

ENGLISH MINOR COURSE : 201

Topic : *Kanthapura* by Raja Rao

Study materials

Prepared by : Shyamali Mandal

1. Discuss the use of myth in Raja Rao's *Kanthapur*.

Ans: Myth is a traditional tale that passes from one generation to another generation through oral tradition involving supernatural elements or events and explaining the early history of mankind, natural or social phenomenon. Like legends or folktale it is a sub branch of oral tradition of folklore. Folk is, again, a group of subalterns who have a tradition bearing at least one characteristic in common. Hence, folk myth is distinctly different from the mainstream Puranic myth. Folk dwell side by side in the society with those considered to be superior but they

www.galaxyimrj.com 026The Exploration of Folk Myth and Its Integrity in *Kanthapura*: A Study have given birth to a different discourse in the society. Puranic myth is chiefly adored by the Brahmins while folk myth is an outcome of the folks but the latter is obviously influenced by the former. Northrop

Frye opines that literature is also a sort of mythology that is written down either consciously or unconsciously and as the society progresses, its mythical elements become an archetype or a structural pattern of story-telling. According to C.G. Jung myth emanates from the human psyche and it again gets express in the form of culture and societal norms. The collective unconscious influence the formation of culture and its progress. Inclusion of myth is integral in literature since time immemorial. According to Frye, no society can exist without myth. R. Parathasarathi in his introduction to *Kanthapura* avers “Told by an old woman, Achakka, the story evokes the spirit and discourse of the traditional folk narrative.” (ix). *Kanthapura* has oral tags like once upon a time, and this is how it all began etc. Other characteristics of oral narrative include the use of songs, prayers, proverbs, epic, lists, and catalogues.

2. Discuss the representation of Gandhian philosophy in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*.

Ans : *Kanthapura* has been inspired by and it celebrates the Gandhian movement. The novel has been fittingly called a Gandhi purana or a Sthala

purana, as Raja Rao himself calls it in his foreword to the novel, for it unfolds the legendary history of a remote village in South India caught up in the maelstrom of Gandhian freedom movement. The story of the novel is set against the backdrop of the early phase of India's freedom struggle preceding Gandhi's Dandi march and culminating in the Gandhi Irwin Pact. It focuses on the very decade when the Civil Disobedience movement reached its zenith. Although the setting of the novel is a far flung South Indian village the people of the place, at least those conscious of the state of affairs were well aware of the proceedings outside in the rest of the movement-stirred India. Through them references are made to the crucial events in the struggle vis-a-vis the British repression upon the Indian mass. In the novel Moorthy, the hero of the novel is a Gandhian man. He gives up his studies and dedicates himself to India's freedom struggle after having a vision of Gandhi. He brings to Kanthapura the excitement of Gandhian freedom movement in its different aspects. A Congress committee was formed in Kanthapura. Under Moorthy's leadership the people of Kanthapura organized a mass movement in the

Gandhian way, though ultimately the movement failed. The methods adopted by Moorthy in conducting the freedom movement puts us in mind of those of Gandhiji himself on the actual arena, particularly Gandhi's resorting to fasting for self-purification, shouldering the blame of violence perpetrated by his followers and his devotion to stern truth. In the novel we have several references to Gandhian movement for Swaraj and its goal, and the methods adopted by Moorthy in this regard reminds us of those of Mahatma Gandhi such as Swadeshi movement on a large scale through spinning, eradication of untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity and the upliftment of the backward people. Thus the novel is dominated by Moorthy's freedom movement on Gandhian track and principle and though the movement ultimately fails, it produces a significant arousal of patriotic zeal in the heart of the people not only of Kanthapura but also of International Journal of Multidisciplinary the neighbouring areas. Thus the novel is a celebration in fictional form of the Gandhian movement in India during 1930s.

3. Discuss Raja Rao's narrative technique in *Kanthapura*.

Ans : In the early stages of literary careers, most postcolonial writers were unsure whether they should write in their native language or in English. Many of them perceived writing in English as oppressive since it was the colonizers' language or the language of overlords. They believed that writing in English would discourage the use of native languages. As a result, several postcolonial writers defended a total return to the usage of local languages while rejecting the colonists' language. On the other hand, many writers chose English as their medium of expression. Choosing English as a medium of expression made them view it as an act of resistance. They utilized it to challenge their colonial masters' generated pool of hegemony and discourse against the Orient as well as to deconstruct the English. However, they didn't use the English form used by the British as such but replaced it "with a local variant that doesn't have the perceived stain of being somehow sub-standard, but rather reflects a distinct cultural outlook through local usage." (Margulis and Nawakoski, 1996) These writers used English to represent their native culture,

sensibilities, and spirit. New English was created as a therapeutic act of resistance by the champions of this stark thought. In this connection, Salman Rushdie, in *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), maintains that, "One of the changes has to do with attitudes towards the use of English. Many have referred to the argument about the appropriateness of this language to Indian themes. And I hope all of us share the opinion that we cannot simply use the language the way the British did; that it needs remaking for our own purposes." (17) In this context, Raja Rao's novel *Kanthapura* occupies a unique position in the field of Indian English fiction. Its goal of highlighting Indian thought and feelings, Indian heritage and culture, and the veritable Indian, is greatly acknowledged and admired by readers. Its short, enduring, classic Foreword is, "in effect, the manifesto of all Indian literature in English" (Trivedi, 9). This was so because Raja Rao not only had to construct meaning into an "alien" language but also had to present the Indian sentiments and spirit in a foreign language. Raja Rao writes that, "One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own" (*Kanthapura*, 1). The use of extended

sentences without punctuation, the repeated phrases and sentences frequently to create a rhythmic, lyrical effect, the seemingly pointless digressions in the story, and the literal translation of Indian terms and phrases into English, all contribute to Kanthapura's Indianness. A textual example is used to illustrate the Indian credo.

4. Discuss Moorthy as the central protagonist of Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*.

Ans : Rao projects Gandhi in person only once in the novel through Moorthy's vision of Gandhi. Gandhi manifests himself in Moorthy's vision as „mighty and God beaming.“ In his vision Gandhi spoke to him in a deep and stirring voice that made a way into the heart of Moorthy. He listened in silence to the inspiring words of Mahatma : “There is but one force in life and that is Truth, and there is but one love in life and that is the love of mankind, there is but one God in life and that is the God of all.” In the vision Mahatma advised Moorthy to adhere to the path of Truth, suggested him to give up studies under the British Education system, to serve the country by working among the dumb millions of villagers.

Finally Mahatma touched Moorthy affectionately and this touch produced an epiphanic effect upon Moorthy and everything seemed to manifest itself in its utmost clarity.