



# Nuances of Nationalism and Features of Spirituality in

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*

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## Abstract:

Raja Rao has talked about the political, social, and cultural aspects of India as if it were a small world. Through his novels, he also gave people a sense of patriotism and spiritualism in politics. He did this by putting spirituality in the setting of everyday life. This piece shines a light on the ways that Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is both nationalistic and spiritual. Also, this piece describes the different parts of being Indian and Gandhian. The story of how Gandhiji's fight for Indian freedom from the British reached a typical village in southern India called *Kanthapura* is told in the most satisfying modern Indian novel, *Kanthapura*. Gandhi's political ideas and lessons are hidden as normal religious ideas, which gets the villagers angry.

**Key Words:** Nationalism, Spirituality, Raja Rao, Indianness, *Kanthapura* etc.

## Introduction:

Indian English writing shows India's brilliance and character through the strong, passionate, and different tones of emotions, thoughts, and feelings. Indianness and the Indian way of life are hard to define because different people, writers, artists, and novelists show it in different ways. The luxury and variety of experiences that Indian English writing has access to give it colour and beauty.

The British brought the novel to India as a type of writing. The Indo-English form first showed up in the 1920s. There was a lot of nonfiction writing that was influenced by other works of literature, political unrest, and social changes. Between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many writers, leaders, reformers, artists, saints, and philosophers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Ramesh Chandra Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore, Manmohan Ghose, Aurobindo Ghose, Sarojini Naidu, and Vivekananda came to prominence through their avant-garde writing in English. These pieces were written in a romance style and had Victorian goals. During this time, the novel as a type of writing started to become more famous in key Indian languages.

The ideas of Mahatma Gandhi can be seen in Indo-English literature from before India gained freedom. Indian literature has written about Mahatma Gandhi's deeds and events, as well as the current social, economic, and political unrest. Raja Rao, who lived during the Gandhian Age, shows in his books and short stories that he understands the power of the Gandhian Revolution and the pull of the past. Raja Rao is one of the best-known Indian English writers because he has a wide range of intellectual, spiritual, national, political, and social ideas. He was born in the Mysore village of Hassana in 1909 to a very old South Indian Brahmin family. He read Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, and Ralph Waldo Emerson's works a lot and admired them a lot because they were also interested in Indian philosophy, especially Vedantic philosophy. In 1964, he won the Sahitya Akademi

Award for his work, *The Serpent and the Rope*. This book has been called the best Indo-English story ever written. In 1969, the Indian government gave him the Padma Bhushan award.

Raja Rao has talked about the political, social, and cultural aspects of India as if it were a small world. Raja Rao is a political activist with a lot of education. He has studied the spiritual practises and religions of India as well as the political situation there. Through his novels, he also gave people a sense of patriotism and spiritualism in politics. He did this by putting spirituality in the setting of everyday life. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) is an old work that shows how Indian society has changed over time. The author shows how intense he is by describing the small town of Kanthapura. People see it as an epic and the creative building of a work of fiction because of its nationalism and faith. This piece talks about how Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* shows different aspects of nationalism and spirituality. This piece also talks about the different parts of being Indian and the ideas of Gandhi.

In his wonderful book *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao talks about how Gandhi affected the modern liberation struggle. *Kanthapura*, an epic about the fight for freedom, shows both Indian pride and spirituality in a very deep way. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is influenced by Mahatma Gandhi in a big way. Rao shows the Indian independence struggle as it really was. Mahatma becomes the leader of the Indian people. People think that this book is one of the most important pieces of Indian writing because it tells a very clear and moving story about the National movement. This book describes the small village of Kanthapura, including its social, political, cultural, and religious life before freedom.

Like Rao's other great books, *Kanthapura* focuses on the idea of the country as a whole. The author also tried to bring attention to some of the social, cultural, economic, religious, and educational problems that the country faced during the colonial period. The author shows that she knows and understands Indian country life very well. He cares a lot about the spiritual and freedom movements in India and shows it. This work is the first sign of his passion for national, spiritual, and patriotic issues.

The writer has given Indian politics a spiritual twist. The author did a great job of describing the social and political atmosphere in India from 1919 to 1930, when the Gandhian movement was at its peak and had a strong effect on the country. India was moving towards independence through patriotic activities and a strong feeling of national pride. In contrast to Raja Rao's earlier books, *Kanthapura* is full of Indian themes, people, society, manners, and more. This makes it clear that it is a national book. The whole story is about a village in south Kerala called Kanthapura. Even though the story is mostly about the town, its people, and what happens there, the same general things happen all over the country. So, it looks like *Kanthapura* is a model town for all of India.

The story of how Gandhiji's fight for Indian freedom from the British reached a typical village in southern India called Kanthapura is told in the most satisfying modern Indian novel, *Kanthapura*. An old woman named Rangamma told a dramatic story that sounds like an old Indian folk tale called the puranas. Rao used a method called "flashing back." An old grandma tells the story to a newcomer to the area. As she tells the newcomer about the past of her village, she talks about real events in which the beautiful old lady herself took part. In the village of Kanthapura, Rao shows how the Swaraj and Satyagraha activities of Gandhian idealism changed over time.

The way *Kanthapura* is is how the whole country is. The tiny town of Kanthapura, which is like a miniature version of the whole Indian subcontinent, is shown coming to life. In the 1920s and 1930s, the successful national freedom fight took place here. The town is in the region of Kara. It is high up on the Ghats and the jagged mountains that look out over the Arabian Sea. Like *Kanthapura*, many Indian villages had woken up to fight against the alien rulers. As a result of being caught up in the freedom movement of the 1930s, the small village becomes a live example of Gandhianism. The book might be considered anti-colonialist because it is against the British Empire.

The Swadeshi movement and the acceptance of nonviolence set the stage for the novelist's detailed descriptions of the village and its rich historical culture, Moorthy, the main character known as the "little Gandhi of Kanthapura," and his fast, the flood and poverty caused by British rule, the nationalist struggle, minority participation in the fight for freedom, and minority awareness. When you look at the book closely, you can see that Moorthy is a supporter of Mahatma Gandhi and that he follows the ideals and ideas of Gandhi. He is the 'Avatar' of Gandhi to the locals. The most important character in the book, who keeps the reader's interest, changes into a copy of Gandhi who does everything Gandhi did in his village during the war for freedom. Moorthy gets the Gandhian point of view that "good ends can only be reached by good means." (Rao 6) After being inspired and changed by Gandhiji's ideas,

Moorthy starts preaching Gandhian theory and putting the Gandhian plan of action into action in Kanthapura. The book tells about Gandhi's explicit consent, in which the ideals of honesty and nonviolence breathe life into the wounds of innocent people. Moorthy gives specific examples of Gandhi's ideas of Swadeshi, nonviolence, and the truth. Moorthy says, "There is only one force in life, and that is truth. There is only one love in life, and that is the love of humanity. There is only one God in life, and that is the God of all." (Rao 52-53)

The novelist told several myths, stories, Vedantic scriptures, and Puranas to show the link between a person and their country and to get the peasants excited about their country. In a harikatha, Jayaramachar makes a comparison between Siva, Parvati, and the country. Siva with three eyes is the symbol for Swaraj. Rangamma took over as the Vedanta scholar after her father died. She read the Puranas in a way that meant hell was foreign rule, the soul was India, and so on. The novelist made connections between Rama and Ravana and Gandhi and British oppression on purpose to show how spiritual nationalism had been supported in the area. The Ramayana, the Mahabharata, well-known fables, folklore, and religious stories about gods and devils, Mahatma Gandhi and what he did, old women sharing stories, and village events all talk about political awareness and national identity.

Gandhi thought that faith and politics are very connected, and Rao shows this. Kanthapura shows the holy truth that a person's place in society is both spiritual and political. At Kanthapura, it looks like Gandhian ideas and thoughts are being put to the test. Throughout the book, there are brief mentions of Rao's spiritual and philosophical beliefs, his knowledge of ancient India, and his understanding of how tradition affected the emotional and mental makeup of the people in this South Indian village during the time of Gandhi's independence movement.

The idea of nationhood and a tendency towards nationalism are driven by the formation of communities. A nation is a group of people who speak the same language, practise the same religion, and have the same customs. In India, however, nationalism is very open-minded because the country has many languages, many different regions, and many different religious sects, all of which want to be citizens of the same country. The nation-state plan is followed by Congressmen and Moorthy in Kanthapura. The villagers' insistence on speaking Hindi instead of their native Kannada, their resistance to using English, and the narrator's mental picture of Moorthy in jail wearing kurta pyjamas instead of a dhoti are all signs that they are nationalists. Creating a nation because of the British Administration is another thing that is making more people feel like they belong to their country. Colonial rule led to the rise of Indian nationalism.

Kanthapura doesn't want the British to rule. The peasants are against both the British Empire and Brahmanism because they want to build their own government, get equal rights, and be free. The author used names from rural India and the names people used to call each other on purpose to make Indian nationalism stronger. The people in the rural area are all the same in that they all want to be free and have their own personality. Comer-House Moorthy, Front-House Akamma, for example. The postmaster Surya Narayan, the nose-scratcher Nan Gamma, the left-handed Madamma, the pork-marked Sidda, the shopkeeper Chetti, the waterfall Venkamma, the coffee plant Ramayya, the street person Beedle Timayya, and the kicc-pounding Rajamma.

Moorthy, a young student and the main character of the book, is inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and is ready to follow in his footsteps in the fight for independence. Moorthy and the whole village get ideas from Gandhian political organisations. Moorthy sets up the Panchayat Congress Committee to teach and inform the villagers about the country and national events. Moorthy has a lot of inner strength, endurance, and patience, just like Gandhi. Like Gandhi, women and people from different groups are encouraged to join the cause. He is known as the Gandhi of Kanthapura by the people who live there because of his selfless work and love of country.

The story also has regular villagers as a way to honour nationalism and the Indian way of life before freedom. When Moorthy shows up, it gives the coolies hope that they will soon be saved. The author made a point of writing about how the British Empire made things worse in the villages during the colonial period. In this book, the descriptions of extreme poverty, different kinds of physical abuse and humiliation, police officers carrying guns and pistols, and leaders and rulers using girls for sex will break your heart. Raja Rao has also talked about Indian pride from his own point of view by using history. History is the big story that builds, re-builds, and changes society. Modern society looks to the past to figure out the best way to go in the future.

The fact that the story starts in Kanthapura shows that the author knows about history. The Sthalapurana, which is the first line of the book, tells the story of the village's long, glorious past. This helps the people of the village



realise how bad things are right now. In his story of Harikatha, the author turns real people from his country into myths, which become a goal to reach for. Gandhi was compared to Ram, who saves Sita from Ravana in the Ramayana, and the British Empire was called the Ravan Empire. The author takes stories from the Upanishad, Vedanta, and other places to make up myths about the many problems and violent acts that happened during the time of colonial rule.

The author also does a great job of focusing on Brahmanism and trying to show how the local colonisers lived. Because of Brahmanism, the untouchables and other people feel like they need their own country so they can have their own place. Even though the book showed a fight between Brahmanism and colonialism, the two ideas are actually the same. One person is in charge of both the government and the culture. Moorthy's treatment as an outsider and his fight against being a "untouchable" show how nationalism and Brahmanism are at odds with each other. Brahmanism doesn't like Gandhi's fight against the "untouchables." The fact that Bhatta, Bade Khan, and the Sahib of the Estate worked together makes me wonder what Brahmanism has to do with colonialism. Moorthy gets people from all castes to fight against the colonisers.

Moorthy improves his social skills by going to places where people can't touch him and drinking milk with them. Moorthy brings people from the lower castes into the nationalist fight because he is a follower of Gandhi. Indian pride has a lot to do with both religion and politics. Like Gandhi, he mixes nationalism and faith. Religious politics have been important and powerful in Indian nationalism since the beginning of civilization. Raja Rao took the lead to make it clear what role religion should play in politics. Nationalists in Kanthapura use religion talk, actions, and symbols for their own political goals. Nationalist movements use Arthi, puja, conches, bells, Vedanta, bhajan, and other religious customs, rites, and symbols as tools.

Gandhi's political ideas and lessons are hidden as normal religious ideas, which gets the villagers angry. Gandhian equality and spiritual nationalism try to get rid of the harsh social caste system and unite everyone under a single religion based on Truth and Love. The story's author uses Kanthapura to show how Gandhi affected Indian villages. So, Raja Rao, a well-known Indian English writer, philosopher, and person with a lot of world experience, is still able to define the many parts of nationalism and spiritualism in India when compared directly or indirectly to the West. We can say with confidence that his works are based on themes of nationalism and spirituality. Nearly all of his books are based on Indian culture and cultural history. He has shown how India's mix of pride and spirituality is true to life.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, Indian English writing has played a significant role in showcasing the brilliance and character of India through its diverse writers, artists, and novelists. The novel serves as a testament to the rich history and cultural heritage of India and its people, showcasing the richness and diversity of Indian literature. Moorthy, inspired by Mahatama Gandhi, begins preaching Gandhian theory and implementing the Gandhian plan of action in Kanthapura. The novelist uses myths, stories, Vedantic scriptures, and Puranas to demonstrate the connection between a person and their country and to get peasants excited about their country. The novelist connects Ramayana, the Mahabharata, well-known fables, folklore, and religious stories to show how spiritual nationalism was supported in the area.

Gandhi believed that faith and politics are interconnected, and the book shows how Gandhian ideas and thoughts were being tested in the village during Gandhi's independence movement. The idea of nationhood and nationalism are driven by the formation of communities, with the British administration leading to the rise of Indian nationalism. The peasants in Kanthapura are against British rule and want to build their own government, get equal rights, and be free. The author uses names from rural India and the names people used to call each other to make Indian nationalism stronger. Moorthy, inspired by Mahatama Gandhi, sets up the Panchayat Congress Committee to teach and inform the villagers about the country and national events. Indian pride is a combination of religion and politics, with Raja Rao defining the role religion should play in politics. Nationalists in Kanthapura use religious customs, symbols, and symbols to achieve their political goals.

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