International Journal of Arts and Social Science www.ijassjournal.com
ISSN: 2581-7922,
Volume 8 Issue 9, September 2025

Mapping the Development of Indian Renaissance thought in Literature, Language and Culture

Richa Bajaj
(Department of English, Hindu College, University of Delhi, India)

ABSTRACT: *The term modern in the Indian context suggests new ways of living, Westernized ideas, and technological progress. Yet, its deepest meaning lay in the attempt of Indian intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century to nurture a rational, scientific spirit in thought and education, while keeping alive a distinctly Indian identity rooted in folklore, legends, and a pre-colonial cultural past. This became the foundation of a national consciousness that shaped the ideals of the freedom movement and continued to guide India toward a rational, democratic way of life based on an Indian conception of humanism. For writers of the pre-independence era, this was a formidable task.They confronted entrenched customs long sanctified by religious authority, exposing their rigidity and injustice. Through literature, they gave voice to the marginalized, reminding the powerful of the supremacy of truth and their moral duty to uphold compassion and goodness—values they saw as the essence of worship. Rabindranath Tagore discerned the divine in the poorest of the poor, while Premchand linked godliness with justice and virtue. For both, humanism was not an abstract ideal but a lived ethic capable of unifying society. By foregrounding human dignity, these writers helped prepare Indians to resist colonial rule with resilience and moral strength rather than brute force. Drawing inspiration from folk tales and epics, they celebrated sacrifice, endurance, and self-determination. In doing so, they forged a unifying cultural ethos and used literature as a medium of national awakening and collective identity.*

KEYWORDS*: humanism, modern consciousness, psychological realism, rationalism, social reform.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Indian literature underwent a profound transformation, largely influenced by the efforts of social reformers and intellectuals who championed the ideal of rational humanism. Central to this movement was Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833), whose relentless campaign for the abolition of *sati* in 1820 sparked a wave of social awakening. His efforts inspired a growing consciousness that encouraged critical engagement with traditional norms and practices.[1] During this period, society and its institutions began to

[1] As Soumyen Mukherjee has observed, 'The most interesting part of Rammohun' s life and works was not the movement to abolish sati, nor the struggle to establish modern education, nor the foundation of the Brahmo Samaj, nor the passionate plea for the freedom of the press, but the sum total of all these and more. He inaugurated the modern age in India by ushering in an era of enquiry and investigation. No doubt his scepticism and humanism touched only a small segment of society, but the philosophy of the Enlightenment had also touched a small number of philosophers in Europe, and yet its importance cannot be denied in the history of ideas or in eighteenth century politics. The 'moral revolution' affected the course of Indian history in the nineteenth century, for it was tied up with social reform and economic enterprise'. (p.11)

be examined through the lens of reason and progress. Religion, too, was increasingly understood not as a divine mandate, but as a social institution shaped by the practical needs and evolving values of the community. As Ram Mohan Roy explained in his comment:

> Human beings are naturally social beings and they are required to live socially. But as society depends upon individuals understanding the ideas of each other reciprocally and on existence on some rules by which the property of one is defined and distinguished from that of another and one is to be prevented from exercising oppression over another, so all the rulers inhabiting different countries, and even the inhabitants of isolated islands and the summits of lofty mountains, have invented special words indicating certain ideas, which form the basis of the invention of religion and upon which the organisation of society depends. (qtd. in Singh 73)

In consequence, a humanistic conception of society was envisioned, one that viewed all people as worthy of dignity and respect, irrespective of class, gender, and caste.[2]

The introduction of Western education, and rational thought that came with it, fostered a climate of inquiry among the thinking sections and influenced much of the literature of the nineteenth century.

At the close of the nineteenth century, a unique Indian identity was beginning to take shape, one that was self-critical as well as exploratory vis-a-vis the unfolding circumstance. This new wave made spiritual fulfillment and humanism its basis.

II.

Writers such as Fakir Mohan Senapati (1843–1918) in Odisha embraced the role of reformers and educators, and advocated education of girls, established schools in rural areas and challenged superstition. Senapati established the Utkal Printing Company in Balasore in 1868, enabling the circulation of ideas through newspapers, magazines and books. He was the first Indian to write a short story in the modern sense of the term.[3] The story, 'Rebati' illustrates the struggles of a young girl who desires to learn to read and write, and for the act faces severe social condemnation. The narrative ends tragically, with an epidemic that strikes her home, leading to the death of Rebati and her parents. Her grandmother accuses her of bringing this calamity upon them as a result of her defiance of societal norms. The story portrays the prejudice and narrow viewpoint prevalent in rural communities.

Senapati was a contemporary of Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1838–1894) and the young Sharad Chandra Chatterji (1876–1938), and through his writing he brought into focus the small villages and towns of Odisha, representing the lives of ordinary people and the issues faced by them. His novel *Chha Mana Atha Guntha (Six Acres and a Third)* offers a critique of colonialism and the stringent zamindari system. The novel was initially serialized in the literary monthly *Utkal Sahitya* from 1897 to 1899 and later published as a book in 1902. The target reader of Senapati was the fellow Odia person either steeped in orthodoxy or one with anglophiles fawning over the British lifestyle. Both became the object of critique in his novels. Deploying the mode of light satire and targeting the dominant western legal system as also the regressive groups in the community, Senapati offered the perspective of the ordinary people. The two indeed remained at the receiving end of the zamindari system, they were fleeced in the name of religion and became victims of superstition. This gets amply reflected in the concerned novel where Mangaraj, a small-time moneylender becomes a powerful man in the fictional village of Gobindapur in British Odisha. This is because the moneylender has been able to successfully misuse the zamindari system, grabbing the

[2] K. N. Panikkar has commented on the nature of the reform movement in the 19th century leading to a realistic understanding of life. To quote: 'The religious protest and reform movements during the pre-colonial period-beginning with Buddhism to the heterodox sects in the eighteenth century-were invariably concerned with the ways and means of salvation. In contrast, religious reform in colonial India was almost indifferent to the earlier preoccupation. On the other hand, the definite shift in emphasis from otherworldliness and supernaturalism to the problems of existence was quite evident. The initial expression of this shift was characterised by a comparative perspective on the importance of religion and material needs of existence.' ("Culture and Consciousness in Modern India: A Historical Perspective", p. 9)

[3] Sisir Kumar Das in *History of Indian Literature 1800-1910: Western Impact, Indian Response* claims that 'Oriya literature found a new impulse' with the emergence of Senapati as a writer. He notes that 'although born and brought up in a traditional environment, he was modern enough to respond to the forces of social change' (p. 240).

lands of others when they can't pay the rent. In the novel, the zamindar of Fatehpur Sarsandha, Gobindapur, Mangaraj projects himself as a father figure for the peasants, whereas in fact he mercilessly exploits them. The people accept their poor conditions as a given and seldom retaliate. When Mangaraj's zamindari in the novel is taken away and given to a lawyer, the villagers are aware of the truth–a new master has replaced the old and their conditions would remain the same. A villager in the novel remarks, 'O horse, what difference does it make to you if you are stolen by a thief? You do not get much to eat here; you will not get much to eat there. No matter who becomes the next master, we will remain his slaves. We must look after our own interests' (205). Senapati also weaves in several mythological and religious references that play an important part in the everyday lives of the people. We notice that fables from religious texts are inextricably part of the cultural lives of the people and get reflected in their actions. References to Krishna, Christ, and Sita abound, and those add depth to the cultural milieu of the time. Senapati's fiction became the epitome of realism, admirable for the minute details of social interactions and the economic mode therein. One can witness the change in tenor and subject matter of the literary texts of the time. The shift is undoubtedly towards a realism that outlines the actual circumstances of people.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) in his early works projected this amalgam of rational thought and a human-centered value system. His early play *Raja* (1910) coalesced the mystical and the human, and projected the tussle between power and truth. Therein, the value of love got emphasized. His collection of poems *Gitanjali* (1913) reinterpreted the divine as a spiritual experience. We notice that love and devotion became the new foundation of life for the human subject. Tagore's novel *Gora* (1910) builds a vision of a new India. Set in the 1880s, the novel projects the social and political milieu with its set of challenges and conflicts between the earthbound thought of Brahmo Samaj and the old religious order. Through the novel, Tagore expands on the idea of commonality among cultures that according to him was central to nationalism. For Tagore, personal beliefs and religious identities come in the way of service to the country. The focus is the human subject, who must find purpose and goal in life. The novel gives centrality to female characters voicing their opinion and asserting their will. Sucharita in the novel carries the intellectual strains of Brahmo Samaj forward. Her distinct identity as a woman gets shaped in the process.

In the ongoing process of development, women were getting viewed as individuals in their own right, even as their imprisonment in the home was symbolic of the mother country in chains. The stream of new consciousness among women writers emerged at the time; they were beginning to express themselves in the literary magazines. Note, for instance, how *The Indian Ladies Magazine*, the first Indian magazine founded and edited by an Indian woman, Kamala Satthianadhan foregrounded women's writing. The magazine ran several issues from 1901 to 1938 and became a trend setter where women's activities in clubs and associations were related along with their literary critical contributions. The exposure granted women a voice and identity. In one such issue of the magazine Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880-1932) published her iconic story 'Sultana's Dream' (1905) that upended the patriarchal world and in its place built a dreamland along a woman's fantasy—a utopian society called 'Ladyland' where women constituted the dominant group in society, governing the state and public institutions, whereas men were confined within the zenana, living in seclusion and looking after the house and children. This role reversal by Rokeya generated new discussions, often becoming the center of controversy. Sara, an inhabitant of Ladyland, chides Sultana (living in patriarchal society) for bearing injustice in the story. She notes, 'A lion is stronger than a man, but it does not enable him to dominate the human race. You have neglected the duty you owe to yourselves, and you have lost your natural rights by shutting your eyes to your own interests.' Such fiery statements paved the way for Indian feminism. Rokeya's husband termed her story a 'terrible revenge' on the male fraternity. Nonetheless, such imaginative flights were the first rays of hope for the women's movement in India that took shape in the early twentieth century. One could term Rokeya's story a precursor to Indian feminism that would redefine women's role in society.

III.

In the early twentieth century, the national movement played a central role in shaping the cultural imagination of the country. Myths were reimagined to construct a meaningful past, one that could inspire and uplift the spirits of the people. Importantly, writers wished to highlight intellectual debates of the time in their literary works.

Premchand (1880-1936), in his essay 'On Realism in the Short Story' (1934) outlined the requirements of the time and the change in readership. He observed,

> At present, we are equipped with a somewhat refined literary taste. As in all other subjects of study, so in literature, we look for intellectuality. We no longer derive pleasure from the divine heroism of a king or seeing a queen flying in the air to meet her king. Nor do we appreciate the imaginary projections of ghosts and daemons. Instead, we measure them all on the scale of realism. In them, we wish to see the reflection of our own lives. (*Premchand: Selected Essays on Literature and Language* 84, emphasis added)

There is a marked shift from depicting tales from folklore that dealt with beasts and monsters to the ordinary lives of people. The spirit of questioning permeates much of literature dealing with tradition, mythology, and the divine in modern times. This constitutes the making of the canon of modern Indian literature. Similarly, Premchand, in another essay titled 'Psychological Truth in the Story', compared ancient literature with modern literature in the following manner:

> Because of the change in times and preferences, we find a lot of difference between stories of the ancient period and those written later. Ancient stories would either have curiosity or a spiritual theme at the center. The Upanishads and the Mahabharata have taken help from the story to explain various mysteries of spirituality. What else shall we call the Buddha-Jataka tales? The Bible too elaborates religious doctrines, stories, and parables. Truth elaborated in this way becomes concrete for the people at large, who may then be able to practice it in daily life.
>
> The aim of the present-day short story is to offer psychological analysis, depict life's reality, and present life-like descriptions. Imagination is found in far less quantity in such writing, and feelings are in abundance. (*Premchand: Selected Essays on Literature and Language*, 72)

We note that Premchand time and again draws our attention to the change in preferences of the reader who is not content with literature that merely entertains. Instead, the changed reader looks for answers to such questions in literary works. This compelled writers to look for issues of common people and present them in an aesthetically pleasing framework. A new space for humanistic conception of life was being framed in literature, that made Premchand spell out in 1936 unequivocally—literature had a social function to perform and writers had a responsibility to pick up for depiction issues from real life. Premchand unequivocally asserted, 'For the human species, the human being himself is the biggest riddle'. Premchand's stories depicted complex and subtle areas of exchange between human beings; he explored the area of half truths lying between temptation and righteousness, loyalty and greed. His story 'Lottery', 1935, is the case in point where human behavior was examined in its variety. His short fiction dealing with religion and God centered around the human individual who was either caught in a quandary or was being tested by God. 'Panch Parmeshwar' ('God Speaks Through the Panch'), 1916, projected the 'panch' as supreme, holding the office of God. Premchand emphasized that justice is goodness and adherence to truth and integrity sustains people. It is shown that social authority cannot be misused in the name of God, it resides in the panch and in their hands is shaped the fate of vulnerable people. 'Durga ka Mandir' (The Temple of Durga), 1917, invoked the invisible power of the gods who appear when the human being is caught in a particularly difficult situation. Premchand presents God only in the form of punishment and reward. For the writer, poetic justice was a form of godly intervention. Good got rewarded, while greed and mischief paid a price and were rejected.

Collective wisdom of people was recognized in the early twentieth century as the best course of action to deal with colonial power, it united Indians on the basis of common goodness and brotherhood. Ideas such as these bonded the people with one another against a common enemy that had to be fought effectively. Premchand used this idea in his story 'Maryada ki Vedi' (At the Altar of Honour),1922, where Prabha sacrificed her personal happiness to avoid the bloodshed of her clan. Rana in the story abducts Prabha and quotes Krishna's example, who abducted Rukmani before her marriage. His justification proves vain because Prabha, in her strong will and

determination, refuses to give in to the Rana. The stories projected how abstract ideas of morality, virtue and honour impinged and often crushed ordinary people. These were constantly worked out from a human-centric angle in Premchand's stories.[4]

Later in the stream of ideological evolution in the country's struggle emerged the principle of sacrifice. It fostered a renewed faith in the Indian people about their ability to pass through trials and tribulations in the face of British imperialism. The spirit of stoic determination entered the Indian psyche as writers reminded fellow countrymen of their potential for heroism. It had religious connotation too but could be deftly adopted in the literary context. Premchand derived inspiration from the supposedly divine for promoting the humanist cause. Parallely, the Hindi poet Suryakant Tripathi Nirala's long poem 'Ram Ki Shakti Puja' (1936) related the episode of Rama's vulnerability against odds. Ram in the poem is ready to offer the supreme sacrifice of his eye to the Goddess Durga for attaining the goal of victory. Following a fierce battle with Ravana, Rama returns exhausted and dejected. Apprehensions and doubts weaken him. This moment of Rama's despair is captured by Nirala in the following manner:

There was silence, the sky thick and dark.
The sense of direction failing
The four winds stalled and the vast ocean roared unhindered.
The Earth engrossed in meditation resembled a distant burning torch.
Doubts waiver the steady Raghuvendra
As the threat of Ravan's victory haunts him
Again and again. (105)

That is when Jambvant counseled Rama to undertake the long eight-day worship of Goddess Shakti for winning her powers so he could beat Ravana. Rama assiduously performs the ritual and gets ready to take the plunge. Suddenly, before the completion of the ritual the last lotus to be offered to the goddess goes missing. Rama is prepared to offer one of his eyes to the goddess as a mark of devotion. Durga stops him from piercing his eye and places the 108th blue lotus. Durga, impressed with Rama's devotion, utters the triumphant words, 'You shall be victorious,' and bestows on him her great powers. The fact that Rama does not flinch from giving an eye in devotion is interpreted as nationalism's spirit of sacrifice required to serve the supreme cause. The poem expressed India's struggles, despair, and apprehensions in fighting against the powerful British regime. The poem ends on a note of optimism that liberation would be achieved through unwavering faith in self, and an invincible spirit enjoying divine grace. The political events required such a message emanating from the creative urge enshrined in the masses. Writers drew inspiration from cultural symbols of the time painstakingly invoked by the visionaries of the day.[5]

IV.

Following 1947, the country faced new challenges fostered by bigotry and intolerance. Sadly, as a consequence of this, the ideals of the national movement stood negated and were viewed as irrelevant. In their place, a strong

[4] In debates around Premchand's view of art and subject of depiction, critics such as Sudhir Chandra have noted that even as writing for Premchand was a mission, his 'concern for the poor … is more emotional than intellectual, more personal than ideological' (620). On the other hand, Manmathnath Gupt found Premchand's early works naturalistic, representing a photographic view of life. His later works reflected realism distinctly through which Hindi literature found a voice (55). However, unmistakably Premchand brought into focus the human subject fighting the historical and social forces active at the time. Humanism remained the ultimate yardstick of judging a literary work for Premchand.

[5] Commenting on the set of influences that went into the making of nationalism, Meenakshi Mukherjee has observed that 'The sense of a community whether it is a tribe, a village community or a group based upon common dialect or similar religious practice, or even the larger community called the nation, has first to be imagined for it to become real. The discourse that constructed nationalism in India came from diverse sources: colonial education, journals, literature, newspapers, public speech, songs, drama, oral narration, films-some of them interlinked' (138).

movement for individualism and self-seeking struck roots in the cultural soil. Broader aspects of humanism and fellow-feeling becoming weaker by the day, the field was open to proliferation of opportunistic ways. In such a scenario, the task fell on the shoulders of sensitive poets such as Muktibodh to remind society of what was being lost in the wake of market forces overtaking the country. Even as the shift in post-independence writing was towards existential individual questions, Mutktiodh constantly sought to bring the collective human potential at the center of his writing.

Muktibodh took recourse to myths, legends and imaginary figures in poetry to focus on the democratic values in society. He projected in his poem 'Andhere Mein' ('In the Dark') a figure bathed in red blood who he called 'raktaloksnatpurush'. In his poem 'Brahmarakshas' ('God-demon') he reinterpreted the image of Brāhmiṇ-Rākshasa drawn from mythology who represented a fallen brahmin or a brahmin who had sinned in previous life in the myth. This image is reworked in the poem and the sin is projected as one against common humanity.

The poem works as a political allegory, as a dramatic poem about the demon-scholar, where the myth of brahmarakshas is exploited to depict a contemporary problem.[6] The poem presented the figure of a brilliant but proud intellectual who refused to share his knowledge with others and finally died without being of any value in society. That apostle of high values in the past remained imprisoned in a well. We are told in the depiction that the ghost of brahmarakshas inhabits the ruins. Muktibodh called it the tragedy of a great mind, one who could not contribute to society in his own time even when his mind carried gems of ideas. To quote from the poem–

> With Effervescent zeal
> His mind earned esteem
> From Sumerian-Babylonian folk-tales,
> From Vedic chants even,
> And knowledge stretching from to the moment now
> Captured in meters, chants, theorems,
> All dictums.

The poetic subject laments the tragedy of the brahmarakshas. He shares with the reader the dangers of the place, warned as he has been of strange happenings. The ghost of a brahmin resides in the stepwell and he can hear the agonies of the ghost. The echo of his pain draws the poet into that tragedy.

> Caught in the circle of frenzied words
> Where each word cancels the other words,
> That form stood struggling with its own image.
> Steadily turning into a distorted shape,
> The voice fighting its own echo.

He wonders how this brahmin became a rakshas. What was his sin? The mystery leads to a revelation that the brahmarakshas when alive, read and researched profusely. He was a scholar who studied in his locked chambers, unaware of the world outside and of the changes taking place in society. He died without fulfilling his essential role. According to the poet he should have made his learning available to people, uplifting the plight of the deprived through his knowledge. For Muktibodh, knowledge is always a collective enterprise. When attained in isolation, it serves no social purpose. The individual in Muktibodh's scheme of things must be able to extend one's scope of understanding to the social world one is a part of. [7]

[6] Muktibodh's poetry is replete with monsters, eerie animals, and semi-human figures. Another poem of this variety is his 'Dimagi Guha Andhkar ka Orangutan' (Orangutan of Dark Mental Caves) where the poet projects the unconscious mental processes. He expanded the scope of the historical creature who is lost in the race of evolution to the homo sapien. Orangutans are turned into a symbol of the growing essence of the human race.

[7] Muktibodh deployed the same myth of Brahmarakshas for a story he titled "Brahmarakshas ka Shishya" ("The Disciple of Brahmarakshas") written around the same time in 1957. While the poem problematized the issue, the

In Muktibodh's creative use of the brahmarakshas, the demon, instead of ruining sacrifices and yagyas or causing obstacles in the ways of others, prefers to stay all by himself. Alienated from people and society, it stays in a far-off place away from the village, near the ruins. True to the myth, it is found hiding in a tree. The scene in the poem is dramatically portrayed. Strangely, Muktibodh's Brahmarakshas keeps scrubbing his body, trying to get rid of the grime. Little does he realize that it is his soul that is blackened. And yet this brahmarakshas, who is now a ghost, is also vain and proud. He mutters curses in pure sanskrit and keeps interpreting the great works of history and philosophy. Generally, Muktibodh's poems carry markings of experimentation and innovation in language. In 'Brahamrakshas' however, there is consistent use of words enjoying affinity with Sanskrit. We witness here deliberate displacement of verbs, pronouns and adjectives. This achieves for Muktibodh an elevation required for the 'argument' that he aims to construct in the poetic mode.

What we are supposed to consider in 'Brahmarakshas' is the phenomenon of mental development at a time in the past when societies planned to progress for the overall good of communities but failed to do so. Class division at that point in history had been consciously planned for productive growth and material development. It appeared indeed necessary to assign specific jobs to people on the basis of their life-long training and acquired skills that could over time be passed on from one generation to another. The relatively brighter ones were picked up for acquisition of knowledge and those with physical strength and energy for defending society against violent attacks from outside the settled territories. Likewise, physical labour to constitute organized production fell to the larger group of the peasants and small scale traders and the rest of the population was placed to provide services of the sundry kinds. This being the rationale of the ancient caste system was purer in conception than in practice and would have soon developed cracks. To cut it short, the upper social segment called Brahmans were considered most crucial, their job being to explore, invent and strategize. This was a job of planning and governance according to the mutually agreed principles in the society as a whole. Understandably, it would earn the epithet 'gods', or highest placed group in the community. Muktibodh seems to keep in mind such an idea for conceptualizing the 'brahman god' category. In the theoretical sense, too, intellect would be taken as the supreme human faculty to organize and look beyond the existing. By presenting an individual with intellect in the modern context, Muktibodh keeps a strict watch on the likely role of a thinking being, one to work for the good of the society as a whole, and observes that the modern-day Brahman does not fit in with requirements of such a role. That turns the Brahman of today into a daemon. That is how 'Brahman-daemon' or 'Brahmarakshas' might be interpreted. Rather than putting it philosophically, Muktibodh deals with the issue in poetic terms. The question is tangled and deeply problematic and as such poses a serious challenge to the poet. That may explain the deployment of evocative symbols, at once sharply pointed and mystery-laden. The same justifies imagining working of the dramatic mode on the part of the poet. 'Bramharakshas' is visualized to present a tragic sequence close to what the post-Independence India unfolds, meaning thereby the difficulty of achieving a tangible goal in the existing scenario. To repeat, the answer to the poet in the given case is not heroic or optimistic, but deeply tragic and painful. It has hints of a dark prospect. There is no wonder that the most elaborately poetic statement by Muktibodh is the poem 'Andhere Mein' ('In the Dark'). That also tells of the dilemmas the country faced in the nineteen fifties. One wonders, therefore, whether the dramatic poem 'Bramharakshas' was to stand together with the poem of epic proportions 'Andhere Mein'. When the two poems are read together, they exemplify a humanist document worthy of intellectual consideration in our context.

V.

In sum, a modern outlook in India began to take shape in the 19th century, marked by a decisive shift toward human-centered concerns and a growing disregard for supernatural phenomena, issues of salvation, and divine

story provided a resolution in Brahmarakshas' awareness regarding his sin and guilt. He is grateful to the disciple for freeing him from his demon life. To quote from the story, 'Disciple! Let me be plain. I am a Brahmarakshas, and yet I am your guru. I need your affection. In my lifetime as a human, I attained every kind of knowledge from all over the world. Unfortunately, however, I didn't find a deserving student to whom I could pass on the mass of learning I gained. For this reason, my soul remained trapped in this world, and I turned into a Brahmarakshas.'

intervention. This era heralded the dawn of the modern age, characterized by self-reflection, intellectual inquiry, and critical exploration across diverse fields, including philosophy, religion, the arts, and literature. Writers of this period, influenced by the socio-political climate, revisited ancient myths, legends, and traditional narratives, but reimagined them in innovative ways that addressed the concerns of a society deeply engaged in its struggle for independence from British colonial rule. These writers sought to reinterpret old stories and cultural symbols to resonate with the urgent need for national awakening, aligning them with the ideals of self-determination, justice, and national pride.

Amid political and social upheaval, ideals of righteousness, self-respect, and sacrifice became central to the national discourse, uniting a population still divided by regional and caste-based loyalties. These ideals acted as moral and philosophical pillars, encouraging people to look beyond their parochial divisions and unite in the collective effort to break free from colonial domination. This was a moment of great national unity, when the voices of writers and leaders converged to outline a vision of self-governance, one that sought to create a society free from the prejudices and inequalities. The hope was to establish a new nation rooted in humanist principles, where justice, equality, and individual freedom would prevail.

However, the post-independence period brought its own set of challenges. The country struggled with communal violence that threatened the fragile unity forged during the independence movement. At the same time, the rise of corruption and opportunism in the political and social spheres revealed the cracks in the idealistic vision of the newly independent state. This era of disillusionment prompted many writers to turn once again to the rich legacy of ancient myths and folk traditions—not to preserve cultural heritage, but as a lens through which to critique contemporary realities. By reinterpreting these tales, they dramatized the harsh and often painful realities of a society still wrestling with entrenched social hierarchies.

Literary voices still committed to the cause of society focused on the complex social problems confronting post-independence India, such as caste discrimination, gender inequality, poverty, and the persistent divisions between communities. Through their work, these writers highlighted the struggles of marginalized communities, the suppression of dissent, and the ongoing quest for justice in a rapidly changing society. In this way, the literary voices of post-independence India continued to serve both as a mirror to reflect contemporary social and political realities and as a powerful critique, drawing on the timeless force of myth to emphasize the enduring relevance of humanistic ideals.

REFERENCES

[1] Mukherjee, S. N. ‘The Social Implications of the Political Thought of Raja Rammohun Roy’ *Citizen Historian: Explorations in Historiography* (Sydney Association for Studies in Society and Culture. Delhi: Manohar, 1996).

[2] Singh, Iqbal . *Rammohan Roy: A Biographical Inquiry into the Making of Modern India* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1983).

[3] Gosh, J.C. (ed.). *The English works of Raja Rammohan Roy* (Calcutta: Srikanta Roy, 1901).

[4] Senapati, Fakir Mohan. *Six Acres and a Third (Chha Mana Atha Guntha)* (USA: Penguin, 2005).
[5] _____. ‘Rebati’. *The Greatest Odia Stories Ever Told* (Delhi: Aleph, 2019).

[6] Panikkar, K. N. ‘Culture and Consciousness in Modern India: A Historical Perspective’. *Social Scientist. Apr., Vol. 18(4) 1990,* 3-32.

[7] Das, Sisir Kumar. *History of Indian Literature 1800-1910: Western Impact, Indian Response* (Sahitya Akademi: Delhi, 2015).

[8] Tagore, Rabindranath. *The King of the Dark Chamber* (*Raja, 1910).* Trans. Kshtish Chandra Sen. (Delhi: Rupa, 2002).

[9] _____. *Gitanjali* (1913) (Delhi: Rupa, 2002).

[10] _____. *Gora* (1910) (Delhi: Rupa, 2002).

[11] Logan, Deborah Anna. *The Indian Ladies' Magazine*, *1901-1938: From Raj to Swaraj (*Lehigh University Press: Bethlehem. 2017).

[12] Premchand, Munshi. *Premchand: Selected Essays on Literature and Language*. Trans. Richa Bajaj and Anand Prakash (Delhi: Stingray, 2021).

[13] Nirala, Suryakant Tripathi. *Nirala Sanchayita*. ed Ramesh Chandra Shah (Delhi: Vani, 2001).

[14] Mukherjee, Meenakshi. 'Narrating a Nation'. *Indian Literature,* July-August, 1992, Vol. 35, No. 4 (150). 138-149.

[15] Muktibodh, G. M. 'Brahmarakshas' (1957). *Rachnavali.* Vol 2 (Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 2019).

[16] Chandra, Sudhir. 'Premchand and Indian Nationalism'. *Modern Asian Studies*, 1982, Vol. 16 (4) (1982), 601-621. Cambridge University Press.