

Struggle for Independence in Kanthapura by: Raja Rao

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Abstract - This research paper is an attempt to explore Raja Rao's Indian sensibility during the middle of the 20th century. Raja Rao, the great Indian writer, well maintained eastern and western style in the "Kanthapura" novel. Through the "Kanthapura" novel, he showed the slavery life of Indian people. During this decade he had a significant role in the fight against British rulers because he had also participated in the freedom struggle movement. Through this paper, we show the mysticism and spiritual insight of Raja Rao. In this paper we can see how Raja Rao showed Mahatma Gandhi's thoughts, nonviolent moment, and devil side of our society.

Index Terms - Metaphysical, mystical, spiritual, realities, ideologies, ethics, Indianess, Indian sensibility.

1947, today everyone remembers this day because our country was liberated on this day. The day of national pride and remember those great people who sacrificed their lives for our country and give a unique example for the country's people. Many people in our country involved in this freedom struggle and many fearless revolutionaries without care of his life, they sacrificed their life for liberate of India by British rulers. In the description of the battle of freedom, every writer has written in his own way and Raja Rao was one of them. He was the most popular and innovative novelist of India in the 1930s and 1940s. He was born on 5th November 1908, in an orthodox Brahmin family, during our freedom struggle. His grandfather learnt him about the Hindu religion, patriotism and philosophy. And He was interested in the Hindu religion, philosophy, and patriotism also. He was a great personality in Indo-Anglian literature. Many novelists of India inspired by Gandhi's thoughts, ideas and his movement for independence, and Rao was one of them who follow Gandhiji's thoughts. He had described his novels on the Gandhian theme. His novels based on realities, mysticism, spirituality, and Idealism. He wrote 'Kanthapura' in 1938. It is a story about people's struggles, sacrifices and suffering. It is

the first novel by him. Kanthapura is a great portrayal of the revolutionary spirit and it is a declaration of independence from English literature. In this novel, Rao represents, how Gandhi's ideas and his struggle for Independence and his fight against the East India Company arrived in a small south Indian village. After the arrival of the East India Company in India, there were lots of constant opposition against British rulers and the spark of opposition we saw in this novel. In this novel, he was presented with good character, good plot, and magnificent themes. Kanthapura is also known as the 'Sthalapurana' and this novel told by an old lady, whose name was Achakka.

*There is no village in India, however mean, that has not a rich sthala-purana, or legendary history of its own. Some god or god-like hero has passed by the village the Mahatma himself, on one of his many pilgrimages through the country, might have slept in this hut, the low one, by the village gate. In this way the past mingle with men to make the repertory of your grandmother always bright. One such story from the contemporary annals of my village I have tried to tell."*¹

Mostly in the novels, Rao's themes are very wide, and through the novel of Kanthapura. He described at the time of 1947 that the situation of India during our struggle and fight for freedom. For the independence of the country, many people sacrificed their life such as they happily sacrificed their lives in the feet of god. Do not let the many difficulties faced our country for freedom. Gandhi was a political leader and his reputation as a spirit of India. The impact of Gandhi and his movement spread in the whole nation and the villagers of Kanthapura were also so much inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi was a good leader and he coordinates to successfully the whole nation into an army of freedom fighters against British rulers. "Kanthapura is political on a superficial level, in that it chronicles a revolt against an exploitative plantation manager and the police who support him. But more

profoundly, it traces the origins of the activities of the congress party one of the young men of the village while away, undergoes a mystical, conversion to Satyagraha and returns to incite his fellow villagers to civil disobedience. He arouses in them not only a sense of social wrong but more importantly a religious fervor which proves to be the true source of their strength against the oppressors.”²

As the novel opens, we see the noble young man, whose name was Moorthy. He is a Brahmin and Kanthapura’s novel is centered on him. Like Gandhi, he also is a spirit of the village. The fire of struggle for freedom which had been lighted by Moorthy in the whole village and he spread ‘Gandhi’s views, ideas, untouchability, spinning wheels (charkha), boycott toddy shops, movements’ (non-payment of taxes and non-cooperation) against the British government, among the people. Moorthy was a true follower of Gandhi. He threw his foreign clothes and take to khadi and dhoti. He had left his city studies and he came to Kanthapura with new ideas and spirit. When Gandhi lived in South Africa, the victimized for racial discrimination many times but when he returned to India he also saw discrimination between the lowest caste and upper caste in India. And he started to fight against discrimination in the whole nation. Our society was divided into four castes- Brahmin, Kshatriyas, vaishyas, and shudra. Caste system became anathema in Indian society. Moorthy also explained to villagers about Gandhi’s views for stop untouchability. And he started to pariah business to change people’s thoughts and to stop untouchability. He believed that Hindu-Muslim or Brahmin and Pariah are all equal. The ‘committee of Congress’ called Moorthy for this job and gave the spinning wheels for distribution in all pariah people. Moorthy and his friends take this responsibility. They went from house to house to give them spinning wheels free of cost and taught them. In this freedom movement, Moorthy faced many problems. Firstly Bhatta is a Brahmin and he was against Moorthy and his movement. Secondly, Moorthy’s mother who also against him. Because she knows that many Brahmin people against Moorthy’ pariah business and one day he will excommunicate by Swami. Thirdly, The Villagers were illiterate and never politically strong but Moorthy also taught them about Gandhi’s views and ideas for freedom. This is the first step to change all negative thoughts in people’s hearts and minds for the lowest people. Many

Brahmin of the village joined this work. Moorthy never gives up his purpose and pariah business, when he excommunicate by ‘swami’ and the death of his mother. He spins more and more. Rao tried to explain that, Pariah business very important part of Independence because it was necessary to protect the motherland from exploitation by foreigners. It is not an individual study but of the group of people and not of one house but whole the village of people involved to fight against British rulers. In this novel, Raja Rao shows other characters like Rangamma, Patel Range Gowda, Shanker Advocate, and Jayaramcher who also fought against the British companies. Kanthapura also a mythical story and Rao shares mythical technique use with Purans. Jayaramcher read Harikatha by giving a twist to the Puranic story. He said, “It will be the story of ‘Siva’ and ‘Parvati’. And Parvati in penance becomes the country or Siva becomes heaven knows what; Siva is the three eyed and Swaraj to be three eyed: Self-Purification, Hindu-Moslem unity, Khaddar.”³

Raja Rao didn’t ignore the role of women in the novel. Kanthapura’s freedom movement was the growing participation of women. Women played an especially role in the boycott campaigns and non-cooperation movement. In it, we see women’s spirit for freedom. Ratna and Rangamma were also freedom fighters in Kanthapura. The all-women of the village organized ‘Sevika Sangh’ and Rangamma was a leader of the Sangh. Women, men, and children were all the fighters and prepared to fight against the British Government. They arranged to ‘Congress Committee’ in Kanthapura. And the first step that they started Gandhi’s “Don’t touch the government campaign.”⁴

Rao’s description of Kanthapura is so realistic and natural that when we go through the pages of Rao’s novel we feel that we are living in a real village. He depicted the truth of life as he perceived it. His themes reflected almost on Gandhi’s movement. Gandhi was very sad to see that many innocent people of India have been tortured and beaten by British rulers. They treated women and children very cruelly. To see all the wrong activities, Gandhi started ‘Dandi March’ against British rulers. He began this March on 12th March 1930 and 79 associations with him in this March. He completed the 200 miles journey in 24 days. This March was a direct action campaign of resistance and it is a major Non-violent protest action in India. Gandhi broke the salt law on 6th April 1930

and it is a very important part of the Indian freedom movement. It is also known as the salt Satyagraha. Moorthy followed all the events of Gandhi step by step and he also taught the villagers about Gandhi's important events like 'Dandi March'. In this novel, Gandhi did not see in anywhere but Moorthy spreads Gandhiji's message of Ahimsa (Non-violence). Now people of the village realized that they need to fight for the freedom of their motherland.

Kanthapura's villagers followed the way of Gandhi's non-violence movement in their struggle. They picketed the toddy grove. Toddy trees are government tree and they wanted to destroy all trees because it is very harmful to human health. In this March police started beating the men, women, and children with lathis. But the villagers never stop and never stop their movement. The movement of picket toddy shops was spreading in the village people explained to everybody and they were made songs by the people: -

*"The toddy tree is a crooked tree,
and the toddy milk scorpion milk, and who is it that
uses the scorpion milk, sister?*

And who uses the scorpion milk?

*why, the wandering witches of the marches."*⁵

Rao's innovative approach to fiction very appreciable and his character reflected regional life, manners and experiences. His stories usually face a crisis in their lives. In Kanthapura novel, Moorthy saw a dream of complete Independence for India, in which the motherland would live freely and peacefully. Many people and coolies of 'Skeffington Estate' also inspired Gandhi's Satyagraha and Moorthy's struggle for freedom and they also joined Kanthapura's villagers. Like Gandhi, they also arrested many times by the police and they were being beaten many times, but they never give up their fights against British rulers.

Rao gave a very interesting climax in novels. The end of this novel is reached its climax, Moorthy and villagers decided not to pay the land revenue and they started a 'No-tax campaign.' In this fight, ten of thousands of people were lying dead and some arrested. Thirty people were safe but they left Kanthapura because all houses and fields sold and many houses were completely destroyed by British rulers and their soldiers everywhere in Kanthapura village. After all this Moorthy also agreed with Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru's thoughts who believed that after the freedom of India, there should be the distribution

of wealth equally between poor and rich people and poor people never exploitation by rich people. Here it will be the end of slave and it will be the complete freedom for India.

Raja Rao tried to explain that what was happening in the whole nation during the freedom movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and what was happening in the Kanthapura village during the freedom movement. Gandhiji's struggles for Independence won in the larger context in 1947 and Rao shows us the picture of the village in which participated actively in the struggle for freedom but they did not win and lost everything. But Rao also shows us that after lost everything they never disappointed and praised for the great fight and contribution for freedom and their sacrifices could not be in vain. Their struggle more and more and reached other parts of the country.

It is a complete mixture of social, political, and religious. Rao represents the beautiful structure of the village where coffee, rice, sugarcane, cardamom, and teak, sandal tree grow everywhere and where people believe in god and goddess. This is a mystical force to binds the whole village. He always tried different types of concepts that related mystical and spiritual, to Indian sensibility, emotional aspects of Indian experience.

Thus Kanthapura is a typically Indian novel and nobody knows about this name because it's just imagery by Rao. He wanted that it is very useful to know a brief history of the freedom movement and people's sacrifices for India. He draws from history, rural life of people and mythological symbols and religious symbols of India to use Puranas, Mahabharata, and Ramayana. Kanthapura is also an epic for India's freedom.

Today he is a great writer in the Indo Anglian novelists. And it is a great achievement for him. He wrote many novels and his contribution are excellent in the writing field of English literature. In the art of narration he was a master. His different kinds of methods can see in his all novels. Kanthapura also a mixture novel, in which Rao tried to given political issues, religious, and social activities. He takes various methods and changes in narrative technique in his different novels. He was an excellent artist.

Rao's style so innovative and his style based on similes and metaphors on the Indian life. In this novel, he used natural thoughts and clear language. Today he

is a great writer. According to him, writing is a spiritual practice and this practice has given you peace and happiness in life. He was presented with actual life and a better source of instruction. And his theory is the combination of three things; Anthropology, psychology, and linguistic.

“Rao is one of the most innovative novelists now writing. Departing boldly from the European tradition of the novel he has indigenized it in the process of assimilating material from the Indian literary tradition. He explores the metaphysical basis of writing itself and of the world through his works of fiction. His concern is with the human condition rather than with a particular nation of people. Writing to him is sadhana a form of spiritual growth. That is why he can say that he would go on writing even if he were alone in the world and he also appropriates for fiction the domain metaphysics. Raja Rao has enlarged the potential of the very genre.”⁶

Thus, Raja Rao was a great revolutionary writer during the freedom struggle. And here, Rao has given a vivid description of the village of Kanthapura. The people are deeply faith in religious activities and they work social and political in the village. Their life is orthodoxy and conservative and fulfills social and political problems. It is a miniature picture of the freedom movement between 1929. It is a tragic story also because in this fight movement many innocent people were dead and they sacrificed their lives for India.

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