



Elements of Spirituality in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* and Kipling's *Kim*

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ABSTRACT:

'Spirit' is a vital principle of life, the breath of God, air or wind. Spirit is more than simply being physical consciousness, it 'is the 'psyche' in modern terms. Spirituality is one's character or quality that makes one transcend the barriers of worldliness, caste, creed and sensuality and realize one's connection with the Truth. Spirituality leads one to search for and discover meaning in life, a meaning that goes beyond a merely material experience, however successful. This is a deeply personal search, which can bring a person to inner peace even in the presence of adverse circumstances. The present paper aims to study elements of spirituality in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* and Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*.

Key Words: Spirituality, society, salvation, renunciation, self-realization.

Spiritual experience is impartial and non-personal. It is an awareness that transcends the constraints and agendas of the personal mind or ego. Non-personal consciousness is unselfish because it is free of ego and it provides a clear view of how to be in the world and let the world be as it is. In a non-personal state of consciousness, the total elusiveness of the world to human understanding and control is obvious. The development of spirituality does not require withdrawal from the perceptual world.

Spiritual experience is the foundation stone of Indian religion and culture. Spirituality is therefore an inevitable factor in every life. It has its own law. It has conformity with the truth of things and it encompasses and controls the world of Indians.

Spiritual realization is an inward transformation in one's character. It is a stage of upliftment from ignorance to knowledge, from an unregenerate to regenerate condition. It is an awakening, a rebornness in one's character. Spirituality in character leads one to search of the knowledge of the highest and the absolute by direct experience and manifestation of the search in every mode of living, thinking and acting. It has been stated in the *Bhagwad Gita* as the means that those undeluded ones, who are free from pride and infatuation, who have conquered the vice of attachment and dwell constantly in God, and whose desires have completely disappeared - freed from the pairs of opposites known as pleasure and pain they attain that imperishable supreme state.

In *Kanthapura*, Moorthy rises above the temptation of the earthly pleasures of life. He overcomes his desires and passions and works for the betterment of the society. Moorthy conquers his senses and attains the state of *Jivanmukta* adhering to the ideals of non-attachment, conquest of all prejudices and emotional bondage and selfless love towards all humanity. The ideology of Gandhi in Moorthy's vision is a simplistic formula for the benefit of his illiterate devotees. He teaches the lessons of non-violence, truth and love.

It is the spirituality of Moorthy which enables them to become united against the cruel Britishers. The image and vision of Gandhi and his followers like Moorthy is firmly established in the minds of Kanthapurians. It has been observed that Moorthy gives religion a new direction and offers the society, concept of unity and equality and dreams of a Utopian society.

Moorthy's concept of religion is broad and enlightened. He appears to be kindled Kanthapura with a large number of religion's rituals with a view to calling people from various quarters of the society

and culture to a secular platform. He recognizes the *pariahs* as individual and awakens their consciousness and encourages them to take part in the activities of the society. He promotes not merely communal synthesis but also integration among the divided Kanthapurians. The society firmly has faith in the Gandhian concept of spirituality. This also has been observed that the Kanthapurian society truly practised non-violence and even when Bade Khan manhandled Moorthy, the wives of the coolies fell upon him and would have hurt him badly but Moorthy asked them set him free.

It is revealed that Moorthy is true to the basic Gandhian ideology avoiding any direct confrontation with unbelief or criticism. Thus, the historical person of the Mahatma is approximated to a well known arch type and is accepted by the ordinary men as reality but for the legendary parallel. To the people of Kanthapura, as in the vision of Moorthy, the Mahatma is a mighty and God - beaming. "Kanthapura is a veritable grammar of the Gandhian myth-the myth that is but a poetic translation of reality." (Iyenger, 1998) Moorthy words replaced by his devotees affect the villagers with a force of a divine edict. This is illustrated in the person of Moorthy who practices truth, non-violence, and spinning and that of Shankar who is a typical follower of the Mahatma. Rangamma and Ratna also, like the legendary heroines of India, pursue the ideals of Mahatma.

Lama as the embodiment of Buddhistic spirit

Lama was holy, reverent, unsuspecting, hopeful innocent, self-sacrificing and charitable. Lama in the novel is the embodiment of Buddhistic spirit. The Lama practices all the rules of Buddhistic religion. He is in the search of the Holy River which can wash away all the sins: "Where nature ---- is that who so bathes in it washes away all taint and speckle of sin." (Kim:14) and thus can free himself from the wheel of life.

Even Kim is moved by the Lama's sincerity and innocence, begs food for him and thus begins an exceptional relationship between the *Guru* and *Chela*. As a *Chela*, Kim looks after the bodily needs of his *Guru*, the Lama and receives instruction regarding the wheel of life: "When the shadows shortened and the Lama leaned more heavily upon Kim, there was always the wheel of life to draw forth, to hold flat under wiped stones, and with a long straw to expound cycle by cycle ---- obediently, then with bowed head and brown finger alert to follow the pointer, did the *Chela* study; but when they came to the Human world busy and profitless, that is just above the Hells, his mind was distracted; for by the roadside trundled the very wheel itself, eating, drinking, trading, marrying and quarreling - all warmly alive." (Kim: 302)

Lama used to teach Kim, the spiritual teachings of Buddha through concrete maps and other designs. "Kipling is well versed in Indian philosophic thoughts. Kipling considered India as his home. The Indian spirit has a great importance for Kipling. Kipling's Kim represents the English spirit, and the Lama represents the ancient wisdom of Indian land." (Mehta, 2009)

Rudyard Kipling has given a very beautiful description of the release of the Lama's soul from the body; the description is truly impressionistic. At the end of the story, the Lama felt that his soul was merging with the universal soul. Thus, it has been revealed that the character of the Lama reflects the concepts of non-attachment, self-sacrifice, self-realization, wisdom etc. The incident on the Road to Benaras, suggests the elements of *Ahimsa* in the character of the Lama.

All the great spiritual qualities of a true Buddhist are found in the Lama. His outlook is other worldly; his devotion to Buddha is supreme and unbelievable. Whenever Kim got a chance he travelled with Lama in order to understand Buddhistic spiritual philosophy. Therefore, Kim represents the concept of wisdom.

Raja Rao's Kanthapura conveys the concept of Gandhian spirituality. The essence of sainthood and its radiating glory becomes the central point of the story. Moorthy idealized Gandhian philosophy of universal brotherhood, equality, casteless ness and abolition of untouchability whereas Lama in Rudyard Kipling's Kim represented the concept of Buddhist spirituality. He is a follower of the middle way, searching for the River of the Arrow. His search for the River of the Arrow, or the River of Life, was his search for the Buddhist's goal. Both Moorthy and Lama represented spiritual concepts like - love, truth, beauty, non-violence, self-realization, self-discipline through their various actions.

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