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**SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND RELIGIOUS PICTURE OF
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Social, Political, and Religious Picture of Contemporary India in Raja Rao's Kanthapura

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Abstract – As R.K.Narayan, a great novelist and story writer of Indo-Anglian Literature depicts Indian sensibility and caste system in most of his novels. Similarly Raja Rao describes social, Political and religious picture of India in his famous novel Kanthapura. He exhibits the significant influence of Mahatma Gandhi on the people of South India. The whole story of the novel presents the reality of Indian village Kanthapura. The novelist also highlights how a Brahmin becomes an outcast among the Brahmin community with his efforts against untouchability

Key Words - Gandhian Ideas, Caste System, Indian Sensibility, Narrative Technique and Freedom Struggle.

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INTRODUCTION

The Term Anglo Indian refers to a group of Indian writers who use English Language as a medium of creative exploration and expression of their views. In the year 1835, English was imposed upon Indians by Lord Macaulay with the intention of serving the ends of the British administration in India. After the publication of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novel Raj Mohan's Wife in 1864, writers like S.K. Ghosh, S.B. Bannerjee, and Toru Dutt Adopted this Languages as a medium of expression and attained new heights in the realm of writing in English. This way of writing inspired a number of great writers like Sarojini Naidu, Rabinder Nath Tagore, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Aurbindo Ghosh, R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao to write on Indian culture and mythology in the early of the twentieth century. Raja Rao one of the greatest novelists of Indo Anglian Literature displays the social political and religious picture of India of 1930's. Raja Rao's three Novels "Kanthapura" in 1938 "The Serpent and the Rope" in 1960 and " The Cat and Shakespeare" in 1965 established him as a major novelist of the twentieth century. Raja Rao in his preface to his novel Kanthapura says, "English is not a 'foreign tongue' in India, but it is only the language of our intellectual makeup".

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION

Published in 1938, Raja Rao's Kanthapura gives an account of the freedom movement as it was carried out in a tiny south Indian Village, Kanthapura, in the year 1920 by a village youth, moorthy, under the inspiring ideals of Gandh ji who was the tallest leader of the country in those days. The tale of the novel has

been narrated by an old Kanathapurian woman, Rangamma, a Brahmin widow of the family of Veda Pravin shastri. Gandhi ji's moral and spiritual teachings had produced hundreds of Gandhis across the country. Moorthappa of Kanthapura was one of them. Though he had never seen the Mahatma, yet his teachings had influenced him so deeply that he gives up his college career and returns to his native village. He launches a unit of the congress party and starts his struggle for freedom on Gandhian ideals. Moorthy or moorthappa, who is the central figure of the novel, introduces Mahatma Gandhi's Philosophy in Kanthapura. He is one of those hundreds and thousands of men who plunged into the freedom struggle after getting inspiration from Gandhi ji. In his Vision, he sees Gandhi ji and receives his instruction by the touch of his hand. C.D. Narsimhaiah says that here "Raja Rao tries to project his own self into the character of Moorthy".

After Initial hurdles, he succeeds in mobilizing the people of kanthapura. In the beginning, Moorthy was a noble cow quiet, generous, serene, different and brahamanic a prince". Through his selfless service he earns the respect of the villagers who begin to call him their leader. They say: "He is the saint of our village. He is our Gandhi" A Harikathamam is invited for religious discourses and he introduces Gandhian ways in his talks. With the arrest of the Harikathamam, Moorthy's movement gains momentum. Moorthy goes from door to door to propagate Gandhian ideals. He explains the economy of Khadi Cloths and inspires the villagers to practise truth and non-violence in their life. He hobnobs with Harijans and convinces them that they are his brothers. He requests the villagers to weave Khadi

and wear Khadi. Gradually he begins to command the respect of the Villages who now recognize him as their leader. They vow to lead a truthful and non-violent life. Moorthy succeeds in forming the unit of the congress party. The subscription fee for becoming the member of the congress is two annas for or a donation of a particular length of the Khadi cloth. But they will become true Gandhians by following the ideals of Gandhi Moorthy tells his follow men:

"And you must now to speak the truth, and wear no cloth but the Khadi cloth".

Hear the novelist traces the early phase of the history of the freedom movement from 1920 to 1931 in this novel. We can easily comprehend from the story that Mahatma Gandhi's Philosophy had influenced the contemporary people in a big way. Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, people shed their age old beliefs and united themselves against the cruel roles of the country. The novelist shows how the superstitions, illiteracy and traditional bound people stood up unitedly against the foreign rules. K.R Srinivasa Iyengar asserts, "Kanthapura will always have a central place in Gandhian Literature." Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* not only gives a true account of the Gandhian movement in the tiny Village of Kanthapura but also projects a veritable picture of Indian rural life of those days. The story of the novel stands firmly rooted in the Indian Soil and sensibility. The author gives an authentic account of Village life in the contemporary India. The society shown in the novel has its own religion and social customs. It is ridden with caste system, superstitions, Illiteracy Religious dogmatism rural indebtedness and poverty. The author shows the idealism of Indian people in the character of Moorthy and the crookedness of the people is shown in the character of Brahmin Bhatta who is interested less in scriptures and more in usury. C.D. Narasimhaiah rightly points out that "Kanthapura is India in Microcosm."

Raja Rao's narrative technique in *Kanthapura* is akin to the Puranic style of narration. M.K Naik maintains, "Both the spirit and the narrative technique of the novel are primarily those of the Indian Puranas". The style of the Puranas is simple, flowing and digressive. It is a blend of narration, description, Philosophical reflection and religions teaching. Exaggeration is the Key note of the Puranic description. K.R Srinivasa Iyengar says that "there is a lilt and seductive rhythm, a curious incantatory power in the language of *Kanthapura*." Proferssor Meenakshi Mukharje observes that the choice of this narrative style serves several useful purposes. She says that by making an old woman the narrator, Raja Rao has freely mixed fact with fiction in a successful way. She views Gandhi ji as Ram and Jawaharlal as Bharat. She says that Mahatma Gandhi ji will slay Ravana (The British Rules) so that Sita, that is India, may be freed. For him, Gandhi ji has attained the statues of a god and Moorthy is his "Avtar" in *Kanthapura*.

CONCLUSION

Thus we see that Raja Rao captures the spirits of the tempestuous times of the freedom movement which was carried out all over the country under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The novelist has presented Moorthy as Mini Gandhi in the novel moorthy represent the contemporary youth. India ultimately got freedom due to the tireless efforts of such people. Moorth is a great and memorable character created by Raja Rao in *Kanthapura* Above all the novel describes the struggle of Indian people for freedom. They oppose the cruel regime in the Gandhian way, and their defeat is in fact their triumph. As the narrative advances, a true picture of the Indian traditional life emerges before us. We may say that *Kanthapura* is Indian in miniature. M.K. Naik remarks, "Kanthapura is, thus a brilliant attempt to probe the depth to which the nationalistic urge presented, showing how, even in the remote villages, the new upsurge fused completely with traditional and religious faith, thus rediscovering the Indian soul.

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