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Executive Summary

Title: "Rural Transformation: A Study of Raja Rao's Novel "Kanthapura"

The project is a study of Raja Rao's Novel called "Kanthapura" to explore the transformation of the mindset of the rural people and how the writer brings out the change of ordinary, poor, mostly uneducated and predominantly illiterate people are transformed into non-violent freedom fighters under the leadership of the protagonist of the novel. Indian rural areas need transformation of mindset and to experience higher planes of living. Economic transformation has been taking place. But economic empowerment goes meaningless if people do not embrace values.

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Minor Research Project: Raja Rao's novel Kanthapura is a remarkable work in relation to Indian Writing in English. The researcher has chosen the topic

"RURAL TRANSFORMATION: A STUDY OF RAJA RAO'S NOVEL KANTHAPURA" not with an intention unfold the role of leadership in bringing about transformation in the Indian villages and the principles are applicable to most other villages in India which need transformation.

The novel helps us to understand the basis of rural transformation. :

India is a land of villages. The worst problems such as poverty, lack of education, superstitions, caste exploitation, ignorance, the feudal system, and so on dog the people of Indian villages. These days vote-motivated approach and political ambitions of our leaders have been acting as divisive forces in our country. They have sacrificed long-term vision for temporary gains. Hence our villages need attention and understanding. No doubt there are innumerable studies on Indian rural problems and solutions have been suggested. A host of them have been experimented upon.

Here, the researcher tries to see how the present novel can look at transformation from a different point of view. The novelist, though tends to be pragmatic and realistic, suggestively indicates the potential and hidden possibilities. The novel "Kanthapura" is set in the context of Indian Independence Movement. The Gandhian non-violent struggle, introduction of the spinning wheel, spiritual empowerment of the pariahs/ untouchables and women, in addition to literacy programme are the instruments through which the village, in the novel, undergoes a transformation to link itself with the national life.

The dalits and women emerge as leaders to fight against injustice.

The role of leadership is an essential part of the study for the researcher which can be taken as a model for transformation of any village in the Indian scenario. The following factors have been fore-grounded in the novel are Illiteracy and superstitions of villagers, who are predominantly peasants, caste barriers traditional mindset.

Other fore grounded factors:

Caste factor as an instrument of exploitation
Problems of attitude
Traditional mindset
Lack of involvement in public life
Interaction between traditional and progressives forces,

Government versus freedom fighters, and labourers versus the Lords

Infusion of Patriotic spirit: Leadership

Apparent failure yet a difference in attitude and personalities of the villagers of Kanthapura

Some of the typical problems faced in rural India, in Mahatma Gandhi's views, are: "India lives in her villages, not in her cities."

"If the village perishes, India perishes too."

"India is not to be found in its few cities but in the 700,000 villages- we have hardly ever paused to enquire if these folks get sufficient to eat and clothe themselves with."

Our former Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi's following view adds strength to Mahatma Gandhi's view. This highlights the importance of transformation in Indian villages in the post-independence India.

"The overwhelming majority of our people live in villages and will continue to do so for years to come. I would go further and say that we don't want to even uproot them." She further said "Rural life should be so enriched as to prevent the migration of people and resources from villages to towns." From this point of view the study undertaken for research has relevance. (From the Indian Express-October 28, 2006--Quotes by Mahatma Gandhi about Indian Villages- The writer is a Secretary General PHDCCI)

The problem is viability of physical and social infrastructure in village.

Methodology: Relevant books have been referred and articles on various subtitles have been sourced from Internet to widen the horizon of the study undertaken.

X. Findings:

People of rural areas like the village of Kanthapura are by and large inactive in public life as found in the novel. They are activated and lifted to a higher plane of life which is to go beyond the self.

Rural people needed motivation. Motivation enables one to get a sense of direction and helps one to come out of the shell. Efficacious Leadership can lead a group or community to achieve goals by motivating the trusted followers.

They needed inspiration from a committed leader. Inspiration is one aspect of development while it demands hard work/perspiration for accomplishing the set goal.

Educational facilities are lacking which hinder their emergence. The few who are lucky to get higher level of educational exposure can induce the people of the village to think of the good of the community. More over education instills courage and confidence.

Caste barriers dog rural life as in the village in the novel. Though it is a unique feature of Indian Society, it has been a curse to Indian life. The limits of caste can be broken for reaching more humane status if education and training are available.

Women are too limited to personal and household life. They are almost confined to four walls. Widows have a pathetic status and need empowerment.

Labourers are inhumanly exploited in the village which is almost a common phenomenon. Illiteracy and ignorance land them in that condition.

Harijans are the victims of our stagnated caste system and enlightened leaders can promote equality as Moorthy could uplift the Harijans of his village. They need a just and dignified status to prove their great worth. Rachanna in the novel provides a testimony to this.

The people do not have the ability to protest against injustice and are resigned to their fate on account of dehumanization.

Traditionally strong superstitious forces can be eliminated if there is commitment. Bhatta becomes a relic of the past in the novel. A woman as Achakka embraces new ideas.

Enlightened personalities can lift a village to higher level of life through their guidance and leadership as the village in the novel became an army of selfless freedom fighters.

Rachanna, an illiterate, the widows Ratna and Rangamma show possibilities of leadership and emerge leaders. Informal education and constant exposure and interaction can mould such people to commit themselves for noble causes.

Women and dalits display abilities and mental toughness to face repression. Their trust in a leader and unflinching loyalty energize them to dedicate for a common cause.

Moorthy, Vasudev, Gangadhar and Seenu stand for the role of educated youth in village transformation. Education is a panacea for most of the serious problems. Education can be both formal and informal.

Uneducated rural people suffer from inferiority complex. This humbles them and may also drive them to slavery. It is very necessary to strike at the root of this psychological problem. The potential of our country is in villages but inferiority complex has been a huge obstacle. The novel unravels the possibilities of overcoming this hurdle.

XI Suggestions:

Reading of the “Kanthapura”, the novel by Raja Rao, can help imbibe the best qualities and attitude of committed and effective leadership. The novel not only gives ideas but also enables to feel the development of leadership.

Rural people must change their attitude. They must interact with the educated people and committed leaders who are selfless and have concern.

Eradication of inferiority complex is necessary. The sense of inferiority gradually becomes a trait and gets hardened in one's personality. Leadership and education have to play a significant role. Hence Expansion of Educational opportunities especially for higher education is very essential.

Rural people must go in for education even up to university level. Various facilities are made available which go unnoticed. If the beneficiaries of Higher Education contribute to the uplift of their villages there will be dramatic changes. One need not wait for getting inspiration from outside. One need not depend on external forces. The needed inspiration has every possibility of coming from within. Moorthy's return to Kanthapura was spirited by a vision/dream. External factors add strength.

Educated youth must return to villages for instilling necessary changes. Youth are the salt of the nation but urban areas have become baits for them. A clear conviction and concern for the people around may develop commitment. Such an ambience needs to be developed.

Rural youth must read the novel “Kanthapura” and understand how to acquire effective leadership qualities. It can be considered a text for instilling motivation and for development of the rural individual.

Rural women Must go in for education and participate in public life. Traditional factors may hinder them. A constant participation will gradually change the attitude of the people with conservative attitude and will lead to acceptance of women as rightful participants of public life. This change is imperative at grassroots level. As Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru says, “ Success often goes to those who dare and act; it seldom goes to the timid.” Women must dare.

There is a need to fight against practice of superstitions and exploitation which are carried on in the name of caste. The caste based regimentation narrows down the opportunities to get greater exposure to positive ideas and experiences in spite of their need for fuller development and transformation.

Rural people abound with talent but need enlightenment and training. They need ambience. External stimulants and internal teaming of the village folk will provide opportunities for uplift. Gandhiji and Belur Narahari Shastri in the Novel act as external stimulants and the village transforms into a cultural army capable of fighting injustice and police

brutality. Therefore the youth must hunt for such stimuli.

Participation in public life and fighting for common good will ensure creation of good ambience in rural life.

Development of leadership in women is the need of the hour. They must be ready to educate, agitate and change. They must think out of the box and must act.

Social balance must be achieved through equality of treatment for Harijans. They need to be brought into the mainstream and the centuries of pain and injustice must be erased from their minds.

Elimination of private money lenders is badly required. The poor people have been victims of this private money-lending. Strict enforcement of Law is the need of the hour.

Effective instruments with strategies have to be employed to transform villages and instead of charkha it may be any newly required technology and it has to be available at cottage level so that there shall be no external dependence.

Embracing new ideas is crucial and need of the hour. As a wise saying goes “Man cannot help changing; change means growth.”

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