

## **National Consciousness in Raja Rao's 'KANTHAPURA'**

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### **Abstract**

A National Consciousness is a sense of who you are as a country and what you all agree on. Raja Rao's 1938 novel KANTHAPURA is mainly about how Gandhian ideas spread to the village of Kanthapura and greatly alter the lives of the people who live there. By putting the village at the center of Rao's story of national identity, he uses centuries-old Indian culture and customs to give people a sense of shared past and a sense of belonging as a way to fight against British colonialism. In the book, the farmers look back at their shared religious and cultural history to find the strength to fight against British rule and imagine a new society. In this way, the story's vision of the society of the future is based on the past, blending the past, present, and future in the town as a whole. I argue that the limits and opportunities for creating the idea of country and future society are set by the time origin of the imagined nationhood.society.

**Keywords:** - Postcolonial literature, India, National Culture, Raja Rao, Kanthapura, National Consciousness.

### **Introduction**

Raja Rao's Kanthapura is mainly about how Gandhian ideas spread to the small town of Kanthapura and greatly alter the lives of the people who live there. The book, which was written during the Indian Nationalistic Movement and other political events of the time, shows the rise of Indian National Conscience and the recovery and rebirth of India's past. The village of Kanthapura is not well known. The village is in the southern part of India and is currently asleep. It all came to a head when Mahatma Gandhi started the movement for nonviolence and non-cooperation in the 1920s. This is how Raja Rao wakes up the sleepy village: by dealing with this theme. He also tells us about the terrible social situations in our towns. In his book "The Discovery of India," Nehru said this about Gandhi: "He was like a strong gust of fresh air, a beam of light that pierces the darkness like a whirlwind that upsets many things, but most of all the working of men's minds." Through his call, Gandhi tried to spiritualize politics and show that people could give up things to help others. Throughout the story, Gandhi is always present in the background, even though he doesn't show up in the book. In the book, Moorthy plays a small part of Gandhi in the village of Kanthapura. Moorthy quit school and joined the freedom fight, just like tens of thousands of other young guys in India.

Having a vision of Gandhi made him decide to spend his whole life fighting for freedom. He did his best to follow Gandhi's ideas. He stopped dressing in clothes from other countries and started using "Khadi." For the sake of his country, he gave up his personal life and happiness. A group of freedom fighters in Kanthapura chose him to be their boss. Moorthy brought the Gandhian Movement to Kanthapura. People heard about Gandhi and his ideas from him as he went from door to door. Besides giving out charkhas, he started spinning clothes regularly. In the end, he was able to persuade them that it was important not only for them but also for gaining political freedom. Over time, more and more people joined CPAC. The Congress Committee in Kanthapura was set up by him. The people in the village started to think of Moorthy as Kanthapura's Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi was known as the "big mountain," and Moorthy was known as the "small mountain." Moorthy worked to help the misfits get better. Even though his mother told him to stop, he didn't. He kept working for the pariahs even after Swami told him he would kick him and his family out of the community. Moorthy was stopped at the gate as he tried to get into the coffee farm. The people who followed Moorthy and the people who followed the owner of the land got into a fight. It caused fights. That made Moorthy think that he had not lived up to Mahatma Gandhi's goals. He fasted for three days because of this. He lived his life without bloodshed, just like the Mahatma told his followers to do. He was a true Gandhian when he was being tried and when he was being jailed by the cops many times. He said that he didn't need a lawyer to protect himself. Except for Venkamma and Bhatta, most of the people in the book are Gandhians. Rangamma, a wealthy widow from Kanthapura, took an active role in the work of the Congress. The Congress party's office in Kanthapura moved into her house. Freedom rebels used to get together at their house to talk about what they were going to do. She worked hard to get the women of Kanthapura to work together and create the Sevika Sangh. Ratna also has a faith in Gandhi. When Moorthy isn't in the town, she takes charge of the freedom fighters. We can see how cruel the cops are. The people of India were fighting against the British government to get their own government. The government did everything it could to crush the Indian crowd. It fought the Gandhian Movement with police and armed power. In a lot of scenes, the cops are shown to be very cruel. The storyteller gives a very detailed account of the horrible things the police did to the people of Kanthapura when they refused to pay their taxes. Police and soldiers were everywhere in the village. After a while, the Gandhian Movement in Kanthapura grew into a large group of people. The villagers, who were made up of men and women of all classes and professions, and the workers on the coffee farm were quick to step up and fight the bureaucracy.

### **Historical and socio-political context**

The historical and socio-political context is crucial for understanding the depiction of national consciousness in Raja Rao's 'Kanthapura'. Set in the backdrop of colonial India during the early 20th century, the novel reflects the socio-political dynamics of the time and the burgeoning nationalist movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. Here's an overview:

**Colonial Rule:** At the time when 'Kanthapura' is set, India was under British colonial rule. The British Raj had been established in the mid-19th century, and by the early 20th century, Indian society was grappling with various forms of exploitation and oppression under colonial administration. Economic exploitation, cultural imperialism, and political marginalization were rampant, leading to widespread discontent among the Indian populace.

**Indian Nationalist Movement:** The early 20th century witnessed the rise of the Indian nationalist movement, which aimed at securing independence from British rule and establishing self-rule based on principles of democracy and equality. Various leaders and organizations, including the Indian National Congress (INC) and its prominent leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subhas Chandra Bose, played significant roles in mobilizing the masses and articulating the demands for freedom.

**Mahatma Gandhi and Gandhian Ideals:** Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolent resistance (Satyagraha) and his emphasis on self-reliance, Swadeshi (indigenous production), and Sarvodaya (welfare of all) had a profound impact on the Indian nationalist movement. His methods of civil disobedience and mass mobilization inspired millions of Indians to join the struggle for independence. 'Kanthapura' reflects the influence of Gandhian ideals on the rural community and their participation in the freedom movement.

**Rural India and the Gandhian Movement:** While the Indian nationalist movement had its epicenter in urban centers, it also found resonance in rural areas. 'Kanthapura' portrays the transformative impact of the nationalist movement on a rural village, depicting how ordinary villagers, particularly women and marginalized communities, became active participants in the struggle for independence. The novel highlights the role of grassroots activism and the mobilization of rural communities in the larger struggle against colonial rule.

**Caste and Class Dynamics:** Alongside the struggle against British colonialism, 'Kanthapura' also addresses internal social hierarchies and injustices within Indian society, particularly the caste system. The novel explores the intersections of caste, class, and gender, depicting how these dynamics shape the experiences and aspirations of individuals within the village community. The nationalist movement becomes a platform for challenging not only external colonial oppression but also internal social inequalities.

Analyzing 'Kanthapura' in the context of national consciousness involves a close examination of how Raja Rao portrays the themes of identity, resistance, and collective action within the framework of the Indian nationalist movement. Here's an analysis:

#### **Characterization and Symbolism:**

**Character Archetypes:** Rao employs archetypal characters to represent different facets of national consciousness. Moorthy, the protagonist, embodies the spirit of Gandhian ideals and becomes a catalyst for mobilizing the village against colonial oppression. Characters like Rangamma and Achakka represent the resilience and determination of Indian women in the face of adversity.

**Symbolism:** Through symbolic elements such as the river Kanthapura, the Gandhi Ashram, and the British presence, Rao conveys deeper meanings about the struggle for freedom and the quest for national identity. The river, for example, symbolizes the flow of Indian history and culture, while the Gandhi Ashram represents a beacon of hope and resistance.

#### **Narrative Technique:**

**Oral Tradition:** 'Kanthapura' is narrated in the tradition of oral storytelling, reflecting the communal ethos of Indian society. The use of vernacular language and folklore creates a sense of authenticity and immediacy, allowing readers to immerse themselves in the world of the village and its inhabitants.

**Shifts in Perspective:** Rao employs shifts in narrative perspective to capture the diversity of voices within the village community. Through alternating viewpoints, readers gain insight into the complex interplay of personal experiences and collective aspirations that shape the villagers' commitment to the nationalist cause.

#### **Gandhian Influence and Ideals:**

**Satyagraha and Nonviolent Resistance:** The Gandhian principles of Satyagraha (truth-force) and Ahimsa (nonviolence) form the ideological foundation of the villagers' resistance against British rule. Moorthy's adherence to these principles inspires others to join the struggle, leading to acts of civil disobedience and mass mobilization.

**Swadeshi and Self-Reliance:** Rao explores the concept of Swadeshi (indigenous production) as a means of economic empowerment and self-reliance. The spinning wheel becomes a potent symbol of self-sufficiency and resistance to British industrialization, fostering a sense of national pride and autonomy.

#### **Community and Solidarity:**

**Unity in Diversity:** Despite internal differences and conflicts, the villagers of Kanthapura unite in their common struggle for independence. Rao emphasizes the importance of solidarity and

collective action in overcoming divisions of caste, class, and religion, fostering a sense of national unity and purpose.

**Empowerment of Marginalized Voices:** 'Kanthapura' gives voice to marginalized groups such as women, Dalits, and peasants, highlighting their agency and contributions to the nationalist movement. Through their participation and leadership, these groups assert their rightful place in the narrative of Indian history and identity.

### **Conclusion:**

The book ends with the locals being forced to leave Kanthapura and find safety in another village. Moorthy also changes his mind and now supports Nehru. The ending could be seen as the peasants' lost hopes, but Achakka says she believes Gandhi will "bring them swaraj" and gives other people hope by telling her story. There is no doubt that the villagers will always be loyal to Gandhi and the promise of the nationalist movement, which gave them a sense of connection and a shared fate. The book shows how cultural and religious elements can be used to bring together popular pushback and connect with different parts of society. But looking at things in a bigger picture, Kanthapura is about a certain kind of India that is marked by Hindu Brahmin custom. The book is an epic because it's about Gandhi's accomplishments and his fight for India's freedom. In the book, Moorthy is the main character and is a Gandhian. He chose the peaceful road that Gandhi had shown. Gandhi was a brave freedom fighter who helped free India from British rule. Moorthy in Kanthapura scared off the British government and bureaucrats, just like Gandhi did.

'Kanthapura' serves as a powerful testament to the resilience, solidarity, and transformative potential of national consciousness in colonial India. Raja Rao's novel not only captures the spirit of the Indian nationalist movement but also offers profound insights into the complexities of identity, resistance, and community in the struggle for freedom and self-determination..

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