Writing about the nationalist movement in his "Indo-Anglian Fiction," N. Radhakrishnan sums up Gandhi's influence on every Indian village during the 20s and 30s, as he says, "even this tiny village (Kanthapura) with its humble folk is shaken to its foundation by the whirlwind of Gandhian Revolution."\(^1\) No novelist, who was a keen observer of contemporary men and events could escape from the Gandhian whirlwind. Raja Rao is an ardent devotee of Gandhi and all that is Gandhian. Not surprisingly, he inclined to give us a memorable picture of Gandhian movement and how it transformed a remote slumbering village into a cauldron of anti-British activities.

In this connection Rama Jha correctly observes, "Each Indo-Anglian, novelist of the thirties derived from Gandhi what was in accordance with his temperament, ideological orientation if any, absorption of Western modern culture and above all his creative needs and vision of life."\(^2\)

This vision of life or the world outlook of each


novelists distinguishes him from his contemporary novelists in his perception of social events and so in his presentation of them in the novels. That is why we find the same Gandhi and the national movement which drew millions of men and women into action, are presented to the readers differently by Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narsayan and others in their own ways.

If one has to evaluate Raja Rao's portrayal of Gandhi in his novels, one must have a thorough understanding of Raja Rao's perception of Gandhi and Gandhism. Raja Rao is a confirmed Gandhian. He has immense faith in the efficacy of Gandhism, which he feels, the panacea to all evils of the society. In his interview with Shiva Niranjan, describing his development as a novelist, Raja Rao confirmed his commitment to Gandhi. He says "In Kanthapura I was Gandhian".

For Raja Rao, Gandhi is the Mahatma, who swept the minds of all and sundry with his preachings and practice. The novel Kanthapura depicts the Gandhian whirlwind that shook the lethargic little village to its roots from its slumber. It is in Moorthy's characterisation that we find the alter ego, Gandhi. As C.D.Narasimhaiah rightly points

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3 Shiva Niranjan, "An Interview with Raja Rao" in Indian Writing in English (New Delhi, Sterling Publications 1985), p. 22.
out "From the time we meet him (Moorthy) at the beginning of the novel to the very end of the book, Moorthy is perched at the top in his ascetic strength and does not seem to me to grow before our eyes very much."4

Moorthy enters the scene of action first by unearthing a half-sunk linga and arranging the consecration ceremony. He knows the villagers' pulse and the means to draw them into national movement. He uses all means of exploiting their religious sentiments and beliefs. This is nothing new, for this was the method actually adopted by Balaji Gangadhar Tilak during the national movement. Later Gandhi emulated it to involve the villagers in the nationalist struggle. Religion played an important role in Indian struggle for independence and so does it in this novel. It is through Jayarajachar's Harikatha that the people of Kanthapura are familiarised of Gandhi and national movement by the Congress. The arrest of Jayarajachar by the police brings Moorthy into the centre of action. Now the responsibility of mobilising the people of his village falls on this young college student. Moorthy is depicted as a true replica of Gandhi. For the villagers, Moorthy is another Gandhi. According to C.D.Narasimhaiah, "It was

Gandhi's greatness that he produced hundreds of little Gandhi's throughout the country. And corner House Moorthy, as the villagers called him, was one of them.\textsuperscript{3}

Of course, Gandhi's producing hundreds of little Gandhi's throughout the country may be contested, for sometimes, Moorthy himself behaves in a most un-Gandhian Way in the novel. But it is true Moorthy is depicted as the true representative of Gandhi and all that Gandhi stood for.

Moorthy is shrewd to mobilise the villagers representing different castes and interests, by explaining how the national movement and its goal fulfil their aspirations and interests. He explains them how the Britishers rob India by importing mill-made clothes from England and how they can prevent it by spinning yarn and wearing their own cloth. The villagers may not be able to understand the political and economic aspects of the spinning. But what they know is that, it saves them some money and they can have their own woven clothes. Even the Brahmin community does not object to it for it does not question their cast supremacy. Bhatta, perhaps the only antagonist after Waterfall Venkamma, of Gandhian ways, also approves this spinning. But when it

comes to the removal of untouchability, he denounces it bitterly. "I see no fault in Khadi and all that. But it is this pariah business that has been heavy on my soul." He goes to the extent of ex-communicating Moorthy, an ardent Gandhian for his mixing with pariahs. In Bhatta, we find the traditional brahmins antipathy towards this Gandhian ideology of the removal of untouchability. But how comes Moorthy, himself a brahmin can involve some many brahmin women in this Gandhian movements? Perhaps Gandhian ideology may itself give scope for different people to interpret it differently to their own advantages. Rangamma is another Gandhian. But, for her, Gandhism, is not enemical to the caste-system. She says, "He (a Gandhi) always says let the castes exist, let the separate eating exists, let not one community marry with the other... no, no! Bhutto, the Mahatma is not for all this pollution." Rangamma, by using the word 'pollution' shows her disapproval of mixing the castes very strongly. But strangely, the pariahs of Kanthapura find in Moorthy, their Gandhi, a redeemer and a Messiah who can eradicate this evil of untouchability. It is difficult


7 Ibid., p. 39.
to comprehend how the faith in the Hindu concept of caste system agrees with the removal of untouchability. If one accepts the caste system, invariably, one has to maintain one's caste identity and pariahs should not be allowed to mix with other upper castes.

Even Moorthy, the Gandhi of Kanthapura, falters when it comes practising the mixing of castes. It is to the novelist's credit, that he reveals the mental struggle that Moorthy undergoes when Moorthy enters pariah's quarters. It is a struggle between his Gandhian principles and his brahminic sentiments. The integrity and honesty of the novelist is praise worthy for he permits the idealised character to react the way he did in Pariah Rachanna's house. ".. Moorthy, who had never entered a pariah's house—he had always spoken to the pariahs from the gutter slab. Moorthy thinks this is something new, and with one foot to the back and one foot to the fore, he stands trembling and undecided, and then suddenly hurries up the steps and crosses the thresh hold and squats on the earthen floor." 8

May be these are the reactions of new comers to Gandhism, who have taken initiation to it recently. But his behaviour after leaving Rachanna's house may raise the eye brows of many Gandhians. This is Moorthy, the Gandhian that

preaches brotherhood and castelessness. And this is how he reacts, to his entering pariah's quarter and sipping milk there. He feels guilty of violating the Hindu tradition and so hesitates to enter the house of Rangamma as usual. He takes the bath in the river and changes clothes. Then he tells Rangamma what he has done, as if seeking her advice. Rangamma, another follower of Gandhi, wants him to change his sacred thread. But Moorthy says that it is not possible to change it as often, as he goes to pariah's quarters. Then she tells him to purify himself by taking the Ganges water. Moorthy's reactions to this surprises us. "... taking the Ganges water he feels a fresher breath flowering through him, and lest any one should ask about his new adventure, he goes to the river side after dinner and sit and think and pray." His feelings reveal how he has felt relieved from the polluting of entering pariahs quarter after taking the Ganges water. It also shows that he is even afraid of the reactions of his community if they know it. That is why he leaves for the river and meditates.

Raja Rao, being a brahmin himself, well brings out the instinctive reactions of an average brahmin in Moorthy's actions. "After all a brahmin is a brahmin." One wonders

9 Ibid., p. 104-105
10 Ibid., p. 105.
if a Gandhian like Moorthy, has reservations for mixing with pariahs, what about the sentiments of an average upper caste villager for the Gandhian concept of the removal of untouchability? Raja Rao the sincere artist he is, gives a true account of an average Indians' sentiments for this Gandhian principle without exaggerating Gandhian influence on him.

Moorthy approaches Range Gowda, the village Patel to seek his help in the formation of the village congress committee. Then Ranga Gowda behaves exactly like a village feudal lord, Moorthy does not even disapprove Ranga Gowda's insulting behaviour towards the pariahs. His advice to love even his enemy falls on the deaf ears of Ranga Gowda. Ranga Gowda says that it is not possible for an ordinary man like him to love his enemy. It is his social status and economic power, that are revealed in his reply to Moorthy. His hatred for pariahs is well shown in his reply for, he does not even mince words or care for Moorthy's feelings. "Learned master, at this rate I should have to go and bow down to every pariah and butcher and instead of giving them a nice licking with a lantana switch I should offer flowers and coconuts and betal leaves and say 'pray plough this field this wise Maharaja." Any one with a modicum of civility and Gandhian principles would have understood the sarcasm of Ranga Gowda's words and objected

11Ibid., p. 100.
to it. But Moorthy, the Gandhi of Kanthapura, is tactical even to the extent of compromising with his ideals. He does not even disapprove Ranga Gowda's behaviour nor does he try to convince Gowda of the inhuman nature of practising untouchability. Perhaps Moorthy is too practical to hurt the feelings of the villages lord for he needs his assistance in forming the congress committee.

The insistence of Gandhi on the good means to achieve good ends is left to winds by Moorthy in involving the villagers in the congress committee. He does not attempt to convince them of the need for the foundation of the congress committee nor does he explain the rationale behind the Gandhian ideology of non-violent non-co-operation movement. For him, Ranga Gowda is there to make the docile villagers fall in line with his activities. The sudras and pariahs hesitate to become the members of congress panchayat, for they understand nothing of its necessity and activity, Ranga Gowda grows wild and shouts, "If you are the sons of your fathers, stand up and do what this learned boy says", and Ranga Gowda's words were such a terror to them that one here and one there went up before the sanctum, to take the oath of practising ahimsa and seeking truth.

Even here, the pariahs are not allowed to enter the

12 Ibid., p. 107.
temple to take vow, for Ranga Gowda is there to order them—"
"Here in the temple or there in the court yard, it is the
same god you vow before, so go along." And all the while
Moorthy remains a mute spectator, while the pariahs are
constantly reminded of their low status in the society.
There is not even a mild protest from this Gandhian. Thus
Moorthy's behaviour sometimes bewilders the readers, who
take him to Gandhi. Perhaps Raja Rao wants to show how the
Gandhian followers cannot get rid of their traditional
social values inspite of their adoration for Gandhi.

Raja Rao shows us Gandhi through the eyes of a cross
section of the people. He reveals how Gandhi over awed the
ordinary men and women with his most untraditional activities
and preachings. Most of them do not consider Gandhi, a human
being like them. For many of them he is super human, an
avatar of God and this make them think that the Gandhian
ideology can be practised by Gandhi alone or people like
Moorthy. That is revealed in Ranga Gowda's reply to Moorthy's
proposal to love his enemies. Gowda says, "that is for the
Mahatma and you, Moorthappa, not for us poor folk." They
equate Moorthy to Gandhi. The adoration of the villagers
for Gandhi is well expressed in the words of Manjamma. "No
sister I do not imagine the Mahatma like a man or a god, but

13 Ibid., p. 107
14 Ibid., p. 90.
like the Sahyadri Mountains, blue, high wide and the rock of evening that catches the light of the setting sun.\textsuperscript{15} Gandhian methods of ahimsa, loving one's own enemies and truth caught the imagination of the whole gamut of the society. But people treat them something impracticable and not within their capabilities. This is revealed, when the women of Kanthapura expressed their joy at the burning of Bhatta's house. For them Bhatta is a money lender who squeezed their hard earned money and so their foes. So, when they find Bhatta's house catching fire they cannot suppress their wild joy. It is a vicarious pleasure, no doubt. But who can stop them from finding pleasure at the sufferings of the enemies, certainly not Moorthappa. "Well done, well done, it is not for nothing Bhatta, lent us money at 18 per cent and 20 per cent interest and made us bleed. Satyagrahi or not, he has starved our stomachs and killed our children and we all say again well done, well done."\textsuperscript{16}

Thus the villagers' instinctive reactions to personal happening cannot be restrained with Gandhian principles. If what historians wrote is true, even Gandhi is not an exception to this natural human behaviour. With all the impar-

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., p. 175

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. 219.
tial outlook, can any one escape from his subjective feeling to the happening around him especially when one is a party to it. It is said that Gandhi considered the defeat of Pattabhi Setaramaiah, his candidate in the hands of Subhas Bose, as his (Gandhi's) personal defeat and could not reconcile to the situation in the election of Bose for the post of presidentship. "The defeat is more mine than Pattabhi's."17 He is not even satisfied with venting his distress. According to Satyavrata Ghosh "On his (Gandhi's) own admission, the resolution to unseat Bose was drafted by Gandhiji himself."18 Of course Gandhi reacted as any ordinary man reacts in such a situation. All this reveal how Raja Rao portrays Gandhi image as understood by laymen.

This honest portrayal of Gandhian character saves Moorthy from becoming an idealised but life less one. Of course, the majority of Indians are swept by the tycoon of national movement. But there are still people, who resent Gandhi and his untraditional ways. Apart from Bhatta who disapproves Gandhi and his mixing of castes, there are a quite number of people in Kanthapur who resent this Gandhi's business and Gandhi vagabondage! Why, even Moorthy's mother

18 Ibid.,
does not approve his ways of mixing with pariahs. Those, who joined the movement, joined voluntarily (especially the brahmin women) without much persuasion from Moorthy. But where persuasion is needed to involve people like Moorthy's mother there is no such evidence in the novel, that Moorthy attempts at it. It is surprising that Moorthy does not begin his reformative trial from home. His mother herself is left out of the stream of national movement. And so, when she learns that Moorthy is excommunicated, she takes it to her heart and dies of sorrow. Apart from these rumbling from a very few upper caste people the whole of Kanthapura stands united in their support to national movement and is ready for any sacrifice. Whether they understand the aims and aspirations of Gandhian movement is a different matter, Jayarajachar introduces Gandhi as an avatar of Vishnu to the villagers. For them, Gandhi is born in India to save her from the clutches of the Britishers. Their absolute devotion for Gandhi is well expressed in Ranga Gowda's words, "If you want one to be a slave, I shall be your slave. All I know is that what you told me about the Mahatma is very fine and the Mahatma is a holy man, and if the Mahatma says what you say, let the Mahatma, word be the word of God." 

These humble village folk had not seen Gandhi nor did they hear him. But they consider Gandhism a mantra to deliver them from all the worldly troubles. Some critics like Rama Jha stresses the spiritual significance of Gandhi's influence on the villagers. "... the significant aspect of Gandhian movement which essentially addressed the village India, was religious and spiritual in nature."\(^{20}\)

But they are not so naive not to think of the economic aspect of Gandhian movement. It may not be Gandhi's intention to raise their economic aspirations. But Raja Rao cannot turn blind eye to the real aspiration of the people who joined the movement. When Gandhi starts his famous Dandi March to prepare salt by defying the salt law, the people of Kanthapura pray for its success. For them this is the weapon, Gandhi uses, to drive away the Britisher from India. In Independent India, they expect to pay less taxes and no harassment from the revenue officials. Perhaps this may be the simplistic approach of the villagers towards the noble goal of achieving independence. But they have their own interests for which they pin hopes on free India.

For Rangamma, one of the most ardent followers of Gandhi among the women of Kanthapura". the British will

leave India, and we shall be free and we shall pay less taxes, and there will be no policeman."*21 Another village woman innocently asks Moorthy, whether they can be free from the revenue payment after Swaraj. "Then you will free from the Revenue Collector? .. the one who takes bribes and beats his wife and send his servants to beat us."*21

This question of the village woman reminds us of a Jatkawalla in Gurujada's *Kanya Sulkam*, asking Giriram whether he would be rid of the police once India becomes independent. Thus the nationalist movement certainly raises a myriad hopes among various section of people, each interpreting it according to his needs. Their interests may be varied and often contradictory. If, for Rangamma who is a land owner, independent India means paying less taxes and freedom from the police harassment, for the pariahs it is the upliftment of their social status. That is why even the simple act of spinning raises many expectations in them. "They would spin and spin, and if that Brahmin boy was to be believed they would have clothes to wear, blankets and shirts and tour clothes. They said it was all of the Mahatma."*22


21d Ibid., p. 192.

22Ibid., p. 28.
Moorthy's involvement in the Sheffington estate affair on behalf of the workers is similar to that of Gandhi's involvement in the Champaran struggle of the workers. Here Moorthy cannot solve their problem and so did Gandhi. Instead of fighting for their cause, there is a retreat and some of the labourers return to Kanthapura as coolies to work in the land lords' fields. Nothing changed for the workers except their masters. We are not even shown by the novelist that they are economically better off in Kanthapura except that they escaped the harassment of the white master. The economic aspect of the lives of the ordinary villagers and the impact of Gandhian ideology on it, is completely ignored by the novelist. Even in the upliftment of the pariah's social status, Moorthy has done nothing concrete. He has not asked them to enter temples, nor does he arrange inter communal dinners. Maybe Moorthy wants them to wait till India achieves independence for the removal of untouchability. Of course Gandhi himself argued against intercommunal dinner. To quote Gandhi, "I believe that interdining or intermarriage is not necessary for promoting national unity." Perhaps, Moorthy is really a true follower of Gandhi in this aspect.

23Dr. B.R. Ambedkar 'Gandhima' (Nellore: Dr. Ambedkar Publications Society)
Gandhi's influence on the women of Kanthapura is quite astounding. It is the women of Kanthapura who form the vanguard of the national movement. But the most active response comes from the two widows, Rangamma and Ratna, who have no family encumbrances. But this Gandhian ideology does not rescue the women from the daily routine of housework drudgery. They are not free to participate in the movement unless their husbands permit. Their duty is first to serve their husbands and then the nation. They cannot think and act independently. When they form Kanthapura Sevika Sangha, it is resented by their husbands. They beat their wives for they feel neglected by their wives. But this wife beating is not objected to by the leader of the women, Rangamma. She does not even try to convince their husbands about the necessity of sharing household chores with their wives, so that their women can do some service to the nation. Instead she advises the wives to bear with their husbands patiently.

More confounding is the advice rendered by Ratna, the young and enthusiastic widow, to the other women volunteers. While training them in the art of bearing the lathi charges of the police, she asks them not to weep even if they are beaten by the police. After all they are habituated to the regular beatings of their husbands. "Be strong sister when your husband beats you, you do not hit back, do you? You
only grumble and weep. The police mans beatings are the like?" The casual manner in which Ratna talks of wife beating really surprises the readers, who expect her to protest against this habit. Both Rangamma and Ratna talk as if wife beating is something natural and women are born to suffer it. Tradition is too strong to be wiped out easily even by Gandhian influence.

The last part of the novel created a lot of controversy among the literary critics. During the no-tax campaign the revenue officials come to Kanthapura to confiscate the land of the people, who refuse to pay taxes. Of course, the rich among them are shrewd enough to hide their valuables. When the officials come to confiscate their land, they resist but cannot prevent them. They are yet to mentally prepare for the long and arduous fight against the British. So once they realise that their fight to retain their land is futile they feel desperate and wavers whether this Gandhian movement can be successful at all. For them their land is precious and they are not ready to forgo it. "We are, we are! But we have only a loin-cloth wide of land and that is to be sold away, and who will give us a morsel to eat—who?"25 Any amount of Ratna’s assurance cannot


25 Ibid., p. 239.
instil hope and courage in them. "Prayer never paid Revenue dues. Nor would the rice creep back to the granaries. Nor fire consume Bhattacharya's notes. Mad we were daughters, mad to follow Moorthy."26 But these desperate feelings come out of their helplessness, not because they use lose complete confidence in Gandhi. Immediately they repent for their remarks and once again repose their faith in Gandhi and Moorthy. "Moorthy forgive us, Mahatma forgive us, Kanchamma forgive us, we shall go. Oh, we shall go to the end of the pilgrimage."27

This wavering attitude of the villagers perhaps may be the outcome of their not understanding of sufferings, one has to undergo if one has to follow Gandhian ideology. It seems that the villagers adoration for Gandhi, not their faith in the efficacy in the Gandhian mode of action, that makes them simply obey Moorthy's orders.

The villagers try to prevent the auction of their property. There is lathi charge and shooting and a few succumb to bullets. The entire village is deserted. Bereft of the leadership some of them settle in a nearby village Kashipura, while Moorthy stays in the city. Now the

26 Ibid., 230-31
27 Ibid., 231.
Gandhian movement is simply a memory for them. This
deserting the village by the Gandhian followers is resented
by critics like T.D. Brunton. He feels that the climax of
the novel achieves nothing in its effect. "The climax, in
which the village is destroyed and the peasants are brutally
beaten and shot on the orders of the British rulers, is
fragmentary and emotionally unrealised. The affair is horri-
fying in itself, but gains little in the telling. Afterwards
the book fades, the villagers are scattered while Moorthy
we gather, is being drawn towards the congress activities
led by Jawaharlal."28

Mr.N. Radhakrishnan feels that this deserting the
village by Moorthy and the villagers is nothing but an
instance of escapism. He questions the novelist's point of
view." If the novelist's aim was to show Gandhi's impact
percolated through Moorthy to a community and enabled it to
raise from bondage to sacrifice—why does Moorthy go away
from the village to city. Similarly, the people of Kanthapura
move of their village and settle in a new village following
the police atrocities and destruction of village. Both are
instances of escapism."29 This Mr. Radhakrishnan feels is most
un Gandhian as Gandhi in his Young India writes, "No country

28 T.D. Bruton, "India in Fiction: The Heritage of
Indianness" in Critical Essays Ed. M.K. Naik, S.K. Desai,
G.S. Anwar (Delhi: The Macmillan Co. of India Ltd.,), p. 218.

29 N. Radhakrishnan, Indo-Anglian fiction—Major Trends
has ever risen without being purified through the fire of suffering ... will India rise out of the slavery without fulfilling this eternal law of purification through suffering?" That is why Mr. Radhakrishnan feels, "if the novelist left them in Kanthapur it would have been a sign of their graduating into Gandhian way of life." Moorthy’s leadership and the fire of revolution would have made them stay back so that they could rebuild their village. He wonders whether Moorthy’s leaving the village is a silent way of protesting against the Gandhi-Irwin pact.

But the above views are well contested by writers like Yengar Naik, and Rama Jha, Rama Jha opines that "Even when Kanthapura is annihilated in the material, physical sense of the term, something is gained in terms of the awakening of the spiritual consciousness." She writes, "The village is destroyed but out of this debris of material destruction, a new spiritual realisation almost like a revelation to the participants takes place."

30 M.K. Gandhi Young India June 16, 1920.


33 Ibid.
In Srinivasa Iyengar's view, the political revolution is "transcended and assimilated into the racial heritage as myth and legend. Walk also supports this view, when he says that their religion has been strengthened by a "renaissance of spiritual life."

Both the arguments, supporting and opposing the way the novel is concluded, have missed the simple fact that Raja Rao simply showed the way how ordinary men and women reacted under that helpless condition. After all, even though the villagers are the devotees of Gandhi, they are yet to completely imbibe Gandhism. They have not fled from the battle. It is simply a retreat. They are still mentally prepared to continue the fight. They have lost the battle but not the war. They assert that they gained a lot from that experience "No sister, no nothing can ever be the same again. You will say we have lost this, you will say we have lost that, Kenchamma forgive us, but there is something that has entered our hearts, an abundance like Himavathy on Gauri's might..."[34]

But, what is surprising to many readers is, Moorthy's desertion of the village and the villagers. He may have been disillusioned by the Gandhi Irwin pact and the call

off of the movement, as many youth did, during the turbulent years of 30's. There is no definite clue, for Moorthy's preference to Nehru for Gandhi, for Nehru was still under the shadow of the banyan tree, Gandhi. The novelists does not suggest that Moorthy has completely abandoned Gandhi. Rama Jha aptly says "To say that Moorthy gets disheartened with Gandhi and becomes a follower of Nehru is to miss the significance of the novel's design. Nehru was in no way opposite to Gandhi. He had differences with Gandhi on minor points, on temporal issues but in essential things Nehru all his life remained faithful to Gandhian ethics." 35

From Moorthy's letter to Ratna, we learn that Moorthy feels that Gandhi is too good not to be easily cheated by the Britishers. This is more a compliment to Gandhi than a denigration. Moorthy turns to Nehru, whom he considers 'equal distributionist.' Perhaps this equal distribution or 'socialism' may have attracted Moorthy as it did many youth during those days after Russian revolution. Raja Rao himself speaks of Moorthy's strange attitude in his interview with Shiva Miranjani, "Moorthy was a young man who felt disillusioned after he suffered a defeat. His faith in Gandhi is

35 Rama Jha, Gandhian Thought and Indo-Anglian Fiction, p. 110.
shaken for a moment. But the novel does project the Mahatma, as the Chief inspiration. At one time, Nehru was also dissatisfied with Gandhi way of struggle. But if Nehru had not been a true Gandhian, India would not have been in the state we are to-day. At best you can say that Moorthy was a deviating Gandhian, Nehru too was a deviating Gandhian.  

The novel Kanthapura shows the unflinching faith of Raja Rao in Gandhi. Gandhi is delineated as a Mahatma, and shown through the eyes of common man. The entire slumbeing Kanthapura has woken up-to action at the clarion call of Gandhi. As Walsh comments, as quoted by Rama Jha, Gandhi to the villagers is "the God as well as the politician marching to the salt pan, Moorthy the God's manifestation as well as the non-violent frantic young leader."  

Gandhi's awareness of an average Indian's reluctance to action and his methods of drawing him into national movement by exploiting his religious sentiments are shown in the character of Moorthy. Moorthy also represents the waning Gandhians, when it comes to overcome the hurdles of tradi-

36 Shiva Niranjan, "An Interview with Raja Rao," in Indian Writing in English, p. 110.

tional customs like untouchability. Gandhi is a leader of the masses. He imbibes the self confidence in the average Indian and makes him aware of his herculean strength. Gandhi's impact on the entire gamut of Indian society is so strong that entire India responded to his call of action spontaneously even if the majority cannot understand what Gandhism was. It is the life of Kanthapura which is swept by the Gandhian whirlwind, that is well portrayed by Raja Rao in his wonderful novel KANTHAPURA