

# GANDHIAN IDEOLOGY IN RAJA RAO'S KANTHAPURA: A POTRAIT OF COLONIZED INDIA

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**Abstract:** The main focal point of this paper is to find out Gandhi's impact on the novel *Kanthapura*. The world of novels got their particular position by hand of the trio of novelist 'Mulak Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K Narayan'. Raja Rao carved a special and important position in Indian English novel after publishing '*Kanthapura*'. His second novel '*The Serpent and the Rope*' received the prestigious 'Sahitya Academy' award in 1963. There was no person who is equal to Raja Rao in respect of Indo-Anglican literature. He was born in Gandhian age. Gandhian ideology has a deep impact in Rao. Gandhi is one of the most admirable leaders of Indian freedom movement in India and also in abroad. He has the experience of two world war and by this he knew the cruelty and pathetic condition of war. Through a close reading of *Kanthapura* we can find that the main protagonist Moorthy is very much similar to Raja Rao and Mahatma Gandhi. Both have same kind of opinion regarding cast problem, family background. The novelist Rao is born and brought up in a Brahmin family and Moorthy is also from a Brahmin family. He was influenced by him to invent himself Gandhi is always everywhere in the novel but at the end of the novel Moorthy himself admits that through the way of freedom is impossible.

Key word: Gandhi's, *Kanthapura*, Indian English, Gandhian, freedom, movement

## INTRODUCTION

Raja Rao began to write novels when the verse were in there high position and dominating the genre. Verse writers like Derozio, Sarajini Naidu, Taru Dutta were dominating Indian English writings. But the world of novels got their particular position by hand of the trio of novelist 'Mulak Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K Narayan'. Raja Rao carved a special and important position in Indian English novel after publishing '*Kanthapura*'. His second novel '*The Serpent and the Rope*' received the prestigious 'Sahitya Academy' award in 1963. It is the novel which brings an enormous fame for him in India and abroad. Through his novel he unveils his deep concern and love for rural India. At that time when he was writing the society is gradually changing his attitude by cosmopolitan atmosphere. But he tried to show the beauty and ideal location of rural India.

There was no person who is equal to Raja Rao in respect of Indo-Anglican literature. He was born in Gandhian age. Gandhian ideology has a deep impact in Rao. Gandhi is one of the most admirable leaders of Indian freedom movement in India and also in abroad. He has the experience of two world war and by this he knew the

cruelty and pathetic condition of war. As all the hopes for freedom was shattered, he is the only hope for the freedom. Education, social life, politics has a deep influence of Gandhian ideology more or less. He influenced the people through his writing in literature and by his weapon of non cooperation, non violence, non touching the foreign. Many writer from India as well as foreign like Henry David Thoreau, John Ruskin were influenced by him. Like Rao he also against the modernization of village. According to him it is the safe place of human consortium.

The Gandhian ideology is present in almost a dozen of Indian novel written in English. Gandhi's concern for abolishing social disparity, untouchability, arrogance regarding cast are repeatedly portrayed in various novels. He was always against of the exploitation of village small industries by the urban large scale industries.

Through a close reading of Kanthapura we can found that the main protagonist Moorthy is very much similar to Raja Rao and Mahatma Gandhi. Both have same kind of opinion regarding cast problem, family back ground. The novelist Rao is born and brought up in a Brahmin family and Moorthy is also from a Brahmin family. Like the others Brahmins he also enjoys the facilities. As novelist himself is from the southern part of India and the village Kanthapura is also in south India. In many fields he has similarity with Rao and he can be addressed as Moorthy Raja Rao.

This influence of Gandhi makes Raja Rao not a mere fiction but more. Gandhi is presented here as a friend, philosopher and guide. Moorthy is the model of Gandhi. He is the Avtar of Gandhi for the village people. He is presented as a Little Gandhi who inspired thousands of common people to leave their study and indulged themselves into freedom movement. Gandhi's ideology influenced them to fight and free their motherland from the burden of colonial rule. As Meenakshi Mukerjee commented on that

“The characteristically concrete imagination of the uneducated mind pictures the Mahatma as large and blue like the Sahyadri Mountain on whose slopes the pilgrims climb to the top, while Moorthy is seen as Small Mountain. To her the Satyagraha becomes a religious ceremony to which she devotes her sacred ardour.”

Kanthapura is a village which represents the struggle of India during the freedom movement. From the very beginning the novelist presents the characters and the villagers who are poor, have no education. They have a social unrest for the cast problem. The struggle between Brahmins and Pariah family shows the Indian social unrest. Actually Kanthapura is the microcosm of India.

### **GANDHIAN STRATEGY: SATYAGRAHA ETC**

Moorthy, one of the youngest fellows who were influenced by this ideology is the main leader of movement in Kanthapura which is leading by Gandhi outside Kanthapura. His work 'Hind Swraj' has a deep influence upon them. “Self government requires transformation of the self, which includes not only the refusal to use violence and coercion but also adopting virtues like temperance, justice, charity, truthfulness, courage, fearlessness and freedom from greed, which would reinforce political ethics” (Bahl 17). They follow the way of non violence. They uprooted the toddy booths because these toddy booths gradually consume the poor economically. The coolies and workers cannot sustain that their hard working income can waste like that. During this time they do not break the motto of non violence even when they were beaten by police.

## **GANDHI: THE INFLUENCING CHARACTER OF THE NOVEL**

Gandhi never appeared in the novel as Mulak Raj Anand introduced Gandhi directly on the scene. But being a background character he influenced and dominated all the character. He is a hero of the nation not because he is crowned by the title 'mahatma' but for his selfless activities in freedom movement. As Rao commented "The subtlety of the Gandhian thought and the complex political situation of Pre-independence could be explained to the unlettered villagers only through legends and religious stories of gods" (Kanthapura 104) He motivated the country denizens to sacrifice their life for the supreme deed i.e freedom of motherland. This kind of influence is also present among the peoples of Kanthapura. "It is not for nothing the Mahatma is a Mahatma and he would not be Mahatma if the gods were not with him" (Kanthapura 125). That is the biggest tribute by the common villagers of the village which is representing India.

## **UNTOUCHABILITY AND GANDHI**

Untouchability is another problem of India. Kanthapura also depicts the same picture. Gandhi himself commented on "...I want to say something about untouchability. If you want to do some real service, and want to save your Hindu dharma, you must remove this. If you fail to get rid of this, be sure that Hinduism itself will be rid of you. That religion cannot be a holy religion in www.galaxyimrj.com Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal ISSN 2278-9529 Vol. II Issue V 2 September 2013 which hatred is taught against even one man. Let a man be a very great criminal; the least you can do is to reform him and not to hate him (Gandhi 69)." Kanthapura is depicted with all the essential details which is Gandhi's ideological village. "The circuit of collusion is, however, shown to be short-circuited by Gandhian nationalism, at first in conflict with orthodoxy and latterly in conflict with colonialism. By this point, the orthodox space of the village has been replaced by an incipient Gandhian space, a process initiated at the moment of the Swami's exposure The new era is consummated by the villagers' commitment to Gandhism (Mondal 112)."

## **MOORTHY AS A MINOR GANDHI**

Like the thousands of common young people Moorthy gave up his study and pleasure life for the freedom movement by the influence of Gandhi. He determined to offer his life for freedom movement. He started to follow the principles of Gandhi. He left his foreign cloths and lit them fire and started to wear Khadi. He postponed his mother's proposal to get marry and lead a common life to put himself more consciously in freedom movement. He was born and brought up in a family who has enormous dry and wet land but he has no interest in erotic pleasure. He got turn to a leader of freedom movement of Kanthapura. However he was a young men but he was loved and acclaimed by the common people. He was respected even by the older people. So he is the most important among all the characters of the novel.

The Gandhi freedom movement was started in Kanthapura by Moorthy. He started to convince the common villagers of the village by going door to door. He gave lectures on Gandhi and his principles. He provided Charkas to the village people which were provided to him by the City Congress. In the beginning it is quite problematic to convince the people. Ultimately they started to spinning the Charkas and producing cloths regularly. They understand that it is essential for political freedom. With their participation the people of Kanthapura formed a Congress Party with the ideology of Gandhi and participate on movement. According to

them Moorthy was the leader. They frequently regarded Gandhi as “big mountain” and Moorthy as “Small Mountain”.

Like Gandhi, Moorthy also works for the upliftment of the socially backward class. He continuously works for the betterment of Pariahs community. Even he goes against of her mother. The swami ordered that if he makes any contact and relationship with the Pariah community he must be excommunicated from the society. But he did not care that even when her mother was dead.

He made a fast for three days because according to him he is not able to follow the principles of Mahatma. The attack of coffee estate is seems to the breaking of Mahatma’s principles to Moorthy. He was arrested by the police for several times but never leave the path of Gandhi.

### **OTHER CHARACTERS INFLUENCED BY GANDHIAN IDEOLOGY**

In this novel the characters are divided into two groups. The first group is Gandhi followers containing the characters like Sankar, Rangamma, Ratna and the second group are against the principles of Mahatma. They are Venkamma and Bhatta.

Rangamma is the next important character after Moorthy who was influenced by Gandhi. Her house is the main office for the congress workers of kanthapura to discuss about the plan. She is one of the main active participator to form the women organization “Savika sangha” in Kanthapura. She motivated the women to indulge themselves in fight for the right. She has a very convincing and impressive voice. She is not like the other common people. She reads news paper on a regular basis to know what is going on the outer world.

Ratna is another women character who also follows the path of Gandhi. She is only fifteen years old and she lost her husband in this young age. When Moorthy was in jail she had taken his place. She leaded the group from the front.

Like Mahatma Gandhi advocate Sankar is also a lawyer and tried to follow the path of Mahatma. He is such a kind of a lawyer who takes only the cases where his client is innocent and the client did not hide anything to him. According to some critic the character Sankar is actually based on Gandi. Though he is a mere small character in the novel but the novelist provided very information about the character. It is important to understand the principles and ethics of Gandhi. His day to day life leading is also indicates Gandhi. He wears Khadi because he knows it very well that by this action the poor people can halt the exploitation which is going on by western industries. He only goes to those marriage parties where the entire guests wear Khadi. He has the belief that Hindi will be the national language so he uses hindi to communicate with his family members. He even fasts with his family in the important days relating to freedom struggle.

In this novel there are also characters like Rachanna, Range Gowda who are more or less influenced by Gandhi. During the Satyanarayan puja they indulge a mass movement. That shows the influence of Gandhi upon the people of Kanthapura.

## **COLONIAL EXPLOITATION**

This above mentioned novel was published 1938 when India was under the British rule. The freedom movement was in pick form. The colonized force repeatedly tried to terminate the movement. The Skeffington Coffee Estate is proof of colonial exploitation. The coolies were forced to do their work with a low wage. They provide only four-anas for man and two for female. The coolies were provided small huts to stay. They did not find any rest during the work. They had to work in sun without any rest. The new owner was much better than his uncle but he had a weakness for women. He used to rape the women. But if any one said no, he created problems. But he always kept distance from the Brahmin women. He usually rape them and gave five rupee as compensation.

When the villagers refused to pay the government tax as they all are in non cooperation movement. But the government ordered to the people that if they refuse to pay the tax they have to pay one rupee and three paise for every people who are above six year in age. The Government also decided to auction the village property. The colonial force who has power continuously smashed the innocent and common people of India during their rule.

## **CONCLUSION**

The novel Kanthapura is a kind of an epic which deals with the ideology and freedom fight on Mahatma Gandhi. Moorthy who is the main protagonist of the novel is the replica of Gandhi in Kanthapura. Though at last Moorthy himself raised a question whether the path of Gandhi is appropriate or not. Like many other young freedom fighter he also disillusioned from the charm that it can achieve their goal. But Gandhi is the main influence through all the novel and all the characters are more or less influenced by him. This novel also gives a visual demonstration of colonized India and how the common people were treated by the colonial force.

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