



REFLECTIONS OF INDIAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE IN RAJA RAO'S KANTHAPURA

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ABSTRACT:

It is said that literature mirrors social, political and revolutionary movements of every Nation. Similarly, Indian English Literature is truly mirrors social and political movements of pre- Independence and post-Independence India. The novels written in pre-Independence period are known for depiction of Indianness, Patriotism and Movements of Independence. Novelists like R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, K.A. Abbas and many more tried to capture India's Freedom struggle in their literary works. Taking this idea, the present research paper tries to explore contribution of Raja Rao as an Indian novelist in Indian Freedom Struggle. Raja Rao's Kanthapura published in 1938 is set in the background of British rule and Indian Freedom struggle and reflects essence of Gandhian Movement. Kanthapurais one of the finest novels on the Indian Freedom Movement depicting Gandhian influence on remote village named Kanthapur and villagers whole heartily participation in freedom struggle against colonial British rules.

Keywords: *Indian English Literature, Indian Movement of Independent, Novel etc.*

INTRODUCTION:

The Indian English novel can be divided into two periods namely Pre-Independent and Post- Independent. The novels written in Pre-Independent era was deeply influenced by the epoch-making Indian Independent Movement.

The impression of Indian Freedom struggle is strongly seen in the writings of many novelist of that era like R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, K.A. Abbas and many more. Among the significant works inspired by Indian Freedom Struggle are the novels like, *Kanthapura* by Raja Rao, *Waiting for Mahatma* by R.K. Narayan, *Mother Land* by C.N. Zutshi and *Inquilab* by K. A. Abbas. The major concerns of these writings are influenced by Nationalistic movement and Struggle for freedom of Indians against the British rule.

RAJA RAO: LIFE AND WORK:

Raja Rao was one of the leading novelists of Pre-Independent period. He was born in Hassana, Karnataka on November 5, 1908. He was highly educated. He was scholar of Vedantic and Buddhist philosophy. He received National and International recognition for his contribution in literature. He won the Sahitya Academi Award and honored with the Padma Bhushan by Indian Government. His work includes five novels namely, *Kanthapura* (1938), *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965) and *Comrade Kirillov* (1976) and *The Chessmaster and His Moves* (1988). In addition to his novels he also wrote two short story collections, *The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories* (1947) and *The Policeman and the Rose and Other Stories* (1978) and many non-fiction works.

KANTHAPURA AND INDIAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE:

As the freedom movement gained impetus in the Indian sub-continent, many writers became involved in featuring socio-political situation in their literary work. The National Freedom Movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi was center of attraction of writings of many novelists. Mahatma Gandhi is such a political leader who is barely impossible for someone to forget or ignore. He has influenced every aspect of Indian life and there is hardly any discipline that remained uninfluenced by his ideologies

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and works. He is an immense source of writing himself and has influenced many different writings. His influence is seen prominent in the novels after 1920s and has him as central theme. Along with R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand; Raja Rao also influenced with Gandhian Movement. His debutant novel *Kanthapura* (1938) is good example of Gandhian influence on him and his writing.

Kanthapura is the first and major novel by Raja Rao published before Independence. The novel is one of the earliest examples of Gandhian novel. It represents the ideologies of the great political and spiritual leader Mahatma Gandhi. The novel depicts how the whirlwind of Gandhian revolution shakes the small Indian village to its very roots. Rao depicts the impact of the Gandhian Freedom Struggle on the life of a remote village named Kanthapura located at Southern region of India. Kanthapura is the representative village of Gandhian Movement, what is happens in it was happening in every village of India during Pre-Independent era. The novel is a story of regeneration of village due to Gandhian Freedom movement. However, Kanthapura is a remote, neglected small South Indian village which comes suddenly to life due to Gandhian Movement.

The novel vividly portrays Gandhi's leadership and his influence on the common villagers and everybody feels as if he is Gandhi who wants to free India from the clutches of unjust British. The protagonist of novel Moorthy is a totally transformed by Gandhian Movement and his principles of Non-Violence and Satyagraha. The villagers called him as a village Gandhi. He is a well-educated man of Kanthapura. He is inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's movement of independence and gives up his studies for the sake of Motherland and desire to meet Gandhiji personally. He

stands for the freedom fighters, which were fought for the motherland in order to free it under the leadership of Gandhiji. Moorthy, a young man of the village, sees a vision of Mahatma Gandhi and gets transformed. He forms a congress working committee in the village; with its help he launches a 'Satyagraha Movement' in non-violent manner against the British rules.

Moorthy is the central force in village, he manages and organises the Gandhian Movement in village. With the help of Congress Committee, he keeps the people constantly in touch with national events through newspapers and other publicity materials. He invites Harikatha man, mixes religion with politics. He compares Gandhi with Rama, British to Ravan. He preaches *Swadeshi* Movement, promotes to use *Khadi* Clothes, spinning of *Charakha* and eradication of untouchability in village. He goes to door to door and explains the economics of *Charakha* and *Swadeshi*. He inspires women to participate in Gandhian Movement. Then he organizes the women voluntary corps. He highly charges the atmosphere and awakens villagers from slavery and ignorance.

As story runs novelist artistically describes the Movement on National level and its impression and impact on village Kanthapura and its inhabitants. All village is involve whole heartily in dharanans, marches, fast and satyagraha. People including children and old men are injured and wounded in large numbers. Slogans like *Gandhi Ki Jai*, *Vande Mataram* and *Inquilab Zindabad* spreads everywhere, which helps to enhance spirit and morale of the people. As a response to the Gandhi's Non-Cooperation movement villager also refuse to pay tax and revenue. There is a mass arrest and people are sent to jail by police and government. Some face

trials and some leave their native place Kanthapura and forced to settle to in neighboring village.

At the end of novel, Rangemma, Ratna, Moorthy and many other villagers arrested and kept in jail by police. When Gandhi- Irwin pact takes place, the all Satyagrahis including villagers were released. When they return back Kanthapura, they saw that village is totally changed and finally young like Moorthy decided to follow Nehru.

In nutshell, Raja Rao very artistically presented Indian Freedom Struggle with the help of characters like Moorthy, Ratna and other villagers of Kanthapura on background of Gandhian Movement. That makes novel *Kanthapura* a great classic of Gandhian Movement and its impact on the masses. It remains record of Gandhi's influence on masses in world history in the form of novel.

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