minor project

on

“novel”

“kanthapura”

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About the Novel

Raja Rae’s novel Kanthapura (1938) is the first major Indian novel in English. It is text of the Civil Disobedience movement of the 1930s that takes for its central concern the participation of a small village of South India in the national struggle called for by Mahatma Gandhi. Imbued with nationalism, the villagers sacrifice all their material possessions in a triumph of the spirit, showing how in the Gandhian movement people shed their narrow prejudices and united in the common cause of the non-violent civil resistance to the British Raj. Paradoxically, given its concerns, Kanthapura was first published in London in 1938 and was written when Rao was in France: “I wrote Kanthapura in a thirteenth century castle in the French Alps belonging to the Dauphins of France and I slept and worked on the novel in the room of the Queen”.

Narrated by Achakka, an old village woman, the plot centres on Kanthapura, a village in South India. This village is a microcosm of the traditional Indian society with its entrenched caste hierarchy. In Kanthapura there are Brahmin quarters, Sudra quarters and Pariah quarters. Despite stratification into castes, however, the villagers are mutually bound in various economic and social functions which maintain social harmony. The enduring quality of the Indian village is represented as ensuring an internal tenacity that resists external crises, its relationship to past contributing a sense of unity and continuity between the present and past generations. Kanthapura may appear isolated and removed from civilization, but it is compensated by an ever-enriching cycle of ceremonies, rituals, and festivals. Rao depicts the regular involvement of the villagers in Sankara-Jayanthi, Kartik Purnima, Ganesh-Jayanthi, Dasara, and the Satyanarayana Puja with the intention of conveying a sense of the natural unity and cohesion of village society. Old Rmakrishnayya reads out the Sankara-Vijaya day after day and the villagers discuss Vedanta with him every afternoon. Religion, imparted through discourses and pujas (prayers), keeps alive in the natives a sense of the presence of god. Participation in a festival brings about the solidarity among them. The local deity Kenchamma protects the villagers “through famine and disease, death and despair”. If the rains fail, you fall at her feet. Equally sacred is the river Himavathy which flows near Kanthapura. Rae’s choice of this village setting is strategic in view of his Gandhian loyalties. In the last decade or so, historians, especially those centered around Subaltern Studies, have attempted to demythologize the histories of the national movement and highlighted the role of the subaltern in terms of agency, which was often neglected in the interests of a homogeneous nationalism. Gandhi, however, does not ignore the aspects of subalternity. One of the first moves he makes on his return to India from South Africa Rather than being a traditional novel with a neat linear structure and compact plot, Kanthapura follows the oral tradition of Indian sthala-purana, or legendary history. As Raja Rao explains in his original foreword, there is no village in India, however mean, that has not a rich legendary history of its own, in which some famous figure of myth or history has made an appearance. In this way, the storyteller, who commemorates the past, keeps a native audience in touch with its lore and thereby allows the past to mingle with the present, the gods and heroes.
Raja Rao (November 8, 1908 – July 8, 2006) was an Indian writer of English language novels and short stories, whose works are deeply rooted in Hinduism. Raja Rae’s semi-autobiographical novel, The Serpent and the Rope (1960), is a story of a search for spiritual truth in Europe and India. It established him as one of the finest Indian stylists.

**Early Life and Career**

Raja Rao was born on November 8, 1908 in Hassan, in the state of Mysore (now Karnataka) in South India, into a well-known Brahmin (Hoysala Karnataka) family. He was the eldest of nine siblings - two brothers and seven sisters. His native language was Kannada, but his post-graduate education was in France, and all his publications in book form have been in English. His father taught Kannada at Nizam’s College in what was then Hyderabad State. The death of his mother, when he was four, left a lasting impression on the novelist - the absence of a mother and orphanhood are recurring themes in his work. Another influence from early life was his grandfather, with whom he stayed in Hassan and Harihalli.

Rao was educated at Muslim schools, the Madarsa-e-Aliya in Hyderabad and the Aligarh Muslim University. He began learning French at the University. After matriculation in 1927, Rao returned to Hyderabad and studied for his degree at Nizam’s College. After graduation from Madras University, having majored in English and History, he won the Asiatic Scholarship of the Government of Hyderabad in 1929, for study abroad. Rao moved to the University of Montpellier in France. He studied French language and literature, and later at the Sorbonne in Paris, he explored the Indian influence on Irish literature. He married Camille Mousy, who taught French at Montpellier, in 1931. The marriage lasted until 1939. Later he depicted the breakdown of their marriage in The Serpent and the Rope. Rao published his first stories in French and English. During 1931-32 he contributed four articles written in Kannada for Jaya Karnataka, an influential journal.

**Nationalist Novelist**

Returning to India in 1939, he edited with Iqbal Singh, Changing India, an anthology of modern Indian thought from Ram Mohan Roy to Jawaharlal Nehru. He participated in the Quit India Movement of 1942. In 1943-1944 he coedited with Ahmed Ali a journal from Bombay called Tomorrow. He was the prime mover in the formation of a cultural organization, Sri Vidya Samiti, devoted to reviving the values of ancient Indian civilization; this organization failed shortly after inception.

In Bombay, he was also associated with Chetana, a cultural society for the propagation of Indian thought and values. Rae’s involvement in the nationalist movement is reflected in his first two books. The novel Kanthapura (1938) was an account of the impact of Gandhi’s teaching on non-violent resistance against the British. The story is seen from the perspective of a small Mysore village in South India. Rao borrows the style and structure from Indian vernacular tales and folk-epic. Rao returned to the theme of Gandhism in the short story collection The Cow of the Barricades (1947). In 1998 he published Gandhi’s biography Great Indian Way: A Life of Mahatma Gandhi. In 1988 he received the prestigious International Neustadt Prize for Literature. The Serpent and the Rope was written after a long silence during which Rao returned to India. The work dramatized the relationships between Indian and Western culture. The serpent in the title refers to illusion and the rope to reality. Cat and Shakespeare (1965) was a metaphysical comedy that answered philosophical questions posed in the earlier novels.

**Later Years**

Rao relocated to the United States and taught at the University of Texas at Austin from 1966 to 1983, when he retired as Emeritus Professor. Courses he taught included Marxism to Gandhism, Mahayana Buddhism, Indian philosophy: The Upanishads, Indian philosophy: The Metaphysical Basis of the Male and Female Principle.
In 1965, he married Katherine Jones, an American stage actress. They have one son, Christopher Rama. In 1986, after his divorce from Katherine, Rao married his third wife, Susan, whom he met when she was a student at the University of Texas in the 1970s.
Sumarry of Nobel

This is the story of a village in South India named ‘Kanthapura’ written by Raja Rao. He was an excellent writer and the simple story of a village life is depicted in an extra-ordinary way in this creation of his. The title of the story is kept by the name of the village only. So the title truly signifies the story.

Born on November 8 in the year of 1908 Raja Rao was a famous writer. The place was Hassan, in the state of Mysore in south India, into a well-known Brahman family. He post-graduated in France, and all his publications were in English. Rao was very much concerned with his language and consciousness. He studied in a Muslim school. After taking a degree from Madras University, he left India for Europe, where he remained for a decade. He studied at the universities of Montpellier and the Sorbonne, doing research in Christian theology and history. In 1931 he married Camille Mousy. She was a French academic. His first stories were published in French and English. His Kannada articles were also published in an influential journal ‘Jaya Karnataka’. He marriage with Camille Mousy didn’t work out and he got divorced in 1939. Rao returned to India and began his first period of residence in an ashram. In search of his spiritual heritage, he traveled widely in India. This happened during WW II. In 1942 he was active in an underground movement against colonial rule. He also edited the literary magazine ‘Tomorrow’ for some days.

Synopsis:

‘Kanthapura’ is the first major Indian novel in English by Raja Rao. The novel deals with the Civil disobedience movement of 1030’s. Mahatma Gandhi on the participation of a small village of South India in the National struggle calls for the story’s central concern. The villagers sacrifice all their material possessions in a triumph of the spirit. It shows how the people of country united at the time of movement and joined at the non-violence movement to bring independence from the British. ‘Kanthapura’ was first published in English and then in France. Achakka narrates the whole story. She is an old village woman and the story revolves around in a village Kanthapura in South India. In this village there are clear discrimination between Brahman, Sudra and Pariah quarters still the mutual bonding between the villagers are very strong and they live happily with equal social and economical bonding. To maintain social harmony they live like one single family. Kanthapura may be isolated and deprived of modern civilization but it is compensated by an ever-enriching cycle of ceremonies, rituals and festivals. Rao depicts beautifully the participation of the villagers in different festivals like Dussera,

Sankara-jayanti, Kartik Purnima, Ganesh Jayanti, Styanarayana Puja, etc. the common picture of village has always come up in many of Rae’s story and that can be called as Raja Rae’s speciality.

Published by new directions publishing corporation in June 1967 ‘Kanthapura’ by Raja Rao is an amazing novel depicting the village life, their beliefs, their rituals in a lucid and transparent manner.

‘Kanthapura’ by Raja Rao is a marvelous creation. He depicts very simple happenings of a village in a lively manner. In his writing a clear picture of villagers become prominent. In his village religion imparted through discourses and pujas keeps alive in the natives a sense of presence of God. In the whole story a serenity flows in a simple harmonic motion which makes the story worth reading.
**Brif summary of the book**

*Kanthapura, a south Indian village*

The story of the Nobel belongs to knthapura, a small, obscure village in remot corner of south india. The people here were mostly poor, illiterate and backward. The village was caste-ridden, with differ -ent quarters in it housing people of different castes—the highest caste being Brahmins, the lowest, the Pariahs. People were extremely religious-minded. Goddes Kenchamma was the presiding deity of the vilillage.

*Village temple; katha-man arrested*

The protagonist of the novel is a young Brahmin boy, named moorthy. Moorthy was staunch follower of mahatma Gandhi. Once this boy found a half –burid linga in the village. He dig it out,installed it at another Place and built a temple their. This temple became the center of social life in the village.moorthy arranged various religious ceremonies and kathas here. One
*Awakening against foreign exploitation*

A policeman, Bade Khan, was posted in the village to keep an eye on the going on there. Being a Mohammendan, he could get no accommodation in the village. The sahib of the neighbouring Skeffington Coffee estate opened a hut for him and lodged him in the estate. The congress committee of the nearby Karwar city consumed Moorthy. He came back to the village with lots of congress literature and spinning wear home-supn khaddar, discard the foreign cloths and thus stop the economic exploitation of Indians by foreigners.

*Moorthy, the Gandhi man, excommunicated*

Moorthy, in fact, had turned into a Gandhi man ever since he saw the Mahatma in a vision. He then discarded his foreign cloths, adopted khadi and returned to Kanthapura. Here he preached Gandhi’s ideals of truth and ahimsa to the villagers. Though a Brahmin, he began to mix freely with the pariahs.bahatta, the vilillage Brahmin, did not like this. He complained against him to the sawami. This swami was an orthodox Brahmin and an agent of the foreign government. Taking an ire on the Gandhi man, the swami excommunicated Moorthy. The excommunication caused severe shock to Moorthy’s mother and she died. Moorthy now began to live with the Rangamma, a childless widow of the village. Rangamma was an Educated lady and was a supporter of Moorthy, the freedom fighter.

*Violence Skeffington Coffee estate*

Once Moorthy was invited to teach reading and writing to the pariahs in the Skeffington Coffee estate. This estate spread over a vast sprawling expanse in the neighbourhood of Kanthapura. The owner of the estate invited Moorthy to create an awakening among the pariahs there. As Moorthy approached the gate of the coffee estate, the policeman Bade Khan hit him with his lathi. The pariahs at the estate sided with Moorthy and attacked Bade Khan. Moorthy reminded his followers to remain non-violent. The fight was stopped, but the violence left Moorthy sad and sorrowful. A pariah named Rachanna was thrown out of the coffee estate, along with his family, for giving severe beating to the policeman. He began to live in the Kanthapura and became a strong congress worker.

*Moorthy’s three day fast*

Moorthy held himself responsible for the violence at the coffee estate. He left the need to purify himself. So he undertook a fast for three days. At the conclusion of the fast, he left his whole inner being over brimming with love for all mankind. The world seemed to bathe in a new light. He felt happy and satisfied. He walked out to preach ‘don’t-touch-the-government-compagn’.
Kanthapura congress committee formed

Moorthy now thought of starting a congress group in kanthapura. He contacted various people and succeeded in establishing the kanthapura congress committee. Moorthy was unanimously elected the president of the congress committee, with range Gowada, Rangamma, Rachanna and seenu as the other office bearers. The commitie had twenty three members. they vowed to spin everyday, practice ahimsa and seek truth. The aim obviously was to fight for the freedom of their motherland.

Moorthy arrested, imprisoned

One, night the police arrived at Rangamma’s house and arrested moorthy. When people protested, they were beaten. Seventeen among them were beaten and were taken to the santur police station, beaten and Were let go. moorthy was taken away to kanwar. eminent lawyers like sankar, and Ranganna, offered to fight His case, but moorthy declined any legal aid, asserting that truth was the best defence. moorthy was implicated in a false case of inciting the villagers to use violence against the police. He was sentenced to three months rigorous imprisonment. A pall of goom spread over kanthapura people fasted.

Kanthapura women’s volunteer cros founded

In moorthy’s absence, Rangamma became active. She thought of forming a woman’s volunteer crops or sevika sangha. she inspired the woman of kanthapura by telling them stories about the patriotic maharani Luxmi bai of Jhansi, rajput princes, sarojini naidu etc. thus she instilled in them the courage to fight for the freedom of their country, but in the gandhian non violent manner. Soon the woman’s volunteer crops in kanthapura was formed.

Moorthy released

Came the month of vaisakh, and with thus the news that moorthy was going to be released. On the appointed day, the people of kanthapura erected victory arches and gathered to welcome their hero. But The police brought moorthy to Rangamma’s house through a secret route. When people learnt this, they gathered here, shouting slogans like ‘Mahtma Gandhi ki jai’ and ‘Vande matram’. The crowd was asked to disperse peacefully and they obeyed because that their leader’s wish. People noticed no change in moorthy. He was, to use the authors words, “as ever—as ever”.

Gandhi’s dandi march

Now came the news of matma gandhi’s Dandi march.moorthy told the villagers that the mahatma had left For the dandi beach,along witch eight two of his followers. He would preperare salt here and would break the salt law. The people of kanthapura were one with the mahatma in his venture . the very moment Gandhi was supposed to make salt, the villagers took batch,led by moorthy, and shouted: ‘mahatma Gandhi ji ki jai’.then came the news that Gandhi had been arrested for breaking the salt law. People were filled with refreshment against the forign goverement and got prepared to make any sacrifice for their mahatma.

Picketing of boranna’s toddy grove

Moorthy addressed meeting of the kanthapura congress committee. He told them that they would not Pay the taxes, the land revenue. They would eastablish a parallel government.ranga gowda would be their Patel. They would establish a parallel government .range gowda would be their Patel . they would refuse To recognize the new Patel of the forign government moorthy gave a clarion-call for a struggle against the brith government but he stressed that their struggle must remain non violent it was decided to picket the boranna’s toddy grove. On the appointed day , moorthy marched at the head of one hundread and thirty hundread. He police tried to stop their march, but they didn’t stop. They forced open the gates of the skeffington coffee eastste.rachanna and others rushed into the estate,climbed the trees and began to break the twigs and branches. The police deployed in strength ,rained lathi blows on the satayagrahis .many of them have caught,loaded in lorries and left in the far of f junglesat the time of night. The cartmen on the way gave them lifts too.

Picketing of boranna’s toddy booth

One marketing day moorthy and his satayagrahis picketed boranna toddy both where the coolies of the coffie estate were brought to spend on drinking . the toddy both stood outside the coffee estate. As the collies moved towards the booth , the stayagrahis sat in the front of the shop, blocking the collies way. The police beat the collies to drive them in to the satayagrahis. At this the freedom fighter lay close-knit th, leaving no space for collies.feeling helpless ,the police rained lathis blows on the freedom fighter.

Police brutalities in jail

The news of picketing spread in the neighbouring areas. As a result, as many as twenty –six toddy booths were closed down in the vicinity of kanthapura. moorthy had become a hero for them.many came to have a darshan of this great man.when the imprisoned satayagrahis returned to kanthapura after their release , they narrated harrowing tales of police brutalitiesa on them inside in the jail..
**Aression in kanthapura intensified**

The British govt intensified its repression on the people of Kanthapura. A new patel was appointed and people were told to pay the revenue. Only a few obeyed the govt. All the others refused to pay because that was their moorthy's instruction. Then one morning, people found a heavy posse of police over Kanthapura. To accompany the beating of drums, the new beadle announced that the people must pay the revenue or be prepared to pay a punitive tax. Moorthy however allayed the fears of the people, promising them full support of the freedom fighters. Haunted by apprehensions, the people kept awake all that night, but nothing happened. No body came.

**Police atrocities molestation of women**

One morning the people of Kanthapura found that the thirty three coolies who had escaped from the coffee estate were being marched back to the estate by the police. Moorthy, Rangamma and others had been arrested and taken away during the night. Women and children came out and pelted stones the police. The police built the children and tried to molest the women. While running away from the chasing police, a seven month pregnant woman gave birth to the baby in the open itself. The police tried to back open the temple door, then locked the door from outside. It was only early in the morning, after the police had left, that the women were rescued.

**Police firing on satyagrahis**

The misfortunes of the people of Kanthapura were not over. Once day the Sahibs, along with the city coolies, arrived. They announced that the lands of the people were going to be auctioned for non payment. Of the land revenue, as the right fell, the city coolies began to reap the fields. The people of Kanthapura took out a procession. The procession was given the look of a religious one, but then they started shouting political slogans. The police rushed at them with lathis. The coolies from the Skeffington Coffee Estate and the city collies from the fields joined them. Many satyagrahmis were wounded, others ran away and escaped to another village, Kashipur.
People settled in kashipur

Almost one year and two months had passed. Thirty refugees from Kanthapur had settled in Kashipur. They
openly recalled those turbulent days in Kanthapur. They missed their fellow men who were either dead or in jail. On the whole, the people had the satisfaction that they had done something for their country. When, however, Gandhi reached a truce with the British viceroy, now had a leaning towards Jawaharlal Nehru, who was more practical than the Mahatma. But people, by the large, had their Mahatma. They looked upon him as Lord Rama, who would slay Ravana, the British, and would free Sita, their motherland.

New face of Kanthapur

Meanwhile, Kanthapur was occupied by the men from Bombay, only the concubine China staying there entertaining her new clients.

A critical evaluation of Raja Rao's KANTHAPURA

INTRODUCTION

Raja Rao, along with Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan, forms a trinity in Indo-Anglian fiction. Raja Rao has written only three novels—Kanthapur, the Serpent and the Rope and The Cat and Shakespeare. But despite his limited output, he has carved out a permanent niche for himself among the Indian novelists writing in English. In certain ways, he may be called even a pioneer, a path-finder, in this new genre of literature.

As we go through Kanthapur, a few characteristics features of the Nobel and the novelist stand out prominently before us.

A plotical novel

Kanthapur is a political novel. It depicts in microcosm the Gandhian struggle for independence that ragged throughout India in the early 1930s. Moorthy, a youngman of the village, sees a vision of Mahatma Gandhi and gets transformed. He forms a congress working committee in the village, with its help, and with guidance from the congress committee in the nearby city of Carwar, he launches a satyagrah movement against the British rules. The toddy shops are picked. Land revenue is not paid. The satyagrahis face the police brutalities most heroically, in a non-violent manner. Even women the phariahs, the low caste, take an active part in this Gandhian non-
*Social novel*

But kanthapura is no merely a political novel. It is a social novel as well. It informs us that gandhi’s movement did not stop at political aims; it a sort of social veils of caste system illiteracy, superstitions, alcoholism, economic exploitation of Indians by foreigners. So in the novel we find moorthy preaching free mixing of casts, giving due respect to the lowly pariahs, toddy booths are picked and the poor collies are taught to shun alcohol. Foreign is discarded and people spin khadi and wear khaddar. Like this, an attempt is made to stop the flow of Indian money to the foreign markets. Illiteracy too is sought to be banished. The two Brahmin clerks at the sheffington coffee estate invite moorthy and his band of volunteers to teach literacy to the poor coolies there.

*Novel, a sthala-purana & Gandhi-purana*

Kanthapura is a regional novel, concentrating itself on one particular region. It is through and through The story of the village named kanthapura in south india. but it is not merely that; it is a sthala purana too, as it carries about it a halo of myths and epics and legends. The village has a presiding deity in goddess kenchamma who looks after the welfare of the villagers. But kantapura is not merely a sthala-purana. It has given an evic form too. It carries a mythical techniques. Gandhi ji elevated as the lord rama. Swaraj is sita who has been kidnapped by the red man, ravana. Just as rama slew ravana and redeemed sita, in same way Gandhi would vanquish the red men and secure swaraj. Gandhi ji is lord Krishna too. men follow him as they did Krishna, the flute player; and so he goes from village to village.

*Characterization*

Kanthapura lacks an effective characterization raja rao has not paid particular attention to the character-delineation here. It has no individual the characterized character. But there was a good reason for that the novelist wanted to present a movement, the stayagrah movement against the british rulers. The need was to present character in the crowd character definition would have deflected from the purpose, and would have diluted the impact of the movement. But that those not mean that the novel has neglected characterization altogether. Rather he has to define his characters as far as possible. For example, he has lent identity to the characters by giving them tell-tale names like CORNER HOUSE MOORTHY,GOLD-BANGLE SOMMANNA, WATER FALL VENKAMMA, nose-scaratching nanjammana etc. But the crowing glory of characterization in the novel is that raja rao has taken pain, thought summarily to humanize his characters.
Dramatic style

Raja rao uses English like master, as one would use one’s own mother-tongue. His words, of course, are English but their organization is Indian and entirely his own invention.

In Kanthapura, we find an expression of a wide range of feelings and attitude from the behaviour of an Indian crowd. First under police atrocities:

“While the police men beat crowd this side and that side
And groans and moans and carries and coughs
And oaths and bangs and kicks are heard, while there is
‘Herad, ‘Mahatma Gandhi ki jai, m…..ki….jai.’ “

conclusion

Raja rao indeed is an Indo-Anglian novelist par excellence. In his very first novel Kanthapura, he has been able to achieve what he himself concede was a difficult task. Says Raja in his foreword to Kanthapura:

“The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own spirit that is one’s own, by accomplishing this arduous task, Raja rao blazed a path for all other Indo-Anglian novelists of posterity.