
The Gandhian Political Influence in Kanthapura:

A Study by Raja Rao.

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ABSTRACT:

The research paper Kanthapura by Raja Rao is a novel that portrays the transformation of a small Indian village during the struggle for independence. Set against the backdrop of India's freedom movement, the story follows the awakening of the villagers to the principles of non-violence and civil disobedience, as inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. This study explores how Kanthapura presents a story of resistance, unity, and self-empowerment, making it a timeless reflection of the Indian independence movement. The narrative is driven by the voice of the village storyteller, who recounts the impact of the national movement on the local community. Through its portrayal of the lives of both men and women in the village, Kanthapura examines the complexities of caste, gender, and social roles in the context of a national struggle for freedom. The novel's blend of myth, spirituality, and politics reflects the deep connection between individual and collective identity. As the villager's experience both unity and division, the story of their transformation becomes a poignant exploration of how a community evolves in the face of political and social upheaval.

KEYWORDS:

Kanthapura, Raja Rao, Indian independence, freedom movement, non-violence, Gandhi, caste.



Introduction:

Raja Rao legendary for his contributions to English writing and his examination of Indian identity and spirituality, Raja Rao (1908–2006) was a well-known Indian author. This is a summary of his life. He pursued studies in philosophy and English at the University of Mysore. Later, he relocated to France and attended the University of Montpellier to further his education. The first well-known book: His 1938 debut novel “Kanthapura” attracted notice for its depiction of Gandhian activism and rural India. In Indian English literature, it is frequently considered a crucial work. Themes of spirituality, cultural identity, and the conflict between traditional Indian ideals and contemporary influences are commonly explored in Rao’s writings. His most important autobiographical book “The Serpent and the Rope” (1960) reflects on his experiences both outside and in India. Indian philosophy is explored philosophically in “The Cat and Shakespeare” (1965). The 1976 story “Comrade Kirillov” combines political and personal concerns. Rao taught at several universities, including the University of California, Irvine, over the most of his life in France and the US. He was married to Kamala Rao, an Indian writer, and had a lifelong interest in spirituality and philosophy. Acknowledgment: Rao won multiple honors for his literary efforts, including the Padma Bhushan and the Sahitya Akademi Award. He died on July 8, 2006, leaving a rich literary legacy that still has an impact on readers and authors today. Raja Rao made important contributions to the canon of Indian literature and is renowned for his distinctive storytelling style and ability to translate difficult intellectual concepts into comprehensible fiction.

Mohandas K. Gandhi, known as Mahatma (“great soul”), was the father of modern India, but his impact extended far beyond the subcontinent and remains as significant now as it was in the

early twentieth century and during this country's own civil rights campaign. This text, drawn from Gandhi's writings throughout his life, introduces the reader to Gandhi's ideas on politics, spirituality, poverty, suffering, love, nonviolence, civil disobedience, and his personal life.

Plot:

The village is called Kanthapura, and it is located in the Kara province. I doubt you have ever heard of it. Many centers of cardamom, coffee, rice, and sugarcane can be found high on the Ghats, up the steep mountains that front the calm Arabian Sea, along the Malabar Coast, and through Mangalore and Puttur. Roads winding through forests of teak and jack, sandal and sal, hang over thunderous canyons and jump over elephant-infested valleys. They are tiny, dusty, and rutted.

They lead you via the Alambè, Champa, Mena, and Kola passes and into the vast granaries of trade, turning left and right at different points. They say that our hauled coffee and cardamoms enter the ships that the red men carry there on the blue waves, and that they then travel over the seven oceans to the nations where our kings reside. Through the streets of Kanthapura, cart after cart moans. On many nights, before our eyes close, the lights of the cart trains are the last things we see, and the cartman's voice, which sings through the darkness, is the last thing we hear.

The carts travel up the passes into the morning that will rise over the sea, after passing through Potter's Lane and Main Street. They then turn by Chennayya's Pond. The carts occasionally stop, and greetings are exchanged when Rama Chetty or Subba Chetty have goods.

Kenchamma is our goddess. She is great and full. Long ago, when she had slain a demon that had come to beg our little sons for

sustenance, the sage Tripura performed penances to bring her down. The Kenchamma Hill is red because she fought so many nights that the blood seeped into the ground. If not, sister, tell me why it should be red only upstream from the Tippur Creek.

You have brown and black muck, but never red, on the opposite side of the creek. Tell me, if it weren't for Kenchamma and her fight, how could this have happened? Thank God, she not only slew the sprite but also became one of us. I will say this: she has never let us down in our time of sorrow. "Kenchamma, goddess, you are not kind to us," you say as you fall at her feet if it doesn't rain. "You have not provided us with any water, and our fields are teeming with younglings. Kenchamma, tell us why you want to make our stomachs burn."

Then, through the shadows of the office, Kenchamma opens her eyes wide—oh, if only you could see her eyelashes twitch and tremble! and gives you a smile you have never seen before. You understand what that implies. The rain patters on the tiles every night after the doors are shut and the lights are out, and many peasants can be heard squelching in the gutter and the muck. I can promise you, dear Kenchamma has never let us down.

Great Goddess, keep us safe! O Benign One.

Then there were Harikathas occasionally. In addition, our Sastri is a poet. Sastri just delivered His Highness an epic about Rama and Sita's journey through the hill country, while the Maharaja of Mysore had already presented a royal shawl to a distinguished Sinhalese scholar. They would have a permanent position in the court and be firmly established. He also sings beautifully. However, Harikatha, dear! What a Harikatha—man! How real and divine and beautiful the god—world appeared to us when he stood up with the cymbals close to his hands and the bells at his ankles.

Furthermore, no one has ever celebrated Parvati's victory over Siva with a larger Harikatha. Sister, he was reciting poems. He could also keep us seated for hours at a time. And how we wished the Sankara-Jayanthi had lasted longer!

To tell you the truth, Badè Khan did not stay in Kanthapura. Being a Mohomedan, he could stay neither in Potters' Street nor in Sudra Street, and you don't, of course, expect him to live in Brahmin Street. So, he went to Patwari Nanjundia and growled at him, and the Patwari trembled and lisped and said he could do nothing. "Only the Patel can do something."

Then, Badè Khan went straight to the Patel and said, "Hey, Patel. The government has sent me here, and I need a house to live in."

"A house?" exclaimed Patel Rangè Gowda as he stepped through the doorway onto the veranda. "Well, you can see just by looking around. Right now, I am unable to come up with one." Carefully, he grabbed a tobacco leaf from his betel pouch. He took a seat and wiped the tobacco leaf against his dhoti before putting it in his mouth and starting to gnaw on an area nut.

The only person who would not interact with these Gandhi-bhajans was Bhatta.

"What is the topic of all this city talk? We've had enough trouble in the city," he would add. "And such annoyances are not what we want here." The truth is that Bhatta started all of this following his most recent trip to the city. He used to sit with us and sing with us before that. Occasionally, if Moorthy was running late, he would go grab My Experiments with Truth, which was bound in white khadi, and ask Seenu to read it and explain it for him.

Abruptly, he entered the metropolis. "I went there on busi-

ness,” he said. You know, he was constantly traveling to the city to register documents such as promissory bonds, sales deeds, and mortgage papers. What did it matter to him to go to the city when the other party had already paid the cart fare? A day spent in the city is always enjoyable. They even claimed that he had started lending money there recently. He was named manager of the Haunted-Tamarind-Tree field by Advocate Seenappa, as you are aware, and we all understood how desperate the debauchee was now. Thus, Bhatta started lending out rupees—one, two, and three hundred.

The district elections followed, and Chandrasekharayya remarked, “Two thousand for it.” He got it, and as a result, he is currently the president of the Tamlapur Taluk.

The second Brahmin is Ramanna. Before midday, he would arrive. The ceremony would start. Bhatta has extensive knowledge in his craft. In the blink of an eye, it would all be over. Then comes the genuine, compulsive meal, which includes solid curds, fresh honey, and Bhatta’s favorite Bengal-gram khir. “Just one more cup, Bhattarè, just one? We must not let our men down.” Bhatta continues to belch and nibble, drinking water and then munching once more.

The elderly are gathered in the side room, waiting for the holy Brahmins to finish their lunch, while the youngsters play in the shade of the byre.

But Bhatta goes on “Rama, Rama”—belching, sipping water, and munching again. “Rama—Rama...” Every day does not end with an obsequial dinner. The coconut comes next, after the sacred supper. Post the two rupees, and see whether the That-House rule applies. It’s five o’clock, and the post office employees are at two-eight. That’s the rule.

Rangamma raises her head slightly and whispers respectfully,

“I don’t think we need to be concerned about that, Bhattarè. The pariahs could always reach the temple door, couldn’t they? They can also visit the temple once a year in Belur, just across the Mysore border.”

“That’s what you think, Rangamma. However, as someone who frequently visits the city, I see it more clearly. Listen! Do you know Advocate Rama Sastri, the son of the ancient, orthodox Ranga Sasuri, is now talking about throwing open his temple to the pariahs? ‘The public temples are under the government,’ he asserts. ‘But this one was built by my ancestors, and I shall let the pariahs in—and which bastard of his father will say no?’ I hope, however, that the father will have died before then. But seriously, Aunt, we live in a strange time. How about their modern education and women? Do you know there are grown-up girls in the city who are capable of bearing two or three children?”

But Waterfall Venkamma knew better. This good-for-nothing person, who couldn’t even pass an examination and has now taken up this pariah business—why, he could plead, cringe, and prostrate himself before the coffee grower, but he would have the dirt out of the body of his second daughter.

Moorthy Agrees with A Number of core Gandhian Concepts:

Gandhi supported khadi, a hand-spun fabric, as a symbol of economic independence and opposition to British textiles. Moorthy urges the villagers to spin and wear khadi. This act, which emphasizes independence and the rejection of colonial goods, is both symbolic and economic.

Non-Violent Resistance (Satyagraha): Under Moorthy’s leadership, the villagers boycott foreign products and refuse to pay taxes in an effort to protest British authorities in a non-violent manner. The involvement of the peasants in these efforts, which are

modeled after Gandhi's national movements, is dramatized in the book.

Equality in Society: Moorthy opposes the strict caste system and supports allowing members of lower castes—referred to in the text as “pariahs”—to enter temples and other places of worship. Gandhi's attempts to end untouchability and promote social harmony are clearly reflected in this.

Conclusion:

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* depicts how Mahatma Gandhi's beliefs profoundly inspired the people of a small Indian community. The novel describes how the villagers, who led modest lives, began to reject British control by adhering to Gandhi's principles of truth, nonviolence, and self-government. Moorthy and others demonstrate how Gandhian ideas transformed their thinking and gave them strength. This story is about more than just one town; it mirrors the greater liberation movement in India. So, the novel tells us that even usual individuals, provoked by strong beliefs, can effect momentous change.

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