

# Moorthy as the Replica of Gandhi in Kanthapura

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## ABSTRACT

The present study reveals the impact of Gandhian thought on the village of Kanthapura. Kanthapura is considered the magnum opus of Raja Rao which portrays the considerable influence of Gandhi's ideology on Moorthy. Moorthy the central protagonist of the novel is an embodiment of the spirit of Gandhi. In Kanthapura Raja Rao gives microscopic picture of the Indian freedom movement and what happened in Kanthapura during 1930's. Kanthapura follows Gandhi's doctrine and ideology of non-violence, Satyagraha, his views on untouchability and casteism etc. The novel can be considered Gandhi-epic. It depicts impact of Gandhiji's ideology on the paralytic Indian masses. Being epic Raja Rao's treatment of myth is effective in Kanthapura he has a strong myth making consciousness. The effect of myth in his novel is persistent and lends philosophical profundity to the theme of freedom.

## Keywords:-

Gandhi's ideology, sthalapurana, satyagrah, non-violence, indigenous, influence of Gandhi's philosophy.

Raja Rao's Kanthapura is the offshoot of Gandhian ideology. By reading the novel Kanthapura, we can find the parallels between the protagonist Moorthy and Raja Rao. Both are attracted towards the Gandhi's ideology. Gandhiji's influence is seen as God, friend, and mentor, guide, and philosopher, and Moorthy as Avatar. He is considered the village Gandhi. He is the replica of thousands of Indian young men who got inspiration from Gandhi and gave up their studies to free their motherland from the brutal shackles of British. Raja Rao emphasizes the role of religion in the struggle for freedom. So the significance of the independence is expressed in a religious metaphor. The political activity of the citizens of Kanthapura gathers strength from their religious faith. Moorthy understands that religious beliefs play an important role in how one views the world. He maneuvers the religious sentiments of the people towards a nationalist cause. In Kanthapura the Gandhian thought and the complex political situation of pre-independence era could be explained to the unlettered villagers only through the legends and religious stories of Gods. Commenting Upon The Gandhian Movement in Kanthapura R.S. Singh points out that "a villager born and brought up in Indian tradition understands easily a contemporary problem if it is explained through a fable or an episode of The Ramayana and the Mahabharata or the Gita, etc." Once the illiterate villages have understood the efficacy of freedom detecting interest in politics and launch a mass movement against the "Red-Man's Government" that is why "the reading of a newspaper becomes as a serious discipline as the reverent reading of the Gita and hand spinning is elevated into a daily ritual like puja".

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Moorthy, the main protagonist comes under the influence of Gandhi at a very young stage. He is an ordinary young man with common human weakness.. The impact of Gandhi's personality has transformed him from a common village man into a young man capable for leadership and self sacrifice and devotion. He acquires spiritual strength in his very first meeting with Gandhi. His meeting with the "God- beaming Mahatma, "who primary preaches to him his political ideology provides him with divine revelations. Moorthy seeks self-realization after a glimpse of the godly Mahatma evinces his faith in Gandhism. He has extraordinary capacity for inspiring the people. He has numerous good qualities of head and heart. He works on three levels political, social and religious for struggling in independence movement. He invariably preaches the Gandhian principles of nonviolence, love of mankind and abolition of untouchability. People of Kanthapura say, "Moorthy is our Gandhi". The village women consider him the saint of Kanthapura and believe that he will always perform holy deeds. Moorthy is an idealized character who like Christ takes all the sins of the people upon himself and undergoes a penance for purification.

Kanthapura being a Sthala- Purana, attempts to combine folklore and politics in its texture and tends to be symbolic at places. Moorthy organizes the Kanthapurians under the banner of Congress and in the name of Mahatma and infuses a new lease of life in them. He arouses hectic political consciousness among brahmanins, weavers, potters and pariahs. He inspires them to arrange for bhajans, keertans and Harikathas and distributes spinning wheel to spin yarns of Khadi and and spreads the message of Truth and Non-violence among them. The villagers think that Mahatma Gandhi is Sahyadri mountain and Moorthy is a small mountain. This comparison suggest" their moral strength and firmness of mind." They are the two vibrating souls having the original purity of heart and the rock like unassailability of mind against the continual onslaught of devilish forces.

Gandhi envisaged casteless, classless and egalitarian society as against the caste ridden society. He asserted that "caste has nothing to do with religion. It is harmful both to spiritual and national growth." Subsequently in 1946 he stated that" caste is an anachronism." Like Gandhi Moorthy has preached brotherhood, equality, castelessness and abolition of untouchability. Kanthapura is a Hindu village and stratified on customary cast lines, as Brahmins and non Brahmins. In these two communities, there is no social interaction beyond the unavoidable economic transactions. Moorthy tries to do away with untouchability. He comes back to Kanthapura with the message of the Mahatma...".....there, is neither caste nor clan nor family.....One should not marry early, one should allow widows to take husbands and Brahmin might marry a Pariah and a Pariah a Brahmin."The above quotation suggests Moorthy's social vision as well as his efforts to bring about unity, equality and individual dignity.

To disseminate Gandhiji's ideas Moorthy started teaching the Pariahs at the night school. He goes even to the Sheffington Coffee Estate to teach the coolies the art of weaving. Even he teaches them alphabets and grammar and arithmetic and Hindi. Moorthy feels Hindi must be national language. He is a staunch supporter of the Swadeshi movement, one of the earliest socio-economic campaigns' organized by Gandhi to promote the development of the indigenous textile industry. He wanted that all the people of Kanthapura should ply Charkha and wear only hand woven clothes. He says "... if you spin, the money that goes to the Red- man will stay within your country and the Mother can feed the foodless and milkless and clothless." Again "...

*Moorthy*

to wear clothe spun and woven with your own God-given hands is sacred. It gives work to the workless and work to the lazy." As Moorthy visited Pariah quarter more and more his mother Narasamma told that if Moorthy has not stopped to visit Pariah quarter he will be excommunicate. So that night Narasamma rushed towards the river and fell down unconsciousness in field. Next morning she found dead. Even after this he didn't stop to visit Pariah quarter.

Being a true Gandhian , Moorthy campaigned against the evil of drinking. More of women than men are attracted by his social activities. These women under the leadership of Rangamma who was Moorthy's right hand in Kanthapura go to toddy groves just to destroy toddy business that worsen people's lives. As a true follower of Gandhiji's principle of non-violence Moorthy dissuades Range Gowda from resorting to violence in case of Bade Khan, the policeman appointed by the government to watch the political activities of the freedom fighters in Kanthapura. Similarly, when Gowda expresses his desire to teach a lesson to Puttaya for unjustly drawing all the canal- water to his fields. Moorthy tries to convince him with the Gandhian principles of nonviolence and love for the enemy.

Raja Rao employees the mythical analogy of the battle between Rama and Ravana to describe the struggle between Mahatma and the British government. Freedom movement is symbolic of the Devas' struggle against the Asuric (demonic) rule represented by the British. K R Srinivasa Iyengar remarks: 'The reign of the Red- man is Asuric rule, and it is resisted by the Devas, the Satyagrahis. In Kanthapura Mahatma Gandhi is portrayed as a symbol of divine power as well as a tangible reality.

As an advocate of Gandhian philosophy, Raja Rao believes that " the future of the world is in Gandhism." Moorthy's belief in the divine efficaciousness of Gandhism points to Raja Rao's great interest in the philosophy. Moorthy is a self sacrificing young man, who has no personal ambitions. He cares for poor villagers, they called him as 'Gandhiman'. He tries to imitate Gandhi in every respect so we feel Moorthy as a replica of Gandhi. CD Narasimhaiah remarks that Moorthy represents Raja Rao " the author's own self is projected, so largely projected in the character of Moorthy". Even Raja Rao himself admits in one of his interviews that, "Moorthy is myself". Since Murthy represents the author, it may then be affirmed that the protagonists thirst for God is undoubtedly Raja Rao's own quest for truth.

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*CS Rao*