



Register Number:

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ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BENGALURU - 27
MA – ENGLISH - I SEMESTER
SEMESTER EXAMINATION: JANUARY 2021
EN 7218 – INDIAN LITERATURES - I

This paper contains THREE printed pages and TWO sections

Time: 2 ½ Hours

Max. Marks: 70

SECTION-A

Read the following article on Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* and answer the questions that follow:

There's no way to celebrate the Salman Rushdies and the Arundhati Roys who have earned such fame without going back to the originals: R.K. Narayan, G.V. Desani, Raja Rao.

In the preface of his classic *Kanthapura*, first published in 1938, Raja Rao writes, "We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. Our method of expression... has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish and the American. Time alone will justify it."

The beginning of *Kanthapura* lives up to this distinctiveness: "Our village—I don't think you have ever heard of 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, they turn now to the left and now to the right..."

The telling was not easy. "One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own.... English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up...not our emotional make-up," he says, choosing to write in English and not Kannada or French, two other languages he was fluent in.

The story is of an upheaval that will soon tell on the lives of a community. A disarray is caused by the arrival of a person influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's teachings. "O, lift the flag high/ Lift the flag high/ This is the flag of the Revolution."

As the grandmother-narrator Achakka puts it: "We said to ourselves, he is one of the Gandhimen, 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 a pariah a brahmin. Well, how does it affect us? We shall be dead before the world is polluted.”

But her world will be upended too. Raja Rao, who lived in France for decades, and later taught philosophy at the university of Texas, was always in search of the best way to infuse the “tempo of Indian life” while writing in English.

“We, in India, think quickly, we talk quickly, and we move quickly. There must be something in the sun of India that makes us rush and tumble and run on... we tell one interminable tale. Episode follows episode, and when our thoughts stop our breath stops, and we move on to another thought. This was and still is the ordinary style of our storytelling.”

Writing about various lives in his village, the rich and the poor, the disparate caste and religious equations, the clash of the old and the new, he touched the world. Polish poet Czesław Miłosz wrote his only poem in English titled ‘To Raja Rao’—For years I couldn’t accept/ The place I was in./ I felt I should be somewhere else.

Answer any ONE of the following questions in about 250 words: (1x20 = 20)

1. “There’s no way to celebrate the Salman Rushdies and the Arundhati Roys who have earned such fame without going back to the originals: R.K. Narayan, G.V. Desani, Raja Rao.” What do you think that the writer means by this statement? Use examples from your reading this semester to substantiate your answer (Core texts/ Companion texts/ Self-study texts/ Suggested reading list).

2. Raja Rao writes, “We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. Our method of expression... has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish and the American. Time alone will justify it.” Explore this statement using the Preface to *Kanthapura* and any other text.

SECTION-B

Answer ANY FIVE of the following questions in about 150 words: (5x10 = 50)

3. Arun Kolatkar “took complex concepts from his native Marathi tongue and wrote them simply in English, with a style that would make a poet in any language envious.” Do you agree with this assessment? Comment on Kolatkar’s style of writing poetry using examples from his *Jejuri* to support your answer.

4. Do you think it is fair to compare and contrast a fictional woman character Mantangini with that of a real-life woman Kamala Das? Justify your answer with examples from your reading of *Rajmohan’s Wife* and *My Story*.

5. According to a review in *The Telegraph*, “While many are brutally honest in admitting the fact that short story is a genre struggling hard under the shadow of its mightier

cousin, the novel, the arrival of a collection of short stories like *Difficult Pleasures* ...busts all such myths." Do you think the reviewer is right in making such a statement? Use examples from *Difficult Pleasures* to prove your point.

6. What is your understanding of Gauri Viswanathan's arguments in *Masks of Conquest* in relation to the imperial context? Does this work show that the origins of English studies in India are diverse and diffuse? Explain using examples from the text.

7. "*60 Indian Poets* spans fifty-five years of Indian poetry in English, bridging continents and generations, and seeks to expand the definition of 'Indianness'." Choose any two poems that you enjoyed reading from this collection and show how they define "Indianess"?

8. "I finally got around to seeing this film (*Train to Pakistan*) the other day, and it was worth the wait." Do you think this reviewer is exaggerating the experience of watching this film? What was your experience? Would there have been any other film that you would have rather watched this semester as part of the syllabus and why?

9. R K Narayan's *Swami and Friends* is one of BBC Arts' "100 'most inspiring' novels". Do you think this novel deserves to be on this list? Respond using references from the book.

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