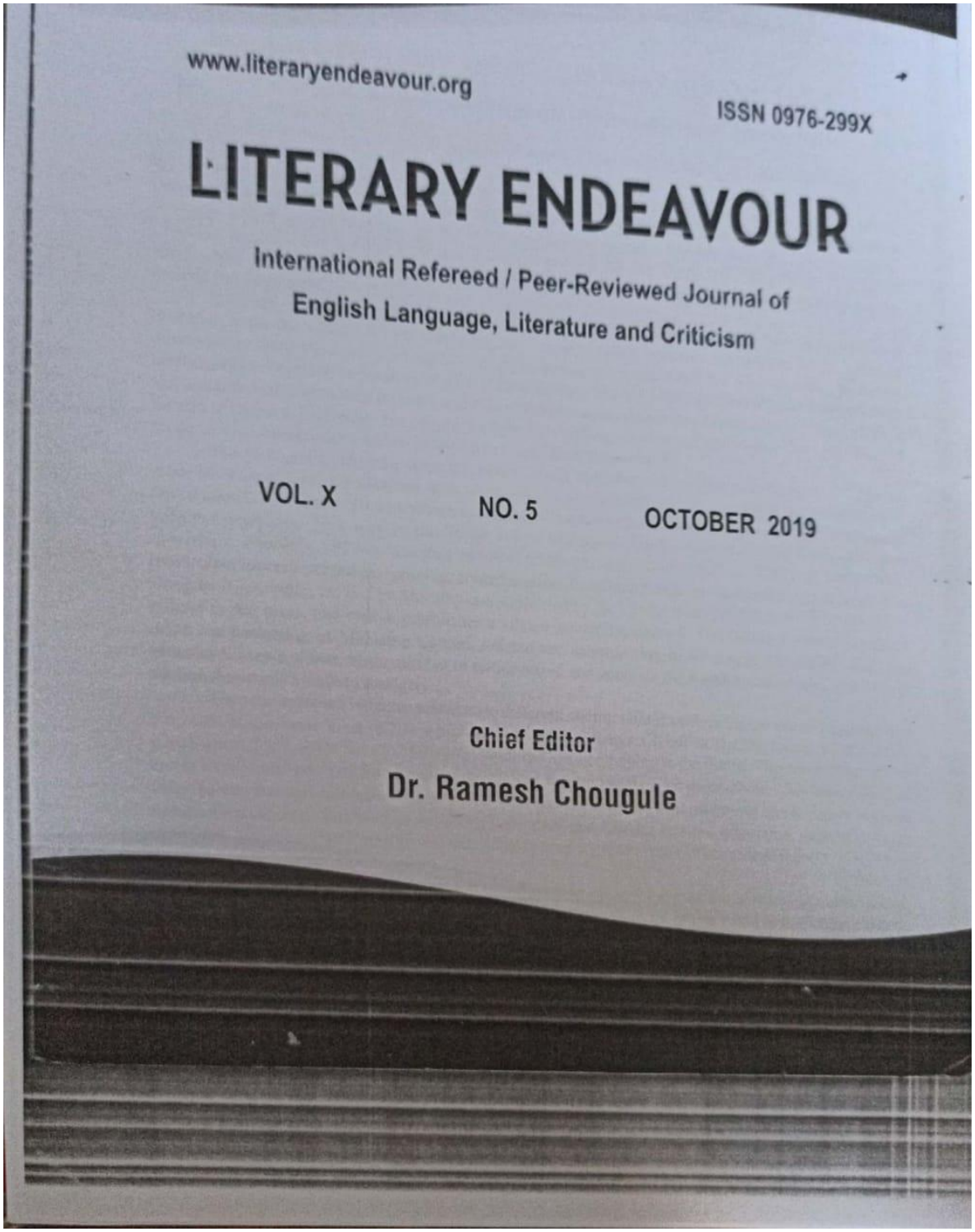
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ಹಲಗೇರಿರಸ್ತೆ.
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LANGUAGE, TECHNIQUE AND STYLE IN RAJA RAO'S *KANTHAPURA*

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Raja Rao is continuously aware of his background steeped in Vedic experience. This is part of history and nation and race. The result is he mixes the present with the past, with the Vedantic myth. Here the myth is a structured essence. So his is a metaphysical attitude, distinct from the western Judeo-Christian concept. The present time is a historical present for the characters. Raja Rao's first novel *Kanthapura* displays this age-old life in the Gandhian times of freedom struggle. There are both forms the minetic and the mythic.

Kanthapura as a village has that static life. The village deity Kenchamma, a form of Parvati after Shaktism, rules the village. All else including the social hierarchy remains the same as in the times of Yajnavalkya. Here Moorthy is a Gandhi man representing the present and the real. Moorthy, however, awakens the village, for its freedom as part of the country's freedom. He asks the villagers to reject caste and untouchability and also patriarchy and follow the economic measures of spinning for clothes. This is the cult of charaka. He teaches the people the three Rs reading, writing and arithmetic. The opposition to modernism or emancipation and empowerment comes from two sources.

The protagonist Moorthy does not bother about both the evils -- one old (Bhat) and the other modern. He continues his idealism with missionary zeal. He reforms the coolies of the neighbouring Skeffington Coffee Estate. He establishes a Congress Committee for Kanthapura. He even gets arrested for seditious activities. This was in the 1930s when Mahatma Gandhi started his Civil-Disobedience movement. Moorthy follows Gandhi's political idealism, conducting such activities as temperance movement, literacy campaign, spinning, contribution to Gandhian funds, and enlightening the folks. The Congress Committee, headed by Moorthy and supported by the village head Patel Range Gowda himself, refuses to pay taxes, and even it establishes a village governing council. The Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, hoisted the national flag of Swaraj in Lahore in 1929. So, Moorthy is aware of that. More number of police arrive and penalize the Kanthapura people. The British auction the people's lands to strangers.

Then the uprooted villagers scattered to different nearby villages where the people still live age-old life. This is the same kind of life which we saw in Kanthapura itself at the beginning of the novel *Kanthapura*. They just believe in Mahatma Gandhi as a savior, hoping in the future. They do not take up the law in their lands and flung into freedom movement, improving their lot themselves. They never think of individuality and self-reliance. Raja Rao thus ridicules them as the chip of the old block. There is also a streak of socialism as followed by Moorthy. It is noted that Gandhi was not a socialist, though he hated capitalism. But the author Raja Rao was a socialist later as we see his novel *Comrade Kirilov*.

Technique:

Kanthapura is a traditional novel. It introduces the place for setting the plot and characterization, and the historical background. Moorthy starts all the complications including his love for Ratna. He is set in opposition to Bhatta, the villain. He is paralleled with Patel Range Gowda. Rangamma and other ladies, and several men collaborate in his activities. He follows Gandhi's ideology faithfully. He becomes the village Gandhi that is to say. He conducts the freedom struggle against the British rule as Gandhi really conducted it in India then. All other characters suffer for his sake, and for Gandhi's sake and for God's sake!

This is but a traditional narrative.

Technically speaking the novel starts from the middle of Moorthy's life. There is shifting of scenes past and present. He is introduced as 'corner-house Moorthy', and is said to be quiet, generous, serene, and Brahminical. His past is established when Bhatta decides to stop Gandhi-business. His being excommunicated forces his mother Narasamma die. The violence of strike at the coffee estate forces him to observe fast. The same pattern informs the lives of Bhatta and Rangamma.

The narrative is linear when it describes the Kartika festival, monsoon and planting ceremony. The grandmother Achakka is the narrator here. The skaz or oral storytelling is there. The first-person narration establishes an intimacy with the reader. There are other narrators too. Whatever, Moorthy is the focus of all these narrations. There is much violence in almost two thirds of the novel, and then the village itself collapses. Moorthy is also disillusioned at the end as Gandhi was disillusioned when the issue of India's Partition took place. Even the characters of Range Gowda, Bhatta, Venkamma disappear and strange characters replace them at the end as if the hell is appearing. We get glimpses of Vedamma, Puttamma, Timmamma, Satamma, Laksamma and Nanjamma. As all the INC leaders were in jail after 1942, all the important characters are in jail. Bhatta himself visits Banaras for religious solace.

Every novel begins it with its milieu as the present one. Once we start reading the novel *Kanthapura*, we feel that it is a living Kannada village. The encounter between Range Gowda and Badekhan is illustrative of this. As a Muslim, Bade Khan is not welcomed in the Hindu village. The Patel is a veritable tiger. Badekhan is not provided with a house, and Patel warns him not to take bribes. Patel represents the whole village. Village women's meeting at river steps, their gossips, nuptials and festivals at home speak of domestic life vividly. This is true even when it comes to police brutality leased upon the villagers during strikes. See the following:

> There are cries and shrieks and moans and groans, and men fly to the left and to the right, and they howl and they yell and they fall and they rise and we rise, too, to fly, but the soldiers have seen us, and one of them rushes towards us, and we are felled and twisted, we are felled and kicked, we are felled and the bayonets waved over our faces-and a long time passes before we wake and we find Satamma fainted beside us, and Madanna and I, who were soaking in a ditch, crawl past him. And then there is a shot, and a fleeing man nearby is shot in the chest and he falls over us, and the moon splashed on his moustached face, his peasant-blanket soaked in blood. (*Kanthapura* 143)

Esha Dey thinks certain descriptions of the novel are far from the reality. She exemplifies the para. "And suddenly a boy rushes to the flag and a host of bayonets are thrust at him."

Language, style and experiment:

Raja Rao's use of language is very innovative. His Foreword is quite revealing to even the western readers. English, according to Rao, is "the language of our intellectual make-up but it is not the language of our emotional make-up." His main object is therefore to find stylistic equivalent in an alien language, of emotion and feeling, in other words, of the modes of actual and direct apprehension of life. This style is realistic for the expression of the self. He is clear at all levels - lexical, syntactic and metaphoric. Rao proposes an alternative stylistic mode of expression as Gabriel Okara did it in his novel *Voice* in Africa. Though Rao is not the first to use the structure of L1 over L2 or English, he is the first to find a meaningful relationship between the narrative form and the stylistic experiment. The language is quite adequate in *Kanthapura* for the indigenous people with little intellectual awakening. Critics think Rao has to combine two experiments: one, to present an intense and particular experience delimited in time and space; the other, to denote a general, timeless and eternal perspective and, if possible, to mingle the two in a golden mean.

So, both experiences - the particular and the general - are in co-existence here. Local color is the

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