



Revisiting the Indian freedom struggle and Nationalism in Raja Rao's Novel- Kanthapura

Raja Rao has contributed immensely in Indian English writing and is considered as one of the prolific writer. In most of his works Raja Rao has broadly focused on 'Nationalism' as one of the central theme. In his novel, Kanthapura he has focused on political, religious social background and freedom movement. The novel has taken into brief account the impact of Gandhi movement and freedom struggle on the village which is situated in the southern part of India called Kanthapura. The present paper attempts to study Kanthapura in detail by focusing on the aspects like: A) Transformation of Freedom movement in to mass movement. B) Depiction of the atrocity of British rule. C) Treatment of freedom struggle in Kanthapura. Further the paper also describes the Indian customs and traditions by description of Indian Rural society. The article concludes by reflecting on all the aspects of Indian village life and its struggle for the freedom of the country.

Key Words: Political, Religious, Nationalism, Rural, Movement

1. Introduction/Narration

Kanthapura was published by Raja Rao in 1938 and it was his first novel which he wrote in France. This novel is considered to be his one of the most important and perfect work by him. This novel presents an interesting account of the history of Indian freedom struggle. The novel has a graphical representation of the village which is superstitious, caste ridden regardless of the fact that it has a lot of impact of Gandhi movement. 'Achakka' is the narrator of the story in the novel. Goddess 'Kenchamma' is worshipped by the people of the village. The whole village is on one side is religious and on other side the village is superstitious. The major occupation in the village is agriculture. The whole village is divided into four quarters namely: Paria quarter, Brahmin quarter, Potter quarter and weaver quarter. The potter quarter and weaver quarter are divided on the basis of caste and communities. The whole story of the novel revolves around the life of the people in the Kanthapura and their participation in Indian freedom struggle. The main character of the novel is 'Moorthy' who is behind bringing the Gandhi movement in the village. Moorthy was Brahmin by caste but he was not an orthodox Brahmin like others and this was unique characteristics of him that in spite of being Brahmin he did not differentiate among casts. He was always worried about the people of the village.

Moorthy motivated the people of the village to get freedom from the British government. He in fact distributed Charkhas by roaming door to door in the village. Even after such efforts he found it difficult to convince the people of the village to start weaving the cloths by themselves. He not only did tried to convince people for their contribution in the Indian freedom struggle but also tried to remove the barriers of the caste system in the village. Moorthy started working for the upliftment of 'Pariah' he was opposed by the Swami

who was a religious man in the village. Moorthy was removed from his caste of Brahmin for this deed and when his mother came to know about this she was upset and stopped her son for this service of uplifting the Pariah. But it made no effect on Moorthy and he continued working in the same manner. His mother was not able to tolerate this and she died at last by the shock of excommunication of his son from the caste. After this incident, Moorthy started living with an educated widow Ranamma who contributed a lot in India's freedom struggle as women representative.

Moorthy encouraged the people of the village to follow the path of non-violence and to play active role in the India struggle for freedom. As Moorthy was educated and did not believe on superstitions he knew that religion is the main factor and it is the base of the mindset of the people and therefore he was very keen on instilling Gandhian principle of Non-violent and Satyagrah. He was of the view that the traditional Harikatha will be very much useful in spreading the Gandhian ideology among the orthodox people of the village and it was indeed his suggestion that the religious festivals and Harikathas should be held regularly.

For this purpose he invited the Harikatham- Jayaramacher from the city. Jayaramacher used Harikathas to tell the people of Kanthapura about the Gandhi and the freedom struggle which was going on at that point of time. The main purpose was to make the people of the village aware about the Principles and ideals of Gandhiji. This idea of Moorthy was fruitful because the Harikatha made the people of the village aware about the present situation.

The novel then deals with the Skeffington Coffee Estate is situated in Kanthapura. Moorthy got an invitation from Brahmin clerks to meet at Skeffington Coffee Estate so that he can meet the coolies of the estate and spread awareness among them. Moorthy didn't know what was going to turn up for him at the venue. When he reached there to his surprise Bade Khan was waiting for him and taking the benefit of the situation he started hitting him but as he was the follower of the non-violence principle he didn't respond but the incident made him sad and unhappy. After this incident he felt that it was him who was responsible for such a chaos. Therefore, he decided to keep fast and carry on with his activity of making the people aware about the importance of their participation in the freedom struggle. He was then arrested by police many times because of his antigovernment activities.

The Karwar Congress committee supported Moorthy by providing him lawyer but he was of the view that he is not in need of an advocate to defend himself. Moorthy was not only one to follow the Gandhian principles but with him Sankar, Rangama and Ratna also followed the same. Moorthy and Rangama actively participated in the work of the congress to such an extent that Rangama's house became office of the congress for Kanthapura. All the activities were carried and planned out from her house. She immensely contributed in assembling all the women of Kanthapura and formed 'Sevika Sangh'. She trained the women to face the atrocities of the police. Ratna was also the follower of the Gandhi. Her family had to face lot of difficulties during the time of freedom struggle because she had an active role in taking revenge for Moorthy. In spite of all these issues, Moorthy continued to fight against the injustice and social inequalities and proved himself as follower of Gandhi.

The efforts of Moorthy were finally started showing its fruits because he was able to mobilize the people of Kanthapura. This was noticed by the British government and therefore he was accused of provoking the people and inflicting violence. This scene was followed by arrest. His companions were willing to release him

on bail but he refused. He was given three months of imprisonments. In absence of Moorthy, the women of Kanthapura took charge for the struggle. Women's volunteer crops under the leadership of Rangamma were formed. After the punishment, Moorthy was released letter and he came out as strong he was.

2. Research Methodology:

The primary objective of the present paper is to study the following aspects of the novel :

- A) Transformation of Freedom movement in to mass movement.
- B) Depiction of the atrocity of British rule.
- C) Treatment of freedom

In order to attain the above objectives a thorough review of the novel was undertaken through qualitative inquiry.

3. The Climax:

The strive for freedom struggle was at pick by this time in Kanthapura and the activities like arrest of Satyagrahis, police brutality on women etc. were now common in everyday life of Kanthapura. In the climax it is mentioned that people of the village were settled in Kashipur and Kanthapura was fully occupied by the people of Bombay. The numerous characters which are portrayed by Raja Rao in the novel demonstrate the sense of community. The larger question which is addressed by the author is not of individual fate but about the group destiny. The author has kept minimum dialogue in the novel by focusing on masses in the background and certain important figures in the foreground. The medium of storytelling in the novel is a female narrator which is also a character in her own right she is of radical nature. She is tells very less about herself to the readers. She is respectful to the Hindu tradition but she is not of orthodox nature. It seems she is caught in the turmoil and at times her breathless narration expresses the excitement of that particular period.

Moorthy is the is a central character in the novel and he is shown as the prime representative of the modern India struggling for freedom. He is shown to be much linked with Hindu tradition. He believes on the principal of nonviolence and like his mentor he acquires political and spiritual force. Rao skillfully controls the focus of the novel by bringing forward subsidiary characters at particular moments when they can sharpen the conflicts. They are usually distinguished by a single facet of personality: Bhatta is known by his smiling, false charm; Rangamma by her eloquent disputatiousness; Patel Range Gowda by his ceremonious speech; and Dore by his scoffing manner.

Conclusion:

Thus, from the above discussion it is clear that the novel is classic piece of Indo-Anglain fiction and deals with the Gandhi movement and its impact on a small village. The novel has categorically pointed out that how an single individual can lead a movement and merge that movement in freedom struggle for the country. Rao has depicted the early phase of India's freedom struggle when the civil disobedience movement was at its height. In a way Rao has tried to prove that Non Violence can also be a powerful tool for gaining freedom.

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Dr. Mayur Wadhvaniya

Assistant Professor,

Shri M.P.Shah Commerce College,

Surendranagar,

Gujarat

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