

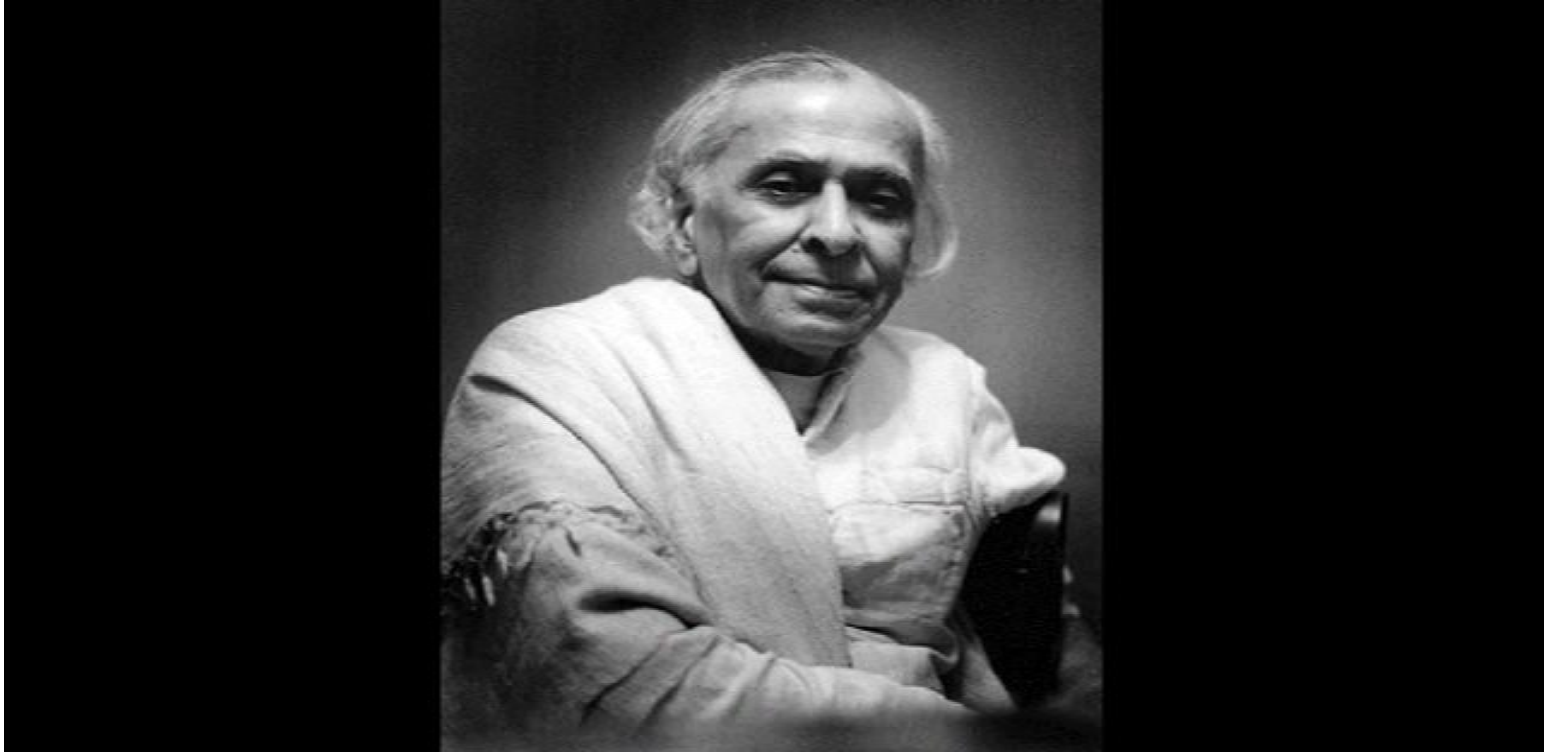


Kanthapura as a Gandhian Novel

Submitted By :
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**“The finest novel to come out of
India in recent years”**

- E.M. Forster



Raja Rao : The Author



Raja Rao : Life Sketch (1908-2006)

- Born in 1908 in Hyderabad.
- Brahmin family.
- Influenced by Sri Atmananda, the great Vedanta.
- Taught Indian philosophy at the University of Texas.
- Lived in France from 1928 to 1939.
- Wrote 'Kanthapura', his first novel in France in 1938.
- Obsession with Gandhism at the age of 25.
- Participation in Quit India movement



Major Works

Novels:

- Kanthapura (1938)
- The Serpent and the Rope (1960)
- The Cat and Shakespeare : A tale of India (1965)
- Comrade Killer (1976)
- The Chessmaster and his Moves (1988)



Major Works (contd.)

Short Stories:

- The Cow and the Barricades (1947).
- The Policeman and the Rose and other Stories (1978)



Awards and Accolades

- Sahitya Academy Award for 'Serpent and the Rope' (1964)
- Padma Bhushan (1969)
- Padma Vibhushan (2007)
- Neustadt International Prize for Literature (1988)
- 'Raja Rao Award' created in his honour in 2000 by Samvad India Foundation.



What is an Epic?

‘A book or movie that is long and contains a lot of action, usually about a subject from the past.’

Cambridge Dictionary

Traditionally a genre of poetry, but often extending to other art forms.



Epical Characteristics

- Juxtaposition of the present with the past.
- Glorification of the present.
- Use of Mythical technique.
- Harikathas



Epical Characteristics (contd.)

Narrated as a Sthala Purana

As a Gandhi Purana

References to Upanishads, Ramayana, and Mahabharata

Mysticising of local heroism through the New Sthala-Purana.

Kalia - daman as a parallel to destruction of foreign rule.



The Historical Background

- Impact of Gandhian movement : the advent of Gandhi.
- The beginning of non-violence and non-cooperation.
- Festivals and Harikathas as uniting forces.
- Civil Disobedience.
- Dandi march to prepare salt: breaking of salt law



The Historical Background (contd.)

- Picketing toddy booths and cigarette shops
- Awakening of Nationalism
- Boycotting land revenues
- Non-violence - Ahimsa
- Foreign cloth boycott



Preface to Kanthapura : Its Significance

‘ A classic stylistic guide for non-native English Writers’

R. Pathasarathy in his introduction to
‘Kanthapura’

Highlights problems of Indian Writers Writing in English
Sthala purana or legendary history of Indian villages -
significant everywhere.



Preface to Kanthapura : Its Significance (contd.)

- English as an alien language
- English as an intellectual language.
- Sanskrit and Persian as a language of emotional make up.
- Style : Introducing episode after episode.
- Art of storytelling - as an oral text



Its Publication

Written in a 13th century French castle in the Alps

Published in 1938 by Allen and Urwin



Theme of the Novel

Unification of various castes under the banner of Gandhian movement

Freedom Struggle accentuated through religion.

The impact of Gandhi's teachings on non-violent resistance against the British.



Theme of the Novel (contd.)

East v/s West

Purification through Prayers and Fasting

Gandhian principles of Ahimsa, Truth and Spinning charkha.



Narrative Technique

- Story narrated by Achakka, an old woman
- Use of mythical technique.
- Exceptionally long sentences
- Colloquial style, no adornment
- Use of Indian vernacular tales and folk epic.



Plot Summary

The story of Kanthapura, a small village in South India in the province of Kara is situated high on the Western Ghats, 'High up the steep mountains facing the Arabian Seas up the Malabar Coast'. It is the centre of cardamom, coffee, rice and sugarcane. Rama Chetty or Subba Chetta are merchandisers. Language of Kanthapura is Kannada and the deity worshipped is Kenchamma, the goddess.



Plot Summary (contd.)

The story is told by an old woman, Achakka. Organising harikathas is a common way of narrating myths from Ramayana, Siva Purana and other mythological texts.

The village comprises of quarters of four castes - the Brahmins, the Potters, the Sudras and the Pariahs. Kanthapura, too, has its superstitions and believes that the deity protects the villagers from famine and diseases.



Plot Summary (contd.)

Moorthy, who walks out of his college days, finds a half-sunk Shiva-linga where a temple is built and sacred books recited through Harikathas. Jayaramchar, the Harikatha man, compares the goddesses with Gandhi whose advent is witnessed in the city.



Plot Summary (contd.)

Bade Khan, as a symbol of govt. authority is stationed in Kanthapura. Bhatta is a rich money lender who exploits the poor and tries to repress the Gandhian movement.

The Skeffington Coffee Estate is a huge plantation around Kanthapura where coolies are brought from all round the country and exploited and ill-treated. The Hunter- Sahib and his assistant, the maistri wield power here.



Plot Summary (contd.)

Moorthy is threatened of excommunication by Swami, who lives in the city but enjoys respect in Kanthapura. Moorthy talks of uniting the people of all castes on a common front to strengthen the Gandhian movement. The people are educated to spin Khaadi, be non-violent, move towards self-sufficiency, protest against paying revenue to the Britishers, speak the truth, be fearless and join 'Don't touch the government' campaign.



Plot Summary (contd.)

Moorthy even resorts to fast as penance for the sins committed by others.

The myths of Prahlad, Shiva, child Krishna are introduced time and again. The Congress Panchayat Committee of Kanthapura is formed. During Kartik, the month of the gods and the lights, Moorthy is arrested. The Gandhian movement strengthens and we have the slogan of 'Mahatma Gandhi ki



Plot Summary (contd.)

Meetings are held. People from all quarters join. Women also form a sevika sangha. Bhajans begin and Moorthy is released. Dandi march to manufacture salt comes as an important event. Mahatma Gandhi is arrested and people begin to fast and capture toddy booths. Lots of lathi charge and arrests take place. Non-cooperation begins.



Plot Summary (contd.)

The coolies of the coffee estate tear down the fence and join the movement. Mass arrests take place. Prohibition is advocated in the name of Mahatma Gandhi.

The land of the villagers who refuse to pay the revenue is auctioned. In the guise of Satyanarayana Puja and its procession, the villagers escape from Kanthapura and settle in Kashi.



Plot Summary (contd.)

It is heard that Gandhi has made a truce with the Viceroy. Jawahar Lal Nehru becomes a figure of hope, is like a Bharata to the Mahatma. The novel ends on the myth of Ramayana and a dream image of Swaraj or free India.



As a Regional Novel

- Centre of cardamom, coffee, rice and sugar crops
- Great granaries of trade
- Tradition of festivals with unity in diversity
- Caste system
- The local legend of Kenchamma as the goddess



As a Regional Novel (contd.)

- Myths through Harikathas - a means to unite people
- Celebrating festivals through Harikathas
- Sankara Vijaya
- Sankara Jayanthi
- Unearthing of half-sunk linga
- Ganesh Jayanthi



As a Regional Novel (contd.)

- Ekadashiday
- Kanthapura Fair
- Concept of village panchayat and all India panchayat called Congress
- Belief in local rituals for a good harvest
- Satyanarayan puja - as a symbol of faith and power



Use of Myths from the Past

- Myth of Himavathy, goddess of the hills
- Myth of Kenchamma, the mother of Himavathy
- Upanishads



Use of Myths from the Past (contd.)

Myth of Ramayana- as a symbol of hope

- Gandhi as Rama
- India as Sita
- The British as Ravana
- Ayodhya as Delhi
- Bharata as Nehru
- Moorthy as Hanuman



Use of Myths from the Past (contd.)

- Shiva and Parvati
- Damayanthi and Sakuntala and Yasodha
- Krishna's fight against demons and the killing of serpent Kali
- Karma theory and Dharma Shastras
- Myth of gods rising from the caverns of the Ganges



A Novel of Political Awakening

- Swaraj as three eyed: Self-Purification, Hindu-Muslim unity and Khaddar
- Spinning and weaving
- Fasting and Praying
- Khadi and Self-Sufficiency
- Distribution of free spinning wheels



A Novel of Political Awakening (contd.)

- Don't-Touch-The-Government Campaign
- Non cooperation - Non payment of revenues
- Slogans of 'Vande Mataram!' and 'Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai!'
- Prohibition
- Disobedience and Protest



A Novel of Political Awakening (contd.)

- Inquilab Zindabad- as a Slogan
- Confiscation and auction of land by the Britishers
- Pressure to plant and salute to the British flag
- Self rule or Swaraj as the goal of Independence





Moorthy as the Village Gandhi (contd.)

- Central figure, symbol of Gandhi worship called 'corner-house Moorthy'
- Saint of the village
- Projection of the writer's self
- Identified with Gandhi



Moorthy as the Village Gandhi (contd.)

- An inspirational figure creates awareness
- Unanimously elected as the president of Congress Committee in the village
- Undertakes a fast for the wrongdoing of others
- Organises picketing and Satyagrahas



Moorthy as the Village Gandhi (contd.)

- Excommunicated by the Swami for his Pariah business
- Preaches castelessness and abolition of untouchability
- An ordinary man with human foibles



Major Characters

Patel Range Gowda -

Tiger of the village, Patel of Kanthapura, Honest, Determined, has a voice of authority - a government servant

Bhatta -

The First Brahmin, government agent, cunning, money lender, responsible for Moorthy's excommunication



Major Characters (contd.)

Bade Khan -

A Policeman, symbol of British Raj

The owner of Skeffington Coffee Estate -

Called Hunter sahib, symbol of British rule, cunning and authoritative, wicked



Major Characters (contd.)

The Swami -

Orthodox Brahmin, Conservative, Influential,
Excommunicates Moorthy, lives in the city

Jayaramchar -

The Harikatha man



Minor Characters

- Dore - The University Graduate
- Ramayya
- Patwari Nanjudia
- Gold-bangle Samanna
- Pock-marked Sidha



Minor Characters (contd.)

- Front House Akkamma
- Rangappa
- Advocate Sankar
- Advocate Seenappa
- Cardamom-field Ramachandra



Minor Characters (contd.)

- Ironshop Inam Khan
- Shopkeeper Subba Chetty
- Postmaster Suryanarayan
- Ramakrishnayya, the learned father of Rangamma
- Old Venkatalakshamma, mother of postmaster



Minor Characters (contd.)

- Ramanna, the second Brahmin
- Savithramma, wife of Bhatta
- Pariah Siddayya, a coolie in the estate
- Rice-pounding Ranjamma
- Nose Scratching Nanjamma



Women Characters

Ratna- a young,educated progressive widow, unconventional, conducts harikathas

Waterfall Venkamma - orthodox and conservative, villager, hates Ratna for her progressive views, justifies her nickname by hurling abuses on everyone



Women Characters (contd.)

Narsamma - Old widowed mother of Moorthy, traditional, god-fearing, noble, orthodox

Rangamma- The widowed sister-in-law of Venkamma, educated, enlightened woman, organises congress work, elected number of village panchayat

Women as Volunteers : Sevika Sangha as a women force



Women Characters (contd.)

Women as Shakti, Shakti as Mother earth

Shakti worship

Rangamma as a symbol of women unity and leader of a volunteer corps, symbolises awareness of scientific knowledge

Rani Lakshmi Bai as a symbol of women empowerment



Skeffington Coffee Estate : Sub plot of the novel

A symbol of large-scale economic exploitation

Hunter Sahib- White owner of the Coffee Estate, a symbol of power

Maistri - a steward of the owner, an inhuman character, symbolises exploitation of coolies



Skeffington Coffee Estate (contd.)

Nephew of Hunter Sahib- symbolises corrupt practices and sexual exploitation of women, rape and molestation

Collector Sahib as a symbol of tyranny

Suffering of the coolies

Revolt of the coolies