

## Chapter 6

### Raj Rao - Kanthapura



#### About the Author, Raja Rao

Raja Rao was born in 1909 in the village of Hassana, in Mysore in a very old South Indian Brahmin family. He lived in France from 1928 to 1939, returned to India on the outbreak of World War II in 1940 and again went to France in 1946 and lived there till 1956. It was in France, thousands of miles away from India that his first novel Kanthapura (1938) was written. His love for Indian culture and philosophy colors his second novel The Serpent and the Rope (1960). He accepted Swami Atmanand, the great Vedantic scholar as his guide and mentor. So the quest for a 'Guru' is an ever - recurring theme in his novels. He spent some months in 1942 in Gandhiji's 'Ashram' and some time at Mahakal Temple at Ujjain. In 1950 he visited USA and was fascinated by American culture and way of life. He studied avidly the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman and was a great admirer of these writers because they too were deeply interested in Indian philosophy particularly Vedantic philosophy. He worked as a visiting philosopher, lecturing at various American universities and expounding Hindu philosophy to American students. He won the Sahitya Akademi Award for his The Serpent and the Rope which has been called the best Indo - Anglian novel ever written. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan by the Government of India.

## Summary of the novel Kanthapura

This is the first novel of Raja Rao and in many ways his most perfect and satisfying work. It was written in France thousands of miles away from India and yet it gives a most graphic, vivid and realistic account of the Gandhian freedom struggle in the 1930s and its impact on the masses of India.

The time of action is 1930 and the scene of action is Kanthapura, a typical South Indian village on the slopes of the Western Ghats. Moorthy, the central figure, is a young man educated in the city. He is a staunch Gandhi man and the Gandhian Civil Disobedience movement comes to this remote secluded village when Moorthy comes from the city with the message of the Mahatma. He goes from door to door even in the Pariah quarter of the village and explains to the villagers the significance of Mahatma Gandhi's struggle for independence. He inspires them to take to charka - spinning and weaving their own cloth. Soon the Congress Committee is formed in Kanthapura. Publicity material is brought from the city and freely circulated in the village. A volunteer corps is formed and the volunteers are trained and educated as so that they may remain non - violent in the face of government repression. In this task of organizing the freedom struggle in Kanthapura, he is helped by Ratna, a young lady, of progressive and enlightened views and Patel Range Gowda, the Sardar Patel of the village.

The Red - man's Government, on its part, takes prompt steps to counter the moves of the Gandhi - men and to contain the movement. Policeman, Bade Khan, is posted in the village and he is actively helped and supported by Bhatta, the Brahmin. Bhatta enlists the support of a Swami in the city, who seems to be a powerful religious authority and wields much influence on the ignorant people of the village. He threatens to excommunicate all those who fraternize with the Pariahs. Moorthy is actually ex - communicated and a few desert him but on the whole, the people remain undaunted and firm in their support to the Gandhi movement. Reports regarding the Dandi march of the Mahatma to break the Salt Law and the enthusiasm it had evoked throughout the country, reach the village and do much to boost the public morale.

Soon there are satyagrahas and picketing. The villagers under the leadership of Moorthy offer Satyagraha outside the toddy plantation. There is police lathi - charge and many are wounded and hurt seriously. A large number of people are arrested and sent to jail. This is followed by the picketing of the toddy booth outside the Skeffington Coffee Estate. Government repression is even more ruthless this time. Even women, children and old men are not spared. The suffering of the fellow - villagers touches the heart of the workers of the Skeffington Coffee Estate and they too join their suffering brethren. The atmosphere resounds with shouts of "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai". Even larger numbers are arrested. Moorthy is also arrested and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. In his absence Ratna looks after the Congress - work in the village. Women are organized and trained.

Then comes the no - tax campaign. The people are directed not to pay land revenue to the unjust Red men. They should remain peaceful and non - violent even if their fields, crops, cattle and houses are auctioned and occupied. They remain non - violent in the beginning but soon violence breaks out. Government is ruthless in its repression. There are merciless lathi - charges and even shootings. The atmosphere resounds with shrieking and crying as well as with shouts of "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai".

The villagers put up a brave resistance but ultimately they are compelled to flee. Their morale is broken. They have to leave Kanthapura, trudge along for miles over unknown territory and finally find shelter in a remote village. They have been defeated but in their very defeat lay their victory. Their brave resistance has given a jolt to the government and as such jolts were being administered all over the country, the British government was bound to be shaken and overthrown in the course of time. It was so over - thrown in 1947; and the British were forced to withdraw. The heroic struggle of the people of Kanthapura is thus a milestone in India's march towards independence.

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## **6. 0 Objectives**

Friends, in this chapter we will study a classic novel from Indian English Literature i.e. Raja Rao's Kanthapura. Studying this chapter will enable you to discuss

- The pre - independence times.
- The freedom movement all over the nation.
- The role of Gandhi and his influence on the masses.

## **6.1 Introduction**

Friends, in the last chapter, we have studied the history of the Indian English Prose. In this chapter we are going to examine critically Raja

Rao's novel Kanthapura. It describes the simple rustic life of a South Indian village, Kanthapura. The whirlwind of Gandhian freedom struggle reaches Kanthapura and the village enthusiastically participates in the movement. The novel describes the impact of the movement on the masses and its aftermath.

## **6.2 Its Historical Background**

Kanthapura is a novel dealing with the impact of the Gandhian freedom struggle on a remote South Indian village of that name and what happens in Kanthapura was happening all over India in those stirring years from 1919 to 1931 of the Gandhian non-violent, non-cooperation movement for the independence of the country. Gandhi does not make a personal appearance in the novel but he is constantly present in the background and at every step there are references to important events of the day such as the historic Dandi March and the breaking of the Salt Law. Hence for the better understanding of the novel it is essential to form a clear idea of the important political and social events connected with the Indian freedom struggle.

India's struggle for independence from the colonial rule of the British goes back to the war of 1857 which was dismissed by the Britishers as a mere mutiny. The battle for India's freedom continued to be fought on the social and economic fronts. Social reformers worked ceaselessly for the eradication of social evils like child-marriage, Sati, untouchability, 'purdha' system and the exploitation and ill-treatment of widows. They waged a constant war against illiteracy, superstition, blind faith and orthodoxy. They highlighted the grinding poverty of the Indian masses that were being rendered poorer as a result of the economic exploitation on the part of their foreign rulers.

In 1885, the Indian National Congress was founded by an Englishman, A. O. Hume. Indians like Surendra Nath Banerjee, Feroze Shah Mehta, Dadabhai Nowrosjee and many others voiced the Indian demand for 'home rule'. These leaders were moderate in their outlook as they were aware of the good which their contact with the Britishers had done to them in bringing about a political and cultural regeneration in the country. The division in the rank and file of the party was perceptible at the Surat Session of the Congress in

1907. The Extremists led by Tilak assailed the Moderates and the session broke up in confusion. The Congress remained under the leadership of the Moderates from 1907 to 1917.

Indian masses are deeply religious and so religion was freely exploited by Indian patriots all through the freedom struggle. The religious sentiments of the rural folk were fully exploited by Tilak by introducing Ganesh festival and Shivaji Jayanti festivals in Maharashtra and instilling in them courage, patriotism, discipline and unity. Athletic performances, patriotic and religious songs, kathas and ballads were recited on a large scale, resulting in a sense of pride in the glorious and worthy past of India. It may be mentioned that religion is used in this very way in the novel. There were recitals of Kathas and holding of Harikathas and festivals all over the nation. It was under the guise of a procession of Ganapati that the people of Kanthapura try to make good their escape. Religion played an important part in the Indian struggle for independence and so it does in the novel.

It was the arrival of Gandhi from South Africa which infused a new life and vitality into the Indian struggle for independence. He had already acquired considerable experience in the use of non - violence and non - co - operation as a political weapons but it was in India that he perfected his technique and used it with success. During the war years 1914 - 1918, he made a forceful plea for extending all possible help to the British in the hope that after the war some measure of autonomy would be granted to the Indian people. When the war was over, the thankless British government did not fulfill the promises made to the Indian leaders but brought in the notorious Rowlatt Act, 1919. The result was that Mahatma Gandhi gave the clarion call for Civil Disobedience. There was an upsurge of Indian nationalism and patriotism such as had never been witnessed before. Public meetings were organized all over the country and leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Gopal Krishna Gokhale etc freely voiced the demand for independence. As public enthusiasm mounted, government repression also increased till there the tragedy of the Jallianwala Bagh was enacted on 13th April, 1919, which sent a wave of horror throughout the country. There were signs of increasing violence resulting in unprecedented violence of Chauri - Chaura. Gandhi was shocked, regarded it as a personal failure and suspended the movement.

Gandhi continued to prepare the nation for the prolonged struggle which lay ahead before independence could be gained. He aimed at the total involvement of all sections of the Indian people and so launched a comprehensive programme of economic, social and religious uplift and emancipation of the Indian people. His programme of action was fourfold:

- a) Spinning of the charkha, weaving of one's own cloth and boycott of foreign clothes
- b) Eradication of untouchability and other social evils like the purdah system so that women and the so - called lower castes may play their part in the freedom struggle.
- c) Village upliftment, eradication of poverty, illiteracy, casteism etc
- d) Hindu- Muslim unity.

In the novel Moorthy places this very Gandhian program of action before the people of Kanthapura. Gandhi's stress was on truth and non - violence and this message was carried to the remote parts of the country by devoted Congress workers. Congress Committees were formed in every nook and corner of the country and Satyagrahis were trained to carry out the programme at the call of the Mahatma.

The second phase of the Gandhian Civil Disobedience began in 1929. This time the movement was more militant though Gandhi still insisted on non - violence. There were meetings and Satyagrahas all over the country. There were picketings and boycotts. Then Gandhi undertook his historic march to Dandi beach to prepare salt there and thus break the unjust and anti - people Salt Law. He started with a few followers but thousands and thousands joined him on the way. Raja Rao has succeeded in capturing the thrills and sensations as well as the brutality and suffering of those tumultuous days when the whole nation was enthused with patriotism during the historic Dandi March.

The British government was shaken. Gandhi was invited to England for talks. He accepted the invitation and went for the Round Table Conference dressed in his usual loin cloth and the result was the well - known Gandhi - Irwin Pact. The pact left the Indian people dissatisfied. Gandhi did two things in 1930: he made the British people aware that they had cruelly subjugated India and he gave Indians the conviction that they could, by lifting their heads and straightening their spines, lift the yoke from their shoulders. The British beat the Indians

with batons and rifle - butts. The Indians neither cringed nor complained nor retreated. This made England powerless and India invincible. It is exactly such a psychological victory which the people of Kanthapura enjoy in the moment of their defeat. It was this very Gandhi - Irwin Pact which paved the way for the establishment of the Indian Federation and the formation of Congress Ministries both at the Centre and the States. It was soon clear that the British Government was on the way out and independence was round the corner. The Indian people - like the people of Kanthapura - had to pass through an ordeal of fire but as Gandhi himself taught, "Swaraja obtained without sacrifice never endures."

## **6.2 Check your progress**

**Answer the following questions briefly:**

1. Which years of Gandhian movement are covered in the novel Kanthapura?

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2. Why there is a need to know about the important political and social events related to the Indian freedom struggle?

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3. What were the social reformers working for?

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4. What was the result of the economic exploitation by the foreign rulers?

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5. Who and when was the Indian National Congress formed?

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6. Who voiced the Indian demand for 'home rule'?

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7. When and where was the Congress party divided?

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8. Why did Tilak introduce Ganesh Festival and Shivaji Jayanti Festival in Maharashtra?

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9. When and which law was introduced by the Britishers after the World War I?

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10. What was Gandhi's fourfold programme of action for independence?

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11. What happened during the Civil Disobedience Movement started by Gandhi?

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12. Which two things Gandhi did in 1930?

\_\_\_\_\_

### 6.3 Characterization in Kanthapura

**1. Moorthy, the Village Gandhi :** Moorthy or Moorthappa is an educated young man of Kanthapura. It is he who organizes the work of the Congress in the village and hence he is the central figure in the novel. He has nothing heroic about him nor can he be called the hero of the novel. He is an ordinary young man, with common human weaknesses. He is one of those thousands of young men who were inspired by Mahatma Gandhi to give up their studies, risk the wrath of the government and become fighters for the cause of their motherland.

He is considerate and respectful is obvious from the affectionate

way in which he is referred to by the people of Kanthapura. He is called "Corner - House Moorthy", "our Moorthy". Moorthy who has gone through life "like a noble cow, quiet, generous, deferent, Brahminic and is a very prince." He is considered to be honest like an elephant and is spoken of as "our Gandhi", "the Saint of our Village". It seems that the impact of Gandhi's personality has transformed him from a common village lad, into a young man capable of leadership and the self - sacrifice and devotion which leadership entails. Of course, he has never come into personal contact with Gandhi. Moorthy was in college when he felt the full force of Gandhi and he walked out of it, a Gandhi - man. From the time we meet him in the beginning of the novel to the very end of the book, Moorthy is perched at the top in his ascetic strength and his capacity for action comes as a surprise in a visionary ascetic strength and in a visionary like Moorthy.

There is, no doubt, the novelist has endowed him with numerous good qualities of head and heart. He has extraordinary capacity for inspiring the people. On his return from the city, he at once proceeds to organize the Gandhi work in the village. The Gandhian struggle for independence had three strands - political, religious and social (including economic) - and all these strands meet in Moorthy. He works on all these three levels. Religion is the most potent force in Kanthapura and so its action begins with religion. Before there is any mention of Gandhi or Swaraj, there is tremendous religious activity. Starting from an invocation to "Kenchamma, Goddess" to the end of the novel, religion seems to sustain the spirits of the people of Kanthapura. The action begins with the unearthing of a half sunken linga by Moorthy and its consecration. The boys of the village hold a grand feast to celebrate the occasion. One thing leads to another. Soon they observed Sankara Jayanthi, Sankara Vijaya etc. Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man, is then invited to the village, Harikathas are held every evening and these Harikathas serve as a clock for Gandhi propaganda. The Harikatha man is arrested and taken away and so the Gandhi movement comes to the village.

It is Moorthy who organizes the Gandhi - work in the village and he shows a rare devotion and insight for a village youth. He goes from door to door carrying the message of Mahatma Gandhi. It is he who explains the economy of the Khaddi and the importance of the

charkha to the ignorant and superstition - ridden women of the village and persuades them to take to spinning despite stiff opposition from all quarters. It is he who forms the Congress Committee in the village and is unanimously elected as its President. Even Range Gowda, the Patel, 'the Tiger' of the village, is deferential to him and calls him 'learned master'. He has full confidence in him, uses all his authority and prestige in his favour and permits him to have his way in everything. The women too must be enthused and so Moorthy sets about organizing them. A Women Volunteer Corps is thus formed with Ratna as the head of this organization of Swayam Sevikas or Sevis. Like Gandhi, Moorthy, too, undertakes a fast, organizes picketings and Satyagrahas, courts arrest and is sent to jail. Throughout, he is shown to be an ideal Gandhite.

One of the important planks of the Gandhian movement was the eradication of untouchability. Moorthy implements this programme and goes in the Pariah quarter from one college to another exhorting the women to take to spinning in their spare time. He is excommunicated by the Swami for this Pariah business and his aged mother dies of grief and shock at this disgrace. Still he persists in his mission but after all he is a human being, with common human weaknesses, and this Pariah business is too much even for him. He hesitates and falters and thus shows that he is made of the same common clay.

Moorthy is a creature of flesh and blood with ordinary human weaknesses. He is no hero but an average young man, who like thousands others in those days, were enthused by Gandhi to come out of their shells and do their best for their motherland.

## **2. Ratna, the Progressive Widow**

Ratna is a young widow. She became a widow when she was hardly fifteen years of age. She is attractive and charming as is clear from the attention which Moorthy pays to her. There is just a hint of a love - affair between the two. However their love and liking for each other has not been properly developed and hence the novel lacks in love - interest.

Ratna is an young educated woman of progressive views. Though she is a widow she does not dress and live in a conventional style of a widow. She wears bangles; colored sarees (and not the white dhoti of a widow) uses the kumkum mark on her forehead and parts her hair

like a concubine, as Waterfall Venkamma puts it. She is also bold and witty in conversation and can hold her own against heavy odds. She is much criticized for her unconventional ways but she does not care for such criticism. She chooses her own path and sticks to it with firmness and determination.

She takes keen interest in the Gandhian movement and is a source of inspiration and help to Moorthy. When Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man, is arrested, she conducts the Harikathas. After Rangamma's death, she reads out the newspapers and other publicity material of the Congress for the benefit of the villagers. When Moorthy is arrested, she carries on his work and serves as the leader. She organizes the women volunteer corps and imparts to the Sevikas the necessary training. She displays great courage and resourcefulness in the face of government repression and police action. She is dishonored, beaten up and sent to jail as a consequence. She suffers everything patiently and unflinchingly. As the narrator of the story tells us, she comes out of jail a changed person, more humble and more courteous to her elders but more matured and determined. When Gandhi goes to England, for the Round Table Conference, reaches a settlement with the Red - man's Government and the movement is withdrawn, Ratna is disappointed like countless other freedom fighters in India. She goes over to Bombay and through her letters we learn of her great admiration for Nehru, "the equal distributionist".

Ratna stands for the educated, progressive womanhood of India whom Gandhi had enthused with his own ideals and who came out of their homes in their thousands to fight shoulder to shoulder with their men folk for the freedom of their motherland. She is the female counterpart of Moorthy.

### **3. Patel Range Gowda, the Tiger of the Village**

Range Gowda is the Patel of Kanthapura and as such a government servant. He, too, is a Gandhi man and a staunch supporter of Moorthy. He throws all his weight and authority in his favor and is of a considerable help to him in organizing the Congress work in Kanthapura.

He is a man of forceful, commanding personality and wields considerable power and authority in the village because of his forceful personality and determination he is known as the 'Tiger' of the village.

Nobody dares to oppose him or disobey his orders. Nothing can be done in the village without Range Gowda. He is also kindly, sympathetic and generous and does his best to help the poor, the needy and the suffering of the village.

This powerful man uses all his authority and influence in support of Moorthy and his cause. He realizes the worth and integrity of the young Gandhite and is deferential to him. When Moorthy approaches him for help he says, "Do what you like, learned master. You know things better than I do and I know you are not a man to spit on our confidence in you. If you think I should become a member of Congress, let me be a member of the Congress."

Range Gowda speaks with the voice of authority and speaks with forthrightness that no self-respecting man can withhold his co-operation. He says, "If you are the sons of your father, stand up and do what this learned boy says." And Range Gowda himself proposes Moorthy for the Presidentship of the Village Panchayat.

When Bade Khan, the policeman, approaches him and requests him to arrange a house for him, he treats him with scant respect.

He explains to the people the significance of spinning and weaving, of non-violence and of the value and meaning of independence. During Moorthy's period of imprisonment, he boosts the morale of the people, guides and encourages them and sees to it that none falters and falls away. Without his active help and co-operation, Moorthy would not have been so successful in his mission. He alone of the Kanthapurians ever returns to Kanthapura. It is he who brings to them news from Kanthapura. In this way he serves to round up the novel and it is in the fitness of things that it is with his appearance and with his words that the novel comes to an end. His dramatic appearance is like the fall of the curtain after the catastrophe.

#### **4. Bhatta, the First Brahmin**

Bhatta, the first Brahmin, is the opposite of Moorthy - the agent of the British government, in league with the Swami in the city and works ceaselessly to frustrate and defeat the Gandhi movement. If at all there is any villain in the novel, it is he.

Bhatta began life with a loin cloth at his waist and a copper pot in his hand but went on adding several acres of the peasants' lands to his own domain. Today Bhatta means money and money means

Bhatta and he charges ten percent interest and has gone upto twenty percent interest even. The novelist, who has a higher conception of the avocation of the Brahmin, the type of whom he sees in men like Ramakrishnayya of the older generation and Moorthy, of the coming generation, now has witnessed his degradation in Bhatta - and yet he is the first Brahmin of Kanthapura.

Bhatta is very learned in his art. Bhatta was always the first to reach the home of his host on a ceremonial occasion, say a death anniversary. He could make perfect grass rings and such leaf cups. It was also pleasant to hear him recite the 'Gita'. Then would begin the ceremony and such was Bhatta's skill that it would be over in the twinkling of the eye.

Bhatta is an unworthy husband, too, with his lack of consideration for his wife at home. On the days he dines out, his poor wife has only dal - soup and rice. Bhatta has no thought of her. His wife dies and soon this middle - aged, pot - bellied priest marries a girl of twelve and half years old. There is dowry too: A thousand rupees cash and five acres of wet land and a real seven days marriage.

Besides his business contracts, he owed to government patronage. He was also the Election agent and got two thousand for it. It is he who is responsible for the excommunication of Moorthy. It is he who keeps the Swami in the city informed of the happenings in the village, incites the people against Moorthy and other Gandhites and does his best to sabotage the movement. He sides with Bade Khan, sets afloat the rumors regarding Moorthy's excommunication and so hastens the death of his mother. Ultimately, he goes to Kashi to wash off his sins. Through him the novelist has exposed the greed and gluttony of the Brahmins as well as the crooked ways of those who worked as stooges of the imperial rulers of the country.

However, even Bhatta has been humanized. He is no unredeemed monster. He too has something good in him. He has his moments of magnanimity too. Someone said, "Hadn't he sent our Fig - tree House Ramu to the city for studies?" Bhatta said, "If you bring a name to Kanthapura - that is my only recompense. And if by Kenchamma's grace you get rich and become a Collector, you will think of this poor Bhatta and send him the money - with no interest, of course, my son, for I have given it in the name of God. If not, may the Gods keep you safe and fit."

## **5. Bade Khan, the Policeman**

Bade Khan, the Policeman, with his long beard, is a symbol of the British Raj. He is the symbol of the British presence in Kanthapura. It is his duty to maintain law and order and put down the Gandhi movement and it may be said to his credit that he performs his duty loyally and sincerely. The Gandhites may consider him a villain but judged impartially, he is a loyal Government servant performing his duty in every circumstance. He may be an instrument of the foreign Government but it would be wrong to dismiss him as a heartless monster of wickedness.

On arriving at Kanthapura, the initial difficulty he has to face is that of accommodation. Being a Muslim, he finds it difficult to find a house in the village. He goes to the Skeffington Coffee Estate, where a hut is allocated to him in which he settles down with one of the Pariah women.

Once settled comfortably, he moves about the village secretly watching the people, collecting information and passing it on to the city authorities. Very soon he is in league with Bhatta and others who are opposed to the Gandhi movement. When Moorthy goes to meet the workers on the Coffee Estate, it is he who keeps watch and rains lathi blows on him and his supporters, as he approaches the gate of the Estate.

In short, he is one of those unpatriotic Indians, who made it possible for the British to rule India for such a long time.

## **6. The White Owner of the Skeffington Coffee Estate**

The Skeffington Coffee Estate is a very large coffee plantation at a stone's throw from Kanthapura. It is owned by a white man, who is popularly known as the "Hunter Sahib" because he always carries a hunter or whip in his hand and freely uses it on all those workers on his estate who neglect their duty. He is a symbol of the imperialist rulers of India who exploited Indians in various ways.

A large number of workers are needed on the estate and they are recruited by the white owner's Maistri or Steward under false promises. They are brought to the estate from distant parts of Mysore. Promises of attractive wages are made. Visions of happy, comfortable life with practically no work to do are held out to them. It is said that one who enters the gates of the coffee plantation never comes out of it.

The coffee workers are exploited in many ways. They are given wretched one - room huts to live in which they are provided little protection against the rains which are heavy and frequent. No wages are paid - they are deposited on their behalf with the 'Hunter Sahib' and they remain with him. Only the meagerest food is allowed to them. They are made to work from early in the morning till late in the evening, till it is dark. If there is any slackness or if they rest a moment, the Maistri or the Sahib is always there to whip them. There is a worst kind of economic exploitation. The workers are exploited sexually also. If the Sahib takes a fancy to any of their women then she is sent to his house at night or he would even have her, then and there in the plantation.

His character has been humanized by showing the good that is in him. We find that he distributes peppermints and toffees among the children of the workers. The climate is damp and the outbreak of malaria is frequent. When the workers are ill, he goes from hut to hut distributing quinine tablets. It is another matter that the ignorant, superstitious workers don't take the medicine due to their superstitions and hence deaths are frequent. The Sahib does what is best under the circumstances.

#### **7. The Swami**

The Swami lives in the city. He remains in the background. Like Mahatma Gandhi he never appears on the scene. He is an orthodox Brahmin, narrow and conservative in his views. He is a traitor to the cause of the freedom of India. He is in the pay of the British government. He has received twelve hundred acres of wet land from the Government. So he is a willing stooge of the Britishers. In league with Bhatta, he does his best to defeat the freedom struggle in Kanthapura. It is he who excommunicates Moorthy for "the Pariah business" and thus is indirectly responsible for the death of his mother who is unable to bear the shock.

#### **8. Advocate Sankar**

Sankar, the advocate, is a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi. He believes in his principles of truth and non - violence and tries to follow in his footsteps. He is a true patriot and does his best for the cause of freedom. He wears Khadi and does not go to functions where people come wearing dresses made of foreign cloth. When Gandhi is



arrested and sent to jail, he keeps fast with Gandhi. He believes that fasting is a means of self - purification. It gives him spiritual strength and illumination. He loves truth and does not undertake false cases. Bold and fearless, he is not afraid of the Government and takes up the defence of Moorthy, when he is arrested and tried in the city courts. He is noble, generous and kind - hearted. When his first wife dies, he does not marry a second time. He remembers his wife and regards it a sin to marry again.

#### **9. Waterfall Venkamma**

Like a waterfall, she is always shedding tears and roaring. She rails against practically everybody in the novel. She is a woman of a petty, jealous nature. She cannot bear to see others prosperous or successful. There is no end to her spite, jealousy and vindictiveness. She is jealous of Rangamma because she has a much larger house and constantly rails against her. She would like to put lizard poison into her food and thus cause her death.

She is also against Moorthy because he refused to marry her second daughter. She nurses this grudge against him and does her best to have her revenge upon him. Orthodox, conservative and narrow in her views, she has no sympathy with the Gandhi movement. She therefore sides with Bhatta and the Swami. It is she who spreads the rumor that Moorthy is to be excommunicated. In this way, she causes his mother much pain which ultimately derives her to death. She also hates Ratna for her progressive views and constantly hurls abuses at her. She rails and rails against everybody and thus justifies the nick - name the novelist has given to her.

Waterfall Venkamma symbolizes all the pettiness, the jealousy, the triviality and the orthodoxy of Indian village life.

#### **10. Narsamma**

She is the old widowed mother of Moorthy. She is orthodox and conservative unable to understand the implications of the Gandhi - movement and the noble work in which her son is engaged. She has a great love for her son and has high hopes of a brilliant career for him. Her hopes and dreams are shattered when he joins the freedom movement. She is literally shocked and her feelings are intensely hurt when Moorthy is ex - communicated by the Swami for the "Pariah business".

Being the youngest of her sons, Moorthy is deeply loved by her. Instead of becoming a Sub - Collector as she hopes he would become, she is told that he has frequent intercourse with the Pariahs. This is a terrible blow to her. Excommunication is regarded by her as nothing less than a sin. She is shocked terribly and dies as a result of this shock.

She is good and noble and we love and respect her despite her orthodoxy and lack of sympathy for the freedom movement. She is not wicked and crooked but only orthodox, credulous and a little dull - headed. She is the most pathetic character in the novel.

### **11. Rangamma**

She is one of the few educated women in the village. She reads the newspapers herself and thus keeps herself and others acquainted with the day to day developments elsewhere. Waterfall Venkamma is jealous of her and roars and rails against her day and night. It is from her railings that we learn much about her. She is a childless widow but she has a very big home, much larger than that of Venkamma herself. Her relatives are in the city and visit her frequently. She is of a great help to Moorthy in organizing the Congress work in the village. She is a lady of enlightened views actively involved in the freedom struggle.

### **6.3 Check your progress**

**Answer the following questions briefly:**

1. Describe Moorthy.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. How is Moorthy referred to by the people of Kanthapura?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Which three strands of Gandhian struggle are found in Moorthy?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Which religious occasions are observed by the Kanthapurians?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. How does Moorthy explain the economy of Khadi at Kanthapura?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What did Moorthy do to organize the women in the village for the freedom movement?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Why does Moorthy's mother die of grief and shock?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Describe Ratna.

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Why is Ratna criticized by the villagers?

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Comment on Ratna's contribution to the freedom struggle?

\_\_\_\_\_

11. Why is Range Gowda known as the 'Tiger' of the village?

\_\_\_\_\_

12. How does Range Gowda help Moorthy in organizing the freedom movement in Kanthapura?

\_\_\_\_\_

13. Who plays the role of the villain in the novel?

\_\_\_\_\_

14. Why is Bhatta an unworthy husband?

\_\_\_\_\_

15. How does Bhatta create hindrances in the freedom struggle?

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16. What is Bade Khan's duty?

---

17. How does Bade Khan collect and pass on information about the village?

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18. Why is the White Man at the Skeffington Estate known as 'Hunter Sahib'?

---

19. How were the Coffee Plantation workers exploited at the Estate?

---

20. How is the Sahib humanized?

---

21. How is Sankar a staunch follower of Gandhi?

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22. Why is Venkamma nicknamed 'Waterfall Venkamma'?

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#### **6.4 Significance of the title Kanthapura**

The title of the novel should be apt and suggestive. Just as a sign board tells us of the contents of a shop so a good title should indicate the contents of the novel. The title 'Kanthapura' is apt and suggestive because the novel is about a South Indian village named Kanthapura

and if there is any hero in the novel it is the people and the community of the village named Kanthapura.

The novel opens with an account of the situation, the locale, of the village. We are told in the very beginning that Kanthapura is a village in Mysore in the Province of Kara. It is situated in the valley of Himavathy; there it lies "curled up like a child on its mother's lap". This single image makes the village spring into life and the readers are able to visualize it as it lies sheltered and secluded like a child in its mother's lap. It has four and twenty houses in the Brahmin quarter; it has a Pariah - quarter, a Weavers' - quarter and a Sudra - quarter. These socio - economic divisions in a village which has in all sixty or hundred houses, at once strikes one with its novelty. In this way, by telling us of the various quarters into which the village is divided, the novelist has highlighted the fact that the Indian villages are caste - ridden and that there is no free mixing of the people even in the small and limited community of a village.

Having described the village, the novelist comes to the people. There is a Postmaster Suryanarayana with his two - storeyed house. Patwari Nanjundiah who had even put glass - panes to the windows; the thotti - house of pock - marked Sidda, which had a big veranda, large roof and a granary; Waterfall Venkamma, who roared day and night and Zamindar Bhatta, who has gone on adding peasants lands to his own domain; the young, idealistic corner - house Moorthy, who is destined to shake the village out of its complacency and put it on the map of Mysore and India; and the nine - beamed house of Patel Range Gowda, the vigorous peasant chief of the village wedded to the soil from immemorial generations. It is obvious he knows them just as well but if he does not individualize them it is obviously because he doesn't like to crowd his canvas. Thus we are told of the people, their poverty, their ignorance and their petty jealousies. The villagers are depicted in their realistic colors. Their names are made descriptive in nature - it is a typical rural way. For instance: Bent legged Chandrayya, Cardamom - field Ramachandra, Coffee - planter Ramayya, Corner - house Moorthy etc.

The people are ignorant, poor and superstitious. At the same time, they are also deeply religious. They have full faith in Goddess Kenchamma, the presiding deity in the village. Right in the centre of the village is a temple dedicated to Kenchamma, "Great Goddess,

benign one." Kenchamma is the centre of the village, forms the still - centre of their lives and makes everything meaningful. Marriage, funeral, sickness, death ploughing, harvesting, arrests, release - all are watched over by Kenchamma.

The picture of village life is filled up by giving further accounts of the grinding poverty, illiteracy and the conflicts and tensions that mark the Indian village life. Indeed, there is a constant shifting and ordering of material, selection of significant details so that Kanthapura acquires a symbolic significance. It becomes a microcosm of the macrocosm, one out of the lakhs and lakhs of Indian villages.

It is to this remote South Indian village that there comes the Gandhi movement through Moorthy and other city boys. It is Moorthy, who organizes the Gandhi work in the village. He is indeed life and spirit behind the movement in Kanthapura just as Gandhi was the life and spirit of the freedom struggle in India. But very soon the people of Kanthapura as a whole are actively involved and the novel becomes an account of their suffering and their heroic sacrifice. An unequal fight it inevitably proves to be, as the Satyagrahis are maimed and broken and scattered, and a remnant reaches - after soar trials and vicissitudes - another village, Kashipura, beyond the border where they settle down. Some of the Satyagrahis - Rangamma, Ratna, Moorthy - spend an allotted span in jail.

Thus Kanthapura is not a novel dealing with the life and doings of any individual hero. It is certainly not the story of Moorthy but of the masses of the village, of their suffering, of their exile, of their momentary defeat which has in it the seeds of ultimate victory. It ends with an account of their life in Kashipura and gives us a sense of abiding fulfillment which they have attained. Hence if there is any hero in the novel, it is Kanthapura itself and its people.

#### **6.4 Check your progress**

**Answer the following questions briefly:**

1. Where is Kanthapura located?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. How is Kanthapura divided into various quarters?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Describe the people of Kanthapura?

---

4. Name the village deity and her functions.

---

5. What does the novel Kanthapura deal with?

---

### **6.5 Raja Rao's use of Mythical Technique**

In Kanthapura, Raja Rao has made effective use of the mythical technique used with such success by English writers like T. S. Eliot and James Joyce. The use of the mythical technique means that the past is juxtaposed with the present and in this way the past may serve as a criticism of the present or it may be used to heighten and glorify the present. Raja Rao has used this very technique to glorify the present and to impart to the novel the dignity and status of an epic or Purana. By the use of the mythical technique, the novelist has enriched the texture of his novel and imparted to it a rare expansiveness, elevation and dignity. Just as in a myth some of the chief characters are Gods and other beings larger in power than humanity, in this tale, Moorthy is presented as a figure much above the common run of men. He is a dedicated and selfless soul, who is idealized to the extent of being regarded as a local Mahatma. And of course, there is the real Mahatma Gandhi also, always in the background, though he is nowhere physically present. The village women think of him as the big mountain and of Moorthy as the small mountain.

Past and present are freely mixed up and Gods and Goddesses and heroes and heroines of epics freely jostle with contemporary personalities. Mahatma Gandhi is Rama, the red foreigner or the brown inspector of police who flourishes a lathi and is but a soldier in ten-headed Ravana's army of occupation and oppression. Nay more: the Satyagrahi in prison is the divine Krishna himself in Kansa's prison.

The use of the mythical technique is seen at its best in the strange kind of Harikathas recited by Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man. In his Harikatha, the past and the present are juxtaposed and contemporary events and personalities are constantly linked - up with Puranic Gods and epic - heroes and heroines. One of the Harikathas he recites is about the birth of Gandhi.

The use of the mythical technique makes Gandhi, the invisible God and Moorthy, the invisible avatar. The reign of the Red - men become Asuric rule and it is resisted by the Devas, the Satyagrahis. Jayaramachar jumbles with splendid unconcern traditional mythology and contemporaneous politics: Shiva is three - eyed and Swaraj too is three - eyed : self - purification, Hindu - Muslim unity and Khaddar. Gandhi is Shiva himself in human shape: he is engaged in slaying the serpent of foreign rule as the boy Krishna killed the serpent Kaliya. Bhajans and Harikathas mix religion and politics freely and often purposefully, the reading of the Gita and hand - spinning are elevated into a daily ritual, like Pooja. This juxtaposition of the past and the present, of men and Gods, is kept up throughout the novel upto the very end. Mahatma Gandhi's trip to England to attend the Second Round Table Conference is invested with Puranic significance.

It is the use of the mythical technique that makes Kanthapura a unique novel almost a new species of fiction. In this way, it becomes Gandhian or Gandhi - epic.

### **6.5 Check your progress**

**Answer the following questions briefly :**

1. How has Raja Rao utilized the mythical technique in the novel?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. How are the characters in the novel and their activities compared to Gods?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. How is mythical technique used in Harikathas in the novel?

\_\_\_\_\_





4. How does Jayaramachar jumble traditional mythology with contemporary politics?

---

### **6.6 Kanthapura as a Gandhi - epic**

Kanthapura is a great village novel but it is greater still as a novel depicting the impact of the Gandhian freedom struggle on the life of a remote and obscure Indian village and what happens in Kanthapura under the impact of the Gandhian non - violent non - cooperation movement was happening all over India, in the lakhs and lakhs of Indian villages during those stirring days from 1919 - 1930 when Gandhi transformed the entire nation in a single lifetime into an army of disciplined and non - violent freedom fighters. There were at least three strands in the Gandhian movement - the political, the religious and the social (including economic) and the three have been woven inextricably into the complex story of the regeneration of Kanthapura as a result of the freedom struggle. It is not merely a political novel but a novel concerned as much with the social, religious and economic transformation of the people as with the struggle for political freedom.

Kanthapura, is an obscure, out of the way, slumbering South Indian village. This obscure village, slumbering for centuries, suddenly comes to life thanks to the non - violent, non - cooperation movement of Mahatma Gandhi in the twenties. It is in the handling of this theme that the novelist quickens it to activity and thus gives us an insight into the appalling social conditions of our villages as also into the values that have preserved our people against flood, fire, famine and exploitation from within and from without - and more than all, that incomparable manner in which Mahatma Gandhi tapped the deeply religious and spiritual resources of our people living in the remotest parts of India and built up a national movement in one life - time.

But it is no political novel any more than was Gandhi's movement a mere political movement and pictures so vividly, truthfully and touchingly the story of the resurgence of India under Gandhi's leadership: its religious character, its economic and social concerns, its political ideals, precisely in the way Mahatma Gandhi tried to spiritualize politics, the capacity for sacrifice of our people in response

to the call of one like Gandhi - not the spectacular sacrifice of the few chosen ones who later became India's rulers - but the officially unchronicled, little, nameless, unremembered acts of courage and sacrifice of peasants and farm hands, students and lawyers, women and old men, thanks to whom Gandhi's unique experiment gathered momentum and grew into a national movement.

It was Mahatma Gandhi's greatness that he produced hundreds and thousands of little Gandhis throughout the country. To be young was very heaven in those days. The Corner - House Moorthy, our Moorthy, as the villagers called him, was young. Moorthy was in college when he felt the impact of Mahatma Gandhi and he walked out of it, a Gandhi man. There is nothing extraordinary in it though, for in those days hundreds and thousands of young men throughout the country gave up their studies and courted arrest. But about the manner in which Moorthy walked out of the college: he is said to have had, not an actual, firsthand experience of Gandhi by personal contact but a vision of Gandhi addressing a public meeting and Moorthy pushing his way through the crowd and joining the band of volunteers and receiving inspiration by a touch of Gandhi's hand. And that very evening Moorthy went out alone and came back to college and walked out of it, for good.

Back in Kanthapura, Moorthy organizes the Mahatma Gandhi - work in the village. The entire novel bristles with action and all that action is centered around Moorthy. He forms the Congress Committee in the village, maintains constant touch with the city Congress Committee and through newspapers and other publicity material keeps the people constantly in touch with events in other parts of the country. It is he who calls the Harikatha man, mixes religion with politics and likens Mahatma Gandhi to Ram and Redman to Ravan and calls Swaraj, the three - eyed. He gives a practical form to the Gandhian programme of Swadeshi and eradication of untouchability by going from door to door even to the Pariah quarters and explaining to the people the economics of the Charkha and Swadeshi. He enthuses the women of the villages to take to charkha - spinning and later on organizes the women voluntary corps. There is considerable opposition from the ignorant, the conservative and the people with vested interests but the opposition is faced with courage and determination and the help of influential people like Range Gowda is enlisted. There is a general

awakening and the atmosphere grows highly charged with emotion and enthusiasm as the news of the Dandi March reaches Kanthapura, of the enthusiastic public support of the miracle that Mahatma Gandhi was performing, reaches like a wild fire at Kanthapura.

Those were tumultuous, stirring times and this atmosphere of tumult, of a national upheaval, under the impact of a single personality, has been successfully captured by the novelist. There are dharnas, picketings and satyagrahas. People, even children and old men are injured and wounded in large numbers. Women, like Ratna, are beaten up and dishonored but their spirit is not crushed. When Moorthy is arrested his place is taken by Ratna and so the movement continues. There is the no - tax campaign and when the people refuse to pay the land revenue, their lands are laid waste and they are compelled to flee the village. In the end it truly becomes a mass movement, the villagers comprising men and women of all the castes and professions and laborers of the Coffee Estate readily meeting the onslaught of the bureaucracy. An unequal fight it inevitably proves to be for the Satyagrahis are maimed and broken and scattered and a remnant reaches - after sore trials and vicissitudes - another village, Kashipura, beyond the border, where they settle down. Some of the Satyagrahis - Rangamma, Ratna, Moorthy- spend an allotted span in jail but the Gandhi - Irwin Pact and the political truce that comes in its wake hasten the release of the Satyagrahis.

Kanthapura has rightly been called a Gandhi - epic for it conveys the very spirit of those stirring days when a single individual in a single life - time could so enthuse the people and so transform the entire nation. The readers feel the charisma of his personality but the great Mahatma himself does never appear on the scene. He remains in the background but his presence is always felt through the transformation he is causing in Kanthapura and in every other village of India, for Kanthapura is but a microcosm of the macrocosm.

It should also be noted that Raja Rao's presentation of the Gandhian movement is impartial and objective. There is no idealization; both the dark and the bright sides of the picture have been presented. The depiction of the Gandhi movement goes along with the depiction of the petty jealousies and trivialities of village life. If there are Ratna, Rangamma and Patel Range Gowda, there are also Bhatta, Waterfall Venkamma and Bade Khan. Even the character

of Moorthy has not been idealized for he displays the necessary human weaknesses and hesitation in entering a Pariah's hut and tasting the drink offered by him. Throughout the novel, idealization is accompanied by constant disapprovals of this Gandhi - business and Gandhi vagabondage, the cynicism of friends and hostilities - veiled and open - from neighbors - all making for constant vigilance against the dangers of the thesis novel.

In short, Kanthapura is a great work of art presenting realistically, impartially and artistically the impact of the Gandhi movement on the masses of India. It is not a propaganda piece or thesis novel but a work of art characterized by the necessary artistic detachment and impartiality.

### **6.6 Check your progress**

**Answer the following questions briefly :**

1. How Moorthy received inspiration from Gandhi?

---

2. How is the working of the Congress Committee maintained in the village?

---

3. How does Moorthy involve the women of the village in the freedom movement?

---

4. Where do the villagers move at the end of the novel?

---

5. How is Raja Rao's presentation of the Gandhian movement impartial and objective?

---

## 6.7 Elements of poetry, fantasy and lyricism in Kanthapura

One of its distinctive features is the imaginative coloring which is imparted to the ordinary and the commonplace and the known and the familiar is thus made to look unfamiliar and uncommon. The narrator is an old woman with a highly poetic imagination and consequently there is a constant mingling of poetry and politics, constant heightening and transmuting of reality. Everything is seen as colored by her poetic imagination.

A common place, yearly event like the coming of rains in Vaisakh is described in highly poetic terms so that it seems to be something uncommon and unfamiliar. The rain is humanized and its arrival is described in human terms. Equally poetic is the description of Diwali, the festival of lights. The mythopoeic imagination of the narrator is at work and Gods freely jostle with men in her account of the festival. Her essentially romantic imagination heightens, transfigures and irradiates with the divine light of poetry what would be prosaic, matter of fact account of a common, yearly occurrence in the hands of a less gifted artist.

Rangamma, one of the more cultured and educated women of the village, discourses on science in an easy, popular way and the narrators account of her discourse is a curious mixture of science, poetry and fantasy. She lets her imagination go, uses the known and the familiar to illuminate and explain scientific truths till science is poetized and the entire account becomes a curious piece of poetry and fantasy.

The description is vivid and graphic, a poetic and whimsical rendering of reality. The radio becomes the speech that goes across the air; Jagdish Chandra Bose's discovery gets expressed as the plants that weep and Darwin's Theory of Evolution as the monkeys that were the men we have become; of the seventeenth century French scientist's germ theory as worms thin - as - dust that get into your blood and give you dysentery and plague and cholera.

Just as science so also politics is charged with poetry and is transmuted and glorified. There is also the vivid description of the soldiers and coolies being asked to walk over the prostrate Satyagrahis and many of them joining the Satyagrahis instead. It is

this constant fusion of desperate elements - poetry, fantasy, science, politics etc - that gives Kanthapura its distinctive place in the work of the Indian writers of fiction in English. Raja Rao has poetized the Indo - Anglican novel and imparted to it the intensity and poignancy of a lyric.

### **6.7 Check your progress**

**Answer the following questions briefly :**

1. Comment on the style of the narrator of the novel.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What does Rangamma discourse on?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. How are the various scientific discoveries and inventions interpreted by the villagers?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. How is politics charged with poetry?

\_\_\_\_\_

### **6.8 Kanthapura as a fictional concretization of Gandhian Thought**

Kanthapura is a great village novel but it is greater still as a novel depicting the impact of the Gandhian freedom struggle on the life of a remote and obscure Indian village and what happens in Kanthapura under the impact of the Gandhian non - violent, non - cooperation movement, was happening all over India, in the lakhs and lakhs of Indian villages during those stirring days from 1919 - 1930. Mahatma Gandhi had transformed the entire nation in a single lifetime into an army of disciplined and non - violent freedom fighters. There were at least three strands in the Gandhian movement - the political, the religious, the economic and the social - and the three have been woven inextricably into the complex story of the regeneration of Kanthapura as a result of the freedom struggle. It is not merely a

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Those were tumultuous, stirring times and this atmosphere of tumult, of a national upheaval, under the impact of a single personality has been successfully captured by the novelist. There are Dharnas, Picketings and Satyagrahas. People even children and old men are injured and wounded in large numbers. Women, like Ratna, are beaten up and dishonored but their spirit is not crushed. When Moorthy is arrested his place is taken by Ratna and so the movement continues. There is the no - tax campaign and when the people refuse to pay the land revenue, their lands are laid waste and they are compelled to flee the village. In the end it truly becomes a mass movement, the villagers comprising men and women of all the castes and professions and the laborers of the Coffee Estate readily meeting the onslaught of the bureaucracy. An unequal fight it inevitably proves to be for the Satyagrahis are maimed and broken and scattered and a



remanent reaches - after sore trials and vicissitudes - another village, Kashipura, beyond the border, where they settle down. Some of the Satyagrahis - Rangamma, Ratna, Moorthy - spend an allotted span in jail but the Gandhi - Irwin Pact and the political truce that comes in its wake hasten the release of the Satyagrahis.

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### **6.9 Indianness of Kanthapura**

The novel is a western art - form but Raja Rao has used it to express an essentially Indian sensibility. Kanthapura is Indian both in theme and treatment. It is an Indian novel and it expresses the Indian

sensibility to perfection. Laws of the western novel cannot be applied to it. Raja Rao says the Indo - English novel must use the traditional Indian form of story - telling. The same is true of characterization. Characters in Indo - English novels are seldom defined and would be called caricatures by the standard criteria of prose criticism. Raja Rao has suitably modified a borrowed art form to express Indian sensibility. He has in this way achieved a rare synthesis of the East and West.

Kanthapura is a typical Indian village and it has been described minutely with great realism. We are told of its location, of its crops, of its grinding poverty, illiteracy and superstition. The coming of the Gandhi movement to it enables the novelist to penetrate to the rivalries, jealousies and the rigidities of the caste system that lie below the surface. The villagers are represented in realistic colors. Their names are made descriptive in a typically rural way. They live in close intimacy with nature and are a part of it. For them nature is a living being and even hills, rivers, fields and animals have a distinct presence, a personality of their own.

Indian sensibility is essentially religious and even politics gets spiritualized. India's most important political leaders and social reformers have all been great religious figures and social and political ends have been attained through the guise of religion. This was also so in the case of Mahatma Gandhi and his non - cooperation, non - violent movement. To the peasants, Kenchamma is a goddess, benign and bounteous. They are deeply religious in outlook. Moorthy, initiated into Gandhi faith becomes a veritable force in the village. Slowly and steadily Moorthy becomes a Gandhi man with a mysterious power to move the people. As the story progresses the three threads of experience tend to be one; the religious, social and political issues become one and the same. The blend is achieved when the villagers consider Moorthy to be the Small Mountain. It is to be remembered that the Big Mountain is Siva, their Protector. Here the Gandhian ideal and the religious spirit merge together. The religious elements and the social and political issues are artistically transformed into one entity. It is natural that prayers and national songs are sung side by side. The objective is to attain independence but the means adopted are religious: Harikathas, Bhajans, fasts, prayers and non - violent resistance.

In the struggle, women's role is important. The author presents them

as various forms of Shakti. Whereas Indian woman is coy, delicate and submissive, she is also firm as rock, great in suffering. Psychologically prepared for the titanic encounter, they get much inspiration from other examples. It is to be noted that in the last phase of peaceful resistance it is Ratna, a woman, who takes over from Moorthy and leads the Satyagrahis.

Shakti - worship is an essentially Indian theme and it runs through the novel. Different forms of Shakti are manifested through the women of Kanthapura. Shakti's indomitable spirit possesses them in their Satyagraha (non - violent struggle) against the British government. When the police ill - treats them with their sticks and boots, the women think, move and act as one, for they are more distinct and pervasive in the devotional aspect. Woman as the Eternal Devotee, Shakti kneeling in rapt adoration in front of Siva, reveals herself through them as they listen to Jayaramachar retelling epic stories and to Ramakrishnayya reading passages from the Scriptures. The most touching example of their edifying faith is the narrator's musing on the ruins of Kanthapura. She dreams of a happy ending to a modern 'Ramayana' where Rama (Gandhi) will return from his exile (visit to England) with Sita (India) who had been captured by Ravana (the British) and as he returns to Ayodhya (Delhi), Bharata (Nehru) who has been reigning as regent, will welcome him and there will be celestial flowers showered upon his aerial chariot.

The theme is Indian and the treatment of the theme is also typically Indian. The method of narration is typically Indian. The Indian grandmother is the most ancient and most typical of story - tellers and the narrator in the novel, Achakka is just such a grandmother, narrating the story for the benefit of a new comer, years later. Raja Rao has used the ancient Indian way of narration. It is a breathless story illustrating the age old Indian tradition of story - telling. The detailed accounts of Sankar, Rangamma and Bhatta are revealing, essential for the narrative. It is a long interminable tale and its essential Indianness is seen in its long interminable sentences, long paragraphs and the absence of division into chapters.

In order to convey an essentially Indian sensibility - we may say peasant sensibility - Raja Rao has evolved a suitable style. It is not "Babu English" that he has used. The words are English but the organization is Indian and the novelist had to organize it himself. The

language is saturated with Indian idiom, Indian imagery and rural color. Sometimes there are literal translations from Kannada and sometimes there is breaking up of the English syntax to convey emotional upheavals and agitations. Many words are imported from Indian languages and used as they are without any translation. For example, we get Ahimsa, Dhoti, Harikatha, Maistri, Mandap to name a few. He frequently uses village proverbs, legends and concrete imagery in Indian context. For instance, in his similes, familiar animals and birds figure most :

1. Our hearts beat like the wings of bats;
2. Every squirrel has his day;
3. The youngest is always the holy bull;
4. And yet he was as honest as an elephant;
5. A rasping hiss as though a thousand porcupines have suddenly bristled up;
6. Does a boar stand before a lion or a jackal before an elephant?

**Numerous proverbs find a natural place in the peasant speech:**

1. the policemen are not your uncle's sons;
2. saw you like a rat on your mother's lap;
3. the first daughter milks the cow when the mother is ill;
4. you cannot straighten a dog's tail;
5. there is neither man nor mosquito in Kanthapura;
6. only a pariah looks at the teeth of dead cows;
7. Land, lust and wifely loyalty go badly together.

Sometimes the peasant's use an abusive, vulgar language and Raja Rao also does not hesitate to use such a language when the occasion demands it though his use of it is more restrained and judicious. Such language is an integral part of peasant speech and so its use is essential to express peasant sensibility. This is indeed the natural speech of the rural folk transmuted into English. With the effective use of the "dialect" and village material the novelist has succeeded in conveying, "In a language not one's own the spirit that is one's own." Kanthapura is Indian both in theme and treatment. Raja Rao has shown to other Indians writing in English how best to express in a foreign art - form a sensibility which is essentially Indian.

## 6.8 & 6.9 Check your progress

Answer the following questions briefly :

1. How do the villagers view nature?

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2. How does the author present women?

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3. How are the different forms of Shakti manifested through the women of Kanthapura?

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4. What does the narrator muse on the ruins of Kanthapura?

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5. Which technique of narration is adopted by Achakka?

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## 6.10 Art and Technique of narration in Kanthapura

Raja Rao's Kanthapura is a triumph of narrative art. It is perfectly suited to the ends he wanted to achieve. Raja Rao has been eminently successful despite the difficulties of the task. He succeeded in bringing into his compass an amazing amount of heterogeneous material and still move ahead swiftly towards the end he had in mind. The narration is straightforward and chronological; there is no backward and forward movement as in a stream of conscious novel. The tale has not been narrated by the novelist himself but by a persona, (imagined character) called Achakka. Achakka is an old grandmother that most ancient of story - tellers. She had been personally involved in the events which form the substance of the novel and she narrates them years later for the benefit of a new - comer. Thus the substance of the novel is made up of the stream of her memory, in which many events and characters have been blurred

by the passage of time and many others have been heightened by her imagination. She is a woman with a balanced mind, sound common sense and the gift of shrewd and intelligent observation. Her personality colors the whole non-cooperation movement, the brave resistance of the people and their consequent suffering. All is recollected and narrated by a naïveté which is not the author's but the narrator's.

The choice of such a narrator serves several useful purposes. Making this old woman the narrator enables Raja Rao to mingle fact and myth in an effective manner. For the old woman, Jawaharlal is a Bharata to the Mahatma - the Mahatma who, she believes, will slay Ravana so that Sita may be freed. For her Gandhi has attained the status of God and Moorthy is regarded as his avatar in Kanthapura. To her the Satyagraha becomes a religious ceremony to which she devotes her sacred ardour.

The second advantage derived by this choice of narrator is that the language used by her is of an elemental quality. Her reaction to things is direct and vivid, not literary and second-hand. She talks of "the pumpkin moon", "the stream of milk splashed in a moonlit night"; "Young boys bright as banana trunks", all are images taken from familiar phenomena which would come naturally to a village woman. The character also enables Raja Rao to achieve his professed aim of reproducing the rhythm of Indian speech in English as well as of coming closest to the oral tradition of story-telling. In Kanthapura the constant shuttling back and forth in time is easily justified as an old woman's leisurely manner of story-telling.

The narrator thus provides a convenient point of view, though she is never sharply individualized. We know nothing about her beyond the fact that she is a widow who has now no one except Seemu (who may be her son or grandson) and has seven acres of wet land and twelve acres of dry land. This numerical precision is again meant to convey the simplicity of the way of life where a man's property is measured not in terms of money but in terms of cattle and land. Her function is representative and her strength lies in being anonymous. She is just one of the many women of Kanthapura who responded to the call of the Mahatma, conveyed through Moorthy. Her faith in the goddess Kenchamma, her respect for the local scholar Rangamma, her unquestioned affection for Moorthy and her trust in him, all these

feelings she shares with other women of the village. No quality is given to her that detracts from her representative nature.

Achakka is both the narrator and the commentator. The narrative is hardly very straightforward: there are involutions and digressions, there are meaningful backward glances. There are rhythmic chains of proper names (Rachanna and Chandranna and Madanna; Satamma and Rangamma and Puttamma and Seethamma), there are hypnotic repetitions and refrains and there are also sheer poetic iridescences. A village, a picturesque region, an epoch of social and political change, a whole complex of character and motive, reason and superstition, idealism and cold calculation, all spring up before our eyes demanding recognition and acceptance.

Not only does Achakka narrate, she also comments and her comments are balanced and shrewd. They serve to place both character and incident in a correct perspective and are a constant check on over - idealization. They serve to impart realism and authenticity to the narrative. Here are a few instances of her racy comments:

1. To tell you the truth, Bhatta began all this after his last visit to the city.
2. Rangamma did not understand all this, neither, to tell you the truth, did any of us.
3. Bhatta left us after harvest on a pilgrimage to Kashi. I tell you, he was not a bad man, was Bhatta.

The story is thus narrated simultaneously on two levels and thus acquires a dramatic character. Narration and description go hand in hand with a chorus - like evaluation of character and action. They increase our understanding of events and character serve as a unifying force in the work. The narration is dramatic; it varies according to the requirements of the action and the situation. The language, the accent, the tone, the tempo, constantly keeps changing.

A considerable part of the book is taken up with life on the coffee estate, the crudities and vulgarities of the Red - man; the humiliations of the poor and the helpless (except Bade Khan, the policeman, who has just to sneeze or cough and everybody will say "I lick your feet") the sickness that broke them and the violation of their women's honour - all have been portrayed most vividly and convincingly to the last

detail of credibility.

Moorthy has been released from jail and the villagers wait eagerly for his arrival. Their suspense and their anxiety have been adequately conveyed through the use of a repetitive language replete with a sense of urgency.

Achakka is garrulous, as a grandmother usually is, and words, words, words flow out of their mouth in quick succession. When a sense of largeness is to be conveyed there is a liberal piling up of epithets and images. The picketings and satyagrahas are narrated, we should say visualized, in this way, and the very atmosphere of those tumultuous days conveyed to the readers. Coolies come out of the Gates of the Skeffington Coffee Estate in large numbers and move towards the toddy booth. The sense of the largeness of their numbers is conveyed through a multiplicity of images and epithets.

At other times, there is a mingling of fact and fancy and sheer poetry comes out of the narrator's lips as in the rhythmic account of the coming of Kartik, the month of the festival of lights.

The narrative art of Raja Rao is the novel's crowning charm. Achakka's gossipy digressions and circumlocutions are in the hoary Indian tradition of story - telling. In this way the happenings in a remote, obscure, out of the way village are transformed into a Gandhian or Gandhi - epic. In this way, instead of remaining a mere sthala - purana or regional novel, Kanthapura acquires the dimensions of an epic - the epic of India's struggle for freedom.

### **6.10 Check your progress**

**Answer the following questions briefly :**

1. Why has Raja Rao chosen an old woman as a narrator?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. How does Achakka mingle myth and fact?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What purposes do Achakka's comments serve?

\_\_\_\_\_



4. How do the two levels of narration of story serve various purposes?

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### **6.11 Plot and Structure of Kanthapura**

Kanthapura is a novel in the Indian tradition and it is not to be judged by western standards. The plot of the story is episodic. There are numerous digressions and there is much that is superfluous. The old narrator is garrulous and gossipy and brings in much that is heterogeneous and irrelevant into the compass of her tale. It has a well - formed and well - organized structure, a coherent and well - knit plot.

The plot of the novel is made up of a main plot and a sub - plot. The main plot deals with the impact of the Gandhi - movement on a remote South Indian village, called Kanthapura, a village which is a microcosm of the macrocosm, for what happens in this remote village was happening all over India in those stirring decades. The sub - plot deals with the happenings on the Skeffington Coffee Estate in the neighborhood and throws a flood of light on the exploitation of the brutality of the Englishmen and the various ways in which they exploited the people and later in the novel, the coolies of the coffee - plantation join the Satyagrahis from Kanthapura in their Satyagraha outside the toddy booth.

The plot has a beginning, middle and an end. It begins with an account of a small South Indian village called Kanthapura, its locale, its crops, its poverty and the ignorant and superstitious nature of the people. Though it is a small village, it is divided into a number of quarters - the Brahmin Quarter, the Potters Quarters - the Sudra Quarter and the Pariah Quarter. The society is caste - ridden and it has its own local legends. Kenchamma is the Presiding goddess and a detailed account is given of the legends connected with the benign goddess. Then follows an account of its people and a number of characters, destined to play significant roles in the action are introduced, petty rivalries and jealousies of the village society come to surface.

There is a development of action with the arrival of Moorthy from

the city, a staunch Gandhi man. He is an educated man who has a true Brahmin's heightened awareness of his social and spiritual obligations and sets out to fulfill them and he is best equipped for his task thanks to the fertilizing impact of this life - making influences. It is interesting to note that before there is ever any mention of Mahatma Gandhi or Swaraj in the novel there is tremendous religious activity. Starting from an invocation to Kenchamma, goddess benign, to the end of the novel, religion seems to sustain the spirits of the people of Kanthapura. The action begins with the unearthing of a half - sunken lingam by Moorthy and its consecration. The boys of Kanthapura had a grand feast to celebrate the occasion. And one thing led to another. Soon they observed Sankara Jayanti, Sankara Vijaya etc and this became the nucleus of social regeneration in Kanthapura in the true tradition of India where social reformers have invariably been profoundly religious men. When Moorthy threw out a hint that somebody will offer a dinner for each day of the month, there was spontaneous response from everyone and this is not stated by the novelist but comes home to us through the characters themselves.

Political propaganda is carried on in the guise of religion. The Harikatha - man, Jayramachar, tells strange Harikathas, in which there is a curious mingling of religion and politics. Gandhi is likened to Ram and the Red - man to Ravana and the freedom struggle becomes a fight between the two incarnations of good and evil for the sake of Bharat Mata or Sita. The use of the mythical technique is kept up upto the very end.

The action develops through conflict. Moorthy forms the Kanthapura Congress Committee, maintains contact with the city Congress, brings in newspapers and keeps the people informed of the stirring events taking place elsewhere. In this way, though Mahatma Gandhi does never appear on the scene, his presence is constantly felt. He goes about from door to door; carrying the message of Charkha and Swadeshi. He is a Brahmin but a true Gandhite. He goes even to the Pariah Quarter with the message of the Mahatma Gandhi. A Women's Volunteer corps is also organized. Efforts are thus made to bring about political, social and economic resurgence simultaneously. The Government, too, is not idle and soon he has to meet with stiff opposition. Policeman Bade Khan arrives on the scene finds shelter on the Skeffington Coffee Estate and soon is in league with Bhatta, the

first Brahmin and Waterfall Venkamma. Contacts are also maintained with the Swami in the city, who wields considerable influence and whose threat of ex - communication sends Moorthy's mother to death.

Battle lines are sharply drawn and the atmosphere is tense. Before the battle actually begins, there is a detailed account given of the goings on the Skeffington Coffee Estate. Into the calm valley of Himavathy there comes not merely Congress politics but there is an exodus of population - poor and half - starved people - from below the Ghats from Andhra Pradesh and from Tamil Nadu and armies of coolies march past to work in the Skeffington Estate owned by the Red - man. Life on the Red - man's estate with its brutalities and humiliations is, speaking in a limited way, like the sub - plot of a tragedy. It is part of the general tragedy depicted in the rest of the book; with this difference, though, that while their suffering brought the victims a chastening, ennobling feeling now and then and left them with perhaps a distant hope, if any, suffering on the estate was soul - destroying and absolutely devoid of compensations.

As soon as the call comes from the city Congress, the Kanthapurians, lead by Moorthy, march to picket the toddy plantations, with shouts of 'Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai' and 'Inquilab Zindabad'. There is a cruel lathi - charge even women and children are beaten up and in large numbers are arrested. Next follows the Satyagraha outside the Toddy Booth near the gate of the Skeffington Estate. The workers come to drink; the Satyagrahis lie down in the path as lathi blows after blows are showered on them. The entire atmosphere resounds with shouts of 'Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai'. And then the unexpected happens, the coolies' side with the Satyagrahis, refusing to march over their bodies, lie down by them and are brutally beaten up by the police. The two plots, thus, fuse and mingle and become a single whole. Those were thrilling, sensational times and the novelist has succeeded in conveying to the readers those thrills and sensations, exactly and precisely.

There are countless arrests and Moorthy is also arrested. He is tried and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. In his absence, Ratna takes up the work of the Congress and becomes the leader of the movement and then comes the no - tax campaign. Government repression and police brutality reach a climax. Workers from Bombay arrive, their crops are reaped and taken away and their houses burnt

and destroyed. Women are dishonored and even children and old men are mercilessly beaten up. They are compelled to flee to their native place and are obliged to seek shelter in distant Kashipur where they are welcomed as, "The Pilgrims of Mahatma Gandhi". Kanthapura has been laid waste, the people have suffered terribly but they experience a sense of fulfillment. The denouement while stressing tragic waste and desolation also leaves the victims much chastened and ennobled.

### **6.11 Check your progress**

**Answer the following questions briefly :**

1. What is the main plot of the novel about?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What does the subplot of the novel deal with?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What does the plot of the novel begin with?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. How does the religious action in the novel begin?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What do the coolies do to the Satyagrahis?

\_\_\_\_\_

### **6.12 Role of the Coffee Estate Workers in the Gandhian Movement in Kanthapura**

Just as Kanthapura is representative of thousands of Indian villages so is the coffee estate representative of scores of British - owned estates in India, whether they are coffee plantations, or some other plantations. Conditions on all of them were more or less like that they are depicted in this novel. Raja Rao included its depiction in the novel because he wanted to include an insistence of large - scale economic

exploitation of Indians by Britishers and the depiction of the coffee estate enabled him to do that.

The Skeffington Coffee Estate is described vividly and elaborately in the novel. The estate is pretty old for no one knows exactly when it was founded. Nor does anyone know its size for certain, though it is said to be at least ten thousand acres wide. However, some people in Kanthapura still remember the first owner of the estate, who was known as Hunter Sahib, from his habit of wielding his hunter on the laborers. The estate had been expanding rapidly ever since that time and more and more coolies had been coming from beneath the Ghats. The estate went on growing bigger till it touched all the hills around Kanthapura. Some of them spoke Tamil or Telugu instead of Kannada which was spoken at Kanthapura. The Kanthapurians knew about the coolies because they passed through the village as they marched to the estate.

The coolies, who worked on the Estate, were recruited from the plains below upto the Ghats stretching upto the river Godavari. A foreman or Maistri as he was called was sent from time to time to recruit coolies according to the requirement of the coolies at the plantation. They were enticed to leave their hearth and home by false promises. They were given one rupee each as advance and were promised a four - anna bit for a man and a two anna bit for a woman as daily wages. They were also told that they would get plenty of white rice and they would merely be required to pick coffee leaves. The foreman would speak to them kindly. Their march to Skeffington Coffee Estate has been described by Raja Rao at length in his usual graphic and picturesque style.

Once the coolies were brought to the coffee plantation, the manners of the Foreman changed and he grew harsh and threatening. They were exploited in many ways. All promises were forgotten. No wages were given. Indeed, the white owner did not even know that they had promised four - anna bit for a man and two - anna bit for a woman. They were given small huts to live in which they had to repair or thatch themselves. They were provided with a frugal diet and were made to work hard from five in the morning till late in the night. If anybody took rest or was slow, he was severely whipped by the Maistri who was ever on the watch. No wages were paid and the old hands knew that one, who came to the Estate once, never went out of

it again. He must work, suffer and die there.

The workers were also exploited sexually. The white Sahib would have this or that woman who tickled his fancy. If a woman refused him, the husband's or father's wages were cut or he was given a whipping.

The workers were also exposed to dangers and diseases of various kinds. The Estate was infested with snakes and many died of snake - bites while at work. Besides this, there were heavy rains and the workers would have to work in rains drenched to their very skin. With the rains, there would come Malaria and take a heavy toll of life. Men, women and children would die in large numbers. No doubt, the Sahib would distribute pills among the coolies but they were superstitious and many would not take the pills. They also suffered from cough, vomiting and dysentery. Many would have liked to go back to their homes but they had no money and anybody who dared to ask for his wages was mercilessly beaten.

The work on the Estate was not just picking coffee berries as it was promised. Infact, it turned out to be a back - breaking drudgery. The men had to dig pits and hew wood and the women had to pluck weeds and to kill vermin. As the sun rose high, working with the axe or the spade became more and more difficult but even if they rested for a moment, they would find the Maistri before them, who would tell them to return to work, saying that nobody's marriage procession was passing. Or they would see the red face of the Sahib himself peeping at them so that they would all begin to work vigorously.

The coolies of the Skeffington Coffee Estate were a miserable lot and had to suffer terrible hardships. The arrival of Bade Khan, the policeman, has further strengthened and encouraged the Sahib because an officer of law was with him. The majority of the coolies were Pariahs. But there were also a few Brahmins who could not be suppressed so very easily. Among them were two young Brahmin clerks, Gangadhar and Vasudev, of progressive and enlightened views. They took the Pariahs to Kanthapura to take part in the Gandhi - Bhajans and invited Moorthy to come to the Estate to teach the ignorant coolies.

However, Moorhty's entry was barred by Bade Khan and there was a scuffle between Bade Khan and the Maistri on the one side and Moorhty's supporters on the other. As a sequel of this incident,

Rachanna was dismissed from service on the estate and came down to live in Kanthapura. Rachanna and his wife played an important part in the Gandhian movement. Infact Rachanna was an elected member of the Congress Committee at Kanthapura. During the struggle with the authorities he was arrested along with the other Satyagrahis. It was Rachanna, who objected to Moorthy being bound with ropes when the police came to arrest him. A very important confrontation between the Gandhians and the authorities took place at the Skeffington Coffee Estate. That was the picketing of the toddy booth situated there. During the no - tax campaign the proprietor of the estate tried to use the coolies against the people but he did not succeed in this and many of them raised slogans like 'Vande Mataram' etc. The city - coolies looked at them and at once stopped work. The lights were all put out. The Skeffington coolies continued to march towards them shouting slogans. They were ordered by a white officer on horseback to stop. On their refusal to do so, shots after shots were fired and cries, groans and lamentations resounded in the air. They ran forward and the police could stop them no more and they jumped over field - bounds and tumbled against gaslights and fell over rocks and sheafs; sickles and scythes. Three thousand men in all and from the top of the mound soldiers opened fire which they bore bravely.

### **6.12 Check your progress**

**Answer the following questions briefly :**

1. What are Kanthapura and the Coffee Estate representative of?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Why does Raja Rao depict the Coffee Estate?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What was the duty of the foreman on the estate?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What promises were made to the coolies during recruitment?

\_\_\_\_\_



5. What dangers and diseases did the workers suffer from?

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6. What role does Rachanna play in the novel?

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### **6.13 Treatment of Freedom Movement in Kanthapura**

Literature is a medium of political and social awakening in a country and it is natural that during India's struggle for freedom, literature played its own part. For thousands of India's illiterate peasants Gandhi came to stand for a religious 'Avatar' or incarnation of a God and even many of the more sophisticated city - dwellers looked upon him as a prophet as well as a savior. The distinction of Kanthapura is that it depicts an early stage in Mahatma Gandhi's career when few people were able to recognize his greatness adequately. Kanthapura is, of course, not the first creative work which projects Gandhi's life and ideals though it is perhaps one of the few which did so directly.

Kanthapura is not only a fine work of art but it also aims at rousing the conscience of the country and even of the world at large, at the ills and injustices which plagued Indian life in the 1930s. Though the novel depicts the freedom movement led by Gandhi as the main theme, it also aims at social reform. It is so because the Gandhian movement did not aim at Swaraj only but also at social reform. Infact, Gandhi believed that Swaraj itself could be attained after certain social reforms and social awakening. These social reforms included freedom from economic exploitation by the West by boycotting foreign goods and by spinning yarn and wearing Khadi made from it, also the eradication of untouchability and the rigidities of the caste system and removal of illiteracy, ignorance and superstition.

In the novel, we have more than a glimpse of the freedom movement in India under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. We see how the name of Mahatma Gandhi acts like a charm in every part of India and how the people in the remote and far - away Kanthapura wait with baited breath and observe a fast in order to show their solidarity with Mahatma Gandhi as he sets out on his historic Dandi



March. In cities as well as villages there are volunteer groups which organize the people, distribute charkas and yarn and even form an ambulance corps to take care of those who are wounded in the firing and lathi charges on Satyagrahis. Moorthy is a typical example of the thousands of young men who were fired with patriotic zeal by Mahatma Gandhi's inspiration and who, under his programme, left schools, colleges and universities, or resigned from their jobs and made a bonfire of their costly imported clothes. Rangamma and Ratna represent the women's side of the movement, while Range Gowda and Rachanna show how even the people of the lower castes picked up courage or curbed their natural instinct for retaliation and accepted the voluntary restraint of non - violence. Peasants refused to pay revenue and other taxes to the Government with the result that many of them were evicted from their lands and lost all means of earning a livelihood. There are Dharnas, Picketings and Satyagrahas. Kanthapurians, even children and old men are injured and wounded in large numbers. Women, like Ratna, are beaten up and dishonored but their spirit is not crushed. Shouts of 'Gandhiji ki Jai' and 'Inquilab Zindabad' resound in the air and boost the morale of the people. Large numbers are arrested and sent to jail. When Moorthy is arrested his place is taken by Ratna, who zealously leads the movement and the movement continues.

The ideals of patriotism and national integration are depicted through one of the minor characters, Advocate Sankar. He is a Khadi - clad advocate, who has been named the 'walking advocate' because of his simple ways. His professional attitude reflects that of Mahatma Gandhi of the days when he worked as a lawyer in South Africa. Sankar never took up a false case and would either give up a case or make the client confess his crime if he later found out that his case was false. He did not charge a fee from the poor and even paid their court fees and stamp charges himself. In spite of this, he got many cases and soon became very rich. But still Sankar would keep up his austere ways. In his spare time, he went to a school where Hindi was taught and helped the teacher with the work. In spite of being a South Indian, Sankar had a firm belief that Hindi would one day become the national language of India. It was not just a theoretical belief with him but something that he actually practiced, for he used the North Indian way of greeting when he met anyone, spoke in Hindi to his old mother

who could not understand a word of it and spoke nothing but Hindi when he talked to his daughter. He did not like people using the English words or language in conversation and when anyone did so inadvertently he had to drop a small coin into a box kept for this purpose, the collections from which were contributed to the Congress funds.

In the case of Khadi, he was a fanatic. He would never attend a wedding party if anyone did not exclusively wear Khadi. He would not even make an exception in the case of the bride, telling them that the showy sarees they wore only enriched Italian yarn - makers and German dye manufacturers. Sankar, who was no doubt a fanatic but he admitted this fact and claimed that a few fanatics were necessary in every field. His fanaticism was revealed in the matter of fasting for he observed a fast and made the members of his family also observe a fast, on most of the days connected with Mahatma Gandhi or other patriotic leaders, or days of national importance, e.g. the anniversary of the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh. Such people may be eccentric and extremists but their example does not fail to impress and inspire others.

British Government in India, its laws and ways are also depicted vividly in the novel. The White Man, who owns the Skeffington Coffee Estate, is a symbol of the imperialist rulers of India, who exploited Indians in various ways. They employed paid agents like Bhatta and the Swami to oppose the freedom movement. They send policemen like Bade Khan to harass the patriots and cook up false cases against them. Their treatment of peaceful Satyagrahis is extremely inhuman. They do not spare even women and children. Inside the prisons, people are treated with great cruelty and forced to salute the Union Jack. Even such movements as prohibition are opposed because these would loosen the hold of the foreigners upon the poor masses.

Many of their laws, for example, those relating to the ban on the making of salt, are extremely discriminatory against the poor people. Moreover, there are references to the atrocities committed by the authorities in the other parts of India, e. g, the massacre at Jallianwalla Bagh in Amritsar. The British policy of divide and rule is also seen in operation, for the loyal Swami is given a gift of twelve hundred acres of land so that there is no chance of his joining the patriotic movement.

One of the most important evils in Hinduism is the caste system. In

the novel, Kanthapura there is much implied criticism of it. It is described through Bhatta and later through Swami. Both are conservative and orthodox Brahmins and are the agents of the British government and work together to frustrate and defeat the Gandhi - movement. Since the Swami's power rests on the superiority of the Brahmins over other castes, he takes the view that the caste system is the very foundation of Hinduism. He maintains that no Brahmin should have contact with the Pariahs and threatens to excommunicate Moorthy because he does so. Later this threat is actually carried out. People of the lower castes are not admitted inside temples but must have darshna of the God from outside. Though the pariahs do not seem to mind this much, there is a movement that the doors of the temples should be thrown open to all classes. One of the followers of Mahatma Gandhi in Karwar has already done that. He is Advocate Ranganna who describes his meeting with the Swami. The Swami had sent a message to the advocate that he desired to see him. The Swami told him that for some time there had been too much of this Pariah business. According to him, it was polluting for a Brahmin to mingle with a Pariah. He maintained that the Pariahs could not be uplifted through the efforts of others.

The Swami was also critical of Mahatma Gandhi because the latter was meddling with the dharma - shastras. The Swami wanted the advocate's help in opposing the movement for the abolition of untouchability, telling him in confidence that the Government was at his back. The advocate pointed out that the Hindu dharma - shastras referred to the foreigners as 'mlechas' so how could there be any cooperation with them. To this Swami's reply was that Governments are sent by the Divine Will and their authority must not be questioned. The Swami again said that the Government had promised to help them morally and materially. This angered Ranganna so much that he left immediately. It was as a reaction against this that he decided to throw open his temple to the Pariahs that very day. Another speaker at the meeting criticized not only the Swami but the system of Mutts. "I have grown in the Mutt", says one, "and I have known what they do." Later, the Swami's agent, Bhatta is exposed as an agent of the Government and when he goes on a pilgrimage to Kashi everybody makes fun of his hypocritical gesture.

The boycott of foreign goods was meant to cripple the efforts of

the foreign manufactures to exploit and impoverish India and the insistence was on spinning because that taught the people of the dignity of labor as well as of self reliance. In a poor country like India, simple living must be practised. Moreover, spinning could provide a regular income to the common masses, especially to women who have no other means of earning available to them. Mahatma Gandhi's emphasis on education and avoiding alcoholic drinks had both a moral and an economic aim. If the poor coolies, who are grossly exploited by the owners of the various plantations, learn to read and write, they would become better acquainted with their rights and would not be cheated so easily. Drink is the greatest enemy of the poor because it never allows a person to spend his income on essential items or make a saving for a rainy day. The Picketing of the toddy grove and the toddy booth has the immediate effect of making the coolies realize how evil toddy - drinking is so that some of them even take a pledge that they would never touch the poisonous drink again in their lives. Thus the political movement of Swaraj is closely linked with religious reforms and social upliftment in Kanthapura.

### **6.13 Check your progress**

**Answer the following questions briefly :**

1. What are Gandhi's views about social awakening?

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2. What did the people of Kanthapura do to show their solidarity with Mahatma Gandhi's Dandi March?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. How did the peasants participate in the freedom struggle?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What would Sankar do if people use English in conversation?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. How is Sankar's fanaticism revealed as far as fasts are concerned?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Who practices the evils of caste system in the novel?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Why were foreign goods boycotted?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Why does Gandhi emphasize on education and avoiding alcoholic drinks?

\_\_\_\_\_

### **6.14 Depiction of the Women Characters in Kanthapura**

As the purpose of the novel was to depict a mass - movement and its impact, a highly individualized characterization would have deflected attention from such a depiction. Thus the characters in the novel are not sharply and distinctly individualized. The emphasis is more on themes and ideas rather than on people. Characterization takes a secondary place in Kanthapura yet it is not without significant and fine characterization.

The women characters have been skillfully delineated by Raja Rao. There is a great variety of them in the novel. At the foremost we have Rangamma. She is one of the few educated women in the village. She reads the newspapers herself and thus keeps herself and other people in Kanthapura acquainted with the day to day developments elsewhere. She knows many things of general interest. She is never befooled by Bhatta. She helps Moorthy literally, although, she does not seem to share his belief that Pariahs and Brahmins are all equal. After meeting Sankar, Rangamma develops into a fine leader and speaker. She is able to fill the void created by the death of her father, who used to expound the Vedantic texts at Harikatha

meetings. It is Rangamma, who plays the major part in organizing the women of Kanthapura into a Sevika Sangh. She is practical - minded for when she comes to know that some husbands are complaining that they are not receiving proper attention at home because their wives are away to participate in drill, she at once takes proper measures and explains to the Sevikas that they must not neglect their household duties.

Next woman character who deserves attention is Ratna. She is a child widow, who has been powerfully influenced by modern ideas and who does not regard being a woman as a matter of shame and inferiority. She is much criticized for her unconventional ways but she does not care for such criticism. She chooses her own path and sticks to it with firmness and determination. She takes keen interest in the Gandhian movement and is a source of inspiration and a great help to Moorthy. When Jayaramachar, the Harikatha - man, is arrested, she conducts the Harikathas. After Rangamma's death, she reads out the newspapers and other publicity material of the Congress for the benefit of the Kanthapurians. When Moorthy is arrested, Ratna carries on his work and serves as the leader. She organizes the women volunteer corps and imparts to the Sevikas the necessary training. She displays great courage and resourcefulness in the face of the government repression and police action. She is dishonored, beaten up and sent to jail as a consequence. She suffers all patiently and unflinchingly. When Mahatma Gandhi goes to England for the Round Table Conference, reaches a settlement with the Red - man's Government and the movement is withdrawn, Ratna is disappointed like countless other freedom fighters in India. She goes over to Bombay and through her letters we learn of her great admiration for Nehru, "the equal distributionist".

Achakka, the narrator, though she is never sharply individualized, is revealed by her manner of narration and her comments on persons and events. In the novel, her function is representative and her strength lies in being anonymous. She is just one of the many women of Kanthapura, who responded to the call of Mahatma Gandhi, conveyed through Moorthy. Her faith in the Goddess Kenchamma, her respect for the local scholar Rangamma, her unquestioned affection for Moorthy and her trust in him, all these feelings, she shares with other women of the village.

However, Achakka is a woman with a balanced mind, sound common sense and the gift of shrewd and intelligent observation. Her personality colors the whole non-cooperation movement, the brave resistance of the people and their consequent suffering.

One of the simplest women in the village is poor Narsamma, the mother of Moorthy. She cannot understand the ideals dear to her son but who only knows that she did nothing to deserve the calamity of excommunication of the society that befalls her family. She is the most pathetic character in the novel.

Through the character of Waterfall Venkamma, Raja Rao brings out the pettiness, the jealousy, the triviality and the orthodoxy of the women folk. Venkamma is a woman of a petty and jealous nature. She cannot bear to see others prosperous or successful. The sight of the happiness of others arouses her wrath and she rails and rails against them. There is no end to her spite, jealousy and vindictiveness. She is jealous of Rangamma because she has a much larger house and constantly rails against her. She would like to put lizard poison into her food and thus cause her death.

She is also against Moorthy because he refused to marry her second daughter. She nurses this grudge against him and does her best to have her views; she has no sympathy with the Gandhi-movement. She, therefore, sides with Bhatta and the Swami. It is she who spreads the rumor that Moorthy is to be excommunicated. In this way, she causes his mother much pain which ultimately derives her to death. She also hates Ratna for her progressive views and constantly hurls abuses at her. She rails and rails against everybody and thus justifies the nick-name the novelist has given to her.

However, it is only against her meanness, frivolousness and conservatism that the character of Ratna shines out.

In Kanthapura, Raja Rao presents women as various forms of Shakti. A typical Indian woman is coy, delicate and submissive and she is also as firm as a rock, great in suffering. Shakti rises in them and each of them is enthused at the proper time. Psychologically prepared for the titanic encounter, they got much inspiration from other examples. It is to be noted that in the last phase of peaceful resistance it is Ratna, a woman, who takes over from Moorthy and leads the Satyagrahis.

Different forms of Shakti are manifested through the women of Kanthapura. Shakti's indomitable spirit possesses them in their Satyagraha against the British Government. When the police ill-treat them with their sticks and boots, the women think, move and act as one, for they are more distinct and pervasive in the devotional aspect. Woman as the Eternal Devotee, Shakti kneeling in rapt adoration in front of Siva, reveals herself through them as they listen to Jayaramachar retelling epic stories and to Ramakrishnayya reading passages from the Scriptures. The most touching example of their edifying faith is the narrator's musing on the ruins of Kanthapura. She dreams of a happy ending to a modern Ramayana where Rama (Mahatma Gandhi) will return from his exile (visit to England) with Sita (India) who had been captured by Ravana (the British) and as he returns to Ayodhya (Delhi) Bharata (Jawaharlal Nehru) who has been reigning as regent, will welcome him and there will be celestial flowers showered upon his aerial chariot.

#### **6.14 Check your progress**

**Answer the following questions briefly :**

1. How does Rangamma acquaint herself with the day to day developments?

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2. What did Rangamma's father do at Harikatha meetings?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. How do we come to know that Rangamma is a practical minded woman?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Who conducts Harikathas after Jayaramachar's arrest?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What characteristic traits of women are presented by Raja Rao through the character of Venkamma?

\_\_\_\_\_



6. Why is Rangamma against Moorthy?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. How is a typical Indian woman?

\_\_\_\_\_

### **6.15 Conclusion**

This chapter has dealt with the novel, Kanthapura, which is a microcosm of what was happening during the freedom struggle movement in the nation. Though it tells about a remote Indian village, Kanthapura, it is representative of all the villages in India. Every village had at least one Moorthy inspired by the golden influence of Mahatma Gandhi. People were giving in their whole - hearted contributions for the mass movement of freedom struggle. They had their own sets of victories and failures in the movement. Also the freedom struggle had united the diverse variety of Indian people, irrespective of their differences, to move towards a common aim of attaining freedom which in itself was an achievement. So though Kanthapura is a piece of fiction, it realistically represents the contemporary Indian situation. The next chapter deals with Lokmanya Tilak's five Essays which deal with the contemporary times of freedom movement.

### **6.16 Summary**

Kanthapura is set in 1930s and the scene of action is the village Kanthapura, a typical South Indian village. Moorthy, a young man educated in the city, is the central figure in the novel. He is a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi. He comes to the village with an aim of organizing the villagers to play a role in the freedom movement of the nation. He goes from door to door even in the Pariah quarter of the village and explains to the villagers the significance of Gandhi's struggle for independence. He forms the Congress Committee in Kanthapura. A Volunteer Group is formed to face the Government repression. Moorthy is supported by the villagers especially, Ratna and Patel Range Gowda.

He is opposed by the Government to curb the movement. Policeman, Bade Khan is posted in the village to curb down the movement and he is supported by Bhatta whereas, Bhatta is supported by the Swami in the city, who is strongly supported by the Government. Swami has a powerful religious authority and has much influence on the ignorant people of the village. He excommunicates Moorthy and his family and Moorthy's mother, Narsamma dies of this shock. In the meanwhile, Gandhi's historic Dandi March to break the salt law casts a strong influence all over the nation and Kanthapura is no exception to this.

There are satyagrahas and picketings in the village. They offer Satyagraha outside the toddy booth. There is a lathi charge by the police and many are wounded and hurt badly. Many are arrested and sent to jail. This is followed by the picketing of the toddy booth outside the Skeffington Coffee Estate. Government turns ruthless this time. The suffering of the fellow villagers touches the heart of the workers of the Skeffington Coffee Estate and they join their suffering brethren. Moorthy is arrested and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. In his absence, Ratna carried the freedom movement forward.

The next movement to come is the no - tax campaign. The villagers decide to not to pay the taxes. They decide to remain non - violent no matter whatever the consequence would be. Soon the movement turns violent. There are merciless lathi - charges and even shootings. The villagers put up a brave resistance but ultimately they are compelled to flee. Their morale is finally broken. They have to leave Kanthapura and find shelter in a remote village, Kashipur. They have been defeated but in their very defeat laid their victory. Their brave resistance gave a jolt to the Government and such jolts were experienced all over the country. In the course of time, British Government was shaken and overthrown. The heroic struggle of the people of Kanthapura is a milestone and representative of the spirit of the crores of Indians marching ceaselessly towards independence.

## **Answers to check your progress**

### **6.2**

1. 1919 to 1931
2. There are many references in the novel related to the political and

- social major events and knowing them will give better understanding.
3. Social reformers worked ceaselessly for the eradication of social evils like child - marriage, Sati, untouchability, 'purdha' system and the exploitation and ill - treatment of widows.
  4. Grinding poverty of the Indian masses
  5. In 1885, the Indian National Congress was founded by an Englishman, A. O. Hume.
  6. Indians like Surendra Nath Banerjee, Feroze Shah Mehta, Dadabhai Nowrosjee and many others voiced the Indian demand for 'home rule'.
  7. The division in the rank and file of the Congress party was perceptible at the Surat Session of the Congress in 1907.
  8. The religious sentiments of the rural folk were fully exploited by Tilak by introducing Ganesh festival and Shivaji Jayanti festivals in Maharashtra and instilling in them courage, patriotism, discipline and unity.
  9. Rowlatt Act, 1919
  10. Gandhi's programme of action for independence was fourfold:
    - a) Spinning of the charkha, weaving of one's own cloth and boycott of foreign clothes
    - b) Eradication of untouchability and other social evils like the purdah system so that women and the so - called lower castes may play their part in the freedom struggle.
    - c) Village uplift, eradication of poverty, illiteracy, casteism etc
    - d) Hindu- Muslim unity.
  11. The Gandhian Civil Disobedience began in 1929. This time the movement was more militant, though Gandhi still insisted on non - violence. There were meetings and satyagrahas all over the country. There were picketings and boycotts. Then Gandhi undertook his historic march to Dandi beach to prepare salt there and thus break the unjust and anti - people salt law.
  12. Gandhi did two things in 1930: he made British people aware that they were cruelly subjugated India, and he gave Indians the conviction that they could, by lifting their heads and straightening their spines, lift the yoke from their shoulders.
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### 6.3

1. Moorthy or Moorthappa is an educated young man of Kanthapura. It is he who organizes the work of the Congress in the village and hence he is the central figure in the novel. He is an ordinary young man, with common human weaknesses. He is one of those thousands of young men who were inspired by Mahatma Gandhi to give up their studies, risk the wrath of the government, and become fighters for the cause of their motherland.
2. He is called "corner - house Moorthy", "our Moorthy". Moorthy who has gone through life "like a noble cow, quiet, generous, deferent, Brahminic, a very prince." He is considered to be honest like an elephant and is spoken of as "our Gandhi", "the saint of our village".
3. The Gandhian struggle for independence had three strands - political, religious and social (including economic) - and all these strands meet in Moorthy.
4. The Kanthapurians observed Sankara Jayanthi, Sankara Vijaya etc. Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man, is then invited to the village, Harikathas are held every evening and these Harikathas serve as a clock for Gandhi propaganda.
5. Moorthy explains the economy of the Khaddi and the importance of the charkha to the ignorant and superstition - ridden women of the village and persuades them to take to spinning despite stiff opposition from all quarters.
6. A woman volunteer corps was formed with Ratna as the head of this organization of Swayam Sevikas or Sevis.
7. Moorthy goes in the Pariah quarter from one college to another exhorting the women to take to spinning in their spare time. For doing so, he is excommunicated by the Swami for this Pariah business and his aged mother dies of grief and shock at the disgrace.
8. Ratna is a young widow. She became a widow when she was hardly fifteen years of age. She is attractive and charming.
9. Ratna is young educated woman of progressive views. Though she is a widow she does not dress and live in a conventional style of a widow. She wears bangles; colored sarees (and not the white dhoti of a widow) uses the kumkum mark on her forehead and parts her

hair. She is also bold and witty in conversation and can hold her own against heavy odds. So she is much criticized for her unconventional ways.

10. She takes keen interest in the Gandhian movement and is a source of inspiration and help to Moorthy. When Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man, is arrested, she conducts the Harikathas. After Rangamma's death, she reads out the newspapers and other publicity material of the Congress for the benefit of the villagers. When Moorthy is arrested, she carries on his work and serves as the leader. She organizes the women volunteer corps and imparts to the Sevikas the necessary training. She displays great courage and resourcefulness in the face of government repression and police action. She is dishonored, beaten up and sent to jail as a consequence.
11. Range Gowda is the Patel of Kanthapura. He is a man of forceful, commanding personality and wields considerable power and authority in the village because of his forceful personality and determination he is known as the 'Tiger' of the village.
12. Range Gowda explains to the people the significance of spinning and weaving, of non - violence and of the value and meaning of independence. During Moorthy's period of imprisonment, he boosts the morale of the people, guides and encourages them and sees to it that none falters and falls away. Without his active help and co - operation, Moorthy would not have been so successful in his mission.
13. Bhatta, the first Brahmin.
14. Bhatta is an unworthy husband with his lack of consideration for his wife. On the days he dines out his poor wife has only dal - soup and rice. Bhatta has no thought of her. His wife dies and soon this middle - aged, pot - bellied priest marries a girl of twelve and half years old. There is dowry too: A thousand rupees cash and five acres of wet land and a real seven days marriage.
15. It is Bhatta, who is responsible for the excommunication of Moorthy. He keeps the Swami in the city informed of happenings in the village, incites the people against Moorthy and other Gandhites and does his best to sabotage the movement. He sides with Bade Khan, sets afloat the rumours regarding Moorthy's

excommunication and so hastens the death of his mother.

16. It is Bade Khan's duty to maintain law and order and put down the Gandhi movement.
17. Bade Khan moves about the village secretly watching the people, collecting information and passing it on to the city authorities.
18. The white man at the Skeffington Estate is popularly known as the "Hunter Sahib" because he always carries a hunter or ship in his hand and freely uses it on all those workers on his estate who neglect their duty.
19. The coffee workers are exploited in many ways. They are given wretched one - room huts to live in which they are provided little protection against the rains which are heavy and frequent. No wages are paid - they are deposited on their behalf with the 'Hunter Sahib' and they remain with him. Only the meagerest food is allowed to them. They are made to work from early in the morning till late in the evening, till it is dark. There is worst kind of economic exploitation. The workers are exploited sexually also.
20. The Sahib has been humanized by showing that he distributes peppermints and toffees among the children of the workers. The climate is damp and the outbreak of malaria is frequent. When the workers are ill, he goes from hut to hut distributing quinine tablets.
21. Sankar, the advocate, is a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi. He believes in his principles of truth and non - violence and tries to follow in his footsteps. He is a true patriot and does his best for the cause of freedom. He wears Khadi and does not go to functions where people come wearing dresses made of foreign cloth. When Gandhi is arrested and sent to jail, he keeps fast for with Gandhi he believes that fasting is a means of self - purification.
22. Like a waterfall, Venkamma is always shedding tears and roaring. She rails against practically everybody in the novel. She is a woman of a petty, jealous nature. She cannot bear to see others prosperous or successful. There is no end to her spite, jealousy and vindictiveness.

## **6.4**

1. Kanthapura is a village in Mysore in the Province of Kara.

2. Kanthapura has twenty - four houses in the Brahmin quarter; it has a Pariah - quarter, weavers - quarter and a Sudra - quarter.
3. There is Postmaster Suryanarayana with his two - storeyed house. Patwari Nanjundiah who had even put glass - panes to the windows; the thotti - house of pock - marked Sidda which had a big veranda, large roof and a granary; Waterfall Venkamma who roared day and night; and Zamindar Bhatta who has gone on adding peasants lands to his own domain; the young, idealistic corner - house Moorthy who is destined to shake the village out of its complacency and put it on the map of Mysore and India; and the nine - beamed house of Patel Range Gowda, the vigorous peasant chief of the village wedded to the soil from immemorial generations.
4. Kenchamma is the village goddess and marriage, funeral, sickness, death ploughing, harvesting, arrests, release - all are watched over by Kenchamma.
5. Kanthapura deals with the masses of the village, of their suffering, of their exile, of their momentary defeat which has in it seeds of ultimate victory.

## 6.5

1. Raja Rao has used mythical technique to glorify the present and to impart to the novel the dignity and status of an epic or Purana. By its use, the novelist has enriched the texture of his novel and imparted to it a rare expansiveness, elevation and dignity.
2. Mahatma Gandhi is Rama, the red foreigner or the brown inspector of police who flourishes a lathi is but a soldier in ten - headed Ravana's army of occupation and oppression. Nay more: the Satyagrahi in prison is the divine Krishna himself in Kansa's prison.
3. In Harikathas, the past and the present are juxtaposed and contemporary events and personalities are constantly linked - up with Puranic Gods and epic - heroes and heroines. One of the Harikathas he recites is about the birth of Gandhi.
4. Jayaramachar jumbles with splendid unconcern traditional mythology and contemporaneous politics: Shiva is three - eyed and Swaraj too is three - eyed: self - purification, Hindu - Muslim unity, Khaddar. Gandhi is Shiva himself in human shape: he is engaged in slaying the serpent of foreign rule, as the boy Krishna killed the

serpent Kaliya. Bhajans and Harikathas mix religion and politics freely and often purposefully, the reading of the Gita and hand - spinning are elevated into a daily ritual, like Pooja. Gandhi's trip to England to attend the Second Round Table Conference is invested with Puranic significance.

## **6.6**

5. Moorthy is said to have had, not an actual, firsthand experience of Gandhi by personal contact but a vision of Gandhi addressing a public meeting and he pushing his way through the crowd and joining the band of volunteers and receiving inspiration by a touch of Gandhi's hand.
6. Moorthy formed the Congress Committee in the village, maintained constant touch with the city Congress Committee and through newspapers and other publicity material keeps the people constantly in touch with events in other parts of the country.
7. Moorthy enthralls the women of the villages to take to charkha - spinning and later on organizes the women voluntary corps.
8. Kashipura
9. Raja Rao's presentation of the Gandhian movement is impartial and objective. There is no idealization; both the dark and the bright sides of the picture have been presented. The depiction of the Gandhi movement goes along with the depiction of the petty jealousies and trivialities of village life.

## **6.7**

1. The narrator is an old woman with a highly poetic imagination and consequently there is a constant mingling of poetry and politics, constant heightening and transmuting of reality. Everything is seen as colored by her poetic imagination.
2. Rangamma, one of the more cultured and educated women of the village, discourses on science in an easy, popular way and the narrators account of her discourse is a curious mixture of science, poetry and fantasy.
3. The radio becomes the speech that goes across the air; Jagdish Chandra Bose's discovery gets expressed as the plants that weep; and Darwin's Theory of Evolution as the monkeys that were the men we have become; of the seventeenth century French



scientist's germ theory as worms thin - as - dust that get into your blood and give you dysentery and plague and cholera.

4. There is a vivid description of the soldiers and coolies being asked to walk over the prostrate Satyagrahis and many of them joining the Satyagrahis instead.

### **6.8 & 6.9**

1. For the villagers, nature is a living being and even hills, rivers, fields and animals have a distinct presence, a personality of their own.
2. The author presents them as various forms of Shakti. Whereas Indian woman is coy, delicate and submissive, she is also firm as rock, great in suffering. Psychologically prepared for the titanic encounter, they get much inspiration.
3. Shakti's indomitable spirit possesses them in their Satyagraha (non - violent struggle) against the British government. When the police ill - treats them with their sticks and boots, the women think, move and act as one, for they are more distinct and pervasive in the devotional aspect. Woman as the Eternal Devotee, shakti kneeling in rapt adoration in front of Siva, reveals herself through them as they listen to Jayaramachar retelling epic stories and to Ramakrishnayya reading passages from the Scriptures.
4. The narrator dreams of a happy ending to a modern 'Ramayana' where Rama (Gandhi) will return from his exile (visit to England) with Sita (India) who had been captured by Ravana (the British) and as he returns to Ayodhya (Delhi) Bharata (Nehru) who has been reigning as regent, will welcome him and there will be celestial flowers showered upon his aerial chariot.
5. Achakka has used the ancient Indian way of narration. It is a breathless story illustrating the age old Indian tradition of story - telling.

### **6.10**

1. Making an old woman the narrator, enables Raja Rao to mingle fact and myth in an effective manner. The language used by her is of an elemental quality. Her reaction to things is direct and vivid, not literary and second - hand. The character also enables Raja Rao to achieve his professed aim of reproducing the rhythm of Indian speech in English as well as of coming closest to the oral tradition of story - telling.

2. For Achakka, Jawaharlal is a Bharata to the Mahatma - the Mahatma who, she believes, will slay Ravana so that Sita may be freed. For her Gandhi has attained the status of God and Moorthy is regarded as his avtar in Kanthapura. To her the Satyagraha becomes a religious ceremony to which she devotes her sacred ardour.
3. Achakka's comments are balanced and shrewd. They serve to place both character and incident in a correct perspective and are a constant check on over - idealization. They serve to impart realism and authenticity to the narrative.
4. The story is on two levels and thus acquires a dramatic character. Narration and description go hand in hand with a chorus - like evaluation of character and action. They increase our understanding of events and character serve as a unifying force in the work. The narration is dramatic; it varies according to the requirements of the action and the situation.

### **6.11**

1. The main plot of the novel deals with the impact of the Gandhi - movement on a remote South Indian village, called Kanthapura, a village which is a microcosm of the macrocosm, for what happens in this remote village was happening all over India in those stirring decades.
2. The sub - plot of the novel deals with the happening on the Skeffington Coffee Estate in the neighborhood and throws a flood of light on the exploitation of brutality of the Englishmen and the various ways in which they exploited the people.
3. The plot of the novel begins with an account of a small South Indian village called Kanthapura, its locale, its crops, its poverty and the ignorant and superstitious nature of the people.
4. The religious action begins with the unearthing of a half - sunken lingam by Moorthy and its consecration.
5. The coolies' side with the Satyagrahis and refuse to march over their bodies lie down by them and is brutally beaten up by the police.

### **6.12**

1. Just as Kanthapura is representative of thousands of Indian

villages, so is the coffee estate representative of scores of British - owned estates in India, whether they are coffee plantations, or some other plantations.

2. Raja Rao included the depiction of the coffee estate in the novel because he wanted to include an insistence of large - scale economic exploitation of Indians by Britishers and the depiction of the coffee estate enabled him to do that.
3. A foreman or Maistri was sent from time to time to recruit coolies according to need.
4. The coolies were given one rupee each as advance and were promised a four - anna bit for a man and a two anna bit for a woman as daily wages. They were also told that they would get plenty of white rice and they would merely be required to pick coffee leaves.
5. The workers were exposed to dangers and diseases of various kinds. The Estate was infested with snakes and many died of snake - bites while at work. Besides this, there were heavy rains and the workers would have to work in rains drenched to their very skin. With the rains, there would come Malaria and take a heavy toll of life. Men, women and children would die in large numbers. They also suffered from cough, vomiting and dysentery.
6. Rachanna and his wife played an important part in the Gandhian movement. Infact Rachanna was elected member of the Congress Committee at Kanthapura. During the struggle with the authorities he was arrested along with the other Satyagrahis. It was Rachanna who objected to Moorthy being bound with ropes when the police came to arrest him.

### **6.13**

1. Mahatma Gandhi believed that Swaraj itself could be attained after certain social reforms and social awakening. These social reforms included freedom from economic exploitation by the West by boycotting foreign goods and by spinning yarn and wearing Khadi made from it, also eradication of untouchability and the rigidities of caste system and removal of illiteracy and ignorance and superstition.
2. The people in remote and far - away Kanthapura wait with baited breath and observe a fast in order to show their solidarity with

Mahatma Gandhi as he sets out on his historic Dandi March.

3. The peasants refused to pay revenue and other taxes to the government, with the result that many of them were evicted from their lands and lost all means of earning a livelihood.
4. Sankar did not like people to use English words in conversation and when anyone did so inadvertently he had to drop a small coin into a box kept for this purpose, the collections from which were contributed to the Congress funds.
5. Sankar's fanaticism was revealed in the matter of fasting for he observed a fast and made the members of his family also observe a fast, on most of the days connected with Mahatma Gandhi of other patriotic leaders, or days of national importance, e.g. the anniversary of the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh.
6. Bhatta and Swami
7. The boycott of foreign goods was meant to cripple the efforts of foreign manufactures to exploit and impoverish India and the insistence on spinning taught people the dignity of labor as well as self reliance.
8. Gandhi's emphasis on education and avoiding alcoholic drinks had both a moral and an economic aim. If the poor coolies who are grossly exploited by the owners of plantations learn to read and write, they would become better acquainted with their rights and would not be cheated so easily. Drink is the greatest enemy of the poor because it never allows a person to spend his income on essential items or make a saving for a rainy day. The picketing of the toddy grove and the toddy booth has the immediate effect of making the coolies realize how evil toddy - drinking is, so that some of them even take a pledge that they would never touch the poisonous drink again.

#### **6.14**

1. Rangamma reads the newspapers herself and thus keeps herself and others acquainted with the day to day developments elsewhere.
2. Rangamma's father used to expound the Vedantic texts at Harikatha meetings.
3. Rangamma is practical - minded for when she comes to know that

some husbands are complaining that they are not receiving proper attention at home because their wives are away to participate in drill, she at once takes proper measures and explains to the Sevikas that they must not neglect their household duties.

4. Ratna
5. Through the character of Waterfall Venkamma, Raja Rao brings out the pettiness, the jealousy, the triviality and orthodoxy of women.
6. Rangamma is against Moorthy because he refused to marry her second daughter.
7. A typical Indian woman is coy, delicate and submissive; she is also firm as rock, great in suffering.

### **Field work**

Compare and contrast R. K. Narayan's novel *Waiting for the Mahatma* with Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*. They share the common experience of Indian freedom struggle with a difference. Note the similarities and the differences.



