CHAPTER-6

The Common Concerns of Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya in their novels

(i) Political Consciousness
(ii) Gandhism
(iii) Mythical elements
(iv) Depiction of Casteism
(v) Spiritualism
(vi) Religious Sensibility
(vii) Women's Position
(viii) Traditions, Customs and Rituals
(ix) Folk-beliefs as well as Superstitious beliefs
(x) Concept of love
(xi) Selection of the titles in the novels
(xii) Mode of expression

After having a detailed analysis of the novels of Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, it is clear that there are many similarities between these two writers in different aspects. It is also true that some of the similarities between them are not apparent, they are hidden. However, a detailed and depth analysis have been to unveil the similarities between them.
None perhaps can deny the fact that Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya are the significant names in the field of literature. They have enriched the field of literature by creative writings. Even today, they are highly respected writers in their native provinces. In their respective fields, they greatly influenced the later generations of writers. Both Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya have acquired the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for their novels *The Serpent and the Rope* and *Iyaruingam* respectively.

Both Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya were from the Brahmin family. By birth both of them were high-casted children. Both were brought up in educated background. Raja Rao’s father was a college teacher. He taught Kannada at Nizam’s college in the neighbouring Hyderabad state. Among his ancestors was Vidyanarayana Swami, one of the greatest teachers of Advaita philosophy after Sankaracharyya. Like Raja Rao Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya was also brought up in an academic atmosphere of his family. Bhattacharyya’s forefather Trayodhar Sarma’s son Lakshminath Sarma passed M.A. from Calcutta University during those past days. Moreover, Bhattacharyya’s big father late Krishnakanta Bhattacharyya was the publisher and secretary of the paper *Assam Bilasini*. Bhattacharyya’s elder brother Nalinidhar Bhattacharyya was a significant poet and critic. So it is seen that both the writers got an academic atmosphere at home.

Both Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya were contemporaries. Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya were born in 1908 and in 1924 respectively. Though Raja Rao was born ahead of Birendra
Kumar Bhattacharyya, it is true that both were born and brought up during the British rule. In this sense they can be called contemporary. In the meantime there had been a movement against the foreign rule. Both Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya were patriots and had strong sentiments against the rule of the foreigners. This idea is found to be reflected in the novels of both the writers. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya's *Mrityunjay* have shown the clear depiction of the freedom struggle of India.

Since both the novelists grew up during the freedom struggle of India, the wave of the struggle touched them very well. At that time the wave of the freedom movement touched every corner of the country. Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya though hailing from South and North India respectively, both had connected themselves in the freedom movement of India. Raja Rao participated in the Quit India Movement of 1942. Rao’s involvement in the national movement is reflected in his books. Likewise, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya also had seen the wave of the freedom movement and joined in the struggle. In the preface of the novel *Mrityunjay*, Bhattacharyya himself has said that the time depicted in that particular novel was 1942. He described the incidents since he himself had seen and joined the struggle.

Both the novelists personally were against violation. Both of them believed in the ideologies of Mahatma Gandhi. They were inspired by the ideologies of Gandhiji which were reflected in their novels. It is seen that Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s *Mrityunjay*
were written on the freedom movement of India and though the outlook of the people in freeing the country from the shackles of the British in both the novels were different, both had emphasized upon the ideologies of Gandhiji. Unlike *Kanthapura* though the characters of *Mrityunjay* involved themselves in the process of violence, later on understood the necessity of non-violence.

Both the novelists were involved themselves in the world of journalism. Both the novelists had the experience of editing books or magazines of their times. It is seen that in 1939 Raja Rao edited with Iqbal Singh, *Changing India*, an anthology of modern Indian thought from Ram Mohan Roy to Jawaharlal Nehru. In 1993-94, Raja Rao co-edited with Ahmed Ali, a journal from Bombay called *Tomorrow*. Likewise, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya also engaged himself in editing the magazine *Ramdhenu* from 1952 to 1963. After that, he engaged himself in editing of the weekly *Navayug* from 1963 to 1966. He served as a Reader in the Dept. of Journalism for many years.

Both the novelists engaged themselves in the social activities. Raja Rao was the prime mover in the formation of a cultural organization, Sri Vidya Samiti; devoted to reviving the values of ancient Indian civilization though this organization failed shortly after inception. In Bombay, (now, Mumbai) Raja Rao was also associated with ‘Chetana’, a cultural society for the propagation of Indian culture and values. Bhattacharyya also engaged himself with many institutions. Bhattacharyya was the president of writers’
Association, life long member of ‘Institute of Gandhian Thought and Peace Studies’ of Allahabad University, selected member of Gauhati University, member of regional research adviser committee. He was the president of ‘Assam Sahitya Sabha’ held in Bangaigaon in 1983. He remained the President of Asam Sahitya Sabha (Assam Literary Society) from 1983-1985. Bhattacharyya was connected himself with Assam Sahitya Sabha for at least ten to twelve years.

Both Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya did not want cheap publicity. They were also aware of their own limitations. Both of them made self-criticism regarding their creation. It is seen that after writing Kanthapura, Raja Rao himself was not satisfied with his creation. So after writing Kanthapura, Raja Rao stopped writing and took almost twenty two years to write his second novel The Serpent and the Rope. This self-criticism was evident in case of Bhattacharyya also. Bhattacharyya also made self-criticism in many of his articles. In one of his article named ‘Mor Upanyas’ Bhattacharyya himself has said that he has seen many weaknesses amidst his own writings when he has made self-criticism. He said that that weakness was of idealism and art. In that article he confessed that his writings were perhaps of one age, not for the whole ages. In another article regarding socialism Bhattacharyya said that as a writer his limitations were many.

The similarities of the various aspects of the novels of Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya are shown below:
(i) Political Consciousness

Literature is a medium of political and social awakening in a country and it is natural that during India's struggle for freedom, literature has played its own part. As citizens of India, both Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya were also aware of the political happenings of India. Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya though hailing from two different states of India showed their consciousness towards Indian politics. One of the important happenings of Indian politics is the freedom movement of India. The freedom movement of India was a landmark in the history of the world. The story of freedom of India captured the imagination of the people of all over the world. Like the other writers of the world, many Indian writers were also interested with the issue of the freedom movement of India and they wrote down their novels describing the issue of the freedom movement of India. The interesting fact is that both Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya themselves saw the wave of the freedom movement and joined in the struggle. Since they themselves were connected with the struggle, they could feel the sentiment of the people and could vividly express the happenings in their art-forms. Both the novelists grew up during colonial India's struggle for independence.

India emerged as a full fledged nation on 15th August, 1947 with the achievement of independence from British colonialism. Prior to that, India was toiling under the brunt of British colonial exploitation. The exploitative policies of the British colonizers made the lives of the Indians
miserable. The British left no stone unturned to exploit the country from all fronts. The exploitation of the British all over the country, finally led to the rise of nationalism in the country. Indian nationalism, really speaking, arose from the system of imperialist exploitation, from the sharp clash of interests of the various sections of the Indian people on one hand and those of the colonizers on the other hand. The freedom struggle, fought under the banner of this nationalism ultimately led towards the achievement of independence and the establishment of Indian nation state. The freedom struggle could mobilize millions of India’s population against the British colonizers. All citizens of India irrespective of race, religion, language, sex jumped on the freedom movement of India and the people were determined to free India from the clutches of the foreigners. The psychological and spiritual unity is considered important for nationhood. The British imperial exploitation sowed the seeds of nationalism in the country which ultimately led to the emergence of a full-fledged Indian nation state on 15th August, 1947.

The freedom struggle resulted in a revolutionary brand of writing that voiced sentiments against the British empire. Though the struggle for freedom is now over, the political theme still continues to predominate in the novels of many novelists. The theme of freedom struggle is now viewed from a new perspective. The struggle for India’s independence from foreign imperial rule is viewed from different view points in Kamala Markandaya’s Some Inner Fury (1955), K.A.Abbas’ Inquilab (1955), Nayantara Sahgal’s A Time to be Happy (1958), Khushwant Singh’s I Shall Not Hear the
Nightingale (1959) and Chaman Nahal’s The Crown and the Loincloth (1981). The theme of colonial conflict has inspired many Indo-English novelists to portray the patriotic zeal and the awareness of nationalism shown by the national heroes of pre-independent India. As an Indian English writer Raja Rao also did not overlook the issue of the freedom movement of India. The first novel of Raja Rao is Kanthapura which is an account of the freedom movement in India under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The novel shows that at the time of the freedom struggle of India, people irrespective of caste, creed and religion jumped upon the freedom fight. The villagers obeyed Gandhi’s ideologies of non-violence and non co-operation. Peasants refused to pay revenue and other taxes to the Government, with the result that many of them were evicted from their lands and lost all means of earning a livelihood. People did dharnas, picketings and satyagrahas. People even children and old men were injured and wounded in large numbers. Women like Ratna were beaten up and dishonoured, but their spirit was not crushed. Shouts of ‘Gandhiji Ki Jai’ and ‘Inquilab Zindabad’ resounded in the air and boost the morale of the people, large numbers of people were arrested and sent to jail. The enthusiastic men and women formed voluntary groups which organized the people, distributed charkhas and yarn. They even formed an ambulance corps to take care of those who were wounded in the firing and lathi charges. The awakening of rural India was complete when Dandi-March got public support. People observed a fast in order to show their solidarity with Gandhi as he set out on his historic Dandi March. The people were ready to suffer any hardship for their motherland. Raja Rao’s
political consciousness is focused in the novel *Kanthapura* very well. On the one side, the novel portrays the imperialistic nature of the British, and the other side, it denotes the love and respect of the Indian people for their motherland. The novel throws light on the British Government, its laws and rules in India. The white men who captured the Skeffington Coffee Estate were a symbol of the imperialist rulers who exploited Indians in various ways. They employed paid agents like Bhatta and Swami to oppose the freedom movement, sent policemen like Bade Khan to harass the people. Their treatment of peaceful Satyagrahis was extremely inhuman. The novel shows that political propaganda is carried on in the guise of religion. By mingling religion with politics, the novelist perhaps wants to make conscious the people of Kanthapura about the political scenario of India. Temple, the religious place is also included in the political activities. In the midst of the reign of terror mounted by the authorities, Ratna and some other women took shelter in the temple to escape the evil designs of the policemen. People performed the Puja of Satyanarayana and took the image of the God in a procession. The police did not stop them because that was a religious procession. When the people reached out a safe place, they raised political slogans. When Moorthy was arrested, Rangamma and Ratna kept up the patriotic spirit of the people by singing bhajans. In between the bhajans, the heroic acts of patriotic Indian men and women of the past and the present were narrated. Bhajans and Harikathas mixed religion and politics freely and purposefully. Religion and politics were interlinked and religion played an important part in the political activities in *Kanthapura.*
Bhattacharyya had beliefs in politics. He had adopted politics as the art of creating true citizen. He had full faith in active politics though he was away of the power of politics. In this respect Bhattacharyya’s political consciousness is similar with that of Raja Rao. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya is perhaps the first Assamese novelist who has taken politics as the subject matter of his novels in a detailed manner. Before him, though some of the novelists like Dandinath Kalita, Daibachandra Talukdar had tried to focus some of the political events through their novels like *Sadhana* and *Apurna* respectively; the political happenings are emphasized more deeply by Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya. Bhattacharyya is such a novelist who has delved deep into the characters and has focused their inner world. Among the political novelists of Assamese literature, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya is perhaps the first political novelist of showing the mental conflict of the characters. Most of his novels dealt with the subject-matter of political happenings of India occurred at different times. Bhattacharyya’s political consciousness is explicit even his first novel, *Rajpathe Ringiyaya*. Bhattacharyya’s Marxian socialistic attitude is focused through this novel. The novelist through the prime character of the novel Mohan has made to feel that after long war with the British, the country India though gets freedom from the shackles of the British, has not carried the real freedom to the common people. It only provides freedom to the capitalists, rich classes of people. The ideology of Gandhi has not been fulfilled by the Congress Government of independent India. This Government only bears the exploitative nature of the British reign. Bhattacharyya’s political consciousness and his
feeling towards independence are focussed through Mohan. Through the dialogues, thoughts and the incomplete lecture before the common people and the distribution of the leaflets among the people, the acquired independence and actual independence of India as well as the novelist’s socialistic attitude are explicit. At the same time, the government’s inability to fulfil the aspirations of the common people has been focused. Bhattacharyya’s socialism is the real socialism thinking for the common people and it does not compromise with the materialism. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya even writing a first and a small voluminous novel like *Rajpathe Ringiyaya*, very successfully portrays the political thinking regarding Indian Independence. It is the special credit of Bhattacharyya that he can express the political happenings with the help of the thinking and activities of a person within one day. Through the grave thinking and activities of a man within a day, the novelist has criticized the significant Indian independence which is a great event of world History. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s political consciousness is explicit in almost all of his novels. Most of his novels are written on the basis of the political happenings of India. A man having political consciousness only can adopt the subject-matter related with politics in one’s novels. In the novel *Pratipad*, Bhattacharyya has analysed the issue of the revolution of the labourers of Digboi oil Refinery. The revolution or the strike of the labourers is a significant issue of the world politics. At the time of the end of the British Empire, in India, there occurred a significant labourer-strike in Digboi, the oil-city of Assam. The theme of *Pratipad* has been expanded on the issue of the labourer-strike. The Sahibs
exploited the labourers physically and mentally and the labourers formed their trade union and opposed the dominating activities of the Sahibs. In the novel, *Kalar Humuniya* also the novelist has depicted the domination of the British people upon the tea-garden labourers and the displeasure of the labourers because of the activities of the owners of the garden. Bhattacharyya has emphasized the political happenings of India very deeply. In Bhattacharyya’s novels, various happenings of Indian politics have taken place. His novel *Sataghni* is based on the Chinese attack upon India and its effect upon the family life of Indian people. The political situation depicted in *Sataghni* is very significant since the attack of Chinas left a deep impact not only on the Indian politics but also on the world politics. *Munisunir Pohar* is another political novel of Bhattacharyya in which the political aspects of the emergency condition of India and its disgusting effects have been vividly focussed. His *Kabar Aru phool* shows the salvation of the Bangladeshis. In *Kabar Aru Phul*, the novelist has shown how the India-Pakistan War has destroyed the socio-economic basis of Bangladesh. *Mrityunjay* is the depiction of the happenings of 1942 movement of India. It will be significant to note that there are two waves of the 42 movement of India, one is the non-violent revolution, led by Mahatma Gandhi and other is the violent revolution, led by Subhash Chandra Bose. *Mrityunjay* shows the violent revolution of the characters to save their country from the clutches of the foreigners though, they suffered from mental conflict and finally, realized the strength of non-violence of Gandhiji. In *Ranga Megh*, the novelist exposes the cheating nature of the greedy politicians and the novelist’s hope
Bhattachryya’s political consciousness is explicit in almost all of his novels. In most of his novels, Bhattacharyya has chosen the subject-matter, which are connected with politics.

(ii) Gandhism

Mahatma Gandhi’s dominating personality shaped the political and historical development of India. His great personality influenced not only the Indian writers but also a good number of writers all over the world. Ambuj Sharma in the preface of his book *Gandhian Strain in the Indian English Novel* has mentioned many writers and their books which directly or indirectly have shown the influence of Gandhiji. He said, Humayun Kabir’s *Men and Rivers*, Shankar Ram’s *Love of Dust*, K.S. Vankataramani’s *Murgan the Tiller* and *Kandan the Patriot* are some remarkable examples of early Indian English novels revealing Gandhian impact. Mulk Raj Anand’s novels like *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, *The Village*, *The Sword and the Sickle*, *The Big Heart*, *The Road*, R.K. Narayan’s *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura*, Bhabani Bhattacharyya’s *Shadow from Ladakh*, Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* and Chaman Nahal’s *The Gandhi Quartet* are some leading later novels which clearly show Gandhian influence. There are some other novels like Kamala Markandaya’s *Some Inner Fury*, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas’ *Inquilab*, Bhabani Bhattacharyya’s *So Many Hungers*, Khushwant Singh’s *A Train to Pakistan* etc., which indirectly reveal Gandhian influence. It is true that a number of world famous writers and books and incidents influenced Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya and shaped them into remarkable achievements and fame. One of the well-
known personalities with whom the novelists felt inspired, was Mahatma Gandhi. Raja Rao said that Mahatma Gandhi’s *My Experiment with Truth* exercised the most lasting influence. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar has rightly called Raja Rao as a child of Gandhian era:

“...he too is a child of the Gandhian Age, and reveals in his work his sensitive awareness of the forces let loose by the Gandhian revolution as also of the thwarting or steadying pulls of the past tradition.”

Raja Rao belongs to the Gandhian era and has realistically and has explicitly expounded the impact of Gandhiji’s principles in his writings specifically in *Kanthapura*. In *Kanthapura* Raja Rao has glorified Gandhiji and has compared him to the Lord Krishna, the flute player.

“...there was born in a family in Gujrat a son such as the world has never beheld. As soon as he came forth, the four wide walls began to shine like the kingdom of the sun, and hardly was he in the cradle than he began to lisp the language of wisdom. You remember how Krishna, when he was but a babe of four, had begun to fight against demons and had killed the serpent kali. So too our Mohandas began to fight against the enemies of the country...and his voice was so pure, his forehead so brilliant with wisdom, that men followed him, more and more men followed him as they did Krishna the flute player, and so he goes from village to village to slay the serpent of the foreign rule.”

The influence of Gandhi on Raja Rao was focused through the novel *Kanthapura*. "*Kanthapura* is an excellent and remarkable piece of fiction in which Raja Rao has enextricably depicted the influence of Gandhiji on the people of India." It seems that the aim of Raja Rao in writing *Kanthapura* was to show the impact of the Gandhian movement for the independence of India on a remote South Indian village. *Kanthapura* is a Gandhian novel. It is a classic of the Gandhian movement, a work in which the Gandhian struggle for independence and its impact on the Indian masses finds its best and fullest expression. The novelist’s style of narration makes it a Gandhi Purana or Gandhi epic. K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar says,

"The theme of *Kanthapura* may be summed up as ‘Gandhi and our village’, but the style of narration makes the books more a Gandhi Purana than a piece of mere fiction."

This novel pictures very vividly, truthfully and touchingly the story of the resurgence of India under Gandhi’s leadership. It shows how the clarion-call of Gandhi turns thousands of youths into soldiers against the rule of England, shouting, clamouring and struggling for the emancipation of their mother-land from the shackles of slavery. At the time of the freedom struggle of India, people jumped upon the freedom fight under Gandhi’s leadership. They followed the ideologies of Gandhi’s non-violence, non-cooperation. In the novel *Kanthapura* it is seen that the Kanthapurians also

obeyed Gandhi’s ideologies of non-violence and non-co-operation. The Gandhian programme of Swadeshi, his teaching on non-violent resistance against the British, the economics of Charkha and Khadi spread in Kanthapura. Moorthy, the central figure of the novel spreads Gandhian ideologies of truth, non-violence, spinning, emancipation of the Harijans, picketing of toddy-booths, non-co-operation with the Government, stop paying land servant and other taxes, suffering in silence. Raja Rao has created Moorthy as a true model and as a true incarnation of Mahatma. Raja Rao has reiterated Gandhiji’s principles of economic independence and self-reliance in Kanthapura through spinning and weaving. Moorthy is a true devotee of Gandhi and inspires the villagers to wear cloth spun and woven by their own hands and to give work to the workless people. He said in the novel,

"Because millions and millions of yards of foreign cloth come to this country, and everything foreign makes us poor and pollutes us. To wear cloth spun and woven with your own God-given hands is sacred, says the Mahatma. And it gives work to the workless, and work to the lazy. And if you don’t need the cloth, sister-well, you can say, "Give it away to the poor," and we will give it to the poor. Our country is being bled to death by foreigners. We have to protect our Mother."\(^5\)

Moorthy referred to the economic exploitation of the poor Indians and peasants by the Red-men who purchased rice and sold their finished goods at the higher rates after finishing them in their own big mills, thus

taking the money away to their own country. When Nanjamma was unable to understand Moorthy’s views about the economic exploitation of the Indians, he expounded his views to her:

“But they buy foreign yarn, and foreign yarn is bought with our money, and all this money goes across the oceans. Our gold should be in our country. And our cotton should be in our country...You grow rice in the fields. Then you have mill agents that come from Sholapur and Bombay and offer you very tempting rates. They pay you nineteen rupees a khanda of paddy instead of eighteen rupees eight annas, as Gold-Bangle Somanna or Mota Madanna would pay. They will even pay you nineteen rupees and two annas, if you will sell more than twenty khandas. Then they take it away and put it into huge mills brought from their own country and run by their own men- and when the rice is husked and washed and is nothing but pulp, they sell it to Banya Ramanlal or Chotalal, who send it by train …”

Moorthy was never seen violating Gandhian ideals neither in words nor in actions. Though he was a Brahmin, he visited lower community people and distributed spinning wheels and a seer of cotton, hemp free of cost. Moorthy tried to abolish the false casteism, untouchability and other social evils and gave the people lessons on morality. Moorthy is seen in the novel as a true Gandhi-man who does not believe in caste, creed and early marriage and who is not against the widow marriage. About Moorthy, it is said in the novel in this way:

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"We said to ourselves, he is one of these Gandhi-men, who say there is neither caste nor clan nor family, and yet they pray like us and they live like us. Only they say, too, one should not marry early, one should allow widows to take husbands and a brahmin might marry a pariah and pariah a brahmin."

Though Moorthy was threatened to make outcasted and Moorthy’s mother died out of grief, Moorthy did not lag behind from his destination. He involved with the people belonging to Pariah community and encouraged people to involve in the freedom struggle of India. It is seen that Gandhi’s ideologies were spread in the minds of the villagers by Moorthy. Gandhi taught people to love all people. Like Gandhiji, Moorthy believed in equality and fraternity and was against all sorts of discriminations. He believed that the Brahmins and the pariahs were alike and were the creation of the same God. So he said in the novel,

"Brothers, and this too ye shall remember, whether Brahmin or bangle-seller, pariah or a priest, we are all one, one as the mustard seed in sack of mustard seeds, equal in shape and hue and all."

In the novel Kanthapura, Jayaramachar’s Harikathas have shown that Mahatma called an ignorant Pathan ‘brother’ who went to kill him. The novel shows that the villagers were cruel to the Red men and adopted violence for the first time with them. Moorthy, the follower of Gandhi, asked the villagers of Kanthapura that they should not be cruel to the enemies. The

7. Ibid, PP. 9-10
8. Ibid, P. 123

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volunteers also gave the lessons of Gandhian ideologies to the villagers. In *Kanthapura* when Rachanna’s wife rebuked the soldiers by calling them ‘monsters’, the volunteer said,

“Monsters, monsters, yes they may be, but we are out to convert them, the Mahatma says we should convert them, and we shall convert them; our hearts shall convert them. Our will and our love will convert them ... send out our love that no hatred may live within our breasts.”

9. Ibid, PP. 167-168

In the novel *Kanthapura*, Moorthy tried his best for spreading the ideologies of Gandhiji to the villagers. Emphasizing the importance of love and purity and against taking violence, he said to the villagers,

“Brothers and sisters, remember we are not out to fight the white man or white man’s slaves, the Police and the Revenue officials, but against the demoniac corruption that has entered their hearts, and the purer we are the greater will be our victory, for the victory we seek is the victory of the heart. Send out love where there is hatred, and a smile against brute force...the path we follow is the path of the spirit, and with truth and non-violence and love shall we add to the harmony of the world. For, brothers, we are not soldiers at arms, say I; we seek to be soldier saints.”

10. Ibid, PP. 130-131

He asked the villagers to pray to the Almighty so that their sins would be purified. The belief ‘where there is lives, there is Siva’ is remembered when Moorthy chanted Sankara’s ‘Sivoham, Sivoham, I am Siva,

9. Ibid, PP. 167-168
10. Ibid, PP. 130-131
I am Siva, Siva am I\textsuperscript{11}. Since God is there in every human being, so loving mankind, one can find God. This teaching is given to the villagers by Moorthy in\textit{Kanthapura}, “In\textit{Kanthapura} Moorthy appears to be the real mouthpiece of the Mahatma who preaches love, truth, non-violence, equality, self-reliance, brotherhood, purity, humanism and untouchability to the people of\textit{Kanthapura}.”\textsuperscript{12}

For the Kanthapurians, Mahatma Gandhi is an ideal person. The villagers of Kanthapura express their reverence for Gandhi by singing songs. They sing:

“Our king, he was born on a wattle mat,
He’s not the king of the velvet bed,
He’s small and he’s round and he’s bright and he’s sacred,
O’, Mahatma, Mahatma, you’re our king, and we
Are your slaves.”\textsuperscript{13}

Like Raja Rao, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya also has focused the Gandhian ideologies in his novels. Whereas in\textit{Kanthapura}, Moorthy taught people the ideologies of Gandhi, in\textit{Mrityunjay}, the characters had a self-realization of Gandhi’s ideologies at the end of the novel. In\textit{Mrityunjay}, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has made an indirect reference of Gandhian ideologies. Specifically Gandhi’s teachings of non-violence were truly understood at the end of the novel by most of the characters. The successful

\begin{footnotes}
\item[11.] Ibid, PP. 66-67
\item[12.] Ambuj Sharma,\textit{Gandhian Strain in the Indian English Novel} (New Delhi : Sarup & Sons, 2004), P.112
\item[13.] Raja Rao\textit{Kanthapura}, (New Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1989), P. 147
\end{footnotes}
derailment of the train made the minds of the characters restless. So the characters like Mahada Gosain and Rupnarayan though at first were interested to take violence for fulfilling their actions and could be able to perform their desired action, they suffered from mental turmoil. The repentent Gosain therefore said in the novel that it would be very beautiful, if they could have fought that fight without killing people. Gandhi taught people to fight against the British with non-violence. The characters of the novel, dissatisfied with the action of colouring their hands with the blood of the British people, understood the value of the strength of love. Gandhiji taught people to win the hearts of the enemy also with the strength of love. Bhattacharyya himself was against violation. That Bhattacharyya, personally, did not believe in violence, is focused in his lecture from the post of the presidentship of Assam Sahitya Sabha. He said,

"The world today has wanted the alternatives of violence and war... No permanent temple can be created by the blood of human being ... We the writers and the artists have to make revolution against violence."14 (trans.)

Though the characters in Mrityunjay took resort of violence to solve their problem, the novelist himself did not agree with that path. He said during his lecture from the post of presidentship of Assam Sahitya Sabha that Dhanpur was blind in darkness and that is why, he adopted violence to do his duty. However, the thinking of Dhanpur could not be accepted. So, in the lecture, he said, "True power does not exist in weapon."15 (trans.)

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15. Ibid, P. 271
novelist personally wanted alternatives of this violence. According to him, revolution is necessary. This revolution should be the revolution of value.\textsuperscript{16} (trans.) The Gandhian programme of Swadeshi, his teaching of non-violent, the economics of Charkha and Khadi were spread among the characters of the novels of Bhattacharyya. Kali Baideu in \textit{Mrityunjay} engaged herself in weaving, thus tried to make self-dependent as shown by Gandhi. Moreover, Gandhi’s appeal to people to avoid snuff was also seen through the character of Aahina Konwar, in \textit{Mrityunjay}. In the process of saving the country from the hands of the foreigners, Aahina Konwar was suggested by his companions to avoid snuff. That people had esteemed reverence for Gandhi is referred to in the novel when it is said that in this age also poor God has been incarnated and Gandhi is the incarnation. At another time, it is said that that Gandhi has showed them the path and they should go forward following his path. The characters inspired by the ideologies of Subhash Chandra Bose, though engaged in the process of violence, later on, understood the relevance of the ideologies of Mahatma Gandhi. Afflicted with mental agony, the characters were forced to think that Gandhi was great. They remembered Gandhi’s lesson of starting the revolution with love and non-violence. Gandhi, the great person asked people to shed violence. The characters like Rupnarayana, Gosain etc. though were adamant to adopt the way of violence and expressed various reasons in favour of their action, later on, realized the real strength of Gandhiji’s teachings. After fulfilling their action, the characters, though, tried to console their minds by showing different

\textsuperscript{16} Lop Cit.

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arguments for the favour of their action; they in real sense became restless. It is seen that the story of the novel *Mrityunjay* though depicted with the action of violence initiated by Subhash Chandra Bose, later on, it ends with the reign of Gandhi's ideologies. As a person, Bhattacharyya, the novelist himself was also against the path of violence. That he had faith in Gandhi and non-violence, is clear through some of the dialogues of *Mrityunjay*. It is said in the novel,

“In this age also there is the incarnation of poor Narayana. This incarnation, according to him is Gandhi.”

17 (trans.)

At another time, the novelist has said through the mouth of one character,

“If they could fight without killing people, then how beautiful it would be...Perhaps this fight would not have happened if Mahatma were outside.”

18 (trans.)

“Perhaps his heart would have got peace and cool if they could get the destination with the help of the strength of love.”

19 (trans.)

Bhattachrayya does not agree with violence. So he says through Rupnarayan, “Violence does not give pleasure.”

20 (trans.) The ideologies of love, truth and non-violence of Mahatma Gandhi are also reflected in

19. Ibid., P. 181
20. Ibid., P. 182
Bhattacharyya's another novel *Yiaruingam*. In the novel *Yiaruingam*, the characters like Rishang, jiban etc emphasized upon non-violence. It is said in the novel, "Development is not possible through violence."²¹ (trans.)

(iii) Mythical elements

Myths have become a significant part of the technique in literature. In modern fiction, the novelists have made a conscious use of myths and symbols. Harish Raiada, a great scholar rightly remarks about the literary value of myths and symbols in literature:

"In the modern literature myth and symbol have gradually acquired a great significance as the appropriate language and the appropriate form for expressing man's deepest thoughts and highest aspirations. Myths embodying accounts of supernatural beings and actions originated to project philosophical speculation and explain religious beliefs...Owing to their universal nature and timelessness and power to convey that which cannot be otherwise expressed, the modern writers have found in myths a useful media of communicating the predicament of the contemporary man and their own view of life. By using mythical situations and characters in modern context, they can view contemporary human situation in a larger perspective of time and leave an immediate impact upon readers."²²

Northop Frye also makes a significant observation.

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²² Harish Raizada, Indian English Novelists, Some points of view (Delhi : K. K. Publications, 1966), P. 42
"In terms of narrative, myth is the imitation of action here or at the conceivable limits of desire which means that myth is a structural literary pattern recurrent in literature."²³

Homer’s the *Iliad*, Dante’s the *Divine Comedy*, Virgil’s the *Aeneid*, Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are such mythical creations which gain significance in mobility of time in the past, the present and the future. Myth is an inseparable portion of collective unconscious of the race. Writers use myth to enrich their works and to enliven them with vigour and vitality. Some writers have used myths to manipulate a continuous parallel between antiquity and contemporaneity and bring out similarities and contrast between the past and the present. Like the other writers, Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya have made effective use of myths in their novels which have heightened the dignity as well as effectiveness of the novels. The use of the mythical technique means that the past is juxtaposed with the present and in this way, the past may serve as a criticism of the present or it may be used to heighten and glorify the present. English writers like T.S.Eliot and James Joyce also have made successful use of the myths in their works. In his *The Waste Land*, T.S. Eliot has used the mythical technique to criticise the present. Writers like Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya have used this technique very elaborately in their novels to glorify the present. The references of *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata*, *The Gita* etc. are woven to the novels of

Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya in this way, that they have enriched the dignity of the novels as well as, have shown the religious nature or spirituality of Indian people. The stories of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* have a great influence on the minds of the Indians. Both Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya have realized the truth and have used those references in their novels. It is seen that in Raja Rao's writings, contemporary realities are mingled with Indian Gods and men, myths and legends. It will not be exaggeration to say that Raja Rao himself was deeply involved in Indian myths. The *Ramayana*, The *Mahabharata*. The *Upanishadas* left a deep impact upon his life and the effect was focused in his works. The theme of *Kanthapura* is mythicised. Mythical elements are used because of the fact that even the most illiterate Indian is well acquainted with mythological stories. Indians at every level are extremely well acquainted with the stories of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The villagers are generally very pious people. They have their full faith and interest in hearing the stories from the *Ramayana* and the words of God and goddess. The dominant myth of *Kanthapura* is of Rama-Sita Ravana which is used to illustrate the fight between the Mahatma and the British. Gandhi is linked with Rama and the Red men to Ravana and the freedom struggle becomes a fight between the two incarnations of Good and Evil for the sake of Bharat Mata or Sita. Through the Harikathas recited by Jayaramachar, the villagers are made to believe that Gandhi has come to the earth to free Bharatha (India) from foreign yoke. The people believed that Mahatma would kill Ravana (foreign rule) and bring Sita (India) with him. Gandhi's trip to England to
attend the Second Round Table Conference is compared to Rama’s exile and the Indians who participate in the process of Government are compared to Bharatha who worshipped Rama’s sandals in his absence. The foreign rulers are compared to Ravana and Gandhi is to kill this demon and bring back enslaved Sita, i.e., India who is under the domination of foreign rulers. His return is expected to be like the triumphant return of Rama to Ayodhya when there was a shower of flowers from the sky. The followers of Gandhi are like Hanuman and they are equally ready to carry out his instruction at any time. Similarly, the Satyagrahi in prison is the divine Krishna himself in Kansa’s prison. Sometimes in the novel Gandhi is compared with Siva also. The people of Kanthapura carried out Gandhiji’s programme because they had been told that he was the incarnation of Siva. Gandhi is Siva himself in human shape. At another time, Gandhi is thought as the incarnation of Krishna. Gandhi’s engagement in slaying the serpent of foreign rule, is compared with Lord Krishna’s successful attempt of killing the serpent Kaliya. Raja Rao connected political ideas with mythological elements. It is described in the novel “Siva is three-eyed, Swaraj too is three-eyed : self-purification, Hindu-Moslem Unity, Khaddar.” The mythical technique is used effectively upto the end of the novel. The past and the present are juxtaposed; there is a fusion of myth and legend with current politics in Kanthapura. In Raja Rao myths form an integral part of the organic structure of the novel. In the novel The Serpent and the Rope also Raja Rao has made an extensive use of myth which heralds ‘Indianness’ to the novel. The

myth of Radha Krishna Siva, Parvati has been depicted in the novel very beautifully and it denotes Indian sensibility of the writer. The spiritual relationship between Rama and Savithri has been reinforced by the popular and well-known Radha Krishna myth. In a way, it symbolizes aspiration of a seeker for the absolute. For Savithri, Ramaswamy is the symbol of Krishna and Shiva and at the same way for Rama, Savithri is symbol of Radha and Parvati. Savithri, one of the prototypes of wifely devotion realized the ultimate truth with the relationship of Ramaswamy, which she did not find in her marriage with Pratap. The myth of Prince Siddhartha and his horse Kanthaka has also been beautifully focused in the novel. Another novel in *The Cat and Shakespeare* also Raja Rao has used mythical elements which have heralded this novel to a great dignity. In order to shed light on the relationship of Pai and his wife Saroja, Raja Rao refers to part of Shiva-Parvati myth in a digressional manner. He, however, asserts that Saroja, his wife cannot take place of Parvati in his heart. *Comrade Kirillov*, like other novels of Raja Rao, is also colourful in expressing the mythical technique. The myth of Shiva and Parvati, Rama and Krishna, Lakshmi, Sita, Kanyakumari, Ravana, Hanuman and so on are introduced in the novel. The myths of Kanyakumari, Parvati and Shiva are integral parts of the central theme of the novel. The myth of Siddhartha has been employed in this novel basically to trace the confused state of Kirillov. The mythical technique, adapted to the novel *The Chessmaster and His Moves*, lends a dignity and a beauty to this novel. The physical separation and the distance between Siva and Jayalakshmi is narrated with the help of the mythical story of Tristan.
and Iseult with whom Tristan is in love, is bound to him by an imperishable love. In the novel, the myths of Kanyakumari and Siva and Kali are also described to focus the intensity of the relationship of Siva and Jaya. Raja Rao also refers to the timeless myth of Rama, Sita and Hanuman. Of the many Hindu myths that are loaded in the novel *The Chessmaster and His Moves*, perhaps the most potent is that of Radha and Krishna.

Like Raja Rao Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya's novels are also full of mythical references which have helped to increase the dignity of his novels. The myth of Rama, Sita, Ravana, Ajmal have been given reference to *Mrityunjay*. Unlike Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has not used the mythical references of the Rama, Sita and Ravana to make the villagers understood the importance of the freedom struggle of India. However, the mythical references have been used in the novel to make the readers understood the mental condition of the characters. *Mrityunjay* is enriched with the depiction of mythical stories. The stories of Rama-Sita, Ajamil have been described in the novel. The mythical stories have enriched the dignity of the novel. At the time of the Indian independence, women have to lose their virginity in the hands of the Red people. This scenario of unbearable sufferings and the mental agony of them have been beautifully displayed through the character of Subhadra in the novel *Mrityunjay*. To console Subhadra, Phukan has referred to the mythical story of Rama and Sita. Rama, even after rescuing Sita from the hands of Ravana, like an ordinary man, hesitated to adopt Sita as his wife, suspecting that perhaps Ravana had corrupted her body. Again, it was said that afflicted with mental agony Sita
entered into the lap of her mother, at the same way, the unbearable pain forced Subhadra to leave the love and affection of the world. The mythical story of Aajmal has been referred to in the novel by Manik Bora, one of the characters of the novel. It is said that Aajmal, at the time of his death called the name of ‘Narayana’ which washed all the sins, committed by him. Mrityunjay shows that when Dhanpur, Madhu etc. were going towards their destination, that is, to derail the train, Madhu was restless. His heart trembled at the thought of killing many people in the incident. The fear that arised in his mind, had been compared with the fear of Arjun, one of the mythical characters of the Gita. When Arjun was ready to kill the people, he had seen his relatives everywhere. Like Arjuna, Madhu was also hesitated to fulfil his job. The mythical stories of Ravana and Sita, have been referred to Bhattacharyya’s novel, Ballari. In the novel, Ali, in order to support her relation with Sengupta, said that just as Sita had depicted the picture of Ravana on the floor, she also depicted the picture of Sengupta.

The myth of Sabitri and Satyaban is mentioned by Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya in his novel Sinaki Suti. The novelist said that Sukhalata was the symbol of Indian woman since Sukhalata was able to return her husband. Sabitri, a true paragon of Indian woman restored her husband Satyaban from the jaws of Death. Because of the devotion towards her husband and for sharp intelligence, the king of Death was bound to return the life of Satyaban to Sabitri. The myth of Sabitri and Satyaban has been referred to Bhattacharyya’s another novel, Aai also. In the novel, little Basa asked his mother why his mother could not bring his father, just as Sabitri gave life to Satyaban. The
myth of Prahlada has been referred to in the novel, *Aai*. In the novel, Basa’s mother asked Basa to read the ‘Prahlada Sarit’. In the novel *Aai*, Basa’s mother wished that just as God saved Prahlada from danger, in the same way, God would save Basa from the thieves, since almost all of the boys were turned to be thieves at that time. Bhattacharyya has used the mythical references of Duhsasana in the novel *Aai*. Rajat, the revolutionary character in the novel, showed his contempt towards Indreswar Mahajan because of his cheating nature, by saying that he would drink his blood. In The *Mahabharata* it is seen that Bhima had drunk the blood of Duhsasana because of his bad action. Likewise, to show the wickedness of the Mahajan, as well as to show his contempt towards the Mahajana, the novelist has mentioned the character of Duhsasana in his novel. In the novel *Ranga Megh* also, the novelist has mentioned the myth of Duhsasana. Looking at the rays of light in the bosom of the Brahmaputra, Priyaram, the fisherman remembered the Bhaona that he and his companions played. Unfortunately, Priyaram took the role of Duhsasana. Priyaram imagined the reddish colour of the water of the Brahmaputra to be the bosom of Duhsasana. It can be said that the novelist has been successful in giving reference to the mythical stories at an appropriate moment.

**(iv) Depiction of Casteism**

Casteism is one of the evils of Indian society. People belonging to different castes live in Indian society and caste prejudices prevail in the minds of the people. In ancient India, the caste-system was very rigid. People
believed that the Brahmins were very superior. It was believed that the Brahmins only could read or teach people the Vedas. The lower-community people like the Sudras or the Pariahs could not read the Vedas. They were not even allowed to enter into the temple. Regarding the casteism, many beliefs were prevailed in society. Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya not only depicted the positive aspects, but also focussed various evil things of the society of that time through their novels. One of such evils that are described by both the novelists, is casteism. Both the novelists have shown the evils of casteism in their novels in a detailed manner. Specifically, in the novels like *Kanthapura* and *Mrityunjay*, a true picture of casteism existing of those days has been portrayed very beautifully by the novelists.

In *Kanthapura*, it is seen that the village Kanthapura was consisted of the people of Brahmin quarter, Pariah Quarter, Potter’s Quarter, Weavers’ Quarter and Sudra Quarter. The main distinction between them was the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins. Brahmins were considered the superior casted people and they were not allowed to go to the houses of lower casted people. They even were not allowed to keep touch with the lower casted people. At that time, the caste division was so intense that the Brahmin people, going to other quarters were made afraid of being excommunicated. In the novel *Kanthapura*, an evil picture of casteism is portrayed through the egoistic Brahmins like Bhatta and Swami. Bhatta and Swami in *Kanthapura* were the symbol of orthodoxy. They did not have respect for Gandhi and for the Indian freedom struggle. Bhatta said in the novel that Mahatma, being a Baishya, could adopt a Pariah girl. A Baishya could do anything, but, since Brahmins
were superior, could not do anything. The rigidity of the caste-system was evident in Kanthapura, when Bhatta and Swami warned Moorthy’s mother to excommunicate them if Moorthy go or mix up with the Pariahs. Because of the free mixing of Moorthy with the Pariahs, Moorthy’s mother was threatened for excommunication. The educated Moorthy did not comply with it. However, Moorthy’s mother did not have courage to live without society. Hearing the issue of excommunication, Moorthy’s mother stopped talking with Moorthy and ultimately died out of grief. Bhatta, the first Brahmin in Kanthapura did not like the idea of entering the Pariahs into the temple. He had a fear in his mind that someday, the Pariahs would occupy the place of the Brahmins. The superiority of the Brahmins was believed not only by the Brahmins, but also by the lower-casted people. The lower community people were very happy to see a Brahmin among them. It is seen in Kanthapura that the Pariah Rachanna’s wife felt glad to see Moorthy, the Brahmin boy in her house. Indian caste system was so firm that even Moorthy, as a free man had to think for sometime about entering into the Pariah’s house and taking the milk that was offered to him by Rachanna. With trembling prayer, he touched the tumbler and taking one sip, laid that aside. Moreover, many customs were also related to the caste-system of Indian society. A custom, prevailing in old Indian society was that, if the Brahmins went to Pariah’s house or touched them, or did some unactivities, they had to change their holy thread, that they had put on their bodies. Moorthy, even being a free man, was also not free from that traditional belief. In Kanthapura, though Moorthy wanted to unite different communities of
people for the freedom struggle of India, he took his bath after going to the Pariah's house. Rangamma gave him the proposal to change the holy thread, though Moorthy said that he had to go there every day. Rangamma wanted to give him a little Ganges water. In Indian culture, it is believed that the Ganga is a sacred river and by touching the Ganges water even the sinners can get rid of from their sins. Rangamma wanted Moorthy to touch a spoonful of Ganges water after touching the Pariahs. Raja Rao, through his novel *Kanthapura*, wanted to show that the caste-system in old Indian society was so intense and restricted that Moorthy, a reformer was also not free from that. It has been referred to in *Kanthapura*, that in some special occasions, Brahmins were offered special meal and other people had to wait for their meal until the Brahmins had finished their meal. The meal consisted of fresh honey, solid curds and khir etc. The meal that the Brahmins had taken, was called the holy meal and the organizers of that ceremony gave one coconut and some rupees to the Brahmins in order to get the blessings from them. The rigidity of Indian caste-system, the belief, behaviour of the people, which are the part of Indian culture have been focused in *Kanthapura* very well.

The evils of casteism are evident in Bhattacharyya's novel *Mrityunjay* also. In the time of pre-independence, casteism prevailed in the Assamese society. The novel shows that when Gosain was ready to take and have the tea prepared by Dimi, a Garo girl, Aahiria Konwar hesitated to have the tea prepared by Dimi. Because of the evils of casteism in Indian society, Gosani, the wife of Mahada Gosain in *Mrityunjay* did not take the pot of tea from
the hands of Dhanpur. Rather, she kept the pot on the ground. It was said that if Dhanpur took the pot from the hands of Gosani, Gosani would have to take a bath. Through the words of Dhanpur also, the novelist has shown the evil scenario of casteism. He said that everywhere, even to enter in the temple also Gosain, Mahanta people got privileged. Brahmin people had enjoyed in the name of religion. Though Dhanpur hoped that after getting Swaraj, the differences of rich and poor and casteism would be abolished, Dimi, however, did not have any faith in her mind. So Dimi said to Dhanpur that even after getting Swaraj also the aspects of Brahmin-Bhakat, Garo-Kasari, rich-poor would exist in society. Because of the evils of casteism, Rajat in Bhattacharyya's novel Aai, got the hindrance to marry Numali though, the union of Rajat and Numali was possible through their elopement. The novel shows that the maternal uncle of Rajat and Bapukan, the brother of Numali engaged in the quarrel for the issue of the love affairs between Rajat and Numali. The situation became so worsened that Bapukan chased Rajat's uncle to hit him though, at the same moment, Basa made a big shout and stopped Bapukan from hitting Raja's uncle. Through their quarrel, it was understood that the society would not allow the union of Rajat and Numali, for which Rajat had eloped Numali.

Another evil of Indian society of that time, was excommunication. The issue of excommunication has been referred to in the novels of Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya. In Kanthapura, there is the issue of excommunication. The issue of excommunication is referred to in Bhattacharyya's novel Sataghati also. Bandhuram Majumdar, the chief male
character in the novel, married a widow Pramilla which was not accepted by society. At that time, the widow marriage was not liked by many people. Even in the twenty First century also, the re-marriage of the widows has not been encouraged. Bandhuram very sadly said in the novel, that his family was excommunicated by the society from the time of his marriage. The family, though performed some rituals on the occasion of his son’s marriage ceremony, none including the neighbours, the relatives, and the people from his village had come to their house.

However, as far as social life is concerned, independence has, to some extent, solved to abolish caste system, untouchability and other social evils from the society. The advent of independence gave an impetus to social reform. After the First World War, Mahatma Gandhi started a ‘constructive Programme’ of which social reform, specifically the abolition of untouchability, was an essential creed. He gave to the untouchables the dignified title of ‘Harijans’. He even tried to secure for them social and political rights along with special economic and political safeguards. As a result of all these movements, ideas of social reform had pervaded a large section of society and begun to make an impact on the life of the people. It is true that Indian society is consisted of people belonging to different castes or different tribes. 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. At the time of freedom struggle of India, the Kanthapurians belonging to all communities joined in the struggle. It was focussed in Kanthapura that the Brahmins, Pariahs, Potters, Weavers marched into the police station.
Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s novels also have shown the unity of people at the advent of the freedom struggle of India. Though casteism prevailed in Assamese society, still at the time of danger, people were bound to forget their differences. The same thing happens in *Mrityunjay* also. At the time of the freedom struggle of India, as depicted in the novel, people including Gosain, Aahina Konwar, Dhanpur, Bhibhiram, Dimi etc., though belonging to different castes, forgot their own identity and submerged themselves in the identity of totality.

**(vi) Spiritualism**

Spiritualism is a philosophical doctrine. It states that nothing is real, except soul or spirit. It is the way of knowing the ultimate truth. Indian society believes in spiritualism. The novels of Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya are also loaded with the ideals of spiritualism and it is one of the common features of the novels of Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya. Both Rao and Bhattacharyya have shown the value system of Indian society in their novels. The depth spiritual outlook has been focused in *Kanthapura*, by giving references to the Holy *Gita*, when it is said that the soul cannot be cut, cannot be burned. Indian spiritualism teaches people to believe in soul. The ideology of Indian spiritualism has been focused in *Kanthapura* when Jayaramachar told the story of the Harikathas, “Fight, says he, but harm no soul. Love all, says he, Hindu, Mohomedan, Christian or Pariah, for all are equal before God. Don’t be attached to riches, says he, for riches create passions, and passions create attachment, and attachment
hides the face of truth. Truth must you tell, he says, for truth is God.”\textsuperscript{25} Moorthy asked the villagers of Kanthapura that they should not be cruel to the enemies. The villagers were cruel to the Red men and adopted violence for the first time with them. Moorthy asked the villagers to pray to the Almighty so that their sins would be purified. About the truth and God, it is said in \textit{Kanthapura},

“There is but one force in life and that is truth and there is but one love in life and that is the love of mankind, and there is but one God in life and that is the God of all.”\textsuperscript{26}

Indian culture teaches people not to attach with riches because riches or greedy nature is the root of all evil or danger. 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. That God is everywhere, is emphasized by the mythical story recited by Jayaramachar in \textit{Kanthapura}. The story of Prahlada is referred to in \textit{Kanthapura}. Prahlada said that Hari was everywhere and he would see Hari, that is, God everywhere. Indian people has a stern belief that God always saves His devotees from any hardships in the world though the opponents try to harm God’s devotees which is applicable in case of Prahlada. In Indian culture, it is believed that where there is a life, there is Siva. This belief is remembered, when Moorthy chanted Sankara’s ‘Sivoham, Sivoham, I am Siva, I am Siva, Siva am I.”\textsuperscript{27} Since God is there

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., P. 12
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., PP. 35-36.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., PP. 66-67.
in every human being, so loving mankind, one can find God. This teaching is given to the villagers by Moorthy in *Kanthapura*.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s novels also have displayed the spirituality of Indian society. That God lives in every soul, has been expressed very beautifully in Bhattacharyya’s novel *Mrityunjay*. By giving reference of the great saints, it is said in the novel that in the soul of the dog, the fox, the ass- everywhere, God dwells and so people should respect them all. This ideology is expressed in Bhattacharyya’s another novel *Yiaruingam* also. In the novel Rishang felt a kind of hatred in his mind towards his father’s killer. He remembered the lessons of Jesus Christ, who asked people to love both friends and enemies. Jesus Christ asked people not to hate the sinners, but to hate only the sins. 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 gives one strength to sacrifice one’s life for one’s lovers, is the greatest love.”

Like the novel *Kanthapura*, in *Mrityunjay* also, there is the reference of the holy *Gita*. The reference of the ‘Karmayoga’ of the *Gita* has been reflected in the novel *Mrityunjay* through Kali Baideu, one of the characters of the novel. When Gosain and other characters of the novel

29. Lop Cit.
prepared themselves to go to their destination, i.e., to remove the fishplates of the train, Kali Baideu asked Gosain and some other characters to do their duty well. She said that in the course of their action, they should not even think of their lives. In the novel, Gosain persuaded his companions to do their duties very attentively. He said that doing the duty was the true religion of human-being. At different times the same ideology has been expressed by different characters. The references of the ‘Karmayoga’ of the holy Gita is explicit in Bhattacharyya’s another novel Yiaruingam also through the speeches or 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. For that noone should expect praise or blame. In the novel, it is also said that actually “the soul does not die and develop.”30 (trans.)

The inherent values, that make people as well as society dignified, have been prevalent in Mrityunjay. The values have been expressed by the words of different characters at different times. When Bbibhiram, Jayram were discussing about the different ways of religion about Sankardev, Chaityanyadev, Gosain clarified them by saying that the goals of them or the goals of different religions are same, inspite of having the different ways among them. The inherent values are displayed by the sayings of Bbibhiram, when he says that woman, cow, rice, moon of the sky –all are only illusion, one has to come to the world alone and one has also to leave the world alone. This spiritualism of Indian society has heightened dignity to the novel. The concept of spirituality is focused in Bhattacharyya’s another novel Aai also

30. Ibid., P. 251
through the character of Sanyasi. Sanyasi said to Bhakat that one day, everybody would have to leave the world. The Sanyasi said,

"The world is false, only the Brahma is real, the sanser is fake."\(^{31}\)

(trans.)

(vi) Religious sensibility

One of the important characteristics of Indian culture is that Indian people are very devoted and they pay tribute to many Gods and goddesses. Both Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya have shown the religious nature of Indian people in their novels. Raja Rao's _Kanthapura_ is loaded with the religious outlook of the Kanthapurians. However, sometimes, superstitions of the villagers are also connected with the religious nature of the people. It is seen that the people of the village Kanthapura worshipped many Gods and goddesses. Besides, worshipping Kenchamma, the local goddess, the villagers believed in other Gods also. Siva is one of them, which is referred to in _Kanthapura_. Siva is 'poison-threatened', 'three-eyed'. The Kanthapurians believed that three-eyed Siva would protect them. They prayed earnestly to Siva at their difficulties. They even sang prayer song for the God Siva in order to get blessings from Him.

"Siva, Siva of the Meru Mount,
Siva, Siva of the Ganges-head,
Siva, Siva of the Crescent-Moon,

\(^{31}\) Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, _Aai_ (Guwahati: Lawyers Book Stall, 1998), P. 84
Siva, Siva of the Crematorium-dance,
Siva, Siva of the Unillusioned heart,
Siva, Siva Siva.32

Sun in Indian society is worshipped as God. Ramayya in *Kanthapura* prayed to the Sun by calling it ‘Sun-God’ to give a fine harvest for them. The religious ethos were also evident in *Kanthapura*, when the novelist had shown that the Kanthapurians were eager to perform the Rama festival, the Krishna festival, the Ganesh festival. It was seen in the novel that the villagers performed Satyanarayana Puja. They also took part in the God’s procession. The religious ethos were also focused in the Harikathas, recited by Jayaramachar. Raja Rao is very successful in depicting the religious ethos, through the novel *Kanthapura*. The religious sensibility is focused in the novel by depicting the religious beliefs of the villagers towards the Gods and the goddesses. That the villagers of Kanthapura are religious, is shown by Raja Rao in his novel over and over again. Kenchamma is the local goddess of the Kanthapurians. The goddess Kenchamma whose abode is on the Kenchamma Hill, is the presiding duty of the village. The villagers believed that it is She who protected the villagers from famine and disease. It is She, who saved them from the cholera or the small pox. People suffering from these diseases got well only because of the blessings of the goddess. In order to get the blessings from the goddess, the villagers earnestly prayed to Her. They had full faith upon the goddess and they prayed to Her by saying:

“O Kenchamma! Protect us always like this through famine and

32. Raja Rao *Kanthapura* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), P. 161
disease, death and despair. O most high and bounteous! We shall offer you our first rice and our first fruit and we shall offer you saris and bodice cloth for every birth and marriage, we shall wake thinking of you, sleep prostrating before you, Kenchamma, and through the harvest night shall we dance before you, the fire in the middle and the horns about us, we shall sing and sing and sing, clap our hands and sing.”

Raja Rao has shown a close affinity between the goddess and the devotees like mother and children. Mother is respected and worshipped and Kenchamma, the mother is worshipped by giving sari, gold, trinket, by the Kanthapurians, the devotees. They earnestly request Her to save them from their misfortunes. Their intimacy is so intense that they give first rice, first fruit, saris, bodice cloth etc. to satisfy Her and they sing:

“Kenchamma, Kenchamma,
Goddess benign and bounteous,
Mother of earth, blood of life,
Harvest-queen, rain-crowned,
Kenchamma, Kenchamma,
Goddess benign and bounteous.”

The deep religious faith towards the God or goddess is one of the important characteristics of Indian people. The novel Kanthapura depicts the religious intensity of the people very vividly. Kanthapura is a small village and it represents the villages. Indian people believe that God helps them at

33. Ibid., P. 3
34. Lop Cit.
the time of adversity. So the Kanthapurians earnestly prayed to God whenever they had fallen any difficulty. It was a belief in Indian society, that by offering things to God, God would be kind enough to them and help them. Their stern belief was that after getting the things, their loving Gods or goddess would shower His or Her blessings upon them. At the time of danger or fulfillment of the desired goals, the villagers offered many things to Him or Her. The Kanthapurians at the time of adversity, earnestly prayed to their local goddess,

“Goddess Kenchamma, oh do not leave us to eat dust.”

They again said,

“We shall offer our first rice and our first ragi to the goddess supreme.”

“Then there is the small pox, and we vow that we shall walk the holy fire on the annual fire, and child and child gets better.”

The novel shows that Ramayya promised to give a goat for his woman’s cure. Ratna at Moorthy’s danger prayed to God,

“God I shall offer ten coconuts and a kumkum worship. God, keep him alive for me.”

The novel Kanthapura shows the religious intensity of the Indian

35. Ibid., P. 63
36. Ibid., P. 123
37. Ibid., P. 2
38. Ibid., P. 71

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people over and over again. When Moorthy was arrested and was not freed, everybody earnestly prayed to their local goddess for Moorthy’s freedom. Rangamma vowed to offer a Kanchi sari to Kenchamma. Ratna desired to perform a thousand and eight flames ceremony. Nanjamma wanted to give a silver belt to the goddess and Pariah Rachanna desired to walk the holy fire. Indian people’s religious intensity and unifying nature is evident in Kanthapura, when the villagers vowed to do some special work at Moorthy’s return from the jail. Rangamma said that she would offer a moonlight feast at the river. Nanjamma said that she would offer a syrup and banana libation at the temple. Some said that they would spin more and more and Pariah Lingayyya wanted to offer Moorthy a red khadi shawl.

The village people in India are very simple. The simplicity of the religious beliefs of the villagers of Kanthapura is reflected in the novel. The villagers’s belief towards the goddess Kenchamma was so intense, that they believed that the goddess would do whatever they wanted. The goddess would be under their command. The villagers felt close affinity with the goddess. They prayed,

“O Kenchamma, in a week we shall have ploughed and manuered and sowed. Send us rain for three days, dry weather for two days and rain again, a fine, soft rain Kenchamma.”

Likewise, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya also has shown the deep religious intensity of the people through his novels. Just as the villagers
offered their favourite things to the local goddess Kenchamma to get Her blessings or to get their desired things in *Kanthapura*, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s *Mrityunjay* also displayed the same religious outlook. Dhanpur, one of the characters of the novel offered a goat to the goddess to get Dimi as his wife. The religious sensibility of the Indian people has been portrayed in Bhattacharyya’s other novels also. It has been mentioned in the novel *Pratipad* that with the help of financial support of Birbhadra Singh, Kali Puja was held in the house of Sandi Aahir. In the novel *Ballari*, the novelist has depicted Ali’s mother as a religious woman. She had deep religious faith in her mind. Like a true religious person, she had not any attraction towards the matter of wealth. Though she, at first, hesitated to go to town, finally, she had to change her decision. Even after going to town also, her religious nature was not changed.

(vii) Women’s position

Women have occupied a prominent place in the novels of both Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya. Raja Rao sees women as shakti. He worships the principle of femininity without which masculinity is nothing. He sees women as Shakti, as Mother Earth and theme of Shakti worship runs through his novels. There are a number of women characters in his novels and each of them expresses one aspect or the other of Shakti. The novelist glorifies the womanhood in *The Serpent and the Rope*:

“Woman is the earth, air, ether, sound; woman is the microcosm of
the mind, the articulations of space, the knowing in knowledge; the woman is fire, movement clear and rapid as the mountain stream; the woman is that which seeks against that which is sought. To Mitra she is Varuna, to Indra she is Agni, to Rama she is Sita, to Krishna she is Radha. Woman is the meaning of the word, the breath, touch, act; woman, that which reminds man of that which he is, and reminds herself through him of that which she is. Woman is kingdom, solitude, time; woman is growth, the gods, inherence; the woman is death, for it is through woman that one is born; woman rules, for it is she, the universe.  

The women's contribution in the freedom movement of India was very significant. History shows that women were not passive; they engaged themselves in the freedom struggle of India. The women in the novels of Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, were also very active. The women in the hands of both the novelists, had shown their activeness in every field. It is seen that the women of Raja Rao's Kanthapura and Bhattacharyya's Mrityunjay took active part in the freedom movement of India. They had shown their eagerness to engage themselves in the process of chasing the British people from the lands of India. Not only men, but also women took part in the activities of the freedom struggle of India. Though Indian women are coy, delicate and submissive, they have a great role in changing the society for betterment. Ratna, Rangamma—these Indian women as depicted in Kanthapura, had taken the initiative role for the freedom struggle of India.

The women of the village Kanthapura got the inspiration from the brave stories of the heroic women and ultimately they were ready to involve themselves in the freedom struggle of India whole heartedly. When Nose scratching Nanjamma hesitated to involve in the freedom struggle, Rangamma mentioned the story of Rani Laksmi Bai and remembered her how Laksmi Bai fought for Indian, she rode the horse like a Rajput and held her army against the British. She fought for her enslaved motherland. Rangamma reminded the women of the village Kanthapura how the Rajput women fought with their husbands. It was mentioned in the novel that Kamaladevi, Sarojini Naidu and Annie Besant all the heroic daughters fought for the mother. In Kanthapura, it is seen that when Moorthy was arrested, Ratna initiated and guided the village people. She was deeply involved in the freedom struggle and inspired the other women to join in the struggle. Women participated in the political procession and shouted “Gandhi, Mahatma Ki Jai”, “Inquilab Zindabad”. Ratna took keen interest in the Gandhian movement. She organized the women volunteer corps and imparted to the Sevikas the necessary training. When Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man, was arrested, she conducted the Harikathas; after Rangamma’s death, she read out the newspapers and other publicity material of the Congress for the benefit of the Kanthapurians; when Moorthy was arrested, she carried on his work and served as the leader. Ratna stood for the educated, progressive womanhood of India whom Gandhi enthused with his own ideals, and who came out of their homes in their thousands to fight shoulder to shoulder with their menfolk for the freedom of their motherland.
Like Raja Rao, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya also realized the strength of women and it was reflected through his novels. Bhattacharyya had focused the contribution of Assamese women in the freedom struggle through the characters like Dimi, Kali Baideu etc. They involved themselves in sending or keeping the important documents related to freedom struggle. Kali Baideu in *Mrityunjay*, inspired the volunteers to engage themselves in the struggle without even thinking of their lives. She tried hard to make the struggle succeed. These women, without having the formal education, had shown their courage, intelligence, responsibility towards their country. Another character Gosani in *Mrityunjay*, though was not actively involved in the freedom struggle of India, still, till at the end of the novel, she connected herself with the issue of the freedom struggle of India. She extended her feelings to Anupama by saying that freedom must come. She also said that whether good or bad these people tried hard to bring swaraj. The strength of women was shown through another character, Sarengla. Sarengla in the novel *Yiaruingam* took the initiative of spreading the teachings of Jesus Christ in the minds of the people. The inner strength of her mind was reflected through her activity of freeing herself from the clutches of khathingkhui. When khathingkhui embraced her and tried to kiss her, she prevented the bad attempts of khathingkhui and had shown her courage to leave that house at night. Later on, she engaged herself as a nurse in the village hospital. It is seen in the novel that she often read the pages of the Bible. Though Rishang had hatred in his minds towards Sarengla, for keeping touch with the Japanese soldier, Ishewara, later on, was impressed because of the chastity of her love towards Rishang. The inner strength of the minds of Sarengla bound even Rishang, the educated man to change his
attitude towards Sarengla. In another novel *Pratipad*, the novelist has shown the activeness of women through the characters like Pannu, Nayanmani and Lasmi etc. These female characters tried to establish themselves in the patriarchal Indian society. Pannu, the daughter of Sandi Aahir had shown her courage to oppose to marry an aged person that was selected by his father. She expressed her decision to her father without hesitation. Inspite of having born in a poor labourer family, Pannu tried to become independent with the help of education. She also felt a kind of attraction in her heart towards Chettarjee, an intelligent man of the novel *Pratipad*. Another female character of the novel Nayanmani also advanced herself through education that was imparted to her by Mrs. Flemming, the wife of a British man. She tried to become self-dependent. With that purpose, she wanted to go to Lucknow to take higher education in music. She chose the life partner of her own choice. The novel shows that she had shown her courage of expressing her own ideas against the views of the guardians. Likewise, Lasmi, the daughter of Bodhan, an ordinary labourer also tied the knot of marriage at her own choice. With the help of the strength of her heart, Lasmi made unsuccessful of the attempt of exploiting her sexually by Birbhadra Singh and the Sahibs of Digboi Refinery. Though married Ismail, a Muslim man, Lasmi did not lose her individuality. Inspite of facing hindrance from society, Lasmi showed through her action that women were equal with men. She tried a lot to mitigate the sufferings of women in the male-dominated society. Though she got the hindrance from society, she did not leg behind from her goal. The strength of woman is explicit in Bhattacharyya's *Sataghni* also. Knowing the fact of involving her husband with the enmity of her country, Bimala, one of the chief characters of the novel made a stern and harsh
decision to divorce her husband. Bimala had opened a school and decided to teach the boys and girls of the dead soldiers. Bhattacharyya’s another novel *Aai* also has shown the strength of women. In the novel, Basa’s mother had shown her strength in maintaining the family without her husband. Even, being a widow, she did not lag behind from her destination of giving education to Basa. Basa’s mother had proved her capability of maintaining all the household matters very beautifully for which she was respected by the neighbourhood.

Though both the novelists have shown the contribution of women in the freedom movement of India and the strength of women, at the same time, both the novelists have shown the sufferings of women in society. Sufferings of women are an international problem. Though women are very loyal and obedient and submissive towards their husbands, the husbands in Indian society sometimes showed their superiority upon their wives. The male dominance is a common phenomenon. Many writers have written in their art forms taking the issue of male dominance over women. Indian writers like Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya also have shown the sufferings of women through their novels. The dominant nature of husband had been focused in *Kanthapura*, when Bhatta said to his wife,

“Oh, be a wife!”

The husbands in old Indian society generally did not permit their wives to move in a procession or to involve in any other activities of the outside world. It is focused in the novel very well. Radhamma’s husband,

41. Raja Rao *Kanthapura* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), P. 82
when he heard that his wife went in a procession, beat her on the day of his returning from village inspection. For the same reason, post-office Satamma’s husband did not talk to her. The male dominance was clear when Suryanarayana said to Rangamma,

“I do not know, aunt, but I want my wife to look after my comforts.”

The dominant nature of the husband towards their wives is reflected in Bhattacharyya’s novel, Pratipad through the character like Giasuddin. Even having his first wife, Giasuddin adopted another girl as his second wife. He did not care of the happiness of his first wife. Another fact is that women have to take permission in their attempts of doing something in society. So Nayanmani in Pratipad, had to convince her husband, for giving her permission to go to Lucknow for higher studies in music. She said,

“The time is changed now. A new day has been started now, what will happen if we move foreward like men?” (trans.)

This states the domination of the husbands upon their wives. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has successfully shown the picture of exploitation and sufferings of women in the male-dominated society.

Another facet of the sufferings of women, has been reflected in the novels of Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya. At the very beginning of the novel Mrityunjay, Bhattacharyya has shown the sufferings of women through the character of Subhadra. Bhattacharyya has depicted the character

42. Ibid, PP. 109-110
43. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, Pratipad (Guwahati: Banalata, 2007), P. 219
of Subhadra as a symbol of exploitation. 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. It is a fact that during the reign of the British in India, some women had to lose the virginity. They were treated as an object of sexual enjoyment. Even some Indian people, working under the British reign, for getting promotion or better advantage, supplied some beautiful girls to the Sahibs to quench the urge of sexual enjoyment of the Sahibs. The Sahibs enjoyed the girls without any hindrance. Jebunnisa, in the novel *Pratipad* is an example of the sexual exploitation in the hands of the Sahibs. This fact is explicit in Bhattacharyya’s another novel *Kalar Humuniya*, also. That the women had to be the object of the lust of the Sahibs, is clearly expressed in this novel. The novel shows that when Rukmini, the beautiful labourer girl went to the compound of Douglas, to give milk, Douglas tried to rap her though his attempt was not successful. In Indian culture women’s virginity is preserved very strictly. Indian women try to preserve their virginity by hook or by crook. Rukmini is also shown in the novel to try to preserve her virginity. Knowing the bad attempt of Douglas, Rukmini shouted and hearing her shouts, the labourers gathered at that place and saved Rukmini from the clutches of Douglas. Taking the issue of Rukmini, the novelist has shown the harsh truth of sexual exploitation of the Sahibs. The novel has shown that Rukmini’s mother Sita had to lose her virginity by Mecpherson and the birth of Rukmini was the result of that sexual harassment. Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* also shows the sexual harassment of
the Sahibs. The novel shows that a Sahib wanted Seetharam’s daughter for sexual enjoyment. However Seetharam dared to say the Sahib in this way,

“I’m a Brahmin. I would rather die than sell my daughter.”

There are also some traditions existed in Indian society of that period, which are related to the sufferings of women. At that time, the girls specifically the Brahmin girls had to be married before puberty. In this respect, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has referred to Kasanmati. Kasanmati, the poor Brahmin girl was married to an old man before puberty. But, for the natural death of that old man, Kasanmati was made responsible, she was neglected by the society and at last, Kasanmati had to be the second wife of Layram. The miserable life of a widow has been explicit in the pages of Mrityunjay, through the character of Anupama. It has been said in the novel,

“The widow of a Brahmin and the death are same.” (trans.)

The widows had to spend the whole life in negligence from society. Widows in old Indian society had to suffer a lot. The widows were considered a bad symbol for the auspicious occasions. This is focused in Kanthapura very well. Venkamma, when her daughter’s marriage was fixed, warned the widows by saying,

“Ah, you widows, you will not even lick the remnant leaves in the dustbin, you polluted widows…”

44. Raja Rao Kanthapura (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), P.60
45. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, Mrityunjay (Guwahati: Sahitya Prakash, 1992), P. 239
46. Raja Rao Kanthapura (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), P.84
A widow in Indian culture is not allowed to put on bangles, nose-rings, ear-rings. Rangamma’s sister Kamalamma’s widowed daughter put on all things which was against the Indian culture. It is true that some of the women did not want to accept the old traditional rules of the existing society.

Though women bear the sufferings, they were very loyal to their husbands. It is a fact that in Indian society, women are very loyal, obedient and devoted towards their husbands. Both Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya have focused this fact through their novels. The women’s obedient nature is reflected in *Kanthapura* when Moorthy asked Rachanna’s wife whether she could spin a hundred yards of yarn per day, Rachanna’s wife says,

“If my husband says “Spin”, I shall spin, learned one.”\(^7\)

Women’s submissive nature is reflected when Moorthy asked the women,

“When your husband beats you, you do not hit back, do you? You only grumble and weep.”\(^8\)

The women’s loyalty is focused when they say,

“We shall not forget our children and our husbands.”\(^9\)

The women performed their duties at home very well without complaining the dominant nature of their husbands, which is one of the important characteristics of Indian culture.

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47. Ibid., P.77
48. Ibid., P.127
49. Ibid., P.110
That women are very loyal and obedient towards their husbands, is reflected in Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s novels also. The novel *Mrityunjay* shows that Gosani, the wife of Mahada Gosain cared a lot to suppress the cough of her husband. Gosani prepared Makaradhwaja (a kind of medicine) and gave it to her husband whenever he got troubled for his cough. It is seen that whenever Gosain was ready to go to his destination with his companions, Gosani asked her husband to take one dose of medicine that had been brought from Kaviraj. Gosani packed another dose of the medicine and some ginger in his bundle. The caring nature of Gosani is expressed when she said,

“The things are in their own places, only don’t leave that kisti ... everything is in the bundle. Now take some rest.”

Another character Ratani also showed her loyalty towards her husband. The novel shows that once she was very hungry, still she did not eat and waited till her husband to come. Even after bearing the unbearable sufferings from police in her state of pregnancy also, Ratani thought for the safety of her husband.

In Indian society, the family bondage is very intense. It is true that there is a good bond between the family members in Indian society and it is one of the important characteristics of Indian culture. This characteristic of Indian culture is explicit in the novels of both Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya. It is focused in *Kanthapura*, when Rangamma’s

parents and younger brothers and the children of the elder one have come to her (Rangamma’s) house to enjoy the vacations with her. The bond between parents and children, husband and wife, mother and son is so deep and tight in Indian society that it is unforgettable. It is mentioned in the novel very well when Rangamma says that her mother has gone to her brother, because their house will be re-built and so her sister has come to her house to accompany her. The parents generally hope for the improvement of their children. They hope that their children will be very rich. It is seen in Raja Rao’s novel *Kanthapura*, when Sankara’s mother expected that Sankara, like Advocate Rangamma would be a very rich man and would buy a motor car.

In Indian society, the bond between mother and child is so intense that at the time of her own danger also, a mother cannot part with her children. It is evident in *Kanthapura*, when the police tortured people, Timnamma carried the child with her. She carried the child in her arms.

The bond between the family members is evident in Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s novels also. The deep affection and caring nature of the mother towards her children, has been expressed in Bhattacharyya’s novel *Aai*. In the novel, the novelist has shown the caring attitude of the mother towards her children very poignantly. The good bond between the husband and the wife is seen between Mahada Gosain and Gosani in *Mrityunjay*. Gosani took care to suppress the cough of her husband. The novel shows that Gosani gave Mahada Gosain Makaradhwaja that was brought from Kaviraj. In the same way, the caring nature of Gosain towards his wife is also explicit in the novel. At the time of the danger of removing the fishplates of the
train, Gosain remembered Gosani; the bright face of Gosani is reflected in the heart of Gosain. Leaving Gosani at the time of her pregnancy at home, Gosain felt restless. The deep intense towards his wife was reflected when Gosain asked a bird whether the bird had met Gosani, whether Gosani was angry with him. He also asked the bird not to tell Gosani of his cough. Addressing the bird with affection, Gosain said that he would not cough in front of the bird because it might inform that news to his wife which would dishearten his wife. In Indian society, the deep attraction towards the family members is a common happening.

(viii) Traditions, Customs and Rituals

Customs are very important and integral part of the human society. These are long established practices, guided by the beliefs of the people, and not determined by any law. These are like the natural expressions and behaviour of the people in day to day life. Indian society is rich with many customs and rituals. Indian people perform many customs and rituals in their way of living and it is one of the important characteristics of Indian culture. Both Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya have focused these characteristics of Indian society in their novels. One can find the customs and traditions, along with rites and rituals in the novels of Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya. This made Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya true representatives of Indian society.

In Indian culture, specifically in village society, the people are called
by using their nick names. Sometimes these nick names are used because of the specific habit of one person, sometimes the appearance, sometimes the profession and sometimes the location of the house. Raja Rao has remembered all these things of the village society and very technically referred to them in his novels. _Kanthapura_, though has been written on the basis of the freedom movement of India, the novelist has shown this tradition of Indian society. Raja Rao has used many nick names to the characters in _Kanthapura_. Because of the habit of nose-scratching, Nanjamma is called Nose-scratching Nanjamma; Sidda’s face is full of the symbol of pock for which, he is called Pock-marked Sidda. Because of the profession of rice-pounding Rajamma is called Rice-pounding Rajamma. In the same way, Nanjundia is known as Goldsmith Nanjundia; Suryanarayana is known as postmaster Suryanarayana; Ramayya is known as the coffee-planter Ramayya. Since Moorthy lives in the corner house of the locality and Akamma in the front house, they are called Corner-house Moorthy and Front house Akamma respectively. In Indian society, some people are called by the title also. In _Kanthapura_, Nanjundia is known as Patwari Nanjundia.

Indian society being a patriarchal one, seems liberal for the boys or the men in comparison to the girls or the women. A man in old Indian society, after the death of his wife, can marry again easily, which is not easy for a woman. After the death of his wife, Bhatta, the middle-aged man in _Kanthapura_, married a girl of twelve and half years. It is also significant to note that in old Indian society, girls are married at very tender age. That the male can marry more than once, is seen in Bhattacharyya’s novels also.
In the novel *Pratipad*, Giasuddin even having his first wife, adopted another girl as his second wife. Since Madhuri, the first wife of Giasuddin was not able to give him child; he adopted Jahanara as his second wife and ignored the wishes and the emotions of his first wife.

In old Indian village society, it is seen that the villagers express their anger to the opponents by cursing them and by spiting upon them. In *Kanthapura*, this custom has been focused. When Moorthoy was arrested, the villagers were very sorry and very angry to the English people. Rice-pounding Rajamma spat three times to show her anger to them. In order to rebuke someone, Indian people use many abusing words. In *Kanthapura*, some abusing words such as, pig, badmas etc. were used by the villagers. This tradition of using abusing words is seen in Bhattacharyya’s *Mrityunjay* also. In the novel Dhanpur frequently used many abusing words to the British people.

In Indian society, the children are considered the blessings of God. A married childless women, in Indian society, moves about the pilgrimages to get the blessings from the God or goddess to get the baby. It is focused in *Kanthapura*, when it is said that Narasamma’s daughters were blessed with children except the second daughter Sata, though she moved along the pilgrimages and spent money for having the child. The idea that the child is the result of the blessings of the God, is focused in Bhattacharyya’s novel *Mrityunjay* also. Madhu, one of the characters in *Mrityunjay*, listening at the news of killing of two immaterial boys by the British army, made the remark that the children were born because of the long good deeds of the people.
In Indian society, the baby's hair cutting ceremony is performed. In *Kanthapura* there is a clear hint of it. Young Suramma bought Dharmawar sari for her son's hair cutting ceremony. There are many customs related to pregnant women in Indian society. A pregnant woman in Indian society is offered some special food and the others are also invited to that ceremony. The novel *Kanthapura* shows this custom when Chetty's second daughter is pregnant, the whole villagers are invited to the special ceremony. Likewise, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya also has referred to some rituals, connected with the birth of a child. One such ritual displayed by the novelist was that Baruah, one of the characters of the novel *Pratipad*, at the occasion of his son's birth, distributed fishes among people. It is one of the customs prevalent in the Assamese society which is very beautifully portrayed by the novelist.

In the Indian culture, it is seen that the people go to the pilgrimage on foot. There is a clear hint of it, when Moorthy in *Kanthapura* said that Mahatma liked the ancient way to go to pilgrimage on foot. In Bhattacharyya's novels also, the tradition of going pilgrimages has been mentioned. Specifically, in *Mrityunjay*, the novelist has referred to the issues of going to pilgrimage like Jagannath and leaving the favourite things of Jagannath-going people. One of the customs of Indian society is that Jagannath-going people have to leave one of their favourite food items as a sacrifice in the name of the God. This custom is referred to in *Mrityunjay* very intellectually by the novelist. The novel shows that Aahina Konwar had a bad habit of taking snuff which made him lazy. Konwar was suggested that since the freedom
struggle for the sake of their country was like a temple, so Aahina Konwar should leave snuff as a sacrifice to the mandir, i.e., the motherland.

It is a custom of Indian society that a Hindu wife does not call her husband by name. She does not mention the name of her husband. This custom of Indian society is explicit in Raja Rao’s novel, *The Chessmaster and His moves*. The novel shows that Suzanne, an actress at the French national theatre had the attraction towards Siva, the prominent character of the novel. Suzanne, like a devoted Hindu wife, never mentioned Siva by name. To call him or to mention his name, Suzanne used the pronouns like ‘you’ and ‘he’. Moreover, a Hindu wife, in Indian society worships her husband as God. It is prevalent in *The Chessmaster and His moves*, when Suzanne showed her respect towards Siva by putting her head on his feet. For her, Siva was a virtual God. This custom of showing the respect of the wife towards her husbands, is explicit in Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s novels also. The novel *Mrityunjay* shows that Ratani even bearing the unbearable sufferings from police in her state of pregnancy also, thought for the safety of her husband. It is seen in the novel that once she was very hungry, still, she could not eat and waited till her husband to come. It is a custom of Indian society that the woman should not eat until her husband take the meal.

One of the important characteristics of Indian society is that in Indian society, the youngers show their respect towards the elders. The disciples pay a great tribute towards the gurus. This custom has been prevalent in Indian society from the very ancient time. Raja Rao’s novel *Kanthapura* has focussed this tradition of Indian culture very well. The novel shows that
Moorthy fell at the feet of Sadhu Narayan and got the blessings from the Sadhu. He also fell at the feet of Sankar and asked blessings from him. By falling at the elders’s feet, the youngers take the blessings in Indian society and it is one of the traditions of the Indian society. Moreover, before teaching people how to meditate that Rangamma learnt from her Guru, Rangamma repeated the name of the Guru, Sadhu Narayan with reverence. This custom of paying respect towards the elders or the Gurus has been focussed in Bhattacharyya’s novels also. In the novel Aai, Basa and his mother fell at the feet of the Sanyasi and asked the blessings from him. Before starting the education of Basa, Basa’s mother asked the blessings from the Sanyasi for the improvement of Basa’s future. She also asked Basa to fall at the feet of Sanyasi to take the blessings from him and Basa did the same. Basa, with his mother showed proper respect to the Sanyasi.

Another custom of Indian society is that after the death of one person, his last rites are performed by his son and at the absence of the son that duty is performed by the cousin. This custom of Indian society is beautifully portrayed by both the novelists. Both Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya have shown this custom of Indian society in their novels The Serpent and the Rope and Munisunir Pohar respectively. The difference in performing this custom in both the novels is that in The Serpent and the Rope, Ramaswamy, the protagonist of the novel performed the last rites of his father whereas, in Munisunir Pohar, Mindhar, the protagonist of the novel had to perform the last rites of his aunt though Mindhar did not believe in these rituals and wanted to shorten all the rituals related to it.
In Indian Hindu culture, a dead person is burnt and the ashes are thrown into the river. After that, obsequial ceremonies are held in the house. This Indian custom has been followed at Narasamm’s death in *Kanthapura*. In *Kanthapura*, it is seen that because of the free mixing with the Pariahs, Moorthy and his family were threatened to be excommunicated from the society. Learning this, Moorthy’s mother died out of grief. After her death, Moorthy performed the rituals and her ashes were thrown into the river.

In Indian culture, generally marriages are occurred by matching the horoscopes of the bridegrooms and the brides. In *Kanthapura*, a clear picture of this Indian custom has been depicted. Coffee-planter Ramayya, though offered his own daughter to Moorthy, the marriage was not fixed because the horoscopes of Moorthy and his daughter did not match. Bhatta, the first Brahmin in *Kanthapura* took the initiative about the matching of the horoscopes. He examined about the matching of the horoscopes of the bridegrooms and the brides. The custom of matching the horoscopes has been prevailed from ancient India. It is also believed in Indian society that it is God who predetermines the mixing of the boys and the girls. The custom of fixing the marriage by matching the horoscopes of the brides and the bridegrooms, is focussed in Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s novels also. In the novel *Munisunir Pohar*, Mindhar, the central character of the novel, though had love relation with Aaidhan, a village girl of a well-to-do family, could not marry her. The marriage did not occur since the horoscopes between Mindhar and Aaidhan did not agree. So Mindhar had to marry a girl named Alaka, with whom the horoscope agreed. In the same way, Aaidhan
was also married with a man, with whom her horoscope agreed. Though Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has shown this custom of Indian society in his novel, he has shown his reformative attitude through the novel. The significant fact is that though there were good match-making between Mindhar and Alaka, they were not happy; their ideology was different. Mindhar was an idealistic person. On the otherhand, Alaka was a materialistic woman, she ignored the poor person. Likewise, Aaidhan though got married with the help of matching the horoscopes, her marriage was also not successful. Aaidhan became a widow after some days of her marriage at her young stage. The novel shows that instead of match-making, the marriage should be fixed on the basis of the similar ideological beliefs of the boys and the girls.

The marriage itself is seen as an important event not merely for the two families but for the entire village or the town. People’s well-knit is focused in the marriage ceremony. People are invited to the marriage ceremony to witness the marriage and bless the couple. Raja Rao has given a detailed elaboration in *Kanthapura* and *The Serpent and the Rope* to refer to the customs and rituals related to the marriage ceremony. Indian society is rich with many customs. In Indian society, before marriage ceremony is performed, people celebrate Kumkum and haldi festival to which many people are invited. *Kanthapura* is a clear hint of this festival. One of the customs related to marriage ceremony in Indian society, is that some married women offer Kumkum water to the bride and the bridegroom and this custom has been maintained in Nanja’s marriage ceremony. In the marriage ceremony,
the family members and other special visitors are offered some gifts from
the bride’s and bridegroom’s sides. Moreover, in Indian society, the bridegrooms
offer special thing to the bride. Nanja, the bride in Kanthapura got a hundred
and fifty rupee diamond nose-ring. In the marriage festival, the invited people
were offered dinner and after that the betels were offered to them. The people
were very happy to welcome the bride and the bridegroom in the marriage
ceremony. The villagers of Kanthapura were very happy when Venkamma’s
daughter’s marriage was fixed. The women made a discussion about the dress
that they would put on that special day. Subbamma and Chinnamma decided
to put on blue and broad-filigree Benaras sari. Young Kamalamma decided
to wear Dharmawar Sari in peacock blue. The bridegroom’s sister wore half-
seer gold belts and diamond ear-rings and Dharmawar saris. Everybody in
the marriage festivals wore something special which was seen in Nanja’s
marriage ceremony. Nanja’s bridegroom’s sister gave her a full seer gold
belt. In Indian society, the gift was offered as a symbol of love and affection.

In Indian society, marriage ceremonies are performed by certain
manners. In the marriage ceremony, the bridegroom’s procession come and
the people wait in the village gate with coconuts and kumkum water to
welcome the bridegroom. The bridegroom with his relatives come to the
bride’s house to take the bride with him. Since Indian society is a patriarchal
society, the brides have to go to bridegroom’s house. Venkamma’s daughter
Nanja’s marriage ceremony was performed in that traditional manner in
Kanthapura. Likewise, in The Serpent and the Rope also the novelist has
given a detailed reference of the marriage ceremony of Saroja. At the
occasion of her marriage, the wedding house was decorated with flowers and the visitors were very happy. They were busy for wearing their beautiful dresses. All these things were referred to in the novel,

"Men and women came in and out to decide whether this sari was good or the other, peacock-blue one; whether the opposite party should be given Dharmawaram saris or only cotton Kanchi ones. ...The house began to fill increasingly with neighbours making pappadams, the Brahmins came and showed their thirty-two teeth, knowing that now the Master of the House was come."51

At the marriage ceremony, singing marriage song is a culture of Indian society. It is seen that the women happily sang the songs as was prevalent in the novel.

"Mango leaves and silver pots were to be seen all over the veranda, and how happy the women looked as they sang:

Laving in the waters of the young stream,
Donning the garments sacramental,
Slowly, ever so silently, adoring Shiva the Lord
She became a spouse, sister.
O, to happy Parvathi,
Raise the censer, wave the kumkum-water,
O holy happiness, for ever and ever,

Auspicious happiness be,
The white hibiscus, the garland of round jasmines-
To the parting of the Moon’s hair, Sister,
Pour pearls."

The bridegrooms and the brides put the garland into each other’s neck. Moreover, the time-honoured ceremony of ‘giving away the bride’ by throwing flowers to the bride and the sorrowful parting scene of the bride from her parent’s house is also focused in *The Serpent and the Rope*.

“I threw flowers to the bridegroom, spread sweet- scented perfumes on his clothes, gave him honey and milk and melted butter to taste- I dipped my jasmine in silver cups and placed it on his outstretched tongue-sprinkled him with rose-water, and anointed him with kumkum and turmeric; I begged him in melodious Sanskrit, repeating syllable by syllable what the Brahmins enunciated, to marry my sister and found a hearth and household. He agreed nobly on his horse, and the women sang hymns of victory, of joy.”

“Saroja put the garland round Subramanya’s neck. Little Mother was sobbing away in the corner. Sukumari joined her. Then the aunts and the great-aunts wiped their tears. I just closed my eyes. Saroja was gone from our household.”

After the marriage ceremony is over, the whole house become very empty, things become disarranged. This scenery is also focused by the novelist. It is said in the novel,

52. Ibid., PP. 268-269
53. Ibid., P. 265
54. Ibid., P. 272
“But the whole house seemed empty by now. The women had all gone to the Other-House. Carpets were deranged, flower garlands were withering in corners, children were asleep on half-open beds, and smells of incense and children’s urine wandered everywhere, with no one to smell them. Even tiger seemed to have decided to go and smell the marriage-pandal.”

It will perhaps be admitted by everyone that Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s novels are written on the political happenings of India. But, under the political happenings of India, the novelist has been very successful in delineating Assamese traditions and customs in the novels. Like Raja Rao, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya also has referred to the marriage ceremony and the rituals performed in this ceremony in his novels. One of the customs of marriage prevailing in Assamese society, that has been referred to in Mrityunjay, is that curd is poured in the body of the bridegroom which is believed to be good for him. The matured girls were very happy and ever ready for that act and the youths also waited to take curd from the hands of the matured girls. In the novel Sataghni, the picture of the rituals performed in a Hindu marriage is vividly described by the novelist. The hanging of the mango-leaves with the help of the thread in the door, the performances of the ‘Hom Jnayana’ etc. are referred to in the novel. In the novel Aai also, the marriage ceremony of Basa’s elder brother has been mentioned. At the occasion of this marriage ceremony, the whole atmosphere was jolly with the sound of Dhol, pepa and people were very much delighted.

55. Ibid., P. 270
One of the old traditions and customs related to marriage prevailing in Assamese society was that a Brahmin girl should be married before puberty. The novel *Mrityunjay* reflects that tradition, when the boatman referred to Kasanmati whom had been married to a very old man since a suitable bridegroom was not found before her puberty.

Indian people generally perform many festivals. Both Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya have shown this characteristic of Indian people in their novels. The labourers depicted in Bhattacharyya’s novel *Pratipad*, had to spend their lives in poverty. Still, they had great faith on the customs and rituals. The novel shows that the labourers were very enthusiastic and enjoyed by engaging themselves in various festivals like the Dolyatra, Idd, and Gurunanak Jayanti etc. The labourers were very religious; they had great faith in God. It has been mentioned in the novel that with the help of financial support of Birbhadra Singh, Kali puja was held in the house of Sandi Aahir. Inspite of the poverty, they enjoyed themselves by taking part in different dances like Jumur, Bihu dance etc. which are the folk-elements of Assamese society and forgot their own poverty-stricken lives. The Indian culture of celebrating different festivals through the religious outlook is focused in *Kanthapura*. The Kanthapurians were happy to perform the Rama festival, the Krishna festival, the Ganesh festival, Sankara-Jayanthi, Sankara-Vijaya, Satyanarayana Puja.

Bihu is the national festival of the Assamese people. As an Assamese novelist, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has referred to this national festival of the Assamese people in most of his novels. Bihu is of three types: Bogag
Bihu or Rangali Bihu, Kati Bihu or Kangali Bihu and Magh Bihu or Bhogali Bihu. Bhattacharyya has mentioned the Bohag Bihu and Kati Bihu in his novel Aai. In Kati Bihu tulsi is planted and flame is kept before it. Tulsi that is planted during the Kati Bihu is considered very sacred and the Assamese people pray and aspire for the fulfillment of their inner hopes. In the novel Aai, Basa prayed before the planted Tulsi and requested the Tulsi to return the ring of his mother (trans.). Regarding the Bohag Bihu, it is said in the novel that the sound of pepa is made through the horns of the buffalos; the singing of the cuckoo has remembered the people about the coming of the Bohag Bihu. The Cow Bihu, which is performed at the eve of the Bohag Bihu, is also mentioned in the novel. Basa, in the novel, went to Bapukan’s house to bring new ‘pagha’ for the cows, through which the cows would be tightened in the Cow Bihu. Bhattacharyya has referred to the Bohag Bihu and the joy and amusement connected with this Bihu in the novel Pratipad also. The poverty stricken labourers of Pratipad had enjoyed this festival very much. The deep involvement in Husari and Bihu dance made the labourers to forget their sorrows in life. Giasuddin, the revolutionary character in Pratipad had frankly said that Bihu only could give him pleasure. In the novel Sataghnri also, there is the reference of Bohag Bihu. The joy and pleasure, colouring hands with jetuka, preparation of various food items, Bihu dance etc. are vividly described in the novel.

In Indian culture, people generally depends upon rice and they are busy in doing their things, related to fields. In Bhattacharyya’s novel Aai,

56. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, Aai (Guwahati: Lawyers Book Stall, 1998), P. 36
this tradition has been explicit. This tradition has been referred to in another novel Yiaruingam also. As an Indian writer, Raja Rao also has referred to this tradition of Indian people elaborately in Kanthapura. It is shown in the novel that in Vaisakh, men plough the fields of the village Kanthapura. The folk-belief of the people is that on the Rohini star, people yoke their bulls to the plough. The folk-belief of winking of the eyes is also connected with the rice. This folk-belief has been referred to in Kanthapura when Satamma, one of the characters says that her right eye winks and it shows that they will have a grand harvest. There are some customs in Indian society related to rice; when the first rice comes, the people perform the ‘rice-eating ceremony’ which is evident in Kanthapura. The Kanthapurians were happy to perform the rice-eating ceremony as Moorthy would be their guest since at that time he would be free from the jail.

In Indian culture the cow is worshipped by the people. In the novel Kanthapura, there is a clear hint of cow worship. In Indian society cows are considered very tame. To denote tameness of a man; he is compared to the cow. Rangamma’s tameness in the novel was compared to cow. Many festivals are related to cow. Magh cattle faires are performed in Indian society and there is a clear hint of this festival in Kanthapura. In the novel, it is seen that Rangamma came back from Karwar to enjoy Magh cattle fair. In the novel Kanthapura, there is also a hint of bull worship. Like Raja Rao, Birendra kumar Bhattacharyya also has referred to the worship of the cows in his novel. In the novel Aai Bhattacharyya has referred to the cow worship on the occasion of the Bohag Bihu. On the eve of the Bohag Bihu,
cows are worshipped and they are given new paghas for which, Basa went to Mon's house to bring new paghas for their cows.

(ix) Folk- beliefs as well as Superstitious beliefs

It will be significant to note that the customs and rituals are connected with the folk-beliefs of the people. Folk-belief is one of the important aspects of folk-culture. At different times, these beliefs have displayed various attitudes, various religious outlook of the society. Sometimes, these beliefs have shown the superstition and at other times, these have shown the various traditions of the society.

The village people, because of the lack of education had many superstitious beliefs. The superstitious belief is focused in the novel Kanthapura, when the elders prevented the fever suffering people from having water. The elders said, “No, noone drinks water when he has fever.” The villagers even did not use the pills that were offered by the Sahib. The villagers believed that Gods were sometimes angry to some human-being, as a result they had to die early. So whenever they were ill or suffering from some diseases, they earnestly prayed to their local goddess Kenchamma. They thought that by giving sari, gold trinket to the local goddess Kenchamma with whom they had close affinity, they would be cured from the diseases like cholera, small pox etc. The superstitious beliefs of the villagers reached to the core, when it was said that goddess Kenchamma would not save the

people of Talassana. The Talassana people would have to stay in Talassana and go to goddess Talassanamma to offer their prayers. At another time, the villagers said, “If the gods are angry—they’ll take away not only your children but yourself.”

These superstitious beliefs are focused in Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s novels also. The Assamese society that is displayed in *Mrityunjay*, is also loaded with many such beliefs. It was believed by some villagers that many evil spirits dwelt on a big tree and Subhadra had to leave the worldly happiness because of the evil shadow of one of those spirits. However, Gosain was free from such superstitious beliefs. He was sure that the unlimited and unbearable sorrows only bounded Subhadra to take such a step of killing herself. The superstitious beliefs are reflected in the novel *Pratipad*, when Sandi 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.” (trans.)

The labourers’ minds were loaded with many superstitious beliefs. Some labourers in the novel, for recovery of their illness offered some pujas instead of taking medicine for treatment.

There are many folk-beliefs regarding the god or goddess, in the

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58. Ibid., P. 57
minds of the Indian people. It is believed that these gods and goddesses have killed some demons to establish virtue in society. This belief is focused in Kanthapura. One such belief regarding Kenchamma, the local goddess of the village Kanthapura was that Kenchamma killed a demon many years ago. The demon wished the young sons of Kanthapura as food and young women as wives. Kenchamma came from heaven and killed the demon in the battle. The battle continued for many nights and the blood fell on the ground, as a result, the Kenchamma Hill was red. The Kanthapurians believed that after slaying the demon, the goddess settled down in the earth and lived with them.

Another folk-belief is that by offering some special things to the God or goddess, one’s desire is fulfilled. The Kanthapuriand therefore, offered many special things to Kanchamma. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya also has referred to this folk belief in his novel. The novel Mrityunjay shows that Dhanpur felt a kind of attraction in his heart towards Dimi. In order to fulfil his desire, he offered a black goat to the Buddha-Buddhi Than (temple).

In Indian culture, Ganga, Jumna, Saraswati are considered very sacred river. Indian people believe that the Ganga is born on the snows of high Kailas. This belief of Indian people has been referred to in Kanthapura. The people said, “In Kashi, when the night fell, gods seemed to rise from the caverns of the Ganges, to rise sheer over the river, each one with his consort, and each one with his bull or peacock or flower throne, and peep into the hearts of pilgrim men.”

60. Raja Rao, Kanthapura (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), P.138
In Indian society, people believe in re-birth. People believe that one's good or bad deeds carry good or bad results in future life. After the death of one man, he or she again comes to the earth, on accordance with the deeds, that he had done in the earth. The people believe that after doing some evil works, people will have to go to hell and have to bear severe punishment. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has focussed this belief of the people in his novel *Mrityunjay*. Manik Bora, one of the characters in *Mrityunjay* believed that physical or mental sufferings of Subhadra were the result of the actions of her previous birth. The issue of re-birth is focussed in Raja Rao's novel *Kanthapura* also. It is said in the novel,

"Oh, when you strike a cow you will fall into the hell of hells and suffer a million and eight tortures and be born an ass."61

Cow is worshipped in Indian society and it is considered a very sacred animal. By doing some harms to that sacred animal, people will have to go to hell and have to be born as an ass. The folk-belief prevailing in Indian society is that a bad man though go to any pilgrimage, can never meet the God. The sinner may go to the ocean, but the water will only touch his knees. This was said in case of Bhatta, who went to Kashi.

There are some folk-beliefs, related to mantra in Assamese society. The novel *Mrityunjay* focuses those beliefs when it is said that there are many bad mantras and good mantras and with the help of these mantras, one can hang anything at any place. Dhanpur in the novel, said that in upper Assam, with the help of bad mantra, a girl was turned mad and then, she was married to that man. Moreover, at another time, Gosani, the wife of Mahada Gosain

61. Ibid., P. 98
said that there was not any thing of fear, since everything had been done
pure with the help of mantra. Years ago, people belonging to other states
believed that people going to Mayong had to be turned to a lamb. This
belief was so strong in the minds of people that Dhanpur, in the novel asked
the question whether people would be turned to a lamb, in coming to Mayong.

Indian people, in the midst of their talkings sometimes utter
‘Narayan’ ‘Narayan’, ‘Ram, Ram’. This habit of some of the Indian people
is focused in the novel Kanthapura. The same belief of uttering the name
of the God in between their sayings is focussed in Birendra Kumar
Bhattacharyya’s Mrityunjay also.

There are many caste divisions in Indian society and many beliefs
are related to castes. One of the folk beliefs existing at that time, is that
a lower casted people should not touch a superior casted people. This belief
is focused in Raja Rao’s Kanthapura also when Moorthy was asked to change
his holy thread after touching the pariahs. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya also
has shown this folk belief in his novel. There is a good reflection in the
novel Mrityunjay, when Dhanpur wanted to take the pot of tea from the hands
of Gosani, Gosani did not give it to him. After that, Dadhi rub the land and
Gosani kept the pot at that place. Dadhi told Dhanpur that he should not
take the pot from the hands of Gosani; otherwise Gosani would have to take
a bath. Manik Bora in the novel said, ‘Gosair Prasad aru Jagannathar prasad
ake.’62

Indian society is rich with many folk-beliefs. Sometimes these

62. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, Mrityunjay (Guwahati : Sahitya Prakash, 1992),
P. 30
beliefs are also related with the animals and the birds. The novel Kanthapura shows that the crow and the crowling of it are believed an evil sign for the people. On the other hand, the eagles are considered very sacred. The eagles are believed to the goddess’ vehicle. The seven sages are believed to be the stars which are hung above the people. Snakes in Indian culture are paid due respect. Sahib in Kanthapura called the snake ‘Maharaja’ and he opened towel after towel to greet the Maharaja. In Assamese society also some beliefs are related to birds and animals. It is a good reflection in the novel Mrityunjay. Looking at the flying vultures in the sky, Gosain was afraid that perhaps, they would get some bad news since it was believed that flying vultures in the sky carried bad news to the people. These traditional beliefs, however, were neglected by the educated Rupnarayan who thought that vultures fiied only to eat something. The novelist through the character like Rupnarayana clearly delineates the scientific and modern attitude of people in the Indian society. Another folk belief is connected with the crowling sound of the crows. It is believed that the crowling sound of the crows, brings guest to the house. This belief is fucussed in Bhattacharyya’s novel Aai. Hearing the crowling sound of the crows, Basa thought that someone would come to their house.

Indian people believe in Sastras. According to the Sastras, there are four yugas: Satya Yuga, Kreta Yuga, Dwapar Yuga and Kali Yuga. In Kaliyuga, there will be confusion of castes and the pollution of progeny. In Kali Yuga, there will be the incarnation of Kalki and Kalki will remove the evils from the society, Indian people believe that at the time of corruption or great
disorder in the society, God appears in the earth to preserve good from bad. As Indian novelists, Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya have referred to this belief of Indian people. It is referred to Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* in this way, “The Lord said in the Gita, whensoever there is ignorance and corruption I come, for I, says Krishna, am the defender of Dharma.” About the incarnation in the Kaliyuga there is a clear hint in the novel. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s novels also have referred to the Kaliyuga and the disorder that occurred in the Kaliyuga. In *Mrityunjay* the novelist has referred to the Kaliyuga through the conversations of various characters. About the Kaliyuga and its disorder, it is said in the novel *Aai* in this way, “In the Kali Yuga there is a great disorder. No love affection, religion is there in Kali Yuga. It is believed that there will be the incarnation of Kalki who will kill the evils and remove the disorder in the Kali Yuga and after that there will be the Satya Yuga.” (trans.) In the novel *Ranga Megh* also, Bhattacharyya has referred to the disorder of the Kali Yuga through the character of Janardan Bapu.

(x) **The concept of love**

Love is a heavenly thing. None can ignore it. The attraction between male and female is a natural event. Both Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya have discussed the issue of love through their novels.

Raja Rao makes love as the very foundation of his ethics and vision.

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Love in his novels has an element of sensuality which is to be transformed into an avenue for the elevation of spirit. Raja Rao ridicules the whole-hearted fidelity in love as portrayed by Dante. He is not bound to this traditional purity and loyalty in married life. As sensuality is an integral part of love, he does not subscribe to the view that earthly love is a divine love as in the case of Dante and Beatrice. However, love becomes sublime in his novels when the woman becomes the object of worship. He considers woman as an object of inspiration. For Raja Rao, woman holds the secrets of the creation and mysterious working of the universe. He acknowledges that man is incomplete without woman. Man can become whole only by absorbing the woman into himself. Woman plays a very important role in man’s life. It is through a woman that a man fully knows and realizes himself.

It is seen that in the novel *The Serpent and the Rope*, Ramaswamy, in intimate moments, feels that Madeleine is the very essence of his life. He feels that Madeleine is inseparable from him. He loves her so deeply that he finds him, his ownself. Ramaswamy says in the novel,

“I give it to you, Madeleine, but you are where you are, I am but nowhere...”

“...taking me into myself, I transpire as the truth, as though touched by itself, like the wave that sees itself to the sea, like the earth that was spread out and was called Madeleine. But when I have to say Rama- her lips are mine turned outward, her flesh mine turned inward, and what a sound she makes, the sound of a jungle doe.”

66. Ibid., p. 159
Raja Rao shows the sexuality of love in the novel. He is very frank about the sexual relation between the husband and the wife which is focused in the novel in this way:

"Let me smother you in muslin, let me take the lip to its ultimate twist and congression. Madeleine, let me touch you here by the waist from which rises birth...Madeleine let me squeeze the juice out of you...let me smell you, smell the you of me and the I in you. Oh, I would smother your sobs, Madeleine, I would die with your pain."\(^{67}\)

At another time it is said,

"I pressed Madeleine, on those nights, with the warmth and tenderness of a mother for her child- I would have sucked her if I could, and though how well I now understood why pregnant wives at home are sent to their mother."\(^{68}\)

It is through man's intimate physical union with his woman that he can spiritually realize the great harmony that pervades all aspects of the universe. The sexuality of love is explicit in the novel *The Chessmaster and His Moves* also, when Siva tells Mireille that lovers can attain perfection in love if they merge into each other. Hence, he wants Mireille to offer her individuality and get absorbed into him on the psychic plane. The novel shows that Mireille and Sastri attain a higher plane of awareness through sex. Mireille is a symbol of pure sensuality. She always looks for new sexual experiences, and as a street walker, picks up strangers to have new fun.

\(^{67}\) Ibid., PP. 160-161  
\(^{68}\) Ibid., P. 241
However, Raja Rao understands the necessity of spiritual love. Just as in *The Serpent and the Rope*, Raja Rao emphasized the spiritual love of Rama and Savithri, in *The Chessmaster and His Moves* also he emphasizes the spiritual love of Siva and Jayalakshmi. Raja Rao believes that man and woman realize their identity only through intellectual and spiritual affinity with each other.

Raja Rao looks upon beauty as the means of spiritual advancement. He knows very well about the spiritual efficacy of beauty. He adores the beauty of woman. Rama, the protagonist of the novel, takes woman as the great marvel and mystery of Nature. In *The Serpent and the Rope*, looking at Saroja, the step-sister of Rama, Rama recalls in an interior monologue,

“I was intoxicated with Saroja’s presence, like a deer could be before a waterfall, or an elephant before a mountain peak; something primordial was awakening in a creature and I felt maturity in a girl was like the new moon or the change of equinox, it had polar affinities. There was something of the smell of music, of the oyster when the pearl is still within, of the deep silent sea before the monsoon breaks. There was, too, a feeling of a temple sanctuary, and I could now understand why primitive people took the first blood of menstruation for the better harvesting of their fields, And why the Indians gave such beautiful name to their women...What deep and reverential mystery womanhood is.”

It is a fact the physical beauty of a girl or a woman attracts everybody.

69. Ibid., P. 50
Many writers have given description about the attractive physical female beauty in their art-forms. That Raja Rao adores the physical beauty of the woman is explicit in the novel *The Chessmaster and His Moves* also. The novel shows that Siva is attracted by the physical beauty of Suzanne. He says in the novel,

“That’s when I noticed her first—her rounded clear-cut nose, her very firm bust, and a flowing waist that seemed to stop on at her toes.”

Like Raja Rao, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya also was not unaware of this fact. Bhattacharyya did not overlook the natural attraction between a matured boy and a girl. In the novel *Munisunir Pohar*, the love between Mindhar and Aaidhan has been mentioned. However, the physical attraction of Mindhar and Aaidhan has gradually turned into spiritual love. Inspite of having enough freedom for sexual enjoyment, they had overcome their sexual feelings for each other and aspired for spiritual love. The cheap sexuality has not been found prominent in the writings of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya. However, it is also true that Bhattacharyya has not neglected the issue of the attraction between male and female. So has made to say in the novel *Bharati*.

“Narir majat purusar khudha thake, purusar majat narir khudha thake. Tak aaswikar karile jibanat aswabhabikatar janma hay.”

It means that there is the attraction between the male and the female and if it is ignored, impossibility is born in life.

The physical attraction between a male and a female has been expressed in Bhattacharyya's novel *Aai*, through the characters of Rajat and Numali. In the novel, it is seen that Rajat kissed Numali and embraced her passionately. This physical attraction is seen in *Yiaruingam* also, through the characters like Rishang and Khutingla. At a solitary place, they embraced each other passionately. In the novel *Mrityunjay*, Mahada Gosain at the time of his destination, remembered the beautiful face of his wife. It is seen that listening to the chirping sound of a bird, the minds of Gosain was restless. He thought as if the bird had carried some message to him from his wife. The love relation as well as the attraction between male and female has been focused in Bhattacharyya's another novel *Sinaki Suti*. In the novel, Anand felt a kind of attraction towards Arpana though Arpana needed spiritual love from him. On the otherhand, Pamela loved Anand and tried to keep him away from Arpana. The natural jealousy of a girl towards another girl in respect of love is also explicit here. The urge of physical attraction between man and woman is found in the novel *Nastachandra*, through the characters like Durlav and Suwanikan. Suwanikan, being unable to get the sexual pleasure from her old husband Bipul, developed a kind of illegal relationship with Durlav, which made her pregnant. In the novel *Ballari* also, Bhattacharyya has portrayed the illegal love relation of Ali, the wife of Nalin Duwara and Sengupta, the geologist of the company. However, Ali before her suicide wrote a letter to her husband, in which she revealed that her love towards Sengupta was not physical.
Selection of the titles for the novels

The title of a novel should be apt and suggestive. A good title should indicate the contents of the novel. It should at once tell us what the novel is about. Both Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya have shown their intelligence in choosing the titles in their novels. Both the novelists have shown their philosophical knowledge by choosing the titles of the novels.

The title of Raja Rao's first novel, Kanthapura is apt and suggestive. The novel is about a South Indian village named Kanthapura. If there is any hero in the novel, it is the people, the community, of the village named Kanthapura. The readers are told, at the very beginning, that Kanthapura is a village in Mysore in the province of Kara. It is situated in the valley of Himavathy, there it lies 'curled up like a child on its mother's lap'. This single image makes the village spring into life. At the very beginning of the novel, the novelist has given a description of the village.

“Our village—I don’t think you have ever heard about it—Kanthapura is its name, and it is in the province of Kara. High on the Ghats is it, high up the steep mountains that face the cool Arabian seas, up the Malabar coast is it, up Mangalore and Puttur and many a centre of cardamom and coffee, rice and sugarcane. Roads, narrow, dusty, rut-covered roads, wind through the forests of teak and of jack, of sandal and of sal, and hanging over bellowing gorges and leaping over elephant-haunted valleys...Cart after cart groans through the roads of Kanthapura.”

The second novel of Raja Rao, The Serpent and the Rope carries

72. Raja Rao Kanthapura (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), P. 1
philosophical implications. The title bears a symbolic outlook. The word 'serpent' represents illusion and the 'rope' stands for reality. *The Serpent and the Rope* is impregnated with philosophy, generally construed to be Vedantic. The title suggests the non-dualistic philosophy of Sankaracharyya. The analogy taken from Sankaracharyya, illustrates the doctrine that just as the rope is often wrongly taken to be the serpent, the limited self is often regarded as the individual soul, which is only an aspect of God.

In *The Cat and Shakespeare*, another novel of Raja Rao, the cat is a symbol of the Feminine Principle. It stands for the Divine Mother who protects those who submit to her. The relation between God and Man is compared to that between a cat and her kitten or to that between a monkey and her baby. The addition of 'Shakespeare' in the title is very significant from the viewpoint of the theme and the general tone of the novel. 'Shakespeare' is a patent universal symbol virtually connected with the theme of the novel. 'Shakespeare' is adopted to the spiritual needs in this novel.

*Comrade Kirillov* is a fascinating story of an Indian intellectual turned communist, who is lost in his quest. The novel portrays Comrade Kirillov's mind from Theosophy to Communism. He is caught in the mighty whirl of ideological contradictions of the modern world and torn between intellectual convictions and emotional pulls.

The title of another novel, *The Chessmaster and His Moves* itself bears a symbolic significance. The Chessmaster is an emblem of God and the game of chess is symbolic of the world. The moves made by the Chessmaster, are symbolic of the conduct of the drama of life (Lila). The narrator says that life is a chess (game or play) and all the occurrences of
our life are happened by the will of the Chessmaster, that is, God, the Almighty. Sivarama asserts that the performance in the chess is the inevitable consequence of the karma and thus the world (Lila) continues.

Similarly, the titles of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s novels also carry their symbolic meaning. The title of his novels also have shown his depth philosophical outlook. One of the novels of Bhattacharyya is *Mrityunjay*, which carries symbolic meaning. The meaning of ‘Mrityunjay’ is he who conquers death. In the novel, the characters, without thinking of their own lives, jumped on the struggle for getting independence of India from the clutches of the British. This means that they tried to conquer death.

Another novel, *Yiaruingam* carries the significant title. The meaning of ‘Yiaruingam’ is the ‘reign of the people’. Rishang and Khutingla wanted to name their coming baby as ‘Yiaruingam.’ The novelist’s optimistic view is focused through Rishang. Rishang hoped that after his death, his son would survive. In this way, representative after representatives would be born in this world and through their works, peace would come to the world and it would carry the victory of the people. *Yiaruingam*, the title of the novel signifies the democratic view as well as the optimistic view of the novelist. At the preface of the novel, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has said that the choosing the title of a new book is as difficult as choosing the name of a new-born baby. The novelist has said that ‘Yiaruingam’ is a tangkhul word and it will convey specific message of a situation.

Another novel, *Aai* also signifies the sympathetic and loving nature of a mother. The mother’s love is incomparable. Many art-forms have been composed on the issue of the mother’s greatness. In the old Indian society,
mother is called 'Aai'. By choosing the title for his novel, Bhattacharyyaa has shown the loving attributes, as well as the sweet addresses for a mother.

Another title, *Ranga Megh* is also significant. *Ranga Megh* is a reformatory and revolutionary novel. The red colour of the clouds is the symbol of revolution and change. Anand, one of the characters of the novel, tried to reform the society from the existing system. Through the character of Anand, the novelist has emphasized the necessity of administrative reformation in the society. From that perspective, the title *Ranga Megh* is very apt and suitable.

Another title, *Ballari* is also very significant. The name ‘Ballari’ means the creepers which cannot stand on their own way. In the novel, Ali Duwara is shown as ‘ballari’. She did not have any individualistic attitude and did not have proper strength to stand in the society, because of which she committed suicide.

Likewise, in the other novels also, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyyaa has shown his intelligence in choosing the title for his novels.

**(xii) Mode of expression**

Language is a medium of expression of ideas. A writer takes the help of a story to give expression or emotions and ideas. Different writers use different style and techniques to express their experiences and ideals. The writer’s use of words, sentences and his particular use of idiom, which is generally known as style, specifically determines the outlook of the writer. In any type of literary creation, style and technique play very significant roles.
and the success and popularity of such a work hinge largely on how the writers have been able to excel in that field. The study of the writer, in his use of narrative technique, not only helps the readers in grasping well the thematic content embedded in it, but also in deriving compound delight from it. The right use of technique confers meaning on the piece of work and gives the work its organic unity and coherence. The adage 'style makes the man' has its significance and relevance in respect of literary artists as well, for no two writers write alike or have the identical manner of expressing their views and ideals or telling their stories. Literature is not only the powerful expression of the society, but also the image of the society. To look into each and every aspect of life is literature. Language is the medium of expression of ideas. The language of a novel is intricably connected with the novelist's philosophy and vision of life. In a fictional work, symbols, similes, metaphors, and imageries form a major part of narrative action and through these aspects, significance of a work is heightened. Raja Rao and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, in spite of writing their novels in two different languages, bear the similarity in their expression. The expressive language and its clarity can be regarded as one of the salient features of the writings of Rao and Bhattacharyya. They have used easy and simple domestic languages in their novels and successfully arrived at the required ends. The clarity of the selection of words is remarkable.

Another salient feature of their writings is that they have used many similes and metaphors in their narration. Besides, their writings are full of proverbs and imageries. They placed the proverbs and imageries in a befitting manner in the writings of their novels. Since Bhattacharyya has written the
novels in the Assamese language, so his proverbs and sayings and similes are from the Assamese society. Both the novelists were well-versed in using simple, compound and complex sentences.

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. In the Foreword of the novel Kanthapura, Raja Rao discusses the problem of the language and style of the Indian writer in English: how to fuse the tempo of Indian thought and sensibility with the English expression. In the 'Foreword' to the novel Kanthapura Raja Rao says about the English language,

"English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up. ...but not of our emotional make-up. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We can write only as Indians ...Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the Americans." 73

Raja Rao has used the Indian English in his creation. To create an Indian atmosphere, Raja Rao sometimes uses direct, literal translations of Indian or Kannada proverbs, idioms and phrases. Raja Rao uses English like a master, as one uses one's own mother-tongue. English syntax and structures are modified and broken to suit his purpose. Raja Rao introduces literal translations as coining of new compound words. He uses the structures like- 'that house people' or 'next- house- women's kitchen'. In The Serpent and the Rope, Raja Rao tries to graft some features of the rhythms of Sanskrit

73. Raja Rao Kanthapura (New Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1989), P.V.
speech on English; and his style, frequently sonorous, repetitive and swift and has an Indian colouring which is further deepened by the use.

The imageries that Raja Rao has used in his novels, are thoroughly Indian and his imageries are equally distinctive and creative. All the images are drawn from Indian objects and experiences. Names and words like Benaras, the Himalayas, the Gangas, Shiva, Parvathi, Cobra 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. In his usage,

(i) ‘The rice be as fine as filigree’, (P.117)
(ii) ‘The mangoes are yellow as gold’, (PP.117-118)
(iii) ‘The sky became blue as a marriage shawl’, (P.56)
(iv) ‘The boys are bright as banana trunks.’ (P.184)
(v) ‘They are as bitter as the neem-leaves.’ (P.56)
(vi) ‘She is hale as a first-calved cow.’ (P.102)

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 novelist has used many Indian dialects such as “Ayyo...Ayyo”. In Kanthapura, he has used these expressions: ‘Waterfall Venkamma’, ‘Nose scratching Nanjamma’, ‘Front-house Akkamma’, ‘Temple Rangappa’, ‘Coffee-planter Ramayya’, ‘Patwari Nanjundia’, ‘Gold-Bangle Sommanna’, ‘Corner house Moorthy’ etc. This technique is extended to the expressions and idioms too. Raja Rao frequently uses village proverbs, legends and concrete imagery
in Indian context. Some of his expressions that he has used in *Kanthapura* are-

(i) 'Our hearts beat like the wings of bats' (P.153)
(ii) 'Every squirrel has his day' (P.81)
(iii) 'And yet he was as honest as an elephant.' (P.9)
(iv) 'A rasping hiss as though a thousand porcupines have suddenly bristled up' (P.175)
(v) 'Does a boar stand before a lion or a jackal before an elephant?' (P.60)
(vi) 'The sinner may go to the ocean, but the water will only touch his knees' (P.99)
(vii) 'You forget it. But this stomach that has borne eight children cannot forget it' (P.119)
(viii) 'You are a traitor to your salt-givers' (P.15)
(ix) 'Your voice is not a sparrow voice in your village' (P.29)
(x) 'Nobody who has eyes to see and ears to hear will believe in such a crow and sparrow story' (P.16)
(xi) 'The youngest is always the holy bull' (P.35)
(x) 'One cannot stitch up the mouths of others.' (P.99)

These are the literal translations of Indian expressions, which create an Indian atmosphere. Numerous proverbs find a natural place in the peasant speech:

(i) 'The policemen are not your uncle's sons' (P.165)
Sometimes, the peasants use an abusive, vulgar language and Raja Rao does not hesitate to use such a language when the occasion demands it, though his use of it, is more restrained and judicious. Such language is an integral part of peasant speech, and so, its use is essential to express peasant sensibility. Sometimes, the peasants burst out into anger and at that time their expressions are-

(i) 'May your house be destroyed'.(P.170)
(ii) 'May your wife die childless'.(P.170)
(iii) 'I'll sleep with your wife'. (P. 62)

This is indeed the natural speech of the rural folk and Raja Rao has transmuted these natural expressions into English to create an Indian sensibility in his novels. 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.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{74} Ragini Ramachandra, "On the Ganga Ghat : An Assessment", Ragini Ramachandra, ed., Raja Rao : An Anthology of Recent Criticism (Delhi : Pencraft International, 2000), P. 189
Like Raja Rao, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya also has been able to represent the situation as depicted in his novels very clearly and vividly before the readers by the use of proper language. Bhattacharyya has used typical Assamese language. Like the writings of Raja Rao, the writings of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya are also loaded with many proverbs, similes and metaphors. These are also drawn from the Indian society, specifically from the Assamese society. Similes, metaphors etc., the chief ornaments of literature are suitably adopted in his novels, which have increased the grandeur of the novels. In the world of Assamese literature of the post-independence period, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has occupied a prominent place. One of the reasons is his capability of using proper language in his art-forms. Bhattacharyya has used homely words and proper Assamese words in his novels. In the dialogues of the various characters, the novelist has used appropriate proverbs, which are used in the Assamese life-style. Moreover, like Raja Rao, Bhattacharyya has also used many similes, metaphors and imageries in his novels. The special credit of Bhattacharyya is that he can apply different forms of language as suited by different characters.

Proverb is one of the important folk-elements. It has a close connection with life. It occupies a significant place in almost all the literatures of the world. The novel *Mritunjay* is also loaded with many proverbs, which are related with folk-beliefs of people. The very first sentence of the novel begins with a proverb- 'kesa baralak jokai lale ga
saribaloi tan."\(^{75}\) It shows the strong nature and extreme eagerness of the Assamese people to prevent the strength of the British reign.

Another proverb of the novel is ‘dhal nai, tarowal nai, Nidhiram Sardar’\(^{76}\) which makes a glimpse of the political atmosphere of the nation.

In Assamese society, boys are considered to be superior. It is reflected in *Mrityunjay*, when Madhu said that a boy was born after many good deeds of people. Moreover, in Indian society, after the death of the parents, a boy performs rituals. Madhu said in the novel that it would be very good, if he had a boy or a girl because the boy would have given ‘pinda’ to him and the girl would have cried after his death. In this respect, he has uttered a proverb.

‘Khetir phal dhan, sangsarar phal santan.’\(^{77}\)

When Dhanpur and Madhu were in conflict regarding one issue, Dhanpur said the proverb, ‘dhantowe prati kanto, manuhtowe prati manto’\(^{78}\) through which, he wanted to explain that every people did not bear the same ideology.

The novel *Mrityunjay* shows how the characters like Rupnarayan, Dhanpur, Aahina Konwar, Bhibhiram, Mahada Gosain etc. were involved in the derailment of the train, which carried many British soldiers. In the process of their action, they had to be very cautious, and should not believe anyone. In this respect, Layram said the proverb,

\(^{75}\) Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, *Mrityunjay* (Guwahati : Sahitya Prakash, 1992), P. 1
\(^{76}\) Ibid., P. 146
\(^{77}\) Ibid., P. 46
\(^{78}\) Ibid., P.31
There are many proverbs in the novel like
‘daho anguliye khai, budhai hesukilehe jai’ (P. 74.)
‘aati darpe hata Lanka’ (P. 261.)
‘maukhe ujale guri paruwar maran nai’ (P. 75.)
‘mari jao mari jao, gurur rin suji jao’ (P. 11.)
‘aahak barisha katak pat, roi ja bhinihi khai ja bhat’ (P. 113.)
‘barata mahar terata jagar, sadai nuguse aata lagar’ (P. 140.)
‘purusar ran tirir biyan’ (P. 222.) etc.

The novel Yiaruingam is also loaded with many proverbs. The novel has focused on one side, the broad Indian nationalistic thinking and on the other side, the separate narrow nationalistic thinking which lead for the separate land for the Nagas. Taking the issue for the separate land for the Nagas, some Nagas including Phanitphang started a revolution and took resort of violence. Videshelly took the leadership of that revolution. When Rishang gave the lesson to Phanitphang to be a true human-being, Phanitphang did not listen to Rishang. Rishang with anger said the proverb, ‘abujanak bujowa, dheruarthari sijowa.’ Rishang, however, understood that the time would only remove the ignorance from the minds of Phanitphang.

In the Assamese society, generally, a boy and a girl were married according to the wishes of their guardians. In the novel Yiaruingam, when

79. Ibid., P. 54
80. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, Yiaruingam (Guwahati: Layars Book Stall, 1998), P. 38

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Barmala said that Rishang and Khutingla loved each other and wanted to marry, Najek remarked, ‘saruk sudhi kone saul bahay?’

Sarengla and Rishang had engaged themselves in the novel for the welfare of society. But, sometimes Sarengla had a fear in her mind that people might say many bad things with her relationship with Rishang. They might also say about her relationship with Phanitphang. But, at the same moment, she assured her mind by uttering the proverb “misa kathar theng sutı.”

Bhattacharyya’s other novels are also loaded with many proverbs and similes and metaphors, which have heightened the dignity of the novels.

81. Ibid., P. 52
82. Ibid., P. 68