop of writers emerged on the Indian literary scene. Times had changed and India was slowly strengthening its independent identity. With the new areas of expertise and specialization emerging, employment opportunities increased. Women’s working became a necessity, especially owing to increasing demands and the progress of inflation. A large number of people migrated to other countries and settled there. This gave rise to an altogether new bunch of writers. It is this new migrant and minority writers and immigrants with multiple identities who have taken over as the representative voice of Indian fiction. The efflorescence in English writing from India has gained international prestige due to writers like Rushdie, Naipaul, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth etc – all of whom are settled outside India. They are representative of the change India is going through and they are the ones blazing a trail. They may not necessarily write about the Indian experience but surely, theirs are the faces that represent Independent India to the world. Sadly however, Indian writers still suffer from a negative consciousness of Indianness. Mohan Ramanan comments:

Many of our writers who divide their time between home and abroad, or live abroad, tend to use India as a sales item. One can’t escape the feeling that reference to India, to Indian terms and ideas are often anxious efforts to stress one’s roots. But plainly much of this is blighted by inauthenticity

and a desire to write for a western audience, which can internationalize a kind of Indian local color or exotica(42).

Whatever the criticism, it cannot be denied that the last twenty years, which mark the new or the second wave of Indian English fiction after that of Mulk Raj Anand, Narayan and Raja Rao has certainly witnessed a tremendous expansion. Experimentation is being done in the field of language with a new confidence, with an altogether new freedom. For the new writers, English is their very own language. Srinivasa Iyengar examines the changes that have taken place in Indian English fiction:

Indian writing in English is being increasingly recognized as one of the dozen or more authentic voices of India. What was at one time a tool for the leaders of the Indian renaissance to rouse the prostrate nation to register its awakening self-respect and presently to protest against the evil of foreign domination has now grown after a series of vicissitudes in our national history, into a creative choice of nourishment, generating literature in all its richness and manifoldness (703).

Coming to the question of women's freedom, many writers have dealt with the theme. Fiction by women writers constitutes a major segment of the contemporary Indian writing in English. The choice of Indian women's writing in English began as a result of English education, as in the case of men. However, Indian women have been subjected to far greater sociological pressures than Indian men. Writers such as Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Anita Desai and Arundhati Roy had to strike a balance between the demands of English literature and their own position in conventional society. Although the recent women writers belong to a much more liberated world, sociological constraints are still evident in their works.

It is to be noted that while the earlier women writers wrote poetry as an escape from their suffering, the women writers of post-independent India wrote mostly fiction

and concentrated on women-centered stories. It is encouraging to note that two successive generations of Indian women writers have given voice to their aspirations in a society still governed by patriarchal ideologies and norms. The growth of creative writing by women writers is largely due to the fact that it allows them to create their own world; free from the direct interference of men.

Certainly women in modern India have played a remarkable role in the movement for freedom. They have contributed to the cultural, political and social advancement of the nation in numerous ways. Many women writers like Anita Desai, Kamla Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal deal primarily with the cause of women's freedom and lack of identity in their novels. However, Anita Desai admits: "Indian women novelists are still exploring their feminine identity and trying to establish it as something worth possessing" (qtd. in Kumar : 73).

In conclusion, the same thing can be said about freedom – that it is still being explored. Freedom is required not merely for the welfare of the person but also for the further progress of society. Thus, the progress of liberty happens to be the criterion of progress of a society. In this sense, freedom inherently exists in a society. What helps individuals to remain free are the set of principles, which are made valid through laws and institutions. However, it also depends on the ethical freedom of those in power and those who govern public institutions in the country. In short, only free individuals can safeguard freedom.

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