

PERSPECTIVE OF INDIAN FREEDOM FIGHT IN KANTHAPURA BY RAJA RAO

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ABSTRACT

Kanthapura is one of the prominent novels of Pre Independence-Era which exemplifies the freedom fight of India against Britishers in an apt manner for the young generation of 21st century. This novel depicts the entire battle of freedom fight and how our leaders materialized it at the cost of their lives. Some remnants of social evils can be witnessed in the contemporary era. Moreover, Gandhiji and his ideology is also brought into light by the novelist. Mantras of Non-Violence, satyagraha is an epitome of Pre Independence-Era for today's youth. This novel seems to spread the message that 'Unity is Strength', as at that time our country was divided into small fragments on the name of caste, creed, culture, language and religion. Rao has portrayed the raw material of the novel from history, but he has changed the subject in a mythical framework, which is appropriate for the Indian mind.

KEYWORDS: Freedom Fight, Indian Minds, Social Evils.

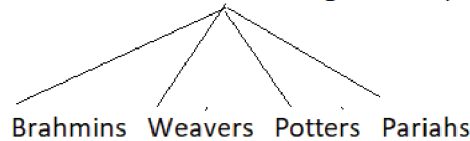
1. INTRODUCTION

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* was published in 1938, an era of pre independence. Rao believes in Indian culture and ethics, but he has used his fiction to explore human psyche. This novel has written in the form of an epic. His use of mythical tales, relating the Harikathas to freedom fight, incarnation of the religious characters from epics, depiction of fictitious villages in South India makes it a *Sthala Purana*. The novel opens with the description of a small fictitious town in South India named 'Kanthapura'. The story of the novel is narrated by an old grandmother of the village, Achakka. She withholds such a magic on the reader's mind while talking about the events happen in story. Her way of storytelling is so authentic and credible. This makes this novel a forerunner of feminist literature. Moreover, it reflects that storytelling in ancient India is associated with females.

“Kanthapura is its name, and it is in the province of Kara. High on the Ghats is it, high up the steep mountains that face the cool Arabian seas, up the Malabar Coast is it, up Mangalore and Puttur.”⁽⁷⁾. In this village, the simple life of the villagers is depicted followed by a simple lifestyle and are far away from the hustle bustle of the city. Goddess Kenchamma is the deity of the village. “Kenchamma, Kenchamma, Goddess benign and bounteous.”⁽¹⁰⁾ urging her to protect them from famine and disease, death and despair, and ends with the same faith in goddess: “Protect us, Mother!” (258). The village is calm and serene. R.K. Srivastava writes about the Indian village: “The absence of machines and motorised transport makes an Indian village insulated, idyllic, calm, and serene, like the still water of a lake well surrounded by mountains. An outsized stone dropped into it could create sounds and ripples disturbing its peace and serenity as the setting up of tannery does in a village in Markandaya’s Nectar in a Sieve and the visit of a police inspector in Kanthapura.”¹

The Village is Divided into Four Quarters

Societal Structure of the village Kanthapura



Brahmins Weavers Potters Pariahs

Figure:1 - Four Quarters

Source: From Different Literatures

Mainly, there is a huge gap between Brahmins and Pariahs. Weavers and Potters are dependent on their position and network dependencies.

As we proceed further, an awareness for freedom is seen among villagers. Jayaramchar, a storyteller, is introduced who inculcates a feeling of patriotism in villagers with the help of religious stories. The characters of Rama, Shiva, Krishna etc. prevails a fervour of religiousness. Moorthy, the hero of the novel, takes the initiative of a freedom fighter. Firstly, he tries to unite the villagers for the sake of freedom. His mingling with Pariahs in an effort to prepare the villagers for the freedom fight. “So Moorthy goes from house to house, and from younger brother to elder brother, and from elder brother to the grandfather himself, and -what do you think? -he even goes to the Potter’s quarter and the Weavers quarter, and I closed my ears when I heard he went to the Pariah quarter.”⁽⁸⁾ His belief in Gandhi’s ideology, door to door distribution of charkhas with some other educated boys, encourages the women of the village to become self-reliant. “And he says

too, spin every day. Spin and weave every day, for our Mother is in tattered weeds and a poor Mother needs clothes to cover her sores. If you spin, he says, the money that goes to the Red-man will stay within your country and the Mother can feed the foodless and the milk less and the clothless. He is a Saint, the Mahatma, a wise man and a soft man and a saint.”⁽¹⁰⁾

Moorthy’s mixing with Pariahs creates resentments among Brahmins. The Vision of Gandhiji brought back Moorthy to the struggle of freedom fighters. Moorthy has to pay off for the work he is doing and is excommunicated from the village by Swami, an agent of the Red-man Government, consequently giving way to the death of his mother, Narsamma. This shows the evil of untouchability which was prevalent in society and boosted by the British Government in view of their principle “Divide and Rule”.

Jayaramchar, a storyteller performs the duty to inform the villagers about the rules and ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. He used Harikatha as a medium to educate and aware the villagers of Kanthapura. “Raja Rao is fully conscious of the fact that he is telling story is a story.... This is a breathless story, or stories illustrating a story, in the old age tradition of storytelling.”²

Later, Congress Committee and Sevika Sangh formation gave rise to this movement. In congress committee Moorthy becomes the President Range Gowda-vice President, Rangamma as a women representative, Rachna to symbolise Pariah community and Seenu as the fifth member.

Formation of Sevika Sangh by Rangamma and Ratna, is another initiative towards freedom perspective. Yoga and Meditation sessions, exemplary stories of great women LaxmiBai, Anie Basent, Sarojini Naidu, Mother Teresa arouse a feeling of motivation among village women. Ratna shows keen interest in Gandhi's Philosophy. Rangamma gives her full cooperation by establishing a Congress office in her house. At her residence, political figures assemble to plan further procedures to tackle the conflict of freedom.

In the end, the British Government charges Moorthy for inflicting violence and arrests him. Moorthy spent three months in jail. In his absentia, women of Kanthapura lead the freedom fight. The end of the novel explicitly states that villagers are still looking forward to their freedom of the country. Their rehabilitation symbolises continuous freedom fighting. A feeling of patriotism has made its way permanently in their hearts. Thus ‘Kanthapura’ evokes a feeling of community and freedom which transcends all limits and barriers for freedom.

“Kanthapura is India in microcosm. What happened there is what happened in many places during India’s fight for freedom. What happened in Kanthapura is by no means a unique exception, but the telling of the story gives the whole affair.”³

2. REFERENCES

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