Chapter – VIII

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The present study conforms that the perspective of Freedom Struggle has undergone a noticeable change from generation to generation in Indian English Fiction. In order to prove this assumption a resume of the study undertaken in the preceding chapters is provided followed by tracing the probable factors as being responsible for such a change in the attitude of the novelist towards the theme of Freedom Struggle.

To begin with Raja Rao's Kanthapura has been examined with the objective of tracing the treatment of Freedom Struggle and identifying the perspective of Kanthapura on Freedom Struggle. The study has revealed that freedom struggle is the nucleus of the narrative in Kanthapura. The novel has successfully portrayed the transformation of freedom movement into a national or mass movement under the eminent leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. In a way it amounts to saying that the novel dwells upon Gandhian movement as the major theme.

This is justified in the incorporation of such events of Gandhian movement as "Satyagraha", "Ahimsa" (non-violence) "Dandi March", "Quit India Movement" and "Fast" etc. In addition to the portrayal of Moorthy as an alter ego of Mahatma Gandhi upholds the theme of Gandhian movement in the narrative structure of Kanthapura.
Yet the freedom struggle, which is the chief landmark in the history of India, is modified into a form of a spiritual myth in order to make a novel out of the history. This reflects the perspective of Kanthapura. In other words the history of Indian freedom struggle under the chieftain of Mahatma Gandhi is perceived from our spiritual angle. This is the unique quality of Kanthapura because no novels prior to Kanthapura have viewed from this particular perspective.

This is evidenced by several elements, which include the ‘Harikatha’ mode, allusions to Hindu dieties like Shiva, Vishnu, Lord Krishna etc., and the symbols of our traditional river Goddesses. Besides prayer to Lord Vishnu to incarnate himself in the form of Gandhi and the depiction of Gandhi as incarnation of God and portraying that freedom is possible only through the intervention of our traditional gods justify that the perspective of Kanthapura with regard to the theme of freedom struggle is undoubtedly governed by spiritualist sensibility. There is also an element of heroism in the treatment of freedom struggle in Kanthapura. It is illustrated in the depiction of Mahatma Gandhi as the hero of Indian National Movement.

In chapter III R.K. Narayan’s Waiting for the Mahatma has been explored with a view to unfold the treatment of freedom struggle in the narrative and the perspective of the novel on this theme. It has revealed that in the novel is impregnated with the history of freedom struggle as
a central theme. Like Kanthapura, Waiting for the Mahatma also portrays
the evolution of national movement under Gandhi’s leadership from
the freedom movement. The thematic emphasis is found in glorifying
the Gandhian Movement. The novel depicts the freedom struggle of
two prominent leaders namely Subhas Chandra Bose and Mahatma
Gandhi. Through the character of Jagadish the strategy of Subhash
Chandra Bose to get rid of the British is incorporated. This episode is
used to explain how the freedom struggle emerges as the mass
movement led by Gandhi.

Sriram is introduced as being ignorant of the freedom movement
across the country. Though he come across the campaign of Mahatma
Gandhi he is first drawn towards the extremist path Subhas Chandra
Bose. As a result he indulges in violent activities. Yet the novel
skillfully deviates its emphasis from it to the Gandhian mode by
depicting Sriram as getting fully involved in the campaign of Gandhi.
He ultimately becomes a devoted disciple of Gandhi by undertaking the
cause of national movement to the countryside. His participation in the
‘Quit India Movement’, ‘Boycott of foreign goods’ etc., suggest that the
narrative moves in the direction of popularizing Gandhian struggle.

Creating Gandhi himself, as a character in the narrative is the
most innovative experiment in Indian English novels and it also justifies
Waiting for the Mahatma as a novel of Gandhian freedom struggle.
Though freedom struggle forms the center of the thematic pattern in *Waiting for the Mahatma* the perspective of the novel on the treatment of freedom struggle exemplifies an amalgamation of traditional and Romantic elements. Regarding the similarity between *Kanthapura* and *Waiting for the Mahatma* Meenakshi Mukherjee observes that "these two novels deal basically with the same theme: the impact of Gandhian thought on an ordinary Indian."¹ The traditional elements are explicitly incorporated in the portrayal of characters and the spirit of the people in the narrative. The romantic elements are found in the theme of love between Sriram and Bharathi whose marriage Mahatma Gandhi assures to conduct himself by being the priest. Thus *Waiting for the Mahatma* though shares the attitude of *Kanthapura* in eulogizing the image of Mahatma Gandhi, it yet moves away from *Kanthapura* in its employment of irony throughout the novel. It emerges as being a form of entertainment rather than the seriousness, which is found in *Kanthapura*. Thus the perspective of *Waiting for the Mahatma* is characterized by romantic tendency. This has been endorsed by P.K. Singh: "the novel is conspicuously divided into two folds - the Mahatma Gandhi and his social and political activities, and the love-story of Sriram and Bharati. Both the folds move together in the novel and makes it interesting and readable."²
With regard to viewing Gandhi *Kanthapura* and *Waiting for the Mahatma* are identical. Both of them project Gandhi as the messiah of India. For them the real freedom struggle begins from the entry of Gandhi to the freedom struggle. Both of them show their inclination in popularizing the national movement and projecting Gandhi as the epoch maker. For them freedom struggle exists within the preview of the phase of Gandhian campaign for free India. Thus they become the representative writers of what is called the era of Gandhi and Gandhian whirlwind. Therefore it is but proper to classify the treatment of freedom struggle in the novels of this generation, Freedom Struggle as a Mass Movement.

In the second part entitled freedom struggle as a disillusionment, two novels i.e. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*. Have been discussed in chapter IV and V respectively. In chapter IV the examination of *Train to Pakistan* (after having explained that partition is only an offshoot of freedom struggle) exposes that the theme of *Train to Pakistan* is about the disillusionment on our freedom struggle. Though the narrative focuses on the holocaust caused by the partition of the Indian sub-continent, the reasons for partition are subtly hinted as being originated from the short sightedness of our freedom fighters. There is a strong suggesting in the narrative that the fallacy that caused partition lies in the leaders like
Gandhi and Nehru who approved the two-nation theory. Having committed this, a large-scale human tragedy has taken place in both India and Pakistan on the eve of partition. Partition connection with the failure of freedom struggle is evidently suggestive in the very opening episode of the novel *Train to Pakistan* which is located during the period of pre-independence on the one hand depiction of disharmony in socio-cultural and religious aspects in the novel show as a great set back and exposes the futility of the freedom struggle on the other hand because these disharmonies are indicators of the betrayal of the promises made by the freedom struggle leaders to the people of Indian sub-continent. Hence the study upholds that *Train to Pakistan* to dwells upon the freedom struggle only as disillusionment because such visions of our national leaders as Swaraj, integrity and prosperity are met with failure on the eve of Indian Independence.

In chapter V Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* has be analyzed and the analyses shows that the narrative is about the consequences of freedom partition of Indian sub-continent. Though 'Azadi' focuses on the impact of partition there are several instances, which link them to the pre-independence phase. The presence of British, the incorporation of the ideology of Gandhi, Jinnah and Jawaharlal Nehru defend that the narrative is extended from the ideology of the freedom struggle to the post-Independent partition scenario in the Indian sub-continent. In the
remarks that Indians are not yet matured enough to govern their
country by themselves and the indignation towards national leaders
like Gandhi strongly imply that freedom struggle is as much part of
narrative as the partition. In addition the tragedy of the nation on the
eve of partition is more because of the failure of freedom struggle itself
than anything else.

The effect of partition on human life has been perceived from the
perspective of realism. The text remains faithful to the actual history of
partition whereby the realistic stance of the novel towards the failure of
freedom struggle and its subsequent impact in the name of partition is
proved beyond doubt. Therefore the treatment of freedom struggle in
the novels that deal with partition belong to the generation next to that
discussed above. Yet there is a visible departure in the treatment of
freedom struggle from their elders in viewing freedom struggle as a
mere disillusionment. Therefore the novels of this generation may be
classified as the works that treatment of freedom struggle as a
disillusionment. It clearly indicates that the second generation has
changed their viewpoint with regard to the history of freedom struggle.

In chapter VI Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* has been
interrogated with the view of identifying the treatment of freedom
struggle. It reveals that the narrative is woven around the history of
modern India from Jallianwalla Bagh Massacre to Emergency. The
theme of freedom struggle and its failure in establishing a free and prosperous nation is observed in the depiction of Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Gandhi’s politics during the pre-independence period and in the depiction of partition of India into India and Pakistan and Pakistan and Bangladesh and the misuse of Nehru’s power to divide the nation on basis of language and the misuse of power by Mrs. Indira Gandhi to declare Emergency. These elements suggest that the freedom struggle has met with failure in securing an integrated nation. In addition the narrative also shows that many types of Nationalism are given birth during the post-Independent India. This indicates that the notion of nationhood as visualized by our patriots has lost its life. Therefore it amounts to saying that the traditional concept of freedom is regarded as dead.

The perspective of *Midnight’s Children* on such themes as freedom struggle and freedom seems to be governed by the sense of post-modernism. It is so because the tendency of viewing the traditional realities belongs to the post-modernists. The theme of freedom struggle and its subsequent failure is installed and subsequently destabilized in the narrative of *Midnight’s Children*.

In chapter VII Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* has been thoroughly evaluated and it is understood that Gandhian freedom struggle and the failure of achieving its goals are used as the major
theme of the novel. The novel has employed a novel mode in revisiting the freedom struggle led by Gandhi through the 'Mahabharatha'. Gandhi’s political ideology and style of function have been bitterly satirized like the *Midnight’s Children*, *The Great Indian Novel* also regards the theme of freedom struggle as a dead subject which becomes explicit in the rejection of the freedom struggle and depiction of freedom as farce.

Treating freedom struggle as a dead theme indicates that the perspective of *The Great Indian Novel* on such subject is characterized by post-modernist sensibility. It is so because *The Great Indian Novel* presents the history of freedom struggle and parliamentary democracy as pseudo elements.

The treatment of freedom struggle from the earlier generation to the present generation has been perceived in different manner while the first generation regards freedom as a heroic theme the second generation looks at it as a disillusion and the third generation moves a step ahead to dismantle the very notion of it by ridiculing it. This view has been aptly endorsed by G. N. Devy in following: “Indian Literature during the sixties and the seventies a disillusionment about it set in producing literature of disillusionment. Pursing the eighties, nationalism was a dead theme.”

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Having established that the theme of freedom struggle is perceived in different ways by the authors belonging to different phases of Indian English novel, it becomes essential to trace the factors that are responsible for the change of attitude towards the freedom struggle which forms the most important event in the history of modern India. To begin with Kanthapura was published 1938. The year of Kanthapura publication helps us to trace the factor, which has moulded the sensibility of its author Raja Rao. During this period the whole nation was virtually under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi. It amounts to saying the obvious that the people of Indian sub-continent had become the followers of Gandhi in one way or the other. Gandhi was hailed as the messiah of our country. Raja Rao is not an exception in this regard. He is also influence by Gandhi and his principles so much so that Raja Rao has accepted Gandhi as his Guru. He has stayed with Gandhi in his ashram, which is a proof for his strong admiration for Gandhi. Makarand Paranjape observes Raja Rao’s inclination towards spiritual tradition and Gandhi, aptly: “Rao visited a number of ashrams and religious teachers, notably Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai, Narayana Maharaj of Kedgaon and Mahatma Gandhi at Sevagram”. This has shaped the sensibility of Raja Rao as a novelist as well. As a result he can but look at Gandhi only from the heroic perspective.
In addition Raja Rao was born and brought up in the family and the environment, which were filled with Hindu spiritualistic tradition. His inclination towards the vedic culture is manifested not only in his life style but also in his novels like *Kanthapura*, *Serpent and the Rope, Cat and Shakespeare* etc. Nevedita Nanda notes in this regard: Raja Rao has professed, time and again, to be a champion of the Indian philosophy, Advaita-Vedanta in particular, and has proclaimed in so many words that writing for him is a manner of *Sadhana*. Thus Raja Rao has obviously made use of his vedic and spiritualistic interest in depicting the theme of freedom struggle in *Kanthapura* which is a narrative of Gandhian national movement with the flavour of our Hindu spiritualist tradition.

R.K. Narayan is too born and brought up in the orthodox Hindu family. Like anybody during the freedom struggle Narayan also is influenced by the principles of Gandhi. Obviously the theme of Gandhian mass movement has become very dear to his bosom. Yet his literary sensibility is governed rather by his interest to tell stories. The fort of Narayan in telling stories is generally irony and romance. Therefore his novel is synthesis of freedom struggle and romance.

Since Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan hail from orthodox Hindu family they share several aspects of the theme of freedom struggle. In a
way they are the most representative novelists of Gandhian doctrine and Gandhian era.

Though freedom struggle is the same to all as to Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan, it has been modified in the novels of the following generation for some obvious reasons. The factor that is responsible for treating freedom struggle, as a disillusionment in *Train to Pakistan* is traceable in the personal life of its author Khushwant Singh. He was also an admirer of Gandhi and staunch supporter of freedom struggle. Yet the human tragedy that occurred on the eve of partition affected both the writer and the victim in Khushwant Singh. He as a humanist views the tragedy of partition as a failure of our freedom struggle. As a victim he has lost his relatives asserts etc., at the time of partition. Since his native place was one of the worst affected areas in the partition holocaust. H.N. Williams makes a reference to this aspect: "The life of his own people, the religious and ethnic community of Sikhs in the Punjab, provides a consistent thread through his work." So he was unable to retain his previous attitude towards freedom struggle for it has failed to protect the life of the people by being unable to prevent the division of the nation. To him freedom struggle reaped not what was promised by the patriots but only calamity, chaos and disharmony. Therefore the sense of disillusionment is prevalent in the narrative of *Train to Pakistan.*
Chaman Nahal has built the novel *Azadi* artistically. Though it spans from third June, 1947 to various other dates around the 15th of August 1947. However this does not mean that in Chaman Nahal’s view almost everybody in those days was in a state of communal frenzy and that almost everybody was trying to humiliate people from other community. Nahal believed that the people did not want freedom at such a cost of human disintegration. Though partition was catastrophic but people maintained the harmony in *Azadi* the novel. With all the difficulties life went on in novel. This is significantly dealt in the following lines of the text: “The machine went whirring on, its wheel turning fast and its little needle moving up and down, murmuring and sewing through the cloth. The doors of both the rooms shook with its vibration.”

The people with stood, the shock and started a new life. But Chaman Nahal in his interview says about freedom as follows: “One of the things in my mind was to convey the meaning of freedom in the larger context. To me political freedom is meaningful only when it brings with it the freedom of the spirit and mind, the freedom of happiness.”

Thus will all the shock, name, flame and shame the people resorted their courage and will to lead a life further which in turn proves the crux of Indian strong roots in unity in diversity.
The factor that is responsible for Salman Rushdie to have the post-modernist outlook and disregard for traditional themes lies in his foreign education and the influence of western philosophers and novelists. Rushdie has admitted that he has been strongly influenced by such writers as G.V. Desani, Guntur Grass and Marquez etc. His attitude is governed by updates skepticism which distains the traditional notions of history, nation religious etc. Since his personality is characterized by the influence of post-modern philosophy he looks at the theme of freedom struggle as a dead theme which is substantiated in using and abusing the history of modern India from Gandhian National Movement to Indira Gandhi’s Emergency in a thematic structure of Midnight’s Children.

Similarly Shashi Tharoor’s sensibility is also governed by the post-modern philosophy. It is reflected in his disregard for the role played by Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah and Mrs. Indira Gandhi in their association with freedom struggle and the subsequent democratic government in free India. His exposure to western education and western thoughts is largely responsible for the in calculation of this skeptic attitude in him as a novelist.

However the contradictions in the approach of these writers with regard to freedom struggle suggest a fact of great significance. It means that these writers have helped the corpus of Indian fiction in English to
main alive with their different perspectives on the same theme i.e., the Indian freedom struggle. If the generations of different phases of Indian Fiction in English had failed to depict the theme of freedom struggle in the changed angle, the vast body of Indian novels in English would have become stale and unamusing. In other words, the variation in the perspective is a sort of blessing in disguise, because it upholds the dynamism of literature. The conclusion of the present study is drawn by way of quoting, the definition of literature by Fredrick. T. Wood: “Now literature, being a living being a living force, and the product of living minds, can never remain static; like life itself it must be evolutionary, otherwise it would stagnate and die.”
REFERENCES