

Art and Techniques of Raja Rao in Kanthapura

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Abstract: Art and techniques also known as literary devices provide proper meaning for the reader and help the reader to the imagination to visualize situations. Narration is the use of a written or spoken commentary to convey a story to an audience. A narrator is a personal character or a non personal voice that the creator of the story develops to deliver information to the audience, particularly about the plot. This research is based on the art and techniques of narration by Raja Rao in his novel Kanthapura.

Introduction:

Raja Rao's Kanthapura is a triumph of narrative art. It is perfectly suited to the ends he wanted to achieve. He tells us in his classic preface to the novel that the telling has not been easy. This was so because he had to capture the tempo of Indian Life in a foreign language.

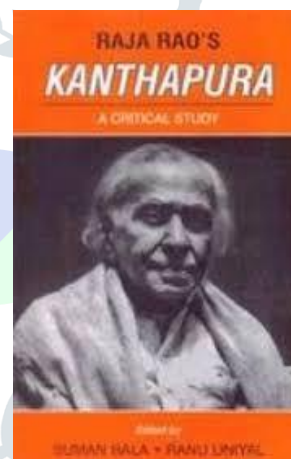
As he himself tells us, "We in India think quickly, we when we move, we move quickly and our paths are paths

It is this swiftness of movement which an Indian capture, he must tell a tale in which episodes follow episodes succession. Kanthapura is just such a tab.

Raja Rao has been successful in bringing into his amazing amount of heterogeneous material, and still moves towards the end he had in mind. The narration is chronological, there is no backward and forward movement as in a stream of consciousness novel. The English syntax has been suitably modified broken to suit the emotions which are typically Indian.

The tale has been narrated by a persona, called Achkka.. Achkka is an old grandmother, most ancient of storytellers. She had been personally involved in the events and she narrates these events years later for the benefits of a newcomer. Thus the substance of the novel is made up of the stream of her memory in which many events and characters have been blurred by the passage of time, and many others have been heightened by her imagination. All is recollected and narrated by a native which is not the author's but the narrator's.

According to Meenakshi Mukherjee, "The choice of such a narrator serves several useful purposes. Making this old woman the narrator enables Raja Rao to mingle facts and myths in an effective manner. For



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the old woman, Jawaharlal is a Bharata to the Mahatama who she believes will slay Ravana so that sita may be freed. For her Gandhi has attained the status of God and Moorthy is regarded as his Avatar in Kanthapura”.

The second advantage derived by this choice of narrator is that the language used by her is of an elemental quality. Her reaction to things is direct and vivid, not literary and second hand. She talks of the “pumpkin moon,” the streets “milk splashed” on a moonlit night young boys “bright as banana trunks”, all are images taken from familiar phenomena which would come naturally to a village woman. The character also enables Raja Rao to achieve his professed aim of reproducing the rhythm of Indian speech in English, as well as of coming does closet to an oral tradition of storytelling.

The narrator provides a convenient point of view, though she is never shaped individualized. We know nothing about her beyond the fact that she is a widow who has now no one except Seemu, who may be her son or grandson and has seven acres of wet land and twelve acres of dry land. This numerical precision is again meant to convey the simplicity of the way of life where a man’s property is measured not in terms of money but in terms of cattle and land. Her function is representative and her strength lies in being anonymous. She is just one of the many women of Kanthapura who responded to the call of the Mahatma conveyed through Moorthy. In this sense, she has choric function.

Achakka is both the narrator and the commentator. Her manner of telling the tale is, according to Srinivas Iyengar,

“Characteristically Indian feminine with a spontaneity that is coupled with sunflower vivid with a raciness suffused with native vigor, and exciting with a rich scene of drama ,shot through and through with humor and lyricism.”

The story is narrated simultaneously on two levels and thus acquires a dramatic character. Narration and description go hand in hand with a chorus like evaluation of characters and actions. Achakka’s evaluations are those of the novelist himself. They increase our understanding of events and characters and serve as a unifying force in the work. To a foreign reader this may appear obtuse. However those familiar with the vernacular and with the circumlocution of Indian speech habits will be delighted with Achakka’s narrative style and its gossipy digressions.

Achakka is garrulous, as a grandmother usually is and words flow out of her mouth in a quick succession. When a sense of largeness is to be conveyed there is a liberal killing up of epithets and images. Moorthy has been released from jail and the villagers wait eagerly for his arrival. Their suspense and their anxiety have been adequately conveyed through the use of a repetitive language replete with a sense of urgency. “And hearts began to beat and yet we saw no Moorthy and we were silent as those in the sanctum

at the camphor ceremony, yet no Moorthy and yet not a pair of his head was seen, and the bus had surely passed by the river over the bridge, and up the Santur Valley and Rangamma got so anxious that she sent Pariah Lingayya to sun and see, Pariah Lingayya ran and ran and from the top of the road cried out, ‘No, No and we all looked to this side and that and no Moorthy and no Seemu either was to be seen. And our hearts began to beat like drums.’”

Thus Achakka’s gossip digressions and circumlocution are in the hoary Indian tradition of telling. As Raja Rao he tells us in the preface. “The repertory of a grandmother is always bright, fact and fancy, reality and imagination men and gods, constantly mingle in her narration, and in this way the happenings in a remote obscure, out of the way village are transformed into a Gandhian or Gandhi- epic. In this way instead of remaining a mere Sthala Purana or regional novel, Kanthapura acquires the dimensions of an epic the epic of India’s struggle for freedom.”

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