
THE PRESENTATION OF GANDHIAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE IN RAJA RAO'S KANTHAPURA

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Received: Sep. 2019 Accepted: Oct. 2019 Published: Nov. 2019

Abstract: Literature mirrors life in terms of social, economic, political, literary, religious, cultural aspects in society. It is life enhancing, when clubbed with reality as an art of expression under the condition of vision in an aesthetic manner through a perfect execution. Indian writing in English is indeed rich in variety, inextricably inter linked to nationalism and independence, it also holds expansion and diversification in the present scenario. Indian writers in English are the writers who took immense delight nation-wide and even internationally to express concerns pertaining in the field of science, political, psychology, economics, political thinking etc.

Raj Rao is one such prominent Indian writer in English who has finely depicted the freedom struggle in India which started in the early 20th century by our Father of our nation Mahatma Gandhi. It did influence and left a landmark upon the minds of people is the central idea of the novel. *Kanthapura* by Raj Rao is not only a mere political novel but a great work of art. As we observe it is greater as the novel is depicting the influence and impact of Gandhian freedom struggle on the life of a remote Indian village and what happens in *Kanthapura* under the impact of the non- cooperation movement of the Gandhian philosophy which was then happening all over India. We can observe that Gandhiji not only transformed but also brought out the sense of oneness and nationalism of the entire nation.

As readers we feel the charisma of his personality through the great Mahatma does not appear, he still remains the backbone in the background but still his spirit and presence are felt always through the transition caused in the present novel *Kanthapura*. We can see that it is not merely a political novel but a novel which is concerned as much as with religious, social and economic transformation of the people, as with the struggle for political freedom. The villages are represented in realistic colours and has been described minutely with great realism.

One of the prominent and outstanding contribution of Raja Rao towards Indian writing in English is to have a new path for a sense of sensibility which is essentially Indian by nature which can be seen through his work *Kanthapura*. As a true leader Gandhiji was able to transform the entire nation into an army of non- violent freedom fighters and made a difference in people's lives. It gives us an essential truth about the Gandhian era, which is not only a merely political novel but which is concerned with the total rejuvenation and resurgence of the masses of India. Raja Rao has depicted beautifully in realistically, artistically and impartially the impact of the Gandhi ideas, principles and movement on the people of India through *Kanthapura* .

Keywords: Mahatma Gandhi, Gandhian Era, Non- Cooperation Movement, Gandhian Philosophy Resurgence.

Introduction: Literature mirrors life in terms of social, economic, political, literary, religious, cultural aspects in society. It is life enhancing, when clubbed with reality as an art of expression under the condition of vision in an aesthetic manner through a perfect execution. Indian writing in English is indeed rich in variety, inextricably inter linked to nationalism and independence, it also holds expansion and diversification in the present scenario. Indian writers in English are the writers who took immense delight nation-wide and even internationally to express concerns pertaining in the field of science, political, psychology, economics, political thinking etc.

Raja Rao is considered one of the greatest among the Indian writers writing in English language. He is a prolific writer who does possess quality in his works. In spite of his stay and travel in foreign countries;

he has his roots deep in India and his insight into Indian philosophy. He is awarded Padma Bhushan and won the Sahitya Academy for his novel *The Serpent and the Rope*. Raja Rao was highly influenced by our Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhiji's *My experiments of the Truth*.

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The present novel *Kanthapura* written in the year 1938 by Raja Rao is a reflection of the impact of the Gandhi Movement in this small village called *Kanthapura*. It is a miniature representation of our country. *Kanthapura* gives in a very realistic and vivid description of the village and the Gandhiji's movement in the 1930's. We see the narration of the story through an old woman called Achakka who gives in description of the background and also the society is caste ridden India which was under the British rule. One of the most prominent character namely Moorthy left his studies and decided to work for the society. It was through Moorthy that the Gandhian ideas, philosophy was brought to *Kanthapura* and people were inspired by the movement. The socio-economic divisions in the village can be seen visibly at the beginning of the impact and emphasis of Gandhian ideology. The villagers have been perceived consciously of the differences and segregation among themselves. Moorthy is presented as the follower of Gandhiji who represented the ideas of Satyagraha in the village. We see the presence of Gandhi felt in the novel though he is not seen or shown. Through various characters of the novel his political struggle, ideals, values and philosophy of life is shown in an exemplary manner. Moorthy who is inspired by Gandhi at a very early age tries to influence others through his deeds, actions and words by following him. He preaches the concepts of non-violence and stood by the truth through his campaign. He urges them to wear Khadi dresses and to throw away the British made clothing, to prohibit liquor in any form etc. We observe that meetings are organised and practise of singing bhajans.

Based on the observations no other book has been so vividly been described as its truthful and touchiness of the story of the resurgence under the Gandhi's leadership in India- in terms of social, political, and religious concerns. The amount of sacrifice by people in the village is a response on the call of one like Gandhiji; a transformation of non-violent, disciplined way of freedom fighters.

Gandhiji was an inspirational person and his greatness that has produced hundreds and thousands of people who in turn spread the Gandhian philosophy in the entire village of *Kanthapura* were the fervour in terms of nationalism that inspired Moorthy and in turn others who had given up their studies and gone to an extent of sacrificing from their part. The vision of Gandhi addressing a public meeting pushed Moorthy to follow in his place joining the band of volunteers with a patriotic spirit. We see a reflection of him organising the same in the novel. The novel centred around Moorthy, an ardent supporter and admirer of Gandhiji. He had become a person who had the congress committee formed in his place, was constantly in touch with committee people in villages through newspapers and other material so as to keep people with the were about of events occurring in other parts of the then situations in our country.

We observe an amalgamation of religion and politics where patriotic fervour was seen. He gives in a practical version of the Gandhian programme of instilling Swadeshi explaining people of the village regarding economics of the charkha and Indian fervour through Swadeshi clothing. An important aspect regarding eradication of untouchability was propagated and spread across even in the Pariah quarters.

In spite of the opposition they faced in the village by conservatives, they had the zeal with determination and with courageous attitude helped them to move on through the movement, also with the help of influential person like Range Gowda also to be noted. Moorthy played a unifying force to help women of the village to take up to Charkha spinning who in turn organised the women voluntary corps.

When the news started to spread in *Kanthapura* regarding Gandhiji who started performing Dandi March in India, people were highly enthusiastic and which led as a general awakening of nationalism in the village. We do preserve that Moorthy who believes the law were to live and let others live so as to have a mutual understanding and tolerance as the law of life. He gives his best to create the Satyagrahis out of the sons of this country. He can be seen as a true Satyagrahi in the true sense as he observes non-violence in word, deed and action; he tried to propagate the same in his village.

A national upheaval, dharnas, Satyagraha's etc were captured by Raja Rao where we see the old men and women, children who are younger or older took part and were injured in large numbers during the rally. For instance, we see women like Ratna is dishonoured, beaten up and humiliated through the process but a sense of national spirit is not crushed. We can hear the slogans uttered by people, "Gandhiji Ki Jai" and "Inqilab Zindabad" which resounded the atmosphere and which boost up the spirit of the people. Most of the people are injured and taken into jail. When Moorthy was arrested, Ratna took his place and hence the freedom movement continued in the process.

In other instance when the people refused to pay the land revenue, land laid waste; at a point of time they were forced to fled the village. Though this it ended up as a mass movement, people irrespective of their professions, castes, men and women, labourers of the Coffee Estate meet the slough of the opposition. An unbalanced fight inevitably processes to be scattered broken, trials on their path reach led to another village- Kashipura beyond where they settle down. Meanwhile Moorthy, Rangamma, Ratna along with other Satyagrahis are sent to jail for a period of time. The Gandhi -Irwin pact when it hastens soon had the release of the Satyagrahis who wait patiently for further developments. We see the effect of Gandhian philosophy when in turn inspired many more in the village.

Social issues like child marriage, untouchability, ignorance etc which did exist in the pre-independence has been projected by Raja Rao in this novel. Most of the upper caste people were against Gandhiji's removal of the untouchability and in turn upliftment of lower class has been shown. Most of the Indian villages then were caste-ridden like *Kanthapura*. We clearly see the division of society through quarters on the basis of caste system.

Moorthy peruses his work for the upliftment of pariahs. His mother could not bear when she heard from the Swami that he had excommunicated Moorthy as a brahmin along with the future generations to come. He was not effected and continued even after he heard that, he wanted to help and educate the labourers living in Coffee estate. As the workers were ignorant and uneducated, they were exploited by the owners; Moorthy made his contribution as far as possible to remove ignorance among them and uplift the people in the society to make free India.

We see another aspect of child marriage in the novel. Ratna who was married at a very early age and lost her husband early had become a widow. People expected widows to follow norms what was meant to be done; the same was expected from her too. Though Ratna broke all the norms she was bold enough to face the world and was a follower of Gandhiji like Moorthy. The society was deeply embedded with principles which required transformation but which was seen gradually through Moorthy and his other followers of Gandhiji.

We see the character of Rangamma too as a follower of Gandhiji she spread the news after reading the newspaper to the villagers as to what was going on in and out of India. She is a widow who considered Moorthy to be like her son and also extended her support by rendering her house which become the office in Kanthapura for the freedom fighters.

There was a sense of disappointment among few people who felt that Gandhiji's method of non-violence was not practical when Gandhiji compromised with the then viceroy when many Satyagrahis were released. Little had they known that it was a transitional phase which later led to the Indian Freedom struggle for Independence.

We can rightly say that it is a Gandhi epic that though he remains in the background, his presence is felt throughout the novel through his principles and ideals. As readers we can feel the charismatic personality of Gandhiji and Raja Rao has presented the Gandhian movt in an impartial manner and realistically corelate with the characters in the novel.

We see Moorthy plays an important role in the whole presentation of Gandhian movement in *Kanthapura*. Gandhiji's presence is always felt though he never appears in the novel are depicted in a realistic, artistic with objectivity. An impact of the movement is not only seen politically but other aspects of social, religious are also depicted in a vivid experience and skilful manner in the novel.

Kanthapura is a miniature representation which depicts the customs, manners, life, language of Indianness of the whole country along with Gandhian principles, ideas, philosophy are discussed in the novel. With time passing by the people realise that they need to be united and must voice out their opinions and aspirations, need to fight out for their freedom. It was through the young and dynamic Moorthy that brought Gandhian ideals to *Kanthapura*; Raja Rao basically projected the impact of the national freedom struggle and influenced the people in the novel.

Kanthapura still remains a great work presented with acute realistic from of all the aspects in terms of social, cultural, religious, political etc. It is a total transformation and reached the resurgence of people in India. Raja Rao has added aesthetic devices by reawakening of the masses through this novel. Their attitude and views towards the untouchables, the caste divisions, the widows, superstitious views etc has been portrayed by Raja Rao in the novel. Thus, we see the Gandhian influences in terms of transformation into a state of dynamism is seen brilliantly through this work.

On the onset *Kanthapura* does mirror the social scenario of the age. It still remains a record of the freedom of our country movement through this work. People of India and also in the International scenario Mahatma Gandhi is recognised as the greatest and an inspirational leader ever in the Indian freedom struggle for Independence; he is truly and fondly be recognised as the father of the Nation (Rashtra Pita).

Gandhi has been seen as a role model till date for his imminent personality who had shown the path of values, peace, truth, ahimsa etc. He has been seen as an International icon for his ideals, values, principles; has inspired various leaders around the globe like Martin Luther King Jr, Nelson Mandela, Rabindranath Tagore etc

He is indeed a true peacemaker and played an important role as an inspiring leader of our nation and who changed the face of nationalism in Indian freedom struggle. He will still remain the modern charismatic and hero for the generations to come. We see *Kanthapura* as a novel of unifying and nationalistic fiction.

One of the prominent and outstanding contribution of Raja Rao towards Indian writing in English is to have a new path for a sense of sensibility which is essentially Indian by nature which can be seen through his work *Kanthapura*. As a true leader Gandhiji was able to transform the entire nation into an army of non- violent freedom fighters and made a difference in people's lives. It gives us an essential

truth about the Gandhian era, which is not only a merely political novel but which is concerned with the total rejuvenation and resurgence of the masses of India. Raja Rao has depicted beautifully in realistically, artistically and impartially the impact of the Gandhi ideas, principles and movement on the people of India through *Kanthapura*. Literature has always been an expression of society in our daily life and thus we see the Gandhian spirit expressed in this work.

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