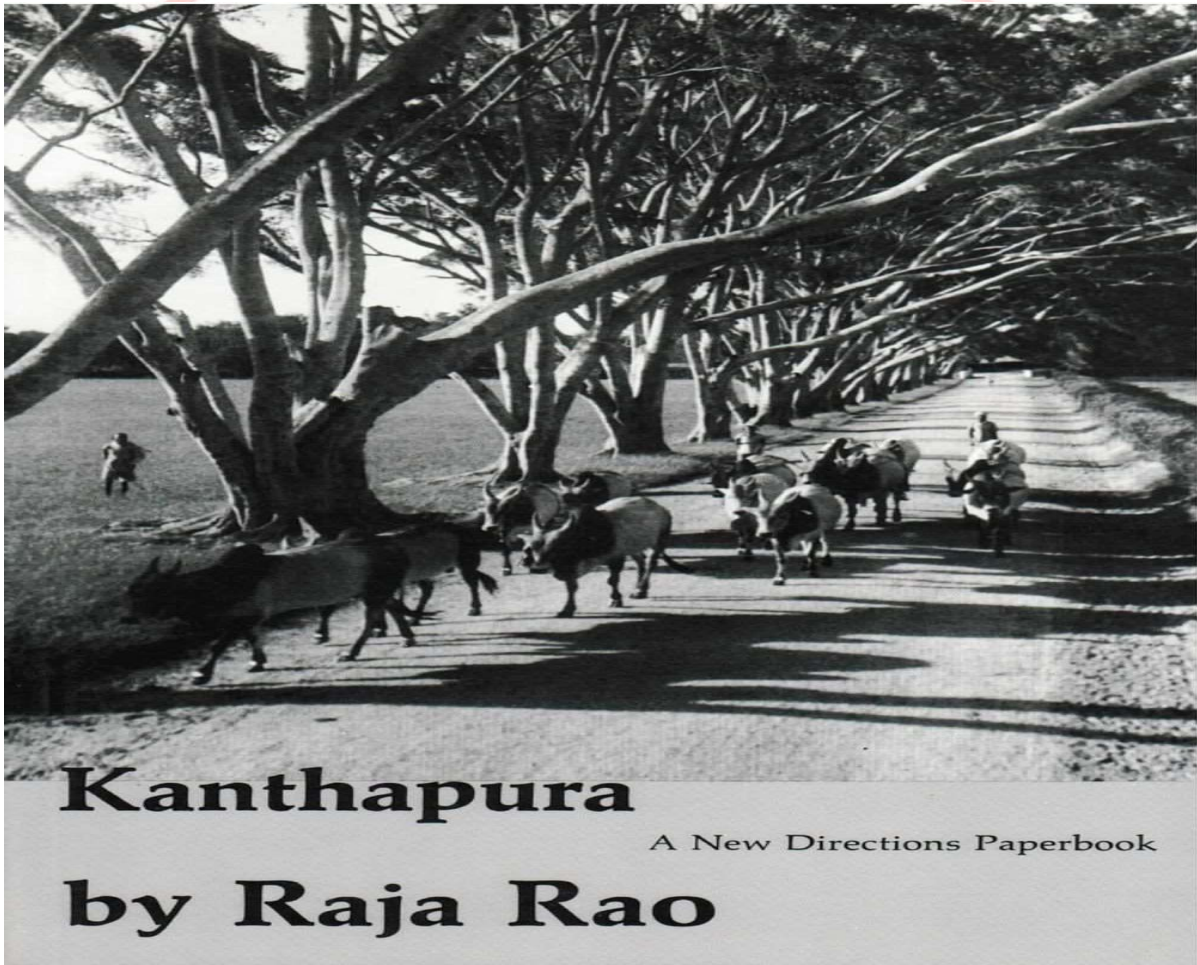


BA III
English Compulsory
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Notes on *Kanthapura*



Created by:
Dr. Naresh Rathee¹
Dr. Anu Rathee¹

1. Associate Professor, Chhotu Ram Arya College, Sonipat

***Kanthapura*: Introduction**

Raja Rao's most well-known book is *Kanthapura*, which he wrote in 1938 when he was only 21 years old. It is especially important because it was his first book. Alpana Sharma Knippling writes that Rao tried to "nativize" the English language to make it sound like his native language, Kannada.

The story takes place in a made-up place called *Kanthapura* in southern India, which gives the book its name. The book is about how Mahatma Gandhi's movement to free India from British colonial rule affected a small, ordinary town. It is told from the point of view of an old villager who watches everyone come and go in *Kanthapura*, taking with her years of knowledge and life experience.

The book was liked by many people and is now thought to be one of the most important Indian books written in English. It has the drama and legends of a standard Indian folk-epic and the poetic style of a modernist work of literature. The Hindu praised Rao by saying, "More than any other writer of his generation, [Rao] established the status of Indian literature in English," and the New York Times praised him for "reflecting the distinctive cadences of his native country."

Genre: Fiction

Setting and Context: *Kanthapura*, a village in South India, during the 1930s

Narrator and Point of View: The story is narrated in the first-person perspective by Achakka in the form of a traditional oral history of the entire village.

Tone and Mood: Tone: direct, proud, zealous, frightened, resolved

Mood: determined, empowered, tense

Protagonist and Antagonist

The protagonist of the novel is Moorthy and Gandhi-women. Bhatta, Bade Khan, and the British Government can be categorized as the chief antagonists.

Major Conflict

The major conflict of the story, in a broader sense, is the Indian struggle for independence. During the 1930s, with the advent of the Civil Disobedience movement, Indians began to envision a liberated India. Raja Rao shows the struggle and the tribulations of the nation through the microcosm of a village.

Climax

The story reaches its climax after Moorthy's arrest. Bade Khan arrests Moorthy in front of

his supporters and well-wishers. The events that ensue after this climactic point can be seen as the resolution or the denouement of the story.

Foreshadowing

When Patel Range Gowda speaks with impunity and refuses to find lodging for Bade Khan, he feels agitated and declares, "I shall squash you like a bug." Towards the latter half of the novel, Bade Khan, along with his fellow policemen, viciously beats the villagers practicing non-violent resistance.

Understatement

1. "Two days later, Policeman Bade Khan came to live with us in Kanthapura" (12). Khan isn't just there to live; he is there to spy, to persecute, to uphold the Government's position and power.
2. "I wish I had closed my eyes with your father instead of living to see you polluted" (40). Narsamma says this to her son, which is an understatement saying she wishes she was dead.
3. "...we see a policeman upon her" (149). This is an understatement for rape.

Allusions

1. Mahatma Gandhi and Jawarhal Nehru
2. The Bhagavad-Gita: the main Hindu scripture
3. Ekadashiday: a holy time in the lunar cycle, usually characterized by fasting
4. Rama: Hindu god, married to Sita
5. Sita: Hindu goddess, married to Rama
6. Brahma: Hindu god of creation
7. Queen Victoria: British ruler during the heyday of imperialism/colonialism

Imagery

The imagery is of strife and struggle, of nonviolent resistance being met with aggression. It is of women standing up to men, the weak standing up to the poor. It is a war over the natural world and the world of men, fought in temples, toddy groves, the streets, and at the sea.

Paradox

1. "Less strange are the ways of the gods than are the ways of men" (25).

Parallelism

1. There is a parallel that runs between the struggles of the village and that of the entire nation.

Metonymy and Synecdoche

1. "He wanted me to be his dog's tail" (68). Here, Range Gowda talks to Moorthy about Bhatta.

Personification

1. "Cart after cart groans" (1).
2. "the trains sneezed and wheezed and snorted and moved on" (45).
3. The rain is "thumping [the weak coffee leaves], thumping them down to the earth, then playfully lounging up" (50).
4. "Ah, in the country it's like this," says Siddayya. "And once it begins there is no end to her tricks" (51).
5. "The brass vessels shimmer and shake" (57).
6. "know for sure what religion is wearing behind its saffron robes" (91).

***Kanthapura*: Short Summary**

The story of *Kanthapura* is about a village in the south of India and how the rise of Gandhism in the 1930s affects it. It is told by an old woman named Achakka, but she uses the word "we" a lot and doesn't say much about what she thinks and feels.

Moorthy is the major character in this book. He is a young man who lived in the city and was kind, smart, and educated. Moorthy becomes a follower of Gandhi and goes back to his village to share the Mahatma gospel, which is mostly about freedom from British colonial rule and self-rule. He goes from house to house to talk about how important Gandhi's fight for freedom was. As he carefully explains to his neighbours how love, truth, and nonviolence will help them get free, he gains more and more support. One of his more divisive ideas is that the Pariahs shouldn't be shunned as much as they are.

Moorthy and a few other young guys are leading the way in the village to set up a Congress Committee. People from the city who work for Gandhi bring informational papers that are given out for free to make sure people know what the goals of the freedom movement are. The Congress makes a Corps unit whose job is to teach people in the movement how to stay nonviolent at all times, even when government forces are trying to hurt them.

As soon as Gandhi's freedom movement starts up in *Kanthapura*, the British government comes up with plans to stop it and keep Gandhi from getting too far. Bade Khan, a police officer, is sent to *Kanthapura* village by the government to calm things down. Bhatta, who owns a lot of land and is rich, helps the police officer and tries to get his friends to turn against Moorthy.

Moorthy and his followers gather the village to protest how the Pariahs (coolies) at the

Skeffington Coffee Estate, a British plantation nearby, are treated badly. They hold protests and shout their support for Gandhi. In response, the colonial police hurt many locals and arrested others. Villagers expect justice and take to the streets to protest this decision. The colonial government reacts more harshly this time. During the picketing, the cops don't care about old people, kids, or women. When they see their fellow locals being hurt by the government, the coolies who work at the Skeffington Coffee Farm get angry. They decide to join the protest, which makes things even worse. Because of this, Moorthy is taken into custody and given a long prison sentence. Rangamma stays and runs the Congress to continue Gandhi's fight for freedom. She is well-educated and well-liked. She gets a lot of young women together and teaches them to lead the fight for freedom. Moorthy finishes his sentence and stays away from *Kanthapura* to work for the cause.

The leaders of the movement start a campaign asking their followers not to pay taxes and land income to the government. They teach their members how important it is to stay peaceful even though the government is trying to take away their farms and property. As a response, the government goes to *Kanthapura* and beats and shoots the marchers, hurting thousands of them. When people are shot without mercy, protesters start to fight back. The protesters are put down by government troops, and they are then forced to leave the village. Some of the women set fire to the village before leaving. They find safety and comfort in a nearby village, but most of them will stay here for good.

Characters List

Moorthy: Moorthy is a young Brahmin who has gone back to his home town of *Kanthapura*. He is described as a "noble cow" who is "quiet, generous, serene, respectful, and brahmanic" (5). He gets a lot of ideas from Mahatma Gandhi's effort to free India through nationalism. People in *Kanthapura* love and admire him, and they decide to follow him without question. In the book, he is called the "small mountain," while Mahatma Gandhi is called the "big mountain." He is able to set up the Congress Party in *Kanthapura* according to Gandhian ideas. He sticks to truth, nonviolence, and civil disobedience, and he won't even protest the fact that he is in jail. At the end of the book, he is out of jail and wants to help Gandhi and Jawarhal work towards "swaraj" (self-rule).

Bhatta: Bhatta owns a lot of land in *Kanthapura* and is very rich. He takes advantage of the people in the village and has nothing to do with Gandhi's ideas. He then works against Moorthy when he tries to start the Congress Party. He does this because he is a secret spy for the

British government. During the revolt, people burned down his house.

Patel Range Gowda: Patel Range Gowda is the village's official Chief Executive Officer. But he runs the whole town like the mayor. Range Gowda has a strong and intimidating presence, and no choice can be made without his approval. People in the town call him the "tiger" a lot. He uses his social power to help Moorthy, and in the end, his patelship is taken away from him.

Rangamma: Rangamma is a strong woman with a "different, soft-voiced, gentle-gestured" (30) manner, but she can also read and write. She is a widow with no children, but people admire her because she is determined and has high goals. She thinks that Gandhian Moorthy is better than Bhatta's religious rule. She teaches the women of *Kanthapura* how to resist without violence and gets them to form a group called "Sevis." Eventually, she is put in jail.

Bade Khan: Bade Khan is a Muslim police officer who just moved to *Kanthapura*. He is big and has a beard. Skeffington Coffee Estate is where he stays. He works for the British government and doesn't like protests of any kind. At one point, when Moorthy tries to meet the people who work on the coffee farm, he beats him badly.

Kamamma: Kamamma is the sister of Rangamma. She stands in stark contrast to the values exhibited by Rangamma. She rejects her sister's conversion to the Gandhian lifestyle. The only concern on her mind is to somehow remarry her widowed daughter Ratna.

Ratna: Ratna is the fifteen-year-old daughter of Kamamma. However, she has more in common with her Aunt Rangamma. She, too, is inspired by the Gandhian philosophy. She is very iconoclastic and independent and does not care for traditional social propriety. She leads the Sevis after Rangamma's imprisonment, having attained a new gravitas and wisdom. At the end of the novel, after having spent some time in prison, she comes out to visit the people of *Kanthapura* and then heads to Bombay.

Narsamma: She is Moorthy's elderly mother, who loves her son very much but is extremely distressed to think about the trouble he is bringing to the village—especially excommunication. She eventually dies due to her distress.

Narrator: The narrator is an old widow with only sons, one of them being Seenu. We do not learn much about her as an individual, as she always speaks collectively.

Waterfall Venkamma: She is a spiteful, gossipy, and constantly aggrieved woman in the village.

Ramakrishnayya: He is the learned, elderly father of Rangamma. One evening, he trips and loses consciousness, then dies.

Jayaramacher: He is a *Harikatha*-man Moorthy brings to the village for the *Ganesh-jayanthi*. Instead of telling them about Rama or Krishna, he tells the villagers of Mahatma Gandhi. This causes a bit of trouble and he is not invited back.

Mr. Skeffington (Nephew): The successor to control of the Skeffington Coffee Estate, he does not beat coolies like his uncle did, but takes Indian women for his own pleasures and punishes their husbands/fathers when they do not go easily.

Mr. Skeffington (Uncle): The British owner and founder of the Estate, he is cruel to those who work for him.

Seenu: One of the narrator's sons, he becomes a Ghandi-man and works with Moorthy, teaching the Pariahs and helping with the Congress committee. He is arrested and is still in jail at the end of the novel.

Siddayya: A coolie at the Skeffington Coffee Estate, he has been there a long time and tries to let the new coolies know what they should expect here.

Rachanna: One of the most prominent Pariah men in the text, he is killed in the uprising. Nanjama, Chinnamma, Seethama, Satamma, Ningamma, Vedamma: They are village women.

Vasudev: A Ghandi-man and comrade of Moorthy's, he helps organize the Pariahs at the Skeffington Estate.

Rangappa: He is the Temple brahmin, who is against the Gandhist movement in the village.

Seenappa: He is an advocate who loses his wife and who Bhatta sets up with Venkamma's daughter in order to win her loyalty against Moorthy and Gandhism.

Sankar: The secretary of the Karwar Congress committee, he tries to help Moorthy fight his charge, but agrees to help run the meetings in his stead. He has Rangamma come live and work with him. He is an ascetic widower who will not remarry because he loved his wife so much, but the people are generally fine with this because they respect him despite his idiosyncrasies.

Ranganna: He is a Brahmin who opens his private temple to the Pariahs. He is arrested when he gives a speech at the Congress criticizing the Swami and the British government.

Seetharamu: He is an advocate who lives in the city and will not remarry because he

loved his wife so much. He provides the villagers with updates as to what is going on with Moorthy. At one point, he is thrown in prison himself, and has horrible stories to tell of its conditions.

Radhamma: She is a village woman who gives birth during the uprising.

Puttamma: She is a village woman who is raped during the uprising.

Themes

The Evils of Colonial Rule in India

In the book, Rao describes in detail how bad the Red Man's rule in India was. Indians were taken advantage of by the colonialists, which is what led Gandhi to start his freedom movement. In *Kanthapura*, Moorthy, a strong supporter of Gandhi, moves back to his home village in the middle of nowhere to organise people against the evils of the colonialists in their country. He does this by starting a group called the Congress. When people in the villages protest against how their masters treat them on the coffee plantations, the government sends police to scare the protesters. Many people are killed or hurt, and Moorthy and other freedom fighters are arrested. Throughout the book, the reader sees how hard it was for the Indians to get their independence. There are tortures, killings, illegal arrests, economic oppression, political oppression, unfair working conditions, high taxes, and more. All of these things inspire Gandhi and his movement, as well as the villagers of *Kanthapura* in the book.

Women's Roles

In *Kanthapura*, women's roles are based on how important they are to the nationalist struggle—they march, protest, passively resist, boycott, read newspapers, and do other things—and how their traditional, inferior, and less important role as housewives takes away from that importance. While the movement gives widows a sense of power and purpose, their own problems aren't taken into account, and they are valued more if they play the role expected of them. In the end, they stick to traditional gender roles set by patriarchy, even as they show how important they are to the struggle.

Education as a Powerful Tool to Fight Colonialism

Indians were often ruled by colonists because they didn't know what was going on, and the people of *Kanthapura* are shown to be ignorant at the beginning of the book. But when Moorthy moves back to the village, everything changes in a big way. Moorthy is a smart young man from the city who knows how to fight the evils of the Red Man's government. He teaches

the villagers about how bad the colonialists were, helps them become economically independent, and sets up a Congress in the village. He and his friends give out free materials to help people learn more about the goals of the freedom movement and how important self-rule is. Villagers will only know what's at stake and what to do about it if they learn more about it.

Anti-Muslim Sentiment

This is a more subtle theme, and it's not a good one, but Rao emphasises many times in the text that Hindus think Muslims are better than them. There is a conflict between the shopkeeper, Subba Chetty, and a Muslim character named Rahman Khan. Rahman Khan is innocent of a crime that people think he did, but Anshuman Mondal says that his symbolic imprisonment shows "the anxiety in the novel about Muslims." Advocate Sankar's almost fanatical insistence on Hindu adds to this, as does the "most graphic and horrifying act of violence" in the book, which is a Muslim policeman raping a Brahmin woman.

Caste

Caste was (and to some extent still is) a nearly unchangeable part of Indian society. However, Gandhi's teachings and, by extension, Moorthy's teachings in the novel start to break down the rigidity and legitimacy of caste. Even though there are questions about how far Gandhi thought the hard lines of caste should be broken down, it is clear that the lines had to be softened and Pariahs had to be treated as real people in order to get rid of colonial rule. Moorthy tries to convince his sceptical fellow villagers that they need to work together for the nationalist movement as a whole to be successful.

Economic Exploitation

The story of the coolies at the Skeffington Coffee Estate is a perfect microcosm of the story of India under colonialism. The coolies are taken advantage of in many ways: they are lied to, not paid fairly, beaten, forced to work long hours, made to spend their money on the master's toddy, not allowed to get involved in politics, etc. Their work makes money for the Estate, but they are treated like they don't matter. The Brahmins learn from Moorthy that even though their lives are better than those of the coolies, they still have to deal with the effects of the colonial economy.

The Collective Experience

The way Achakka tells the story is the first sign that this book isn't just about one person and her experience with Gandhism. Instead, it tries to explore different voices and different experiences. It wants to see how a whole village deals with the changes that are happening all

over the country. This is because villages are the heart of the country and a microcosm of the country as a whole. People can only change if they work together and see themselves as a group. One person can't do much, but dozens, thousands, or millions of people can.

Kanthapura Summary and Analysis of Chapters 1-3

Summary

Chapter 1

The story is told by an old woman who has sons. She talks about her village, Kanthapura, which is in the province of Kara. There are lots of busy carts moving coffee and cardamom to the ships that the "Red-men" (Europeans) bring. The name of their god is Kenchamma, and she is big and generous. She came from heaven to kill a demon and has never forgotten her people. Yes, there have been problems, like smallpox and cholera, but Kenchamma has never let them down, so they dance and sing for her.

The 24 homes in the village are all different sizes.

Waterfall Venkamma complains about how big the widow Rangamma's house is, but her own house is just as big. Dore is here. He never finished his Inter, but he knows "city ways," has read books, and calls himself a Gandhi-man. But he doesn't have a lot of friends, like Corner-house Moorthy, who she will talk about in more detail later. She doesn't know how many huts are in the Pariah quarter, the Weavers' quarter, or the Sudra quarter.

On the Karwar road, between her house and Subba Chetty's shop is the Kanthapurishwari temple. Even though it has only been there for three years, it is the hub of town life. Moorthy suggested that they build it, and he helped dig up the linga and protect it with a tile roof and a mud wall. Bhatta blessed it, and each day of the month, the men of the town claimed their times to read the Sankara-jayanthi and give a dinner.

The first reading was done by Rangamma's wise father, Ramakrishnayya. He had a calm, deep voice that made people cry. There was music, and they did this ceremony every day.

Moorthy asks the narrator and others what they think about having the Rama festival, the Krishna festival, and the Ganesh festival here, with religious hymns playing for a month and the party going on. The women like the idea, but he says that to get the best *Harikatha-men*, they need money. The women agree because they know Moorthy has been to the city and is a trustworthy person.

Moorthy goes from house to house, even to the Pariahs' homes, to ask for money. The villagers all know that he is a Gandhian and doesn't care about caste, clan, or family. They give

him a shrug because it doesn't matter to them what he does. People all give him a little bit of money.

The *Harikatha-man* Jayaramacher comes to the big festival. Everyone is amazed by him, and after he sings and tells stories about Siva and Parvati for a while, he says he will talk about Gandhi. Some people are confused because Gandhi is not Rama or Krishna, but the Postmaster's son says that Gandhi is a saint, a holy man.

The story that Jayaramacher tells goes like this: Brahma is resting in heaven when the wise man Valmiki comes in and tells him that there is trouble on earth. He says that Brahma has forgotten about them for so long that people from across the seas are coming to step on them and spit on their goodness, so they need one of his gods "so that he can come to earth and bring back light and plenty" (11). Brahma agrees that Siva can be sent. On Earth, a family in Gujeret has a son, and he is very wise. He is called Mohandas, and he starts fighting against the people who want to hurt his country. Men start to follow him, and even though he doesn't hurt anyone, he goes from village to village killing enemies. He says that God is the truth. He is a holy man who fasts and prays.

Jayaramacher has more stories to tell, but the police jemedar is there and talks to Moorthy. Jayamaracher is told to leave, and Moorthy's face has been serious ever since. Soon, more men will become Gandhi-men with him.

Two days later, Badè Khan, a police officer, moves into the village.

Chapter 2

Patwari Nanjundia tells Badè Khan that he can't stay with the Potters (he's a Mohammedan), on Sudra Street, or with the Pariahs or Brahmins, so he should ask the Patel for a house.

Rangè Gowda, the Patel, doesn't care about Badè Khan and tells him that the Government doesn't pay him to help the police find houses. Badè Khan grumbles and growls at him and makes a weak threat, but he doesn't stay. He goes to the Skeffington Coffee Estate and asks Mr. Skeffington for a hut. In response, Mr. Skeffington tells his butler to give him one. Badè Khan is happy and takes a Pariah woman with him to clean and sleep with him.

Badè Khan leaves the village for a few days. One woman says she saw him, but the others say he's just a passing police officer they've seen many times before. Waterfall Venkamma disagrees and says she knows why the police are there: Moorthy and the Gandhi affair. Everyone knows that she doesn't like Moorthy because he turned down her request to marry her second

daughter.

Since Jayaramacher was kicked out, things have been strange. Moorthy and other men are getting together, and Moorthy says that everyone should get free spinning wheels. He convinces them that everything foreign “makes us poor and pollutes us” (16) and spinning cloth is sacred, “gives work to the workless” (16), and can be given away to the poor. He explains how the fruit of their labor goes to “fatten some dissipated Red-man in his own country” (17).

Moorthy goes to see everyone in the village, even the Pariahs, who are happy to see a Brahmin there. The villagers see a big-bearded man and realise it's Badè Khan, the policeman, who is still very much in the village.

Chapter 3

Gandhi's songs have nothing to do with Bhatta. He has been to the city and doesn't like how much they talk about it. He cares mostly about money, and everyone in the village knows that one day he will own the whole place. He's the First Brahmin, and Ramanna is the Second. Most of his money comes from loans to villagers.

He is married, but his wife Savithramma dies after falling down a flight of stairs. Many people offer him their daughters to marry, and he agrees to marry Purnayya's daughter, who is twelve years old. They have a wedding that is very expensive.

Over time Bhatta grows richer and richer; he is “no more a pontifical Brahmin. He was a landowner” (23). He helps people work out their problems, and when he can't, he sends them to Advocate Seenappa or Advocate Ramanna. He now owns 37 acres of wet land and 90 acres of dry land in all the nearby villages, and no Brahmin or Pariah did not owe him something. The narrator says, “I tell you, he was not a bad man, was Bhatta. But this dislike of the Gandhi-bhajan surprised us” (25).

Bhatta goes to Kannayya's house one day. His uncle, Old Ramakrishnayya, is sitting on the veranda, and his aunt, Satamma, is sleeping by the door. Rangamma also comes out, happy to hear Bhatta.

Bhatta starts to complain that it's hard to find husbands these days because all the young men want someone to pay for their college degrees and are too busy with Gandhi business. For example, someone like Moorthy should be married and not hang out with Pariahs. He had heard that Pariahs wanted to go to the Sanskrit College.

Rangamma says softly that they've always been able to come to the temple door, but Bhatta says that now they might just throw the doors wide open. This is an odd time, and he

doesn't like these modern women in the city with their modern ways. Satamma agrees and says there will be “the confusion of castes and the pollution of progeny” (27). Rangamma says that the Mahatma has always said that people from different castes should live separately. In response, Bhatta says that he has taken in a Pariah girl as his daughter.

He says that he recently went to see the Swami and told him about his worries. The Swami agreed with him and told him to talk to his people and set up a Brahmin party. The Mahatma was a good and simple man but he is “making too much of these carcass-eating Pariahs” (27). In fact, the Swami said, any Brahmin who touches a Pariah will be cast out. Bhatta said he would talk to his people about it.

Rangamma, Satamma, and Ramakrishnayya are all upset. Bhatta starts to calm down and says that all he wants to do is warn them about Moorthy and the city boys.

Rangamma is a smart and educated young woman who often tells the narrator and other villagers what she has read in the papers. She talks about faraway places where women work like men, where people go to school for free and get a job and a home, and where all men are the same. But she is always quiet and respectful, even though she can stand up to Bhatta.

Kamamma, Rangamma's sister, and Ratna, who is the widowed daughter of Kamamma, join them. Bhatta is getting ready to leave because he doesn't like Rama. He doesn't like how she acts, because she acts like she never lost her husband and like being married for one day when she was 10 doesn't count as being married. Especially the women don't like her, and they spit on Kamamma for having a dishonourable daughter.

Bhatta doesn't say anything because he isn't a man and Ratna's father is his second cousin. She is from the Chanderhalli family, so she is okay, even though Bhatta still thinks these new ways are stupid.

As he walks through the village, he thinks he sees a person near Rama Chetty's shop. He shouts loudly and asks who it is before going into the courtyard. A pale light shines on a person with a beard, who says his name is Badè Khan.

The next day, when Waterfall Venkamma and the other women see Moorthy's holy, old mother, Old Narsamma, they are all quiet. She has a lot of kids, but Moorthy is the one she loves the most.

Moorthy had a vision of the Mahatma one day, and he started to cry and admit that he was at his feet. In this vision, he asked Mahatma what he should do, and Mahatma told him to only look for the truth. Moorthy got rid of all his books and clothes from other countries and

became a Gandhi-man. He came home in the middle of the harvest. His mother was shocked to see him and hear him say that all the schools were bad, but she loved him so much that she let him stay. She tried to get him to get married, but he refused and said he would stay pure and noble. But this made Narsamma uncomfortable, so he thought he should marry the coffee planter's daughter. Waterfall Venkamma heard rumours, but she knew something was wrong. She talked to Narsamma and told her in a mean way that she was glad Narsamma didn't marry her daughter off to Moorthy, the Pariah-mixer.

Venkamma had been fine for a while, but today she talks to Narsamma again about how the Swami said he would kick out of the village anyone who hung out with Pariahs. She says angrily that this has to stop because she has daughters to marry, and that Moorthy should just leave and stop calling himself a Brahmin. Chinnamma tells her to calm down because they don't hang out with Pariahs, but Narsamma is so shocked that she is shaking. She shakes and cries, and no one can make her feel better. She beats her chest and rolls around on the floor of her house because she is afraid that they will all be kicked out of the church.

Analysis

Kanthapura is told by a single voice, but we don't know much about her other than her name, Achakka, and the fact that she is a widow with sons. This isn't because she doesn't have a rich inner life or is being secretive as a narrator. Instead, it's because she doesn't see herself so much as an individual as a voice for the whole group of Brahmin women in the text. She mostly talks about what all the women do, feel, think, and believe by saying "we" instead of "I." This is part of Raja Rao's plan to show the reader what it was like for the whole village, not just one woman, when Gandhism came to their area.

The novel's style is worth commenting on, as Rao intended achieve something very specific—he is writing in English but as he says in the preface to the novel, “the tempo of Indian life must be infused into our English expression” (vii). This is not easy, as “one has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language” (vii). “We cannot write like the English. We should not,” Rao asserts, and “We cannot write only as Indians” (vii)—which means there will have to be “a dialect which will... prove to be... distinctive and colorful” (vii).

Scholars often pay attention to this preface, praising its sentiments and/or offering critiques of Rao's endeavor. Janet Powers Gemmill notes the “obvious deviations from the

syntax of spoken English and a consciously-achieved style of rambling narrative.” In addition, “run-on sentences and an exaggerated lyrical enthusiasm help to create the intensity required of an effective storyteller... the narrator is illiterate; her story must be written in a style which will reinforce the impression of a spoken village vernacular.” The diction suggests a different worldview, as with the term “Red-men” to describe the British.

Not all critics are laudatory, though. Alpana Sharma Knippling notes that Rao himself is “geographically, socially, and epistemologically distanced from the subaltern characters he is attempting to represent,” and that Achakka would certainly not be speaking English or able to “utter startlingly refined poetic phrases.” Knippling references another scholar, FerzooJussawalla, writing that for Jussawalla, “Rao’s experimentation fails because Rao does not take into account India’s actual multicultural and multilingual situation of *spoken* English and the fact that English can never *be* Kannada itself.”

When it comes to the story itself, Rao explains what Kanthapura is like in the first few chapters. It is a small but busy village that was an important part of colonial trade. The traditional Indian caste system gives the village a clear social and physical order. There are widows and city boys, wise old men and rich landowners, women who talk a lot and humble priests. It is a full and rich place.

Most of the characters are only broadly drawn, but Moorthy, the young university graduate whose embrace of Gandhism forever changes Kanthapura, gets more attention. He is “a noble cow, quiet, generous, serene, deferent and Brahminic, a very prince I tell you” (5). People respect him because he “had been to the city and he knew of things we did not know” (9), but also because he is humbly able to talk to anyone and everyone, explaining things in a way that makes sense. When talking to Brahmin women about cloth, he says quite explicitly, “millions and millions of yards of foreign cloth come to this country, and everything foreign makes us poor and pollutes us. The Mahatma says that it is holy to wear clothes that you made with your own hands. And it gives work to people who don't have any or don't want to work. And if you don't need the cloth, sister—well, you can say, ‘Give it away to the poor,’ and we will give it to the poor. Our country is being bled to death by foreigners. We have to protect our Mother” (16). This is also helpful for modern readers who may have forgotten how British colonialism affected India and why Gandhism was so appealing and, in the end, so successful.

Chapter 4

On the day of the fair, the carts are rolling through Kanthapura, and Moorthy is rushing

into the village to see his mother. But when he goes to greet her, she pushes him away and says he's been kicked out of the church. She begs him not to let his shadow fall on her too, and she rushes out of the hut in anger and frustration. She yells at a Pariah for getting in her way and says that all of this trouble is because of her son. She decides that her only option is to die a holy death.

She finally calms down, though, and feels like a fool for being so angry at her beloved son. When she gets home, he is not there. The first footsteps she hears are not his, but those of Bhatta, who tells her that Moorthy is mad at him for saying the Swami will excommunicate them. She finally calms down, though, and feels like a fool for being so angry at her beloved son. When she gets home, he is not there. The first footsteps she hears are not his, but those of Bhatta, who tells her that Moorthy is mad at him for saying the Swami will excommunicate them. He adds that Moorthy also said he would do more and more Pariah work and the Swami is no one, only a "self-chosen fool" (41). This distresses Narsamma even more.

Bhatta tells her that she has never been to the city and can't imagine what goes on there. As he is talking, Moorthy comes back. Bhatta doesn't say anything as he leaves.

Moorthy and Narsamma no longer talk with each other. Moorthy, his family, and the generations to come are all kicked out of the church. Soon after, Narsamma dies.

Moorthy goes away for a while, but he comes back and lives with Rangamma. He keeps going to see the Pariahs. Seenu, the narrator's son, comes with him, and they plan to go to the Skeffington Coffee Estate.

Chapter 5

The Skeffington Coffee Estate is huge. It keeps getting bigger and more coolies want to live there. The maistri would go to them in other parts of India and tell them to come to the estate and work, promising them money and telling them that the Sahib was a very kind and good man. The coolies would agree and go to the Estate.

When the coolies from the Godavery got to the Estate, the Sahib, a tall, fat man with golden hair, stood in front of them. The maistri told them that if they worked, they'd get sweets, but if they didn't, they'd be hit. The coolies started building their huts and thought it would be a good place to live.

But when they worked, the maistri yelled at them and hit them if they were slow or didn't pay attention. As they tried to stay out of the eye of the maistri, they told stories about snakes.

They were very surprised when, one day, the oppressive heat turned into heavy rain and

thunder.

Sidayya told them that this was how the country was, and that it would be like this for a few days.

They also got sick, and some of them began to die. When the Sahib found out what was going on with his workers, he sent them pills. Sidayya told them not to take the pills because the Sahib didn't know anything about their lives. When the Sahib heard this, he got angry and told them to take six. Most of them did, but a few did not.

As sick kids and old people kept dying, some people thought they should just take the money they were owed and leave. They added up what was owed to them and thought it was more than enough. Sidayya listened and nodded, but she knew that no one ever left.

Ten years went by, and people were born, died, and got married. No one got out. The old Sahib died and was replaced by his nephew. A lot of coolies and maistris came and went. The nephew didn't beat people like his uncle did, but he did take any woman he wanted. If a girl said no, he went to their men and beat them or cut their pay if they said no. Only when he wanted a Brahmin girl did he hesitate, and he finally gave up after one father was killed and a long court battle over restitution for the widow's widow.

When the story takes place, the Sahib is happy to hear that there will be a policeman in town, but Bade Khan stays the same. Everyone dislikes him, while Moorthy is liked, and the business of hanging out with the Pariahs goes on. After all, "what is a policeman before a Gandhi's man? Tell me, does a boar stand before a lion or a jackal before an elephant?" (56).

Chapter 6

Moorthy is supposed to come this evening, so everyone in the Pariah homes is waiting with bated breath. At one point, they think they hear him, but it's just Bade Khan hiding.

Moorthy gets close to the Coffee Estate, but Bade Khan tells him in a gruff voice that he can't come. Moorthy says that coolies are men, and the government says that no man owns another man. This means that he can go in and talk to the coolies.

When the coolies get to the gate, everyone starts to say bad things about Bade Khan. Khan hits Moorthy with a punch, and the coolies fall on him. Moorthy screams that there shouldn't be any fighting. Bade Khan is furious and says he will have all of them arrested. Moorthy goes back to Kanthapura after the maistri whips them back up the Estate Path.

The maistri comes to Pariah Rachanna's door in the morning and tells him they have to leave. No matter how much Rachanna's wife asks, nothing changes. When Rachanna asks for the

money they are owed, the maistri laughs and gets Bade Khan and the butlers to physically kick them out.

The family goes to Moorthy, who brings them to Patel Range Gowda. Timmayya gives Rachanna and his family a place to live in his backyard.

From now on, Moorthy gets even sadder and quieter. This is when his “Don’t-Trust-the-Government” campaign begins.

Chapter 7

Moorthy tells Rangamma that he will fast for three days at the temple. He says this is because his presence has caused trouble and violence. Seenu tells him that this is fine for the Mahatma but not for them, but Moorthy says calmly that he will not die if he does this.

Moorthy goes to the temple, where candles light the way. After saying his gayatri, he goes to sleep. Even when the villagers and Waterfall Venkamma come by and make fun of him, he doesn't move. He tells himself to love the people who hurt him.

Over time, he starts to feel elevated and full of love. When he looks out over the bright earth, he thinks he is Siva. His mind wanders to dark shores, and then his bright mind takes over. Since the one of Mahatma, this is the first vision he has had.

The next morning, he is deep in his meditation and seems to glow. He asks Ratna to pray with him when she comes to see him. He doesn't think of her as a 15-year-old girl anymore, but as a sister. He asks her to pray so that other people's sins can be washed away.

When Rangamma brings him salt, Moorthy puts it in his water and drinks it. His stomach is cool, but then his arms and legs start to feel warm. Rangamma tries to get him to eat just a little bit, but he won't.

He has a shiny, wrinkled face. He tells Rangamma that their cause would win if he could love Bade Khan. Rangamma shakes her head and wonders how anyone could love Bade Khan. They might not insult him or even hate him, but they can't love him.

The next day, Moorthy feels even worse. Bhatta tells him that he is just pretending to be religious, but Moorthy smiles and says he is too weak to talk to him right now and will explain it later. He is insulted by Bhatta, and he leaves.

On the third day, Moorthy is dizzy and his heart is beating strangely. He seems to see things that are not there, and the temple “seemed to shake and sink” (66). He passes out, and when he wakes up, Rangamma is there. People around him are confused when he starts to cry. Rangamma offers him an orange, but he tells her she knows he can't have it.

He is better because he is drinking more water. Ratna is told by Rangamma to pray for him. By evening, the most important time is over, and Moorthy says he is done and not too weak to have a bhajan tonight. Seenu turns on the oil lamps and calls people from all the streets. Also, Bade Khan joins. When the bhajan is over, Moorthy sees that there aren't many people in the Brahmin quarter and decides to send his love to them. He has a very strong sense of peace. The next day, he breaks his fast and starts to talk about his new campaign.

Chapter 8

Moorthy goes to see Range Gowda, the village's oldest man, without whom nothing can be done. He tells Gowda that things are bad in Kanthapura because the Brahmins no longer come to the bhajan, people are afraid of being kicked out of the community, and Bhatta is causing trouble. Range Gowda stiffens and says Bhatta came to him but he admonished him for his behavior; he would not be "his dog's tail" (69).

Moorthy says that his plan is for them to start a group of Congress members in Kanthapura that will join the Congress of All India. You pay a small fee each year and promise to tell the truth. Range Gowda is fine with his idea as long as they don't get in trouble with the government. Moorthy says and thinks that it's not hard to be against the Indian government, but it will be hard to be against the government of the Red-man.

Bade Khan gets cursed by Range Gowda, but Moorthy tells him to love his enemies. Range Gowda doesn't get it, but Moorthy says that you have to love your enemies because hatred spreads and love stops more enemies from coming into the world.

Range Gowda eventually tells Moorthy that he will help him with this project. He knows that Mahatma is a holy man and that if Mahatma wants this, it is the right thing to do. Moorthy thanks him and says that being a member of Congress is not an easy job and that all promises are made in front of the Mahatma and God.

Moorthy goes to see the Pariahs, the Weavers, and the Potters. When he crosses the threshold into a Pariah home for the first time, he feels very strange, as if all the gods were calling out against him. But Rachanna and his wife are happy for him, so they help him. In the end, everyone in Pariah Corner comes to Moorthy's house to look at him.

Moorthy begins, telling all the women and children there that they must have a *panchayat* (Congress), and they must spin and practice ahimsa and speak the truth. He asks if they can spin a hundred yards per day, and many of the women frustrate him with their reluctance to commit to this. Finally Rachanna's wife says she will do it.

Moorthy goes to the temple, rings a bell, and asks the gods for their blessings. He goes home to Rangamma and tells him that he's not sure what to do now that he's been in a Pariah house. She thinks and says that he can come in through the back, wash and dress himself again, and drink some water from the Ganges to feel better.

He prays by the river at nightfall and then goes to Seenu's Pariah night school in the panchayat hall. When Moorthy tells Seenu that they will have their Congress, he is very happy. The next day, Moorthy tells Range Gowda that it has been decided. They agree to have a procession for the gods and a bhajan, as well as to vote on who will be on the committee.

Everyone comes with camphor and coconuts in the evening. They are looking forward to the procession and bhajan, and they listen as Range Gowda calls Moorthy their Gandhi. People laugh at him, but he says it's true because Moorthy is very wise. Moorthy's eyes fill with tears, and he says a prayer in a whisper.

Moorthy takes charge and asks the quarters if they want to join the panchayat officially. Range Gowda scolds them when they hesitate to do their jobs, and they tremble as they agree. Moorthy will be president, Range Gowda will be super-president and protector, Rangamma will be the third member, Rachanna will be a Pariah, and Seenu will be the fifth member.

Two days later, Moorthy makes a list of 23 people and pays their fees. Moorthy's picture is in the paper, and everyone thinks he is a great man and talks about him in the city. After that, the women started spinning more and more, and Moorthy says that the Mahatma is very happy about it.

Analysis

In this set of chapters, Moorthy keeps promoting Gandhism's ideas and ideals, sometimes getting pushback from some of the villagers but mostly getting their support. Bhatta is one of the main people speaking out against Moorthy. He worries that Gandhi's campaign for change will hurt his own power and wealth. There is also the hated Bade Khan, who is seen as a complete outsider and a sign of growing colonial control over the small village. There is also Waterfall Venkamma, whose sneering disapproval seems more personal than political. Overall, though, most of the characters quickly accept what Moorthy tells them about Gandhi's ideas. Especially if they are a Pariah or spend a lot of time with Pariahs, it is hard for them to ignore the facts of colonial life.

The chapter about the Godavary coolies (Pariahs), which is a bit out of order with the rest of the story, helps the reader understand what is at stake in India at this time. Both their British

masters and the Indians who work for them are cruel and unfair to Pariahs (as overseers or police or soldiers, for example). Even Brahmins aren't safe from the shady Sahib or from the way they are treated by the economic and political system in their own country.

The whole book is about the question of what to do with the coolies/Pariahs. Characters have mixed feelings, and even Moorthy is upset by his choice to become a Pariah. Ania Loomba looks at Gandhi's own thoughts on the subject and says that he thought they were part of Hindu society, but that this was a political stance, not a moral one. Gandhi wrote, "I believe that if Hindu Society has been able to stand it is because it is founded on the caste system. The seeds of Swaraj (self-rule) are to be found in the caste system. Different castes are like different sections of the military division. Each division is working for the good of the whole." Gandhi warned, "To destroy the caste system and adopt the Western European social system means that Hindus must give up on the principle of hereditary occupation which is the soul of the caste system... It will be a [sic] chaos if everyday a Brahmin is to be and a Shudra is to be changed into a Brahmin."

Loomba also quotes politician and social reformer B.R. Ambedkar, who said frankly, "Gandhism is a paradox. It stands for freedom from foreign domination which means the destruction of the existing political structure of the country. At the same time it seeks to maintain intact a social structure which permits the domination of one class by another on a hereditary basis which means a perpetual domination of one class by another," and "these very instruments which blasted and blighted the life of Untouchables are to be found intact and untarnished in the bosom of Gandhism." This isn't to say that Gandhi or his philosophy are bad or that he didn't help the real Kanthapuras of India. It's just to say that both are complicated and sometimes contradict each other.

T.J. Abraham is critical not of Gandhism but of how *Kanthapura* portrays it. He deems it a "distortion" of the philosophy, conspicuous more for its "violent hierarchy" and the "binary between religions. In the book, Gandhism doesn't do much to bring the Pariahs into the mainstream. The cardinal Gandhist principle of truth is ignored in favour of subterfuge and deceit, like the religious procession at the end of the book that serves as a cover for illegal behaviour. Moorthy is the one who brings Gandhism to the village, who is "of a meditative nature and is given to visions" and had "no actual encounter with Gandhi." Gandhism ultimately fails the people, Abraham claims, and is a "discourse exposing how Gandhism draws a blank" and is "ineffectual as a programme for anticolonial nationalist movement." The novel "breaks at

its centre for want of strong sinews to take the weight of a secular modern India, which may require a Gandhian scheme, whose postulate would be something other than religion.” Abraham’s opinion isn’t the end-all-be-all of *Kanthapura* criticism, but it does offer the reader food for thought.

Chapter 9

Bhatta is upset about the Congress business, and he starts to wonder who is with him and who is against him. He has a brilliant idea: he will find a husband for Waterfall Venkamma's daughter, and she will be so happy. He thinks about the men he knows and decides on Advocate Seenappa, who lost his wife not long ago. He is sure that people will think he is 21 even though he is 34, and the fact that he already has kids shouldn't be a problem.

He goes to Venkamma in the morning, trembling with excitement, and when he tells her what he wants to do, she is thrilled. She tells the other women how lucky she is, and they say that Ranga is the luckiest of all of them. On the day of the wedding, they see a middle-aged man with a moustache and two missing teeth. He has a lot of land, though, and the wedding party is a lot of fun. People say that Bhatta and Venkamma are not that bad. Moorthy is the only one who wanders and thinks all day.

Chapter 10

Now it is Kartik, the month of the gods, which is a happy time with lots of lights and celebrations and gods walking by in the dark.

People wonder if something is wrong when they hear a commotion in Rangamma's house one night. When they get there with the lanterns, they see a policeman who yells at them that he can't let anyone in. They hear noises coming from Rangamma's house and see an angry Ramakrishnayya spitting.

People can't see very well, so they move around to get a better view of Moorthy's room. He is there, where light is hitting his face and police officers are looking through his books and clothes. He smiles and nods, and he doesn't get in their way. Bade Khan finally yells that the other police officers should tie this man up, and people start to get angry about this.

Range Gowda says something, and Rachanna begins to cry out loudly, “*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!*” over and over again. They make so much noise that the birds start singing along. The angry policemen start beating the men and women, but Moorthy shouts over the noise that there should be love, peace, and order because Mahatma has been to jail many times. When the police inspector hits Moorthy, all the lights in Kartik go out.

The police are trying to catch Rachanna and the others, and there is a lot of chaos. They were spit on and tied with ropes by the police. When Madonna's wife is thrown against a wall and a police officer squeezes her breast, Range Gowda gets angry and beats a police officer to the ground. The police are now beating and grinding the Brahmins into the mud.

In total, 17 men are caught and taken to the police station, where they are treated horribly. Moorthy is put on a bus, though, and taken to Karwar. When a lot of men say they will defend him, plead for him, and raise money for him, Moorthy turns them all down and says that nothing will come between him and the truth. Even the holy Sadhu Narayan can't change Moorthy's mind, and neither can his older brother Sankar, who gives Moorthy his blessing after he fails to convince him.

Sankar runs the meetings in place of Moorthy, and they are full of joy and passion.

Ranganna gets a standing ovation for letting Pariahs into his private temple. But one man wants to make a different point, and Sankar is kind enough to let him up on stage.

The old man nervously comes up and begins to speak of how when the white man leaves, India will simply have chaos. Before the British came, there was “disorder, corruption, and egoism” (88). Now when they leave there will be corruption of castes, and this will be devastating. He concludes his remarks and someone calls out to ask if he is a Swami's man, to which the old man says yes. The man in the crowd says the Swami takes royal gifts and is a Government's man, but the old man does not care; the Swami is neither for the government or against it.

One by one, young men come up and say that the Swami is being paid by the British government to do their dirty work. Ranganna says that the Swami once asked to see him and, when they met, told him that he needed Ranganna's help because they are Brahmins and not Pariahs, and Gandhi's attempts to bring them together are against the laws of the sages. He said very clearly that they must work together to stop this Untouchables campaign. Ranganna was doubtful and asked how he could accept help from a foreign government, but the Swami merely said they were “sent by the divine will and we may not question it” (90). Ranganna found that ridiculous and vowed to open his temple. To the crowd before him he says that they should know what religion “is wearing behind its saffron robes” (91)—instead of the “fatted Brahmins, who want to frighten us with their excommunications, once the Government has paid them well” (91), they should follow the saint Mahatma Gandhi.

At this point, a police inspector comes up and says that Ranganna is being arrested.

Ranganna then hands himself over to the police. The angry crowd forms lines and yells loudly, but when it gets to the Imperial Bank, it is violently broken up.

As the weeks go by, the newspapers keep writing about the trouble in the country. They get together on Rangamma's porch in the evening. Ramakrishnayya talks about different parts of the Vedanta Sutras, but the conversation always ends up going back to Moorthy. Seenu will sometimes go to town and report back, and Vasudev will sometimes go see Moorthy. The people in the village are sure that the Goddess will set Moorthy free.

Rangamma says she wants to go to the city to see her cousin Seethamaru, who is a lawyer and can tell her what's going on. Nanjamma says she will go with them, so the two of them take a cart to Karwar.

When they meet Seethamaru, he tells them that Sankar is taking care of the case. They go to Sankar, who tells them that he loves Moorthy like a brother and hasn't found a better Gandhian. He is doing everything he can, but the police say he set up the Pariahs' attack on them. No matter what, he says they should stay and see what happens.

More and more people are unhappy with the government. Range Gowda is kicked out of his Patelskip, and people are outraged because a Patelskip is supposed to be passed down from father to son and so on. All of them ask the Goddess to destroy the government, and they sing songs that criticise both the government and Bhatta.

Rangamma goes back to Sankar to follow up again, and he asks her if she would like to stay and work for him, maybe putting his papers in order and writing letters to Congress. They felt like they were alike, and she agrees. With Waterfall, this starts a little bit of talk. Even though Venkamma is acting very mean, Rangamma just shrugs.

Sankar had just turned 26 when he lost his wife, but he won't get married again. People don't like that he's a widower, but because his wife was so perfect, they have to accept it. People also sometimes help him with his daughter and his home. Everyone knows he will never take a false case, and see him as an "ascetic advocate" (96). At this point, a police inspector walks up and says that Ranganna is being arrested. Ranganna then comes forward to give himself up. The angry crowd forms lines and screams loudly, but when it gets to the Imperial Bank, it is violently broken up.

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More and more people are complaining about the government. Range Gowda is kicked out of his Patelship, and people are outraged because a Patelship is supposed to go from father to son and so on. They all ask the Goddess to destroy the government and sing songs that criticise both the government and Bhatta.

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Sankar lost his wife when he was only 26 years old, but he won't get married again. People don't like that he's a widower, but they have to accept it because his wife was so perfect. People sometimes help him with his daughter and his house.

Chapter 11

After Ramakrishnayya died, no one in the village knew who could read the Vedantic texts. They suggest Temple Raganna, but he can't read well and Rangamma says he works for Bhatta. She suggests Ratna, and they wonder if Ratna will mess up the texts, but they decide that she won't.

Every afternoon, Ratna starts to read, and Rangamma always talks badly about the British Government when they talk. She is becoming very wise, and the women ask her to teach them the meditation and yoga she learned from Sadhu Narayan.

Rangamma says that she saw women, girls, and widows in the city form groups called Volunteers and do drills for when they have to deal with the police. Nanjamma screams that she can't fight, and Rangamma tells her the story of Rani Lakshmi Bai and how she fought for India during the Soldiers' Revolt. She says they should think about more than just milking cows, and

they should be ready to meet Moorthy when he comes home. All of the women agree that they will be called Sevika Sangha, or Sevis.

Men begin to complain that the women are acting like soldiers and not doing their jobs as wives. When Suryanarayana complains about his wife, Rangamma says that he isn't a Gandhian. He protests, but says all he wants is to be taken care of.

Rangamma tells the women to do their jobs, and they grumble and understand, but they are caught up in the changes that are happening. Rangamma tries to teach them what to do if the police show up, and even though they are scared, they do their best.

Seenu and Vasudev sometimes come to watch and say that they wish the boys would do this too, but they are afraid of going to jail. If they stay there, they won't be able to farm their land. Vasudev also tells Rangamma that Bade Khan will come after them since he already beats and spits on them. He is standing guard at the gate, even though he has a fever right now. But his wife isn't that bad, and she lets Vasudev come and go.

They decide that they will start the bhajans again, thinking it would be what Moorthy wants. But Moorthy tells Sankar, "Let them prepare themselves for the fight. But no processions or bhajan lest the police fall on them!" (108).

Analysis

Kartik is the month of lights, but the villagers of Kanthapura are getting more and more unhappy. Because of their activism, Moorthy and his fellow countrymen have been beaten, thrown in jail, and have lost important jobs. Even though they are committed to truth, love, and nonviolence, they are still met with violence and oppression. Rao doesn't want the reader to think that Kanthapura's resistance will fall apart if Moorthy isn't there to lead it, so she shows how the women start to work together without him to keep fighting. Rangamma leads their learning and their training, and they form the "Sevis"—a Volunteer brigade of women young and old, willing to put their bodies on the line for Gandhism.

Critics have a lot to say about how women are portrayed in Kanthapura, and there are many different points of view. To start, the women in Kanthapura are breaking some of the rules of society. They are becoming more public figures, and those who have been shunned in the past because of their bad reputation, like Ratna, are less limited and more respected now that they are in charge. As Raanu Uniyal explains, "woman appears as a source of strength and *shakti*... women emerge as a strong force of social and cultural change." Through defying societal pressures, widows like Rangamma and Ratna become inspirational to others. The widow

“represents authority of the powerless and with her self-sacrificing nature she becomes intrinsic to the movement.”

Uniyal also believes the novel calls attention to other women’s issues, like “caste system, unequal marriage, child-marriage, women’s education and women’s empowerment in the socio-political and economic structure,” and “highlights that a certain meaning be added to women’s lives once the individuals collectively begin to question certain norms of the community.”

Janet Powers Gemmill agrees, noting the positive nature of the changes in the women’s lives: “In *Kanthapura*, we perceive how the role of the women was gradually transformed as a result of necessity, education, and revolutionary fervor. The traditional Indian woman is shy, retiring, unwilling to show her face before strangers, and always responsive to her husband's bidding. Here, we find women with initiative who are no longer content to go for water, cook meals, and wash clothes, but begin to take on jobs ordinarily reserved for men: reading and interpreting scripture, defending the village, and protesting against the British. Like their model, Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, the emotions of the *Kanthapura* women are sufficiently aroused to call forth extraordinary feats of behavior.”

There are other ways to look at *Kanthapura* than in a way that praises the women. In the next analysis, we'll look at Gandhi's own views on gender, but here we'll keep focusing on the characters.. Ultimately, as M.E.P. Ranmuthugala says, the female characters show a “lack of agency” and their “identities were moulded by men to serve their own nationalist interests.” They have an extremely narrow tightrope to walk between respectability and notoriety, and “they play (or appear to play) both widow and ‘concubine’ based on their actions or the stance they take.” While they do engage in political action, both physically and rhetorically, “the modernity they exhibit is flouted by the traditionalism they bow to: They do not forge separate identities but incorporate Gandhian/nationalist thought into their existing identity of caretaker/mother.” They are important in the struggle but “men set the agenda” in this nationalist struggle that makes it clear it will not “negatively affect the traditional roles the women were given.” The women do not “change the status quo,” and “the novel promotes a vision of women as both modern and traditional where they are tools for men and nationalism.”

Chapter 12

People are praying for a good harvest now that it has started to rain. Priest Rangappa and the villagers gather at the temple, where he bathes and dresses the goddess, while the villagers hitch their ploughs to the bulls. They are glad to see Range Gowda, who they still call Patel, and

are happy to see him. Everyone wants the goddess Kenchamma to show her face and pour down her blessings. The bulls run through Skeffington and Bhatta's fields, splashing the rice and throwing flowers from their flanks as they go.

They will plough, fertilise, and plant. They want it to rain gently, then stop, and then rain gently again. They think Moorthy will show up when the winds get stronger. Everyone wants to make gifts and drinks, spin more, and ask Rangamma anxiously when he will come. She thinks it will be Saturday or Tuesday, and they read in the paper that he is finally out and will be coming soon. Before he goes to the village, Sankar sets up a big meeting to welcome him.

When Venkamma hears this, she goes to Rangappa to plan her daughter's wedding for Tuesday, which is the day they think Moorthy will arrive. The women are upset, but they have their own daughters and know they can't ignore the fact that another woman's daughter is getting married, so they reluctantly agree to go.

They think Moorthy will come on the blue bus on Tuesday, and everyone who doesn't have to go to Venkamma's is waiting for him with bated breath. They think about how Moorthy will get to them, but time goes by and he doesn't show up.

Later that day, they hear Seenu calling to them, so they run to Rangamma's house, which is surrounded by police. Moorthy was taken off the bus and brought here, Seenu tells them. People are upset, but Rangamma comes out and tells them that they should split up for Moorthy's sake. They agree, but watch what Rangamma, Ratna, and Seenu say to the police officers.

The police leave at midnight. They notice that there is a second, younger Bade Khan who also takes a Pariah woman and lives at the Skeffington Coffee Estate.

In the morning, they see Moorthy by the river and think he looks "as ever" (117).

Chapter 13

Moorthy says that the time has come to act. They must also pray for the Mahatma, who is making salt on the Dandi beach after a long pilgrimage. During this time, they need to be strong and put the differences between the Brahmin and the Pariah aside. They are all the same, so they must work together. They don't know what's in Moorthy, who they knew as a child but who is now a completely different person.

Moorthy tells them about Mahatma's journey, how many people gather along the road, how the Patels quit their jobs, and how they hope the British will leave India and give them freedom. They are worried about what will happen when the people get to the sea.

Soon, it will be evening, and they will know that the Mahatma will end his journey and

start making salt the next day. They can't sleep, so they go to the river in the morning to take a bath like the Mahatma would. Everyone gets together, but Priest Rangappa asks them what they are doing, and they know Bhatta has gotten to him.

The next day, they read in the papers that Mahatma took a handful of salt after taking a bath. Then, everyone went home, made it, and gave it to other people. The police don't like this, so they start dragging men to jail and spitting on them. If there weren't so many white men watching the pilgrimage, they would do more. Now every day men go to the sea and make salt, and are put into jail, and more villages send their people because "the call of the Mahatma had sung in their hearts, and they were for the Mahatma and not for the Government" (121).

They ask Moorthy when they will march like Mahatma, and he says when the Karwar Committee tells him to. Rangamma tells the women that they should work on their drills. They are excited about this and get used to it over time. They think about getting hit and falling over, but they try to stay brave and get along.

Chapter 14

One morning, Seenu tells them the Mahatma has been arrested. They see Range Gowda and Moorthy and Rangamma and Pariah Rachanna at the temple, with Moorthy "all speech and Range Gowda all gestures" (124) and they wonder what is being decided. Seenu explains that next week there will be a "Don't Touch the Government" campaign and today they will fast, the Congress panchayat will meet, and in the evening there will be bhajan.

Nanjamma asks Vasudev if the people from Skeffington will join. He says that some of them are with them, but not many. The streets are filled with bicycles that are taking orders to the panchayat.

Later, everyone goes to the temple, where they all feel like they belong to the same caste. Moorthy finally shows up and tells them it's time to start the campaign. They will not pay taxes and they are to picket the toddy booths, for "toddy trees are Government trees, and toddy booths are there to exploit the poor and the unhappy" (125). They will set up a parallel government, and the first thing they will do is put Range Gowda back in charge as Patel. Their hearts swell. He continues that they are not fighting the white man or the white man's slaves (the police and revenue officials), but the "demonic corruption that has entered their hearts, and the purer we are the greater will be our victory, for the victory we seek is the victory of the heart" (125). He counsels them to "send out love where there is hatred" (126). He extols the merits of nonviolence and truth and love, claiming that it will lead to the harmony of the world.

Everyone agrees with him, and then he tells them that the panchayat has decided that the beginning will be on Friday, November 17. This is still a few days away, so they have time to pray and clean up.

When the day comes, men, women, and children get together with musical instruments and a lotus-decorated cart where Moorthy, Range Gowda, Rangamma, and Pariah Ranchanna sit, and they march to the village gate. Vasudev goes to the Estate and brings back 23 Pariahs. They march to Boranna's toddy grove, where there are 139 of them.

They are scared because they can see the police inspector's red horse in the distance. Then they start to see more and more policemen with lathis, which makes them nervous. The inspector tells them they can't march to the toddy grove, and Moorthy smiles and says he knows. The inspector tells them that the government will do everything it can to stop them. Moorthy tells him thanks, and they keep going.

As they move forward, the police surround the men and try to push them back. When Pariah Ranchanna runs out and tries to climb into one of the carts, the police hit him with the lathi. People shout, clap their hands, sing, and shout as they move forward as one. The police throw their clubs at them, and more and more people move toward the fence and try to pull it down. Rangamma tells the women to move forward, and they feel a new force inside them. The more they get hit, the more used to it they get.

But finally, the policemen stop the rush, and they huddle together to look for family members. They feel good about themselves because they know they've done something good. The police split them up by putting them in different cars and taking them to different places. The narrator and others are left in the middle of the jungle at night and are afraid of the wild animals. Rangamma tells them to get in a line, and as they walk and sing, they try to calm down. A man from Ranchapura walking down the road with a cart hears them and offers them food. They ask him to take them to Kanthapura for money, and he agrees. Other carts also come.

People in the village respect them for standing up to the police, and the women, who feel brave, talk about how they need to get rid of the British. People from the village go with the women back to Kanthapura, keeping them safe and being proud of how brave they were.

Chapter 15

When someone asks where the villagers are going on market day, Nanjamma says they are going to picket the toddy shops. Moorthy tells her to be quiet, but he smiles when an old flower seller named Betel Lakshamma asks if they are the ones who marched for Mahatma and

defied the police. She asks if they can save her and her people from the tax collector, but Moorthy is a bit vague and says that they are against all tyrants and that they will see.

The group walks on the Karwar road to the Kenchamma grove. As they stand apart on the Skeffington road near the grove, their hearts start to beat quickly. They had never been on that road before because they always thought the Sahib was standing there and shook as they passed.

There are already police there. Moorthy walks up to the gate and waits calmly for the first coolie to come out with his earnings from the week and go to the toddy booth. When it starts to rain, the procession is worried that the coolies won't show up. They think they hear something coming, but it's just the maistri, so Moorthy tells them to move forward. Something might happen now, and the wind is getting stronger.

The coolies come out when the police inspector opens the gates. They look sad as they walk and look at their feet. They are led to Boranna's toddy booth, where Moorthy and the other villagers stop to look at them and then join them there. Everyone wants to know what Moorthy is going to do.

Moorthy tells them to kneel down in front of the toddy booth, so they do as he says and lay down. The policemen are trying to crowd around the booth and push the coolies forward, but they won't walk over the people. Boranna comes out and yells at them, so everyone starts to chant. Rangamma tells them to lay down, and then the police start hitting them. Moorthy's mouth gets hit. People scream and cry out, making a lot of noise, but they try to stay where they are. The police throw water from pots all over them and sometimes even up their skirts. They stand up and sit down, but they don't fight back.

After everything is over, they wake up in a truck, are let go, and walk home. Some of the men were taken to jail, but Moorthy was not one of them.

When I wake up in the morning, there are new huts and new people. More than thirty Godaveri coolies have moved in. They proclaim that “the army of the Mahatma is an increasing garland” (140).

Chapter 16

Villagers all around the area begin picketing the toddy groves as well, and make songs calling the toddy tree a “crooked tree” (141). People sometimes come to Kanthapura to get one of the villagers to help them in their own village, which makes everyone happy. People go on hunger strikes and get beat up, and stories about what goes on in prison get around.

But the people of Kanthapura continue to support Moorthy and the cause every day, and

they picket many toddy shops. When they ask Moorthy what will happen next, he says that the tax assessments will cause problems in June. They can't wait for this to happen.

Day after day, they get revenue notices, but they don't pay. When a new Patel, a police officer, and the landlord's agent all show up, they all insist that they have to pay. Even when women are beaten in place of their husbands, the people still say no. Some people in the village pay, but most do not.

They hide their jewels and other valuables because they expect police officers to come to their homes. None of them do, but when they wake up one morning, all the roads and cattle trails are blocked. In the afternoon, a beadle shouts loudly that there will be a punitive tax if the taxes aren't paid and the laws aren't followed.

Moorthy steals from house to house in the evening to warn everyone that the real fight is about to start. If the police come to their homes, they should ring the sanctum bell, and Moorthy and his men will be there as soon as they can.

The streets and alleys are empty and quiet all night.

Analysis

To start, it's best to explain what a toddy is and why it's so important to the story. When left to ferment, the sap from a toddy coconut tree, also called a palm tree, turns into a mildly alcoholic drink. In Kanthapura, the coolies are supposed to drink the toddy from the owner's estate and bring him more money than he gets from their work. The coolies spend a lot of their daily pay on alcohol, which Moorthy and the other members of the panchayat think is unfair and want to stop. Throughout the second half of the book, the toddy tree continues to be a strong symbol of imperialist control.

Turning to the question of women and their roles in the Gandhism movement, which was covered in the previous analysis, we will add how Gandhi himself saw the ideal woman and her role in the new India. In their article on the subject, Anshuman Mondal talks about how Gandhi's ideas about women changed over time. He didn't start to see women as important to the nationalist movement until many years after he started it. He extended his definition of courage to include women, seeing them as actors in this struggle but only "without threatening the sanctioned spaces of Hindu patriarchy." The domestic space was a separate sphere from the public one, but now seen as complementary. Women's "courage," then, would take place within the home.

As the 1930s progressed, even though the noble widow was a useful figure, this

movement “was never designed to answer women’s *social* issues” and “its purpose was the very opposite: to idealize ‘woman’ as a ‘sign’ in the respective ideological contests over which vision of India should prevail. In the specific context of communal strife and rising Hindu nationalist militancy, identification with non-aggressive, non-assertive, accommodating and loving feminine principle was designed to restore attention to the kind of nation Gandhi wanted to be.” Overall, then, Gandhi “did not challenge the domestication of female experience nor the fundamental premises of Hindu patriarchy,” and women’s role in the public sphere was “conditional upon service to the nation.”

Another phase is sexuality, and as M.E.P. Ranmuthugala states, “Mahatma Gandhi himself always felt women were asexual.” The heroines in *Kanthapura* are widows, and Indian societal tradition says they will not engage in sexual acts. They are to renounce worldly pleasures when they are widowed, but still take care of the men in their lives. Gandhi was “constantly surrounded by women, both as followers and as care givers,” and in the novel a host of women “follow Moorthy but... also tend to [his] material needs by providing him food and shelter.”

Rangamma, Ratna, and other women in the text are good examples of the "new woman of India," who was different from the average woman in terms of her sexuality, virtue, and commitment to the home. She was also smart, so she was both modern and traditional at the same time. Ratna's picture in *Kanthapura* is a little bit more complicated than Gandhism's new woman because she is more independent and different. She has her own ideas and doesn't always act in the way that most widows do. She talks back to her elders a bit, wears her hair differently, and runs like a boy. But by the end of the novel, “being involved in the nationalist struggle agrees with her and she becomes more deferential and the widows too accept her.”

Chapter 17

The next morning, everyone knows that the Sahib will want the coolies back, so they start to cry out and wonder where Moorthy is. As the police start pushing the coolies back to the Skeffington Estate, kids throw rocks at them and women scream.

Rangappa is beaten after throwing a stone and hitting a soldier. The women call the police “dung-eating curs” (148) and in response the police rush at them. One of them gets on top of Puttamma to rape her.

The streets are full of screams and cries, and all they can see are police officers in uniform. They rush to the temple for solace, and “the whole world seems a jungle in battle” (150). The men were all taken from their homes the night before, and some of their women were

tied up so they couldn't fight back.

The women are upset by the damage they see as they run from house to house looking for safety. They see policemen beating an elephant, and they can hear children crying. The coolies are still marching, and the road to Karwar is blocked with barricades.

They are worried about Radhamma, who is pregnant, and then they see her running with another group of women while policemen beat them. Radhamma sees them and follows them. As they walk to Nanjamma's house, Radhamma collapses and gives birth, even though she is only seven months pregnant.

They hear a scream from the post office and go there to find Ratna. The police officer who raped her has already left. She cries and cries because she wanted to leave but couldn't. They huddle together, and Ratna washes herself and tells them that this is not a safe place. When they hear her, they realise that this is Rangamma's voice. This is not the child they knew or the young widow they cursed.

Their goal is the temple, but they find out that the Pariah women have set fire to Bhatta's house. Women and children from the Pariah group scream in the streets. They get to the temple, but when one of Bhatta's veranda roofs falls in a storm of sparks, they are startled. Timmamma tells Satamma not to go to her own house because the police are still out there.

The women beat their breasts in front of the god without any decorations and begged Siva to protect them all. They pour drinks and pray for their husbands and children. They hear more crashes from Bhatta's house in the distance, and when Satamma curses him very harshly, Ratna tells her that they are all Satyagrahis.

The coolies of the Estate are making a lot of noise because they want to welcome the coolies who were being dragged in. They hear drums in the distance and think that the Himavathy people might be coming to help them. Vedamma suddenly starts shaking and says she has a fever. Ratna tells her she will go get blankets. The women don't want her to, but she tells them to stop being "women" and let her go. As she runs out, a police officer sees her. She runs back inside, and they block the door so he can't get in. He keeps trying to get in, but in the end he locks them in and leaves.

They cry, beat on the door, and try to get out for hours before Ratna suggests they light the sacred flame and do bhajan. She tells them stories about Rangamma and the women in Bombay who were beaten to calm them down. Radhamma starts to feel cold, so they try to warm her up while Timmamma holds the child. Inside there they forget all about the Pariahs and police

and Moorthy and the Mahatma and “felt as though we were some secret brotherhood in some Himalyana cave” (155).

But they are still scared and bang on the door to be rescued. Finally, when Pariah Rachanna's wife hears the moaning and yelling, she comes to the door and lets them out. They get up and go outside, where they can't believe how different the landscape looks now that Bhatta's house is gone.

When she cried about what had happened to her in the morning, Puttamma seemed to have gone crazy. The gods will forgive her, the women tell her.

They know that their men are close and are very excited to see them.

Chapter 18

After three days, it seems like something is wrong. Men dressed in European clothes drive up the Kenchamma Hill in car after car. They brought a lot of soldiers and coolies with them. Drums are beating as police move into the temple square, and someone says that the people there are rebels and that the Government is the most important thing. People's fields are being claimed and put up for auction, and this makes the women cry.

Satamma gets angry and says that she is neither a Moorthy nor a Mahatma and that she is leaving. She doesn't want to go to Ratna's, where the women are going to figure out what to do, but she goes there against her will.

They head to Sami's house where Ratna lives, and all the women gather there. They are confident that the city boys are coming to their relief, that “they would win us back our harvests” (159). More and more women, children, and old people join them.

They are happy to see Pariah Madanna, who had been hiding in the jungle, and their joy increases when they see the city boys emerge, “like princes, fair and smiling and firm” (159). A Volunteer says that they knew the government would sell off their land, so hundreds of men are coming from the city to help. They've also decided to hold a Satyanarayana Puja, where the men will escape from the police and soldiers, more and more men will come, and the government is afraid of them. They talk about what's going on in cities like Peshawar, which the Muslims took over and kicked all the white people out of. They won without firing a single shot, and they refused to kill the Indian soldiers who were sent to stop them. One woman screams that those Indian soldiers are monsters. The Volunteer says that they might be, but the Mahatma says that they are trying to convert them and that their will and love will do it.

The women can see what is going on in their lives: there are policemen everywhere, even

in their homes; there are coolies who look like Pariahs; cars are going up the Bebbur mound and through the fields; and everything is broken. They feel like they can't go on, but Ratna tells them to keep going. Then they say that they only have this little land and won't have anything to eat. She tells them not to worry because the Congress will look after them.

They go home because they are scared. They don't believe that prayers can pay debts, that rice can go back into the granaries, or that fire can burn up Bhatta's promises to pay. But then they realize their error, and cry out for Moorthy to forgive them, and they will "go to the end of the pilgrimage like the two hundred and fifty thousand women of Bombay" (162).

They start getting ready for the procession, and Ratna tells them that at dusk, someone will blow a conch, and all the men from the jungle, by the river, the village, and the city who are working in the fields will come out and go to the field for Satyagraha.

As more people come to the auction, the women see that some of them are also women, and they curse them, especially when they see that some of them are their own. The women start to cry and scream.

They see the holy Sankaru and are happy. As night falls, people in the Sudra and Pariah lines start to cry out. They think they might be safe for one more night because it will be too dark to harvest, but the white men make the coolies in the trucks take out huge gaslights. Sankaru comes running over to them and tells Ratna to blow the conch.

Ratna does this, and then everyone forms a line. They sing, clap, and hold the holy flame and torch. The police come to stop them, but when they see that it's a religious procession and hear them singing a religious song, they realise that they can't do anything for now. As it gets darker and Ratna keeps blowing the conch and shouting for Mahatma, the police get more and more angry with them. All of the men and boys join them all at once and crowd around them. They are so happy.

The city boys say they are going to the barricades and head toward the Bebbur mound. They see shapes and worry that they are soldiers, but the women tell them that they are soldiers, too, and that the land belongs to them. As they get closer, the police get closer and start hitting them. The procession breaks up, and the throne falls to the ground, crushing flowers. But they feel like the gods are with them, and someone shouts to raise the flag of revolution.

The group runs down Aloe Lane, and the police throw rocks at them. They see a break in the hedges and trucks, men, and coolies behind the barricades. They scream out "Gandhi Mahatma ki jai" and the coolies look at them and do not stop working, but the police fall on

them.

Near Rangamma's field they see dozens of soldiers with bayonets coming forward, and “we whirl in shrieks and shouts and yells, and we leap into the harvests. And a first shot is shot into the air” (168). Everything is quiet for a second, and then it all goes crazy with noise and chaos. They fall, run, and try to get into the fields. They fight with the soldiers, but Ratna tells them to keep going. They hear more gunshots, but they keep going. The soldiers are running away, and there are a lot of people moving under the stars.

They want to run and hide in Bhatta's sugarcane, then trip over them while holding their children. Even though they are afraid of snakes, they stay. They can see the coolies still picking and the maistri keeping an eye on them. Then they see shadows in the Estate and think it is the coolies who won't let them down.

They see a man in white holding a flag and hear the crunch of police boots, but they don't know what's going on. When a command is given, the lights go out and the coolies stop working. The only things left are the stars, the moonlit dome of the Kenchamma temple, and a lantern from the Skeffington bungalow.

The coolies shout and throw a burning dhoti at the soldiers. They tell the soldiers to climb the barricades. Some of the coolies fall down when the police shoot at them. As bigger groups of men rush the soldiers, they cry and moan.

The women can't stand by and do nothing, so some of them go behind the crowd and get shot at. They try to bandage each other, and then they run after a city boy who leads them away. Men and boys can be heard talking from the fields.

Suddenly, the soldiers don't know what to do because the coolies, both men and women, are pouring over the barricades and they seem to be outnumbered. But a white man tells them to shoot. So, the soldiers do what they're told and charge at them. There are a lot of kicks and screams, and the women are thrown to the ground. They are spread out.

There is a hush. Someone tells them to be quiet when they ask where Ratna, Nanjamma, Vedamma, and Chinnamma are. Kanthapura is still and quiet in the moonlight. But then they hear the white officer and the soldiers whispering, and they know they are going to attack again.

And they do get attacked, but only because one of their own soldiers opens a gas canister, which the other soldiers hear and mistake for a gunshot. They run as fast as they can, and one of them tries to put the National flag on the barricades, but the men keep getting shot and falling. The women scattered across the field and tried to escape.

One group of soldiers stands up in front of them, and a city boy tells them that they are peaceful. The soldiers say that they have to be loyal to the British Government. Their words turn into a fight, and the coolies join in with their hands. They beg people not to be violent, but more and more men keep getting shot and dying, and the women are sad that Moorthappa, Rachanna, and so many others are dead.

It is a horrifying and amazing sight to see the Gandhi flag under the moon while thousands of men cry, groan, crawl, and gasp. In her despair, Rachanna's wife Rachi wishes she could just burn the whole village down, and other women help her do it. The narrator and her women complain about losing their homes, but there is nothing else they can do about it. They would rather it burn down than have the government take it.

They start to leave the village, but more beatings stop them. They get into the jungle and walk along the riverbanks. On the other side is the state of Mysore, and they dip into the holy river. Men come to meet them and lead them to the village. The villagers put flowers around their necks and call them Mahatma pilgrims.

The people who live here in Kashipura invite them to stay, and they agree.

Chapter 19

It's been a year and two months since the things that happened were written down. In Mysore, a lot of the village people live here. The person telling the story lives with Timmamma. They get together in the afternoon to hear the Upanishads.

They have heard that Rangamma and Seenu will soon be set free. Ratna was in prison for a year, and she recently went to see them to talk about what she did there. The Viceroy and Mahatma came to an agreement, and the peasants will pay back their taxes and won't stop going to the toddy shops. People think things will be the same but that is impossible, for "something has entered our hearts" (180).

They ask about Moorthy, and Ratna tells them he is out of jail. She has a letter from him that she reads to them, in which Moorthy talks about the people he has met and the problems he has talked about, and he wonders if this is all for independence. Swaraj (self-governance)? He knows that there will be Pariahs and poverty as long as there are iron gates and barbed wire around the Skeffington Coffee Estate and as long as there are coolies, gaslights, and cars rolling up the Bebbur mound. He wants Jawaharlal to make things better.

The next week, Ratna went to Bombay, and Rangamma will be here soon. Mahatma is to go to the country of the Red Man and give them Swaraj.

Range Gowda was the only one who went back to Kanthapura, and when he got there, he told them he had to drink three handfuls of the Himavathy water. But the real reason he went was to get his jewellery. He said there “was neither man nor mosquito in Kanthapura, for the men from Bombay have built houses on the Bebbur mound, houses like the city, for coolies, and they own this land and that, and even Bhatta has sold all his lands” (182).

Analysis

Moorthy, Gandhi’s proxy, may not be present during the last major battle between the villagers of Kanthapura and the representatives of colonial authority, but the spirit of Gandhism infuses the villagers’ behavior and beliefs—or, at least, it *mostly* does. The villagers are rightfully distressed by the murder of Rangappa, and cannot help but forget their teachings on loving everyone and scream out, “Butchers, butchers, dung-eating curs!” (149). Their hearts are “burning with anger” (150). Satamma wants to break away from the righteous struggle to save her own house, and cannot help but “[speak] of the hay and the rice and the beds and the only roof she has over her head” (153). Satamma also gives voice to the rage many women feel against Bhatta, saying bitterly that “Satyagrahis or not, he has starved our stomachs and killed our children,” to which the other women except Ratna chorus, “Well done, well done” (153).

Most of the women also express their fears about their lands being harvested and auctioned, wondering “Prayers never aid revenue dues, nor would the rice creep back to the granaries, nor fire consume Bhatta’s promissory notes. Mad we were, daughters, mad to follow Moorthy” (161). While these fears and doubts do not last long and the women recommit themselves to the struggle, the fact that Rao includes them is a testament to how regular Indian people did not always find it easy to embrace Gandhism. Yes, they understood why the movement was important, and they certainly did not relish colonial oppression, but they still felt ties to their land, their homes, and their social standing, and did not always find it easy to be selfless paragons of nonviolence, love, and peace.

There are several disturbing examples in this section that demonstrate how the violence of the state is especially visited upon women’s bodies, as it often is in times of unrest and war. Indirectly, the terrifying and tumultuous events force Radhamma to give birth to her child two months early, but directly, policemen rape Puttamma and attempt to rape Ratna. Though India’s patriarchal system might not make it easy for the rape victims to be open about what happened to them, or even may be censured themselves, the women in the text make it clear that they understand each other, that they know what it is like to inhabit a woman’s body and experience

men's violent acts against it.

The women also come together in a beautiful but painful moment of solidarity when they are trapped in the temple. In the dark, hiding from the soldiers, they hold the newborn child, try to calm the fever of the new mother, and listen to Ratna's stories. They felt as if they were "some secret brotherhood in some Himalayan cave" (155). And tellingly, it is another woman—Rachi, Ranganna's wife—who helps her sisters out by releasing them.

The women of this novel see themselves as soldiers, the "soldiers of Mahatma, and this country is ours" (166). They "whirl in shrieks and shouts and yells, and... leap into the harvests" (168). They put their bodies on the line, taking bullets and blows. They decide they will take the fate of Kanthapura into their own hands by burning it down and leaving it behind, which, given how hard those actions are, is a testament to their resolve and strength.

What to make of the end, then? As the novel was published in 1938, it cannot account for the later years of Gandhist struggle and the eventual achievement of independence and swaraj. The main actors—Moorthy, Rangamma, Ratna, Seenu—are still out there, working to secure those goals. The end is anti-climactic, at a point of stasis. Change has happened, though, with almost everyone else living a new life somewhere other than Kanthapura, and only one villager is left in the burnt-out village—Concubine Chinna, who "still remains in Kanthapura to lift her leg to her new customers" (182). This could be a throwaway comment, intended to be amusing or maybe bittersweet, but it also may have a larger resonance: critic M.E.P. Ranmuthugala sees it as a commentary on the sort of women who are considered crucial parts of the nationalist struggle and necessary in and for the new India. It is ultimately only "the traditional women who are expected to survive in the new India Mahatma Gandhi and Rao propose. The deviant woman is not acceptable in this new India."



Established in 1951

Short Answer Type Questions:

Q 1. Comment on the opening plot of the novel

The writer describes the novel starting with a description of a village. The village is initially known as an agricultural village where the economical imbalance is present in that village. But on the other hand, the village is divided between the two major castes, the Brahmin and Shudras.

Q 2. Who is the narrator of the novel Kanthapura?

The name of the narrator is Achakka. She is known as an old widow. People call her the grandmother of the village.

Q 3. Who was the local deity that people worship in that village?

Goddess Kenchamma was the local deity that people worshiped in that village. She saves the villages from any natural calamities.

Q 4. What kind of castes belong in the village of Kanthapura?

Kanthapura village belongs to various castes. There are the Brahmin, the Pariah, The potter, the weavers, and the shudra.

Q 5. Why Kenchamma hill is recognized as a red hill?

It is popular among the people that Kenchamma killed a devil on the hill and the blood of the devil filled the whole hill with his blood.

Q 6. Who is Bade Khan?

Bade Khan is the police and he was sent by the British authorities to the Kenchamma village.

Q 7. Why does he find it difficult to get a house in the village?

Bade Khan faced problems finding a house for living in because he was a policeman and a Muslim caste because the Kenchamma village was divided into various castes.

Q 8. Where did he get a place to live in?

Bade Khan finally found a place to live at the Skeffington Coffee Estate. He tried to occupy a tin-shed room.

Q 9. Who was Bhatta?

Bhatta is a Brahmin in caste and he is one of the villagers of Kanthapura. He is recognized as a clever man and moneylender also.

Q 10. What vision does Moorthy have about Gandhiji?

Moorthy has a vision in which Mahatma Gandhi leads him from darkness to enlightenment. Gandhiji instructs him to lead a life of truth.

Q 11. Why did Narsamma die?

Moorthy follows the rule of Gandhiji in his life and kept mixing with the pariah people. He was excommunicated from the village community. Hearing this, his mother falls and dies.

Q 12. How was Skeffington Coffee Estate?

The working conditions are very hard. It rains heavily here. The workers have to work there in the rain. The female workers were exploited there.

Q 13. Who was the owner of the coffee estate?

The Hunter Sahib was the owner of the coffee estate.

Q 14. What kind of man he was?

The original owner of the Skeffington Coffee Estate was called Hunter Sahib. He uses his hunter on those workers who did not work properly.

Q 15. Why does Moorthy start fast?

Moorthy remembers that he is responsible for the violence which takes place in the coffee estate. So he decides to go on a fast for three days.

Q 16. Who is Patel Range Gowada?

He is a revenue officer at the village of Kanthapura. Because of his official position, he is the local authority of the village.

Q 17. What is the village-level congress committee?

Gandhiji announced the message of the freedom movement all over India that every village must have a congress committee on the pattern of the All India Congress.

Q 18. How does Bhatta pull Venkamma in his favor?

Venkamma is a woman of aggressive and quarreling nature. Bhatt was aware that he might object to serving on the Village Congress Committee. That is why he plans to keep Venkamma on his side. So he decides to get her daughter married to a suitable man. So that she remains under his thumb.

Q 19. Why is the month of Kartik important to the villagers?

The month of the Kartik is important to the villagers because it is remembered that it is the month of light and it is believed that the God Kartik descend on the earth and move around in the streets of the Kanthapura village.

Q 20. How is the mixing with Parihas important for Gandhiji's cause?

Gandhiji remembers if the people mix freely they will be able to stand united against the British.

Q 21. How is the Savika Sangha formed in the village?

Rangamma takes an active part in the freedom movement. She impressed the village women with her personality in Kanthapura village. In this way, the Savika Sangha is formed in the village.

Q 22. Who teaches Yoga to the villagers and what was the result of it?

Rangamma teaches Yoga to the villagers. Rangamma taught them how to control their breath and as a result, they feel stronger than before.

Q 23. What grudge does Venkamma have against Moorthy and how does she try to settle scores?

Venkamma have against Moorthy .She knows that villagers are planning to welcome Moorthy on his release from jail. So he fixes the date of marriage of her daughter to divert the villagers to the same date.

Q 24. What is Gandhiji's last pilgrimage to be?

The Dandi March is the last march of Gandhiji. About eighty-two people join in this march.

Q 25. What is the picketing of the Toddy shop?

The villagers decide not to let the coolies buy Toddy. The police beat them but they bear all and try to stop the coolies from going into the Toddy shop.

Q 26. What is the significance of the song about the toddy milk?

Toddy milk is a kind of desi wine. Toddy milk's song is about spreading awareness against wine.

Q 27. What kind of auction is announced in the village of Kanthapura?

The villagers refuse to pay the taxes. So the Government announced that their land will be auctioned.

Q 28. Why does Rachi start a bonfire of clothes?

The police came to auction the fields of the villagers. Rachi says that if their crops are to be auctioned, they will not let them fall into the hand of the police. So, Rachi starts a bonfire of clothes.

Q 29. What news do the villagers get about Moorthy?

The villagers hear that Moorthy has joined the company of Jawahar Lal Nehru.

Essay Type Questions:

How are women represented in *Kanthapura*?

In *Kanthapura*, women play a very important role. Achakka tells the story, and Rangamma, Ratna, and Rachanna's wife are also important women characters. Most of the women in the story are shown to be respectful and committed to the cause. Their active participation in the fight against the British is notable, especially since they don't fight back, even when they are beaten, raped, and put through other kinds of pain. But the women can't fully accept their role as freedom fighters because this isn't Gandhi's vision and it's also not what their husbands or fathers want for them. Rangamma tells the Sevis that her husband and family are the most important things for a woman. So, *Kanthapura* is a perfect example of how women were treated in India before it became independent. Even though women had so much potential, they were seen as inferior to men and treated badly by both men and their colonial masters.

How does Ratna change as the novel progresses?

When we first see Ratna, it is through Bhatta's eyes, with Achakka as a guide. Ratna is only 15, but she is already a widow, and she doesn't act like she should. She "went about the streets alone like a boy... even wore her hair to the left like a concubine" (30) and when anyone asked her about her behavior, she told them it was none of their business. She was seen "openly talking to Moorthy in the temple, and alone too" (31), demonstrating a disregard for social norms and public opinion. But as time goes on, she gets involved with the nationalist movement and starts to change. She becomes more respectful and puts more emphasis on how smart she is instead of how independent she is. She takes over for Rangamma with the Sevis once her aunt is gone, and the widows marvel that "there's the voice of Rangamma in [Ratna's] speech, the voice of Moorthy, and she was no more the child we had known, nor the slip of a widow we had cursed" (152). Ratna is now quieter and more like the new woman Gandhi thought India needed—a woman who doesn't challenge traditional ideas of separate spheres and women's virtue, but is still active and committed to the nationalist struggle.

Why do very few villagers find it easy to love Bhatta and Bade Khan, as Moorthy counsels them to?

Bhatta isn't a very likeable person at first, but he is a villager who is connected to many of the other people through family, land, and debt. Bhatta isn't a very likeable person at first, but

he is a villager who is connected to many of the other people through family, land, and debt. People tolerate him, and Achakka says, "he was not a bad man, was Bhatta" (25). But Bhatta speaks out strongly against Moorthy and Gandhism in general because he fears for his own wealth. He joins forces with Bade Khan, sets Venkamma against the other widows, and keeps the villagers' money in his hands. Bade Khan is an Indian who works for the colonial government. He is a complete outsider. He sneaks around and hides, watching the villagers and trying to stop their progress as much as he can. Moorthy counsels the villagers to love both of these men because Gandhi says this is the only way to create a just society, but his words mostly fall on deaf ears. Achakka comments, "We would do harm to no living creature. But to love Bade Khan—no, that was another thing. We would not insult him. We would not hate him. But we could not love him. How could we?" (65). Near the end of the novel, all of the women say almost the same thing about Bhatta. They burn down his house and complain about the promissory notes he made them sign. These two men are not easy to love because they directly and negatively affect the lives of the women. As a city boy, Moorthy may find it easier to talk about the philosophical ideas of Gandhism, but for the villagers, this is not something that is easy or practical.

Why is Achakka, the first-person narrator, so thinly drawn?

Most first-person narrators in books say what they think, feel, and believe. Their view of the world is naturally selfish. The "I" perspective is the most important; the way they see the world controls how the reader sees it. But Achakka is not like that. The reader doesn't know much about what she thinks and feels. We don't even know much about her life, except that she is a widow without a daughter. Rao does this on purpose, though. He makes Achakka say "we" more than "I," so she can be the voice of more than one woman. Achakka is more a part of a group than a person, and she gives up her own needs for the good of the group. This lets Rao talk about how Gandhism affected a whole village (or at least the women of the village) instead of just one person.

What kind of note does the novel end on?

The tone of the end of the book isn't clear, in part because the nationalist struggle was still going on when Rao published his book in 1938. No one knew what would happen to Gandhism, and India's freedom from British rule was not a given. At the end, there isn't much change. The main characters are still moving and doing what they've always done. It's possible that not much has changed or that everything has. India is still run by the British, but the people

there have grown up and are no longer just parts of a machine. They are still ruled by the government, but they know what they need to do to make things better. *Kanthapura* is no longer there, but maybe it lives on in the hearts of the people who lived there and still fight for it, if not in its physical form, then at least in their minds. Achakka's storey has a note of pride, but it also has a note of sadness. Rao says it's complicated, which is probably the best way to figure out what Gandhism has done to small villages.

Q Write a note on the depiction of women characters in this novel:

Raja Rao's novel *Kanthapura* is set in the background of India's movement. Moorthy is the central character of the novel. When Moorthy is arrested Ratna takes his position. Under her guidance, the other women of the village take part in the freedom movement. They form Savika Sangha to fight against the British.

Rangamma and Ratna are two women leaders of *Kanthapura*. Both of them are educated, widows. She regularly takes the newspaper from the city. Through these newspapers, she knew about the trial of Moorthy and his satyagrahis.

On the other hand, there is Ratna. She is a young widow. In the beginning, the villagers do not like her. But, when she takes part in the freedom movement, the villagers like her. Later, in the absence of Moorthy and Rangamma, Ratna leads the women against the police.

Ramakrishna read the Vedantic texts. When he dies, the women of the village decide to read and comment on the Vedantic texts. The women choose Ratna to read the texts Rangamma to comment on them.

Kanthapura discusses the sexual activity of the female workers of the Skeffington Estate also. If any woman is against this, her father or husband is beaten. Thus we find that female characters of the novel play a main role in the novel.

Q Discuss *Kanthapura* as a Gandhian Novel.

Raja Rao's novel *Kanthapura* is a Gandhian novel. The novel describes the events that take place in *Kanthapura* under the impact of Gandhi's non-violent freedom struggle.

When we think about our freedom struggle, some big names come to our minds. But we must not forget the little, nameless, unremembered acts of peasants, students, lawyers, women, and old men.

Moorthy was one of them. He saw Gandhiji addressing a public meeting. He felt the impact of Gandhiji, and he became a Gandhian. He joined the freedom struggle.

Moorthy organizes Gandhi's work in the village. He forms the congress committee. He calls the Haritatha man. He spreads Gandhi's message of eradication of untouchability.

He goes from door to door, even in the pariah streets. He encourages the women of the village to join the freedom struggle. In the conclusion, it can be said that *Kanthapura* is a Gandhian Novel.

The Castes of India in *Kanthapura*

Gandhi's revolutionary speeches and *Kanthapura* itself have a lot to say about the caste system and how unfair it is. We'll take a quick look at what the caste system is and explain this complicated social order for people who don't know about it.

The Hindu caste system, called *jati*, puts people into a hierarchy based on their *karma* (work) and *dharma* (duty). It comes from the *Manusmriti*, which is the most important Hindu law book and was written more than 1,000 years before Christ was born. There are four main castes, and within those, there are about 3,000 castes and 25,000 subcastes that are based on jobs.

The Brahmins, who are teachers and intellectuals, are at the top of the hierarchy. They are thought to come from the head of Brahma, who made the universe. The Kshatriyas, who come from Brahma's arms, are the leaders and warriors. The Vaishyas, which come from his thighs, are the next group. The Shudras, who come from Brahma's feet and do simple jobs, are the fourth group. The Dalits, also called the "Untouchables," are the last group that is not part of the caste system. They do the dirtiest jobs, like working with diseases, animal skin, sewage, and so on. People are put into a caste when they are born and stay there until they die.

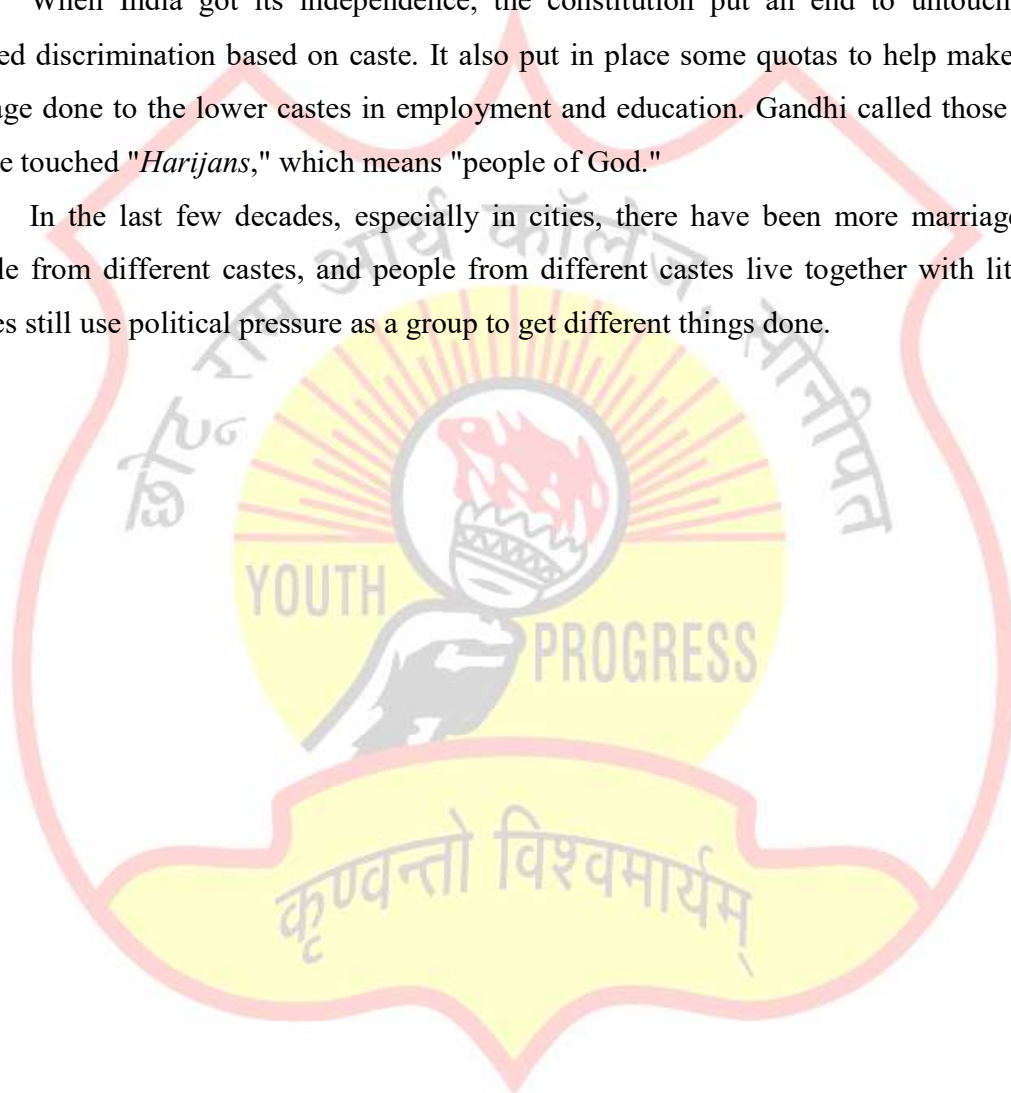
The system is rigid, and the upper castes have a lot of benefits that the lower castes don't have. However, until the late 18th century, the system was a little bit fungible, which means that sometimes people could move from one caste to another. However, when the British colonial rulers took over, they, as the BBC explains, "made caste India's defining social feature when they used censuses to simplify the system, primarily to create a single society with a common law that could be easily governed."

The *Asia Society* explains the nuances of the caste system: "The *jati* system is not static in which all groups stay in the same position. There is mobility in the system and *jatis* have changed their position over the centuries of Indian history. However, the *jati* moves up the social scale as a group and not as individuals. A *jati* can improve its position in the class system by

advancing economically and emulating social groups with money and power. At the same time, a jati can also move up in the caste hierarchy. Mobility in the caste system has been termed 'Sanskritization' by the scholar M.N. Srinivas. To gain position in this process, a lower jati copies the habits and behavior patterns of the dominant jati in the area."

When India got its independence, the constitution put an end to untouchability and banned discrimination based on caste. It also put in place some quotas to help make up for the damage done to the lower castes in employment and education. Gandhi called those who could not be touched "*Harijans*," which means "people of God."

In the last few decades, especially in cities, there have been more marriages between people from different castes, and people from different castes live together with little trouble. Castes still use political pressure as a group to get different things done.



Established in 1951