

Kanthapura

-Raja Rao

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About the Author

- Born on 8 November' 1908, in Hassana in Mysore
- He was in France when he wrote his first novel Kanthapura (1938)
- Awarded with the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1964, and Padma Bhushan in 1969
- Borrows profusely from Kannada to replace English idioms and proverbs
- In 1943, he attained spiritual realisation after meeting his guru Swami Atmananda in Travancore
- Scholar of Advaita Vedanta philosophy.

Indian Writing in English

- Debates regarding Indian Literature and Indian Writing in English. Raja Rao one of those first few to defend that English is not an alien language, although it may be the language of intellectual make up.
(Rao V)
- R.K Narayan, Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand form the holy trinity of Indian Writing in English.
- Raja Rao in the Foreword to Kanthapura mentions that the Indians should provide an Indian touch to their writing.

“One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own...We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians.”(Rao V)

Possible ways in which writers convey the idea of Indianness

- Translate the idioms, phrases, proverbs present in regional vocabularies of India into English. For example: “You are a traitor to your salt-givers”(Rao, *Kanthapura*)
- Loan words from the Indian languages into English
- Changes made in the syntax or structure of the language
- Use of Indian imageries
- Traditional Indian forms applied, for example in *Kanthapura*, Achakka the grandmother uses the Indian form of story telling

Freedom Struggle Movement of the 1930's

- On the anniversary of Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919, Gandhiji walked to Dandi and made salt through evaporation
- This was a start to a series of civil disobedience movements in the 1930's
- Rejuvenated the call for Swaraj and facilitated the downfall of British Raj
- Indian National Congress adopted Satyagraha to initiate self rule from British rule
- Truth and non-violence were the main pillars of the Civil Disobedience movement.

Mahatma Gandhi in 1930's

- Dandi March/ Salt Satyagraha
- Civil Disobedience Movement
- Tried removing stigmas associated with untouchability
- Boycott Movement and spinning of charkhas
- He had a massive influence on the masses, which also led to the upsurge of patriotism.

* All of these efforts made or movements started by Gandhiji is also written about in Kanthapura by Raja Rao

People of Kanthapura

- They survive on myths. For example, Goddess Kenchamma's victory over the demon turned their hills red.
- People who were slumbering for ages, is jostled to life through their participation in the freedom struggle movement
- Their religious sentiments are touched upon to make them understand about the political situation of their country
- The religious, political and social stand as one for the people of Kanthapura
- The call for Swaraj made by Gandhiji is also understood by the people as the call for Ramarajya

Themes

- Spirit of Indian struggle movement in the 1930's and its influence on the masses
- Deification of Mahatma Gandhi
- Use of Mythologies
- Kanthapura as India in microcosm
- Moorthappa and Gandhi
- Freedom struggle movement transcends all barriers

Portrayal of Mahatma Gandhi in Kanthapura

- Mahatma Gandhi's birth is equated with the birth of God in Jayaramchar's Harikathas
- Gandhiji is not only a political leader but also seen as a reincarnation of Hindu Gods
- Religious appeal made to encourage people to participate in the freedom struggle movement
- Gandhiji's absence in Kanthapura is met by Moorthy-one of those little Gandhis produced by his magical influence
- His fight against the British is also to reinstate good over evil
- People understand that Gandhiji's victory over the British would bring about Ramarajya

Freedom Struggle Movement in Kanthapura

- Social reforms carried out along with the struggle for freedom.
- It is a fight between the good and evil.
- People relate to it as a war between the devas and the asuras.
- Their country is also their mother, whom they have decided to free from the clutches of the demons
- Participation of women like Ratna and Rangamma, who are various forms of Shakti
- The movement justifies itself, for example, exploitation of labourers working in Skeffington Coffee Estate
- Transcends barriers such as caste, gender, and age to collectively fight for the nation

Use of Myths

- Juxtaposition of past and present
- Myths help the writer to glorify the present
- Similar to Gods and Goddesses in myths, Moorthy and Gandhiji acquire a status above men
- Harikathas combine the political and mythical aspects

Moorthappa /Moorthy

- Educated man and possessed leadership qualities
- One who introduced Mahatma Gandhi and his Civil Disobedience Movement to the people of Kanthapura
- His first meeting with Gandhiji is described as phenomenal experience
- Belongs to the upper caste, but follows Gandhiji's message on eradication of untouchability
- For the people of Kanthapura, if Gandhi is a big mountain then Moorthy is a small mountain
- Moorthy embodies the vision of Gandhiji and also initiates the Gandhian program of action.
- His selfless goals turn him into a local Mahatma

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