CHAPTER 5

Place of Raja Rao and
Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya in Indian literature

(i) Place of Raja Rao in Indian Literature

(ii) Place of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya in Indian Literature

After making a brief analysis of Indian literature, it will be pertinent to focus the place of Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya in Indian literature. For convenience, this chapter is segmented into two parts, the first part analyses the place of Raja Rao in Indian literature and the second part examines the place of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya in Indian literature.

(i) Place of Raja Rao in Indian literature

Raja Rao holds a unique place in Indian literature. He is one of the greatest of Indian novelists writing in the English language. His output is limited in quantity, but the limited works have made his name a remarkable one. That Raja Rao has occupied a significant place in Indian literature, is clearly seen in his portrayal of wide Indian life through his art forms. Though Raja Rao has chosen the English language to express his thoughts, ideas etc. as an art form, he is called an Indian novelist because of the Indian spirits, Indian sensibility, Indian outlook which are prevalent in his works. “Raja Rao’s
considerable achievement derives substantially from the uniquely Indian spirit and thrust of his work.”¹ The characteristics of Indian literature, viz., to arouse the spirit of nationalism, to focus spirituality, depiction of Indian myths and legends, search for aesthetic experience, idealism, conflict between tradition and innovation etc. are beautifully portrayed by Raja Rao in his novels, which have made him a significant Indian novelist. The features of Indian literature that he displayed in his novels and short stories have fixed his place in Indian literature. It will perhaps be no exaggeration to say that by writing even the first novel, Raja Rao has shown all the characteristics of Indian literature. Raja Rao has the credit of showing every ethos of India through his limited works. His Indian sensibility is focused in every work. He can be called the most Indian of the Indians writing in English. C.D. Narasimhaiah says:

“He is perhaps the first Indian who brings to the business of novel writing a wide intellectual culture- Vedas, Upanishads, Buddha, Sankara and Coomaraswamy jostle with Cathars, the Holy Grail, Dante, Rilke, Paul Valery, Cezanne, Marx, Gide and Romain Rolland”²

One of the characteristics of Indian literature is to arouse nationalism in the minds of people. Rao’s involvement in the nationalist movement is reflected in his first two books. Raja Rao’s Kanthapura, is perhaps the only

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novel that goes successfully to the depth of national uprising. *Kanthapura* is Indian both in theme and treatment. The theme of the novel is the freedom struggle of India. The novel depicts the impact of Gandhian freedom struggle on the life of a remote and obscure Indian village named Kanthapura. Kanthapura is a typical Indian village and it has been described minutely with great realism. *Kanthapura* is the most poetical novel written by Raja Rao and in it, he has described the civil disobedience struggle, put up by the men and women of Kanthapura. It is an epic of freedom struggle, encompassing India’s vastness within the artistic structure of a work of fiction. The novel *Kanthapura* is an account of the impact of Gandhi’s teaching of non-violent resistance against the British. The novel pictures very vividly, truthfully and touchingly the story of the resurgence of India under Gandhi’s leadership. He draws vivid picture of exploitation of the Indian masses by the Britishers and atrocities committed on unarmed Satyagrahis. “*Kanthapura* is, in a sense, unique in Indian English fiction, perhaps the only successful attempt to probe the depths to which the nationalistic uprising penetrated, showing how, even in the remote villages, the new patriotic upsurge fused completely with traditional, religious faith, thus rediscovering the Indian soul.”  

*Kanthapura* is Indian not only because of the theme but also for the Hindu myths and rituals that make the novel a grand success. All the novels to his credit are unique themselves. Indian themes on western art form are exposed in his novels, wherein stories are told in the Indian tradition of story telling.

The Indian grandmother is the most ancient and most typical of story tellers. *Kanthapura* is written in the style of an Indian grand mother telling a story. In the Foreword of the novel *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao says,

"Episode follows episode, and when our thoughts stop our breath stops, and we move on to another thought. This was and still is the ordinary style of our story-telling. I have tried to follow it myself in this story."

In *Kanthapura*, a narrative technique based on traditional Indian methods of story telling has been adopted. His method of narration resultantly becomes digressive and episodic like that of Puranas. Raja Rao’s art of narration is decorative and episodic although it differs from his novel to novel. His method of narration of *The Serpent and the Rope* is different from that of *Kanthapura*. In *Kanthapura*, the narrator is an old grandmother and the narration is exactly as one would expect from an old Indian lady narrating some events to her grandchildren. Her description proceeds from her current memory and naturally she becomes garrulous and gossipy, sometimes with pauses. In course of her narration, she, as usual, recourts irrelevant episodes leading to digressions but without any confusion and yet the narrative advances in a chronological order.

Indianness is evident not only in *Kanthapura*, but also in *The Serpent and the Rope*, the second novel of Raja Rao. In him, there is seen an evolution as a novelist from simple narrative evinced in *Kanthapura* to complex analysis and metaphysical speculations in his later novels, which have

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shown intellectual and artistic maturity. Regarding the Indianness of the second novel, S. Nagarajan says,

"Reviewing Raja Rao's novel, *The Serpent and the Rope*, in the Sewanee Review (summer 1964), I ventured to call it an 'Indian' novel because it attempted a fundamental definition of Indianness. Indianness as it emerged in the novel, consisted in the conviction of the sole existence and reality of the subject... *The Serpent and the Rope* is Indian in another sense also: it makes a central use of certain important Hindu myths and rituals."5

The myth of Radha, Krishna, and Siva has been depicted in the novel very beautifully and it denotes Indian sensibility of the writer. *The Serpent and the Rope* has been called by scholars a modern Indian *Mahabharata* both in content and form. It is an attempt at a Puranic recreation of storytelling. It contains story within story, fables, legends, philosophical reflection on Christianity. The novel is an artistic expression of the Vedantic philosophy of non-dualism i.e., Advaita Vedanta, as propounded by Sri Sankara, the famous philosopher of the classical age of India. Raja Rao employs the narrative technique of 'I' as the protagonist-narrator. Ramaswamy, the hero narrator of the novel reveals his innermost thoughts and understanding of Indian life through his self-revelatory letters and introspective diary entries. In Raja Rao's writings, contemporary realities are mingled with Indian Gods and men, myths and legends. Raja Rao himself was deeply involved in Indian

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myths. The *Ramayana*, The *Mahabharata*, The *Upanishads* left a deep impact upon his life and the effect was focused in his works. “Rao is, indeed the first Indo-English novelist who throws a challenge to his countrymen’s very conception of the novel and the place of Indianness in English fiction.”

As an Indian writer, Raja Rao has been successful in displaying every ethos of Indian society through his novels. One of the characteristics of Indian culture is that Indian people are very religious and very eager to celebrate the festivals. The Indian culture of celebrating the different festivals through the religious outlook is focussed in *Kanthapura*. The Kanthapurians are happy to perform the Rama festival, the Krishna festival, the Ganesh festival, Sankara Jayanti, Sankara Vijaya, Satyanarayana Puja. The camphor trays and kumkum trays are decorated to perform Satyanarayana Puja. In Indian culture in special occasions like God’s procession etc., God is washed and the garlands of flowers are offered to Him. One of the distinguishing features of Indian culture is that in Indian society people celebrate some festivals taking donation from the people. Indian people are festival loving people. The Indian custom of collecting the donation from houses to houses has been prevalent in *Kanthapura*.

As an Indian novelist, Raja Rao has shown his capability of displaying the religious nature of Indian people. The deep religious faith towards the God or goddess is one of the important characteristics of Indian people.

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Indian people's religious belief is often mixed with superstition. Raja Rao has shown this belief of Indian people very beautifully in his novels. Specifically, this belief has been specifically prevalent in *Kanthapura*, the first novel of Raja Rao. The old Indian village people had no education. So they had many superstitious beliefs. Kanthapura is a village of pre-independent India. The people of Kanthapura also had many superstitious beliefs in connection with religion. The people believed that Gods were sometimes angry to some human-being, as a result, they had to die early. In this way, the novel is loaded with many superstitious beliefs. In *Kanthapura*, the prayer offered to Kenchamma sounds like a prayer in Indian language. It can truly be said that he has moulded English language in such a way as to make it a suitable medium for the expression of Indian sensibility. Inspite of using a foreign language in his works, Raja Rao has successfully expressed the Indian sensibility, which ranks him as an Indian novelist.

One of the important characteristics of Indian literature is to focus the spiritualism, which is inherent in the minds of the Indian people. Indian culture believes in spirituality. As an Indian writer, Raja Rao has shown this characteristic of Indian culture in almost all of his novels. The reference of the Holy *Gita* is given in *Kanthapura*, when it is said that the soul cannot be cut, cannot be burned. It is said in the Holy *Gita* in this way:

“Na jayate mriyate ba kadasin
Nayang bhutwa bhavita wa na bhuya.”

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Aajo nityah saswatohayag purano
Na hanyate hanyamane sarire."

This means that the soul is never born and never dies. This soul, once evolving, will never merge because this soul is birthless, nitya, sanatan and old. Though the body dies, the soul never dies. Indian spiritualism teaches people to believe in soul. Indian culture believes that one should not harm the soul which exists in every living creature because God lives in every soul. Hindu, Mohemedan, Christian, Pariah- all are the children of God. The ideology of Indian spiritualism as well as the idea that God is everywhere is emphasized by the mythical story recited by Jayaramachar in *Kanthapura*. Raja Rao has been successful in delineating the idea of Indian spiritualism in his other novels also. His quest for spirituality has lent metaphysical aura to his writings.

As an Indian writer, Raja Rao not only had focused the positive aspects of Indian people to the outside people, but also had shown the negative side of people. The novel *Kanthapura* displays the evil aspects of Indian society. *Kanthapura* is written at the time of pre-independence. The socio-economic division of people of that time, specifically in a village, is well portrayed in *Kanthapura*. The village Kanthapura is consisted of four and twenty houses in the Brahmin quarter, a potters’ quarter, a weavers’ quarter and a Sudra quarter. By portraying divisions in a small village like *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao has shown that this division is there in Indian villages. By telling

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about the various quarters into which the village is divided, Raja Rao has highlighted the fact that the Indian villages are caste-ridden. There is no free-mixing of the people even in the small and limited community of a village. The casteism, one of the most distinguishing evils of Indian society, has been described very vividly in Kanthapura. At that time, the rigidity of the caste system was so intense that the superior casted people had to be outcasted for going to the lower casted people. The lower casted people were not admitted to go inside the temples. They could get the blessings of God and see the idols of God or goddess from outside the temples. Many superstitious beliefs were also there in the minds of the people regarding casteism. One of the beliefs was that a Brahmin, after touching the Pariahs or Sudras, had to change the holy thread. However, he might be purified by throwing some water of the Ganges on his bodies. Raja Rao's credit lies in giving a realistic turn to all this factors.

It is also true that though there is the caste division in Indian society, still they are united and live peacefully. Specifically, at the time of the adversity, they become united. It is seen in Kanthapura that at the time of the freedom struggle of India, the Kanthapurians belonging to all communities joined in the struggle.

To create an Indian atmosphere, Raja Rao has made new experiments in style in his novels. In Kanthapura, Raja Rao makes a new experiment in style. The syntax of his sentences is quite different from the intonation of King's English. The opening sentence of the novel Kanthapura is "Our
village-I don’t think you have ever heard about it- Kanthapura is its name, and it is in the province of Kara” and it makes an Indian sensibility.

Raja Rao’s use of English, a foreign tongue for an Indian theme is suitably adopted for the expression of Indian sensibility. Though he has chosen the English language to express his thoughts, emotions etc., his style of writing is not like that of an Englishman. He raises his powerful voice against the use of Babu-English or English as is used in Oxford and Cambridge. Raja Rao makes a powerful plea for the adaptation of English language to Indian needs. One of the problems arose before the Indo-Anglian writer was how to find English words to express the peculiarly Indian feelings of his Indian character. Mulk Raj Anand tried to solve the problem by making literal translations of typical Punjabi words and abuses. This helped to create an Indian atmosphere. But the excessive use of this technique makes his writings crude and vulgar. Raja Rao has used the device very skillfully and effectively. He sometimes uses direct, literal translations of Indian or Kannada proverbs, idioms and phrases. He has said, ‘waterfall Venkamma’, ‘nose scratching Nanjamma’. This technique is extended to the expressions and idioms too. ‘The sinner may go to the ocean, but the water will only touch his knees’, ‘you forget it. But this stomach that has borne eight children cannot forget it’, ‘You are a traitor to your salt-givers’, ‘Your voice is not a sparrow voice in your village’, ‘Nobody will believe in such a crow and sparrow story’, ‘The youngest is always the holy bull’ are the literal

translations of Indian expressions which create an Indian atmosphere. Many words are imported from Indian languages directly in English without any translation or modification. ‘Dhoti’, ‘Mandap’, ‘Ahimsa’, ‘Kumkum’, ‘Maistri’, ‘Harikatha’ are some of the words which denote Indian sensibility.

The images that Raja Rao has used in his novels are thoroughly Indian. All the images are drawn from Indian objects and experiments. Names and words like Benaras, the Himalayas, the Ganges, Shiva, Parvati, and Covra conjure up Indian images. His similes and metaphors are related to the lives of Indian people. These are also drawn from history and mythology of India. Raja Rao has brought into his English the rhythm of Sanskrit and other Indian languages. He incorporates the rhythms of Sanskrit and Kannada speech in his descriptions. His usages like ‘The rice should be as fine as filigree, the mangoes are yellow as gold’, ‘the sky is as blue as a marriage shawl’, ‘women are as beautiful as new-opened guavas and as tender as April mangoes, ‘the boys are bright as banana trunks’ provide an Indian sensibility. Raja Rao’s use of imagery is equally distinctive and creative. His use of images is functional and not merely decorative; his imagery touches upon objects and experiences that are distinctively Indian and faithfully conveys Indian sensibility. His similes and metaphors are drawn from the common, everyday objects and phenomena which serve to clarity and elucidate.

Raja Rao has used many Indian dialects such as ‘Ayyo...Ayyoo’. Raja Rao’s “adventure with language, one can, as always; discern a vigorous and energetic pre-occupation with a native idiom that attempts to express a
distinctly Indian sensibility."9 Inspite of using a foreign language in his works, he has successfully expressed the Indian sensibility which ranks him as an Indian novelist.

It has been already said that Raja Rao’s Indian sensibility is not only focused in Kanthapura, but also in his other novels. Raja Rao himself was overwhelmed by Indian philosophy, Indian culture, Indian myth and rituals and Indian way of life which he carried everywhere. His long stay in France did not make him forget his Indian values, rather made him more conscious of his orientalism and Indian values. That is why, in every piece of work he reaffirms the undying Indian cultural tradition with reverence and passionate ardour. In his novels and short stories, he has given a graphic description of Indian village life. Raja Rao’s love of Indian culture and philosophy colours The Serpent and the Rope also. Regarding his second novel The Serpent and the Rope, C. D. Narasimhaiah says,

“It has been observed that in The Serpent and the Rope, for the first time in creative writing in English, India is made real to the West.”10

Regarding Raja Rao’s third novel, The Cat and Shakespeare, C.D. Narasimhaiah says,

“The Cat and Shakespeare is for me his most mature novel... It is an unsurpassed achievement in Indian fiction.”11

11. Ibid, P. 36

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Raja Rao has written a couple of essays to express his love for his motherland and his fascination for Indian culture and Vedantic philosophy. The Indian Vedantic vision and the wisdom of age-old Indian scriptures—Vedas, Upanishads, The Gita etc. are woven into the very fabric of Raja Rao’s novels. “Rao draws inspiration, theme and material from India as an idea, a vast, complex matrix of philosophies and religions, whose speculations and practices are vital to the continuities and fluctuations of her history and civilization.” 12 Raja Rao is such a writer who goes deep to the human heart. While other Indian novelists like R. K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand are concerned with social and political realities, Raja Rao is concerned with the spirit of India.

Contemporary Indian society is experiencing strong contrary pulls towards modernity and tradition. Raja Rao’s novels also focused this characteristic of Indian society. In the novel Kanthapura, Moorthy is a symbol of modernity, while, the illiterate village people represent the symbol of tradition, loaded with some conservative values. It is significant to note that one significant issue dominant in Indian literature is that there is a clash between tradition and innovation. In this respect the kanthapurians represent the symbol of Indian tradition, whereas Moorthy is a symbol of modernity. He wanted to remove the false casteism that was existed in the minds of the villagers. He, even the free man had to face the mental conflict when a pariah woman offered some milk to him. The mental conflict of the

characters is one of the significant characteristics of Indian literature. Raja Rao as an Indian novelist has portrayed this chief characteristics of Indian literature.

The features of Indian literature that Raja Rao have displayed in his novels and short stories, have fixed his place in Indian literature. Raja Rao is perhaps the first Indian who has the capability of mingling a wide intellectual culture. He may be the first Indian who has woven the myth, legend, philosophy, poetry, history—all these into a single theme. He has focused Indian ideology, Indian way of life not only to the Indian people, but also to the foreign people. He shows the true picture of India to the whole world. From the first novel to the last one he has shown his capability of grasping the ideas and conveying it successfully. By the way and the quality of his writing, he has made the Indo-Anglian novel to occupy a place on the world map of literature and attain international recognition. He has perhaps shown to other Indian writers in English how best to express in a foreign language, a sensibility which is essentially Indian. He has paved the way for the other writers and fixed his place as a successful Indian writer in English.

(ii) Place of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya in Indian Literature

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya was a famous Indian writer and one of the pioneers of modern Assamese literature. He was first ever recipient.
of the Jnanpith Award given to an Assamese writer, in the year 1979 for his novel *Mrityunjay*. He was also a recipient of Sahitya Akademi Award in Assamese in 1961, for his novel, *Yiaruingam*, which is considered a masterpiece of Indian literature. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has occupied a significant place in Indian literature. The characteristics of Indian literature are prevalent in the novels of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, which have made him as an Indian novelist.

Bhattacharyya can be called an Indian novelist because of the theme that he has chosen for the novels as well as the treatment which are totally Indian. The themes of his novels are the contemporary events of India. As an Indian novelist, Bhattacharyya has chosen the subject matter related to Indian politics. His novels are replete with political atmosphere and events of Indian politics. Not only the freedom struggle of India, but also the other happenings of Indian politics, such as, the Second World War, the strike of the labourers, China’s attack upon India etc. are the significant happenings of the world politics and Bhattacharyya has displayed all these happenings through his novels. Political consciousness is the very core of Bhattacharyya’s creative ethos.

The prestigious Jnanpith Award winning novel *Mrityunjay* is based on the political happenings of India. It reflects the impact of the '42 movement on Assamese society. The memorable incidents of real happenings of the last phase of Indian independence has been depicted in the novel since the novelist himself has seen, felt and engaged with that great movement
of India. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya successfully has shown the wave of
the freedom movement of India in his novel *Mrityunjay*. Freedom movement
of India is a significant happening of Indian politics. Many Indian writers
have written their art forms taking the issue of the freedom movement of
India. As an Indian writer, Bhattacharyya has shown the issue of the freedom
movement of India very beautifully in *Mrityunjay*. He has shown the urge
of the Assamese people to free their motherland from the shackles of the
British. Like the other people of different states of India, the Assamese
people also tried a lot to save their motherland from the clutches of the
Red people. *Mrityunjay* is a clear revelation of this fact. Though, generally
the Indians, under the leadership of Gandhi, took resort of non-violence in
the fight against the British, some of them were not interested in the process
of non-violence. Specifically, in the Quit India movement of 1942, when
all the political leaders like Gandhi, Nehru were arrested by the British
Government, people became furious and at that time some leaderless
patriotic people of India took resort of violence thinking that India would
never get independence through the process of non-violence. The limitless
torture and exploitation of the British led them to adopt the ways of violence.
These people were ready to fight against the British taking violence under
the leadership of Subhash Chandra Bose. The call also came from Jayprakash
Narayan and Rammanohar Lohia to continue the attempts to impede British
war activities with guerilla tactics. The characters in *Mrityunjay* also engaged
themselves in the violent activities in the freedom struggle of India. The
novel *Mrityunjay* shows how the characters like Rupnarayan, Dhanpur, Aahina
Konwar, Bhibhiram, Mahada Gosain etc., without thinking of their own lives, engaged themselves in the derailment of the train, which snatched the lives of some white soldiers and the labourers.

One of the characteristics of Indian literature is to arouse nationalism in the minds of the people. Nationalism in India grew under the changing socio-political conditions; it subsequently pitted itself against the colonialism. Nationalism as a common idiom became significant factors in the process of national unification in India. The national movement under Gandhi’s impact, has political and social objectives. Independence is the political goal of this movement. On the otherhand, under social objectives, lie the village reconstruction works of India. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya is successful in displaying both the objectives of national movement through his novels. Bhattacharyya’s another novel *Pratipad* is also decorated with the national consciousness of Indian common people and the ideology of social reform. As an Indian novelist, Bhattacharyya has been able to portray a true picture of the sufferings of the labourers during the reign of the British. The patriotic feeling, tolerable nature and the unflinching faith in God made the labourers bear all the sufferings. The attempts of the labourers inspired by the ideologies of Gandhi’s non co-operation, satyagrah, strike etc. are beautifully portrayed by the novelist in *Pratipad*. The urge of opening the Unions to chase the British from the lands of India is understood by the labourers. It is hoped that through the Union, the political, social and economic sides of the labourers’ will be blossomed, which will help to create a socialistic reign in the country. The character like Chatterjee in *Pratipad* realized that creating Union is the first step of getting independence of India. He
understood that the social and economic development of the farmers and the labourers are connected with the independence of India. The salvation and the happiness of the common people are connected with the happiness of the country. Under the political happenings of India, the novelist also throws light of the social atmosphere of that period. The exploiters and the exploited-these two classes of people have been vividly portrayed in the novel. The novel shows that on the contrary of the poor condition of the labourers, the British people lead very luxurious lives.

As an Indian novelist, Bhattacharyya has explored another fact of the British people. The fact is that the British people lead immoral lives in the land of India. It is a fact that during the reign of the British in India, some women had to lose virginity in the hands of the Sahibs. The girls and the women were treated as an object of sexual satisfaction. Another shameful fact is that even some Indian people, working under the British employers, for getting promotion or better advantage, supplied some beautiful girls to satisfy the sexual needs of the Sahibs. Jebunnisa in Pratipay is the true representatives of women exploitation during the British reign. The scenario of unbearable sufferings and the mental agony of the exploited women have been beautifully displayed through the character of Subhadra in the novel Mrityunjay. Subhadra was wrapped brutally by ten soldiers; the unbearable mental agony and the negligence from the society made her to commit suicide. At the time of pre-independence, many girls like Subhadra had to lose their virginity. Bhattacharyya has depicted the character of Subhadra as a symbol of exploitation. The immoral nature and exploitative nature of the Sahibs are vividly portrayed by the novelist.
Inspite of writing most of the novels under the political happenings of India, Bhattacharyya has not forgotten to portray the social nature of the Indian people. Before the independence of India, the rate of literacy in India was very poor. The village people of that period paid little attention for the education of their children. Through the words of Dadhi Master, the novelist has portrayed a nacked scenario of village school of Assam of that period. Moreover, because of the lack of education, the villagers had many superstitious beliefs. As an Indian novelist, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has successfully shown the superstitious nature of the people through his novels. The labourers’ minds, as depicted in Pratipad, were loaded with many superstitions. Some labourers in the novel Pratipad, for recovery of their illness, preferred to observe some pujas instead of better treatment. Sandi, one of the characters of the novel, losing two children consoled his daughter Pannu in this way-

"Pannu, don’t cry. What will happen by crying? The Kali mother has got dissatisfied. What will you do? Kesaikhaiti wants puja. Puja has to be performed."¹³ (trans.)

The village people in ancient time, because of the lack of education believed that by offering some things to their God or goddess, they can be cured from the disease. As an Indian novelist, Bhattacharyya has shown the superstitious attitude of the Indian people specifically of the village people very beautifully in his novel.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has been successful of delineating every aspect of Indian society. Indian society is consisted of people belonging

¹³. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, Pratipad (Guwahati: Banalata, 2007), P.37.
to different castes, different tribes. There is a strict caste division in Indian society and it is maintained strictly and rigidly. Bhattacharyya’s novels have reflected these characteristics of Indian society very beautifully. *Mrityunjay*, one of the significant novels of Bhattacharyya, has reflected the division of Indian society. In Indian society, the Brahmins are considered superior casted people. They were not allowed to take anything, offered by the lower casted people. The rigidity of Indian caste system was evident in *Mrityunjay*, when Dhanpur wanted to take the pot of tea from the hands of Gosani, Gosani did not give it to him. Dadhi told Dhanpur that he should not take the pot from the hands of Gosani; otherwise Gosani would have to take a bath.

Though there is the caste division in Indian society, the people become united at the time of adversity. Unity in diversity is one of the distinguishing features of Indian culture. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has shown this attitude of Indian people in his novels. In *Mrityunjay*, it is seen that all the characters forgetting their castes, involved themselves in the derailment of the train. The novel *Pratipad* also shows that there is unity among people of different castes and religions. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Jain—all these people lived in the small town very peacefully.

One of the important characteristics of Indian culture is that Indian people are very religious and very eager to celebrate the festivals. The deep religious faith towards the God or goddess is one of the important characteristics of Indian people. The culture of celebrating the different festivals through the religious outlook, is reflected in the novels of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya.

One of the important characteristics of Indian literature is to focus
the spiritualism, which is inherent in the minds of the Indian people. The
dominant note in the Indian mind has been spiritual. Against the materialistic
outburst of the West, India is replete with the spiritual outlook, which is
beautifully focussed in the novels of Bhattacharyya. The spirituality of Indian
people is focused by the novelist by giving reference to the *Gita* and the
*Bhagabata*. India is a land of the sages and the saints. It has been referred
to in *Mrityunjay* about the sayings of the great saint, that in the soul of
the dog, the fox, the ass- everywhere God dwells and so people should respect
them all. Moreover, the 'Karmayoga' of the *Gita* has been reflected in the
novel when Kali Baideu in the novel asked the followers of the freedom
movement to do their duty well without thinking of their lives. It is said
in the *Gita*, in this way,

"Tasmadsaktah satatong karyang karma samasara.

Asakto hyasarankarma paramapnoti purusah.14"

Through this given sloka, Lord Krishna in the Holy *Gita* asked Arjuna
to do his duty well because people, doing duty without any desire, get merge
with the Great Soul.

The reflection of 'Karmayoga' of the *Gita* is prevalent in *Yiaruingam*
also through the thinking of Jiban. Jiban thinks that people should do their
duty well as the planets and the stars do their duty on their own orbit. The
inherent values of Indian society are also beautifully expressed by the
novelist. The novelist has displayed the inherent values through the characters
like Jiban, Rishang, and Dr. Brook etc. When Rishang hated Sarengla for her

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14. Kiran Sarma, *Sri Madbhagawadgita* (Translated into Assamese) (Gorakhpur:
Govind Bhavan-Karyalaya, 2002), P. 71
relation with the Japanese soldier, he remembered the sayings of Jesus Christ who asked people not to hate the sinners, but to hate only the sins. In the novel, Rishang felt a kind of hatred in his mind towards his father’s killer. He remembered Jesus Christ’s sayings, who asked people to love both friends and enemies. Sarengla read the pages of the Bible where it was said, “Love each other in this way as I like you.” It was also said, “That love which teaches one to sacrifice one’s life for one’s lovers, is the greatest love.”

As an Indian novelist, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has shown many Indian myths and legends in his novels. Though Bhattacharyya has written his novels specifically from the political scenario of India, he has shown the Indian myths and legends which have heralded the greatness of India. The myth of Rama, Sita, and Ajamil etc. has been very beautifully portrayed by the novelist and it denotes Indian sensibility of the writer. The imagery that Bhattacharyya has used in his novels is thoroughly Indian. The images are drawn from Indian objects and experiences. His similes and metaphors are related to the lives of the Indian people. These are also drawn from history and mythology of India.

It can be said that Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has depicted the real scenario of Indian society in his novels. The customs and rituals, beliefs and manners, myths and value system, superstitions and casteism etc. are vividly displayed in his novels which have made his novels as the social document of India and rank him as a successful Indian novelist.

15. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, Yiiruingam (Guwahati: Layars Book Stall, 1998), P. 246
16. Lop Cit.