



## Impact of Gandhian Philosophy in Kanthapura

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**ABSTRACT:** *Kanthapura is one of the finest depictions of the Indian freedom struggle started in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by Mahatma Gandhi. Indian freedom struggle which left influence on the minds of people of India is the central thrust of the novel. Kanthapura illustrate how Gandhian struggle for independence against the British reached to a characteristic South Indian village Kanthapura. The novel is a wonderful example of the impact of Gandhian philosophy that affected even the far flung villages of India. This paper is an attempt to analyse the manner in which Raja Rao appropriates Gandhian philosophy through his creative writing in Kanthapura.*

**Keywords:** *Freedom struggle, Mahatma Gandhi, Moorthy, philosophy, Satyagraha*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Most of the writers felt deeply inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. All were not less than a Prophet and a saint who made people think strenuously. Of these Gandhi's influence on Indian writers was most significant. Gandhiji is, no doubt, one of the most influential figures of the modern period. The Indian masses started acting with high devotion for independence through Gandhian principle of non violence. India's struggle for independence is one of the most popular themes in Indian fiction. He led this moment with his extraordinary weapons of non cooperation, non violence, truth and love. Gandhiji inspired a number of novelists in all Indian languages to write novels projecting his ideology. An eminent critic K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar calls a particular period between two world wars as the "Gandhian age". Munshi Premchand was also deeply inspired by Gandhi so much so he resigned from government job to practise Gandhian thought. He settled down in a village to experience rural life and write about it. In some of the novels, Gandhiji appeared as a person and in some as an unseen hidden presence. In Raja Rao's Kanthapura, Moorthy is presented as the replica of Mahatma Gandhi. He is called as village Gandhi who is truly representative of Gandhian thought and politics extolling the ideals of Satyagraha and appealing Indians for freedom struggle.

Mahatma Gandhi is living God's presence in Kanthapura. His political struggle and philosophy of life is shown by the thought and action of various characters of the novel. Raja Rao describe in Kanthapura a south Indian village truly inspired by Gandhian Satyagraha. In this novel, Gandhi is an incarnation of Lord Rama who s sent from heaven to save India (Sita) from the clutches of slavery from the British (Ravana). Gandhiji is not a character in Kanthapura but his invisible presence and the impact of his thought can be felt throughout the book. Moorthy, the main protagonist comes under the influence of Gandhi at a very young stage. Gandhian philosophy is introduced into the novel through Moorthy. He preaches to the villagers to practice non-violence and speak the truth. He persuades villagers to bear khadi dresses and urged the people to discard British made dresses. Moorthy tells his villagers that Gandhi says 'spinning is as purifying as praying'. The people of Kanthapura and nearby areas are exhorted in the name of the Mahatma not to drink liquor in any form. The toddy shops in the area are picketed to stop sale of liquor. Gandhiji's practice of singing bhajans at his meetings is always appreciated. The people take morning outings and gather at the temple where they sing religious songs They also sing new songs in which Gandhi's stature appears as that of a king of humble reason. Following is an example of a song:

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 is sacred,  
O, Mahatma you'r our king and we are your slaves. ( Rao 203)

This creates the image of Gandhi as Mahatma. He is a godly figure who emanates spiritual power with which he is going to overthrow the rule of Britishers in India. The narrative technique in *Kanthapura* makes the novel more a Gandhi Purana than a piece of mere fiction. Gandhiji is seen as God, mentor, guide and philosopher, and Moorthy as incarnation of Gandhi. *Kanthapura* is about life in South Indian village that is projected as sthal-purana that is the mythic tale of a particular place. *Kanthapura* presents a clear picture of India's freedom struggle in a remote village where the people are illiterate, poor and backward. Gandhi is the way and truth to Moorthy. Moorthy launches the Civil Disobedience Movement against the Britishers. Gandhi is not a character in the novel but he is projected in the novel through his philosophy and teachings. The villagers invest Gandhi with super human powers. They consider that there is Gandhiji government only because of his image as that of a king of humble origin.

There's one Government, Sister,

There's one Government, Sister,

And that's the Government of the Mahatma.

(Rao 207)

Slogans like 'Vande Mataram!', 'Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai!' and 'Inquilab Zindabad!' are raised on various occasions in the novel. People take out morning outings and sing religious songs in which Gandhiji is worshipped as God. Gandhiji lived the life of an ordinary man because of his firm belief in simple living. Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man comes to *Kanthapura* and recites a new kind of tale that mingles Hindu Mythology with contemporary politics. He says that Gandhi is incarnation of Shiva. Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi full name of Gandhi gives Jayaramachar the idea of paralleling Gandhi with Lord Krishna as Mohan being one of the names of Krishna. We are told that Lord Krishna as a young boy kills the serpent Kali and Gandhi also moves from village to village slaying the serpent of British rule. Gandhi teaches Moorthy how to be a Satyagrahi just as Krishna teaches Arjuna the wisdom of how to be a true man of action. Moorthy makes people understand the true significance of freedom struggle and Gandhian Satyagraha. The enthusiasm of Moorthy's followers like Rangamma, Ratna and Range Gowda always encouraged him. They project Gandhi as Mahatma, a superior soul, man with infinite patience and great spiritual powers. With this a new wave of patriotism generates among people of *Kanthapura* and Satyagraha movement gains strength. Moorthy is arrested by the police. Rangamma organises the 'Sevika Sangha' while Moorthy is in jail. Rangamma too is arrested, Ratna takes over the leadership. Moorthy is released after sometime and he is welcomed by the people of *Kanthapura*. Moorthy asks people to join hands with Gandhi's Civil Disobedience movement by perusing Don't touch the Government Campaign and no tax campaign. Police beat protesters mercilessly but they do not give up the struggle. In the end, *Kanthapura* is destroyed but not defeated. The villager's inner resolve remain strong. This is chiefly due to their following the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and the leadership provided by Moorthy.

## II. CONCLUSION

Gandhi's vision of life finds an outlet in *Kanthapura*. Raja Rao through Moorthy, who is called village Gandhi, spreads Gandhian ideals and thoughts among Indian population. Moorthy is a self sacrificing young man, who has no personal ambitions. He cares for poor villagers. The people of his village refer to Moorthy as 'Gandhiman'. He tries to imitate Gandhi in every respect. Moorthy duplicates every action of Gandhi in his village that Gandhiji initiates in his struggle for independence. He reads the Bhagwad Gita, plies the spinning wheel, and even mimics Gandhi's Dandi March. This action of Moorthy makes him out to be a parody of Gandhi. This paper presents Moorthy as the replica of Gandhi who follows Gandhian philosophy and appeals to the people of village to follow the same and actively participate in Gandhiji's freedom struggle.

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