



Gandhi and His Non-violence in *Kanthapura* and *Waiting for Mahatma*:

A Ray of Hope in Desolation

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ABSTRACT

The aim of writing this research paper is to highlight the theme of Gandhian ideology which is revealed through a comparative study of two novels, *Kanthapura* by Raja Rao and *Waiting for Mahatma* by R.K Narayana. The impact of Gandhian Ideology on the masses would be focused on in these two novels. *Waiting for Mahatma* deals with the depiction of Mahatma as a character whereas *Kanthapura* makes a critical study of Gandhian Ideology as physically Gandhi is not present in the novel. No doubt Mahatma Gandhi and his ideologies of equality, discipline, non-violence and love for all are the most desirable ideals in today's world. These ideologies are India's gift to the world as he stood up firmly for these ideals. The paper will analyze whether these ideologies work as a savior for the world which is going towards its downfall today due to widespread hatred.

KEYWORDS-*equality, discipline, non-violence, love, peace.*

An effort has been made through this paper to focus on Gandhian Ideology by comparing *Kanthapura* by Raja Rao and *Waiting for Mahatma* by R K Narayan. Raja Rao was an Indian writer of English Language who is known for his novels and short stories. He is among the three great modern Indian English novelists. The other two are Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan, a well known author of *Waiting for Mahatma*. Raja Rao's novels are deeply rooted in Hinduism. He was born in Karnataka. His native language was Kannada, but most of his writing are in English, except newspaper articles written in Kannada. Raja Rao took active part in the Indian Nationalist Movement .He participated in the quiz India Movement of 1942. We can see the effect of this in his first two books. His novel *Kanthapura* is an account of the impact of Gandhi's teaching of non violence and how it was used as a weapon of resistance against the British.

Non violence is a force in human consciousness that Gandhi called a “living power”. It is the personal practice of being harmless to self and others under every condition. It’s means we should not harm anyone in any circumstance. It may be based on religions, moral and spiritual principles. It is the greatest force of disposal of mankind. It is strangest weapon ability of a man, Mahatma Gandhi quote “Tibetan spiritual guru the Dalai Lama has said that religions emphasis on the importance of compassion, a tool to curb violence”. One person kills a other person in the name of religion. The killing is justified as Dharma by the supervisor of religions and they prodaim that it was for a righteous purpose. Through the movement and writings, Mahatma Gandhi spread the lesson of non-violence. The word non-violence is often linked with or used as a synonym for peace. It is just like a powerful weapon. It is indeed a weapon which cuts without wounding and dignify the man who wields it.

The protagonist of the novel *Kanthapurais* Moorthy who follows Gandhi’sideology of non-violence in spite of several problems.

Out of love and Sriram is pretending to follow Gandhian Ideology for his personal benefit. Through Sriram I want to discuss the plight of modern people who followGandhi and his ideology for their personal benefits and not out of love.

But non-violence is often misunderstood for cowardice. Does it really resemble cowardice? Mahatma Gandhi, a great saint of non violence, was born in India and played a major role in getting independence from the foreign rule. He taught us to be benevolent and human to the people, even to them who are wicked by nature. He taught us the importance of forgiveness and how to forgive the deeds of cruelty and confront cruelty with kindness. Thus,non-violence teaches us to win cruelty with kindness, hatred with love , injustice with justice and so on. Non violence is such a great force yet it can be easily taken for cowardice as cowardice also teaches to bowlike non-violence. Mahatma teaches to resist injustice and wickedness by using internal force and not the weapons.

Non violence does not mean to be powerless rather it means it’sopposite. The person who follows non-violence needs to be stronger than a person using weapons. Moorthy in *kanthapuraby* Raja Rao is a relevant example of it. Moorthy is an educated person who is living in colonized India. People in India were suffering from several atrocities at the hands of British. Cottage industry collapsed and Indian people were left to work aslaborers. They were hired as laborers at Skeffington coffee estate where the situations were not worth living yet they were asked to live

and work even when they were sick. They were exploited physically, mentally and sexually. New sahib used to explore women working at Skeffington coffee estate.

“Sometimes when the weeds are being pulled or the vermin killed, he wanders into the plantation with his cane and pipe and puppy, and when he sees this wench of seventeen or that chit of nineteen, he goes to her, smiles at her, and pats her on her back and pats here on her breasts. And at this all the women know they have to go away, and when they have disappeared, he lies down there and then, while the puppy goes round and round them, and when the thing is over he takes her to his bungalow and gives her a five -rupee note or a basket of mangoes or plantations, and he sends her home to rest for two days”

His uncle used to beat the labors cruelty. He never bothered even if they were sick. Moorthy who is an ordinary Brahman boy, living in Kanthapura with his mother was known for his etiquettes and nobility. He was so popular in the village that there were many marriage proposals for this boy. Waterfall Venkamma who does not like moorthy in the novel is also wanted her second daughter’s marriage with Moorthy but Moorthy was boy of some other world especially since the day he met Mahatma Gandhi in his vision. He felt as if new light entered into him which made his personality enlightened. He made it a goal of his life to practice whatever Mahatma taught. His mother did not like Mahatma and his principals as it created problems for her son. Therefore she resisted against Mahatma and did not give him food .She asked him to leave the house although it was very painful for her and eventually she dies of this pain.

“From that day on they never spoke to each other, Narsamma and Moorthy. He sat and ate his food by the kitchen threshold and she in the kitchen, and everybody saw that Narsamma was growing thin as a bamboo and shrivelled like banana bark.”

“She looked up at the moonlit sky, and the winds of the night and the shadows of the night and the jackals of the night so pierced her breast that she shuddered sank unconscious upon the sands, and the cold so pierced her that the next morning she was dead.”

Moorthy is determined and does not leave faith in Mahatma. He lives with another woman Rangamma a motherly figure for Moorthy. She also becomes part of Moorthy non violence. Now Moorthy becomes the Gandhi for kanthapurians as they never saw Gandhi but they felt a great strength of non violence in Moorthy.

Moorthy is worshipped as Mahatma in Kanthapura and people gave up foreign clothes. They started spinning cotton and confronting cruelty of the rulers with non violence. Moorthy behaves like a true discipline of Mahatma Gandhi as he keeps fast for three days to compensate the violence done by kanthapurian against Bade Khan while he was abusing Moorthy.

Moorthy held the power in his hands as all the people of Kanthapura are ready to sacrifice their life's for Moorthy's sake. Despite being powerful he does not use his power against the Britisher's rather he keeps fast and endures atrocities on his head with his people. Thus he sets a perfect example of non violence for the readers.

This research paper makes an effort to show non violence it unpacks through a comparative study of two novels which are dealing with Mahatma Gandhi and his principles. These two novels are *Kanthapura* by RajaRao and *Waiting for Mahatma* by R. K Narayan. An effort is made here to see how strongly non violence effects people.

Undoubtedly *Kanthapura* is a novel which articulates non violence in true form.

The other novel that we are dealing that is *Waiting for Mahatma* by R.K Narayan. R.K Narayan, an icon in Indian Writings in English, presents Mahatma Gandhi's influence in his prominent novel *Waiting for Mahatma*. Mahatma Gandhi appears as an influential character in the novel. Gandhi had fought not only for Indian's freedom but also for social justice which remains a dream for Indians ever today. There is an unequal distribution of wealth among the rich and the poor, yet the poor and the neglected continue to lead a life of scarcity and misery. He had wished to launch another nonviolent social struggle for achieving equality among the rich and the poor. It did not come through because of his assassination soon after independence.

In the novel, Gandhi comes to Malgudi to address the people during the struggle for freedom. He asked them to develop a sense of unity. He clapped his hands rhythmically and said: " I want you all to keep this up, this up, this beating for a while – no good not enough...I like to see more vigor in your arms, more rhythm and more spirit. It must be like drum beats of the nonviolence soldiers marching on to cut the chains that bind Mother India. I want to hear the great neat. I want to see unity in it". This resurgent voice awakened the Indians to be free from the oppression and exploitation of the foreigners.

At the very outset Mahatma Gandhi explained that he would speak in Hindi as a matter of principle. He said, "I will not address you in English. It is the language of our rulers. It has enslaved us. I very much wish to speak to you in own sweet language, Tamil". The Mahatma had

profound love and affection for the language spoken by the people of India. He treats English language as the language of the ruling class.

The Mahatma asked the people to discipline themselves. The prime objective of life is to be disciplined in various activities. He felt India must try to discipline them to attain the noble objectives of the life. Discipline is the greatest virtue of mankind. Gandhi emphasizes this nobility of life: "I see before me a vast army. Every one of you has certain good points and certain defects and you must all strive to discipline yourselves before you can hope to attain freedom for our country. An army is always in training and keeps itself in good shape by regular drill and discipline. We, the citizens of this country, are all soldiers of a nonviolent army, but even such an army has to practice a few things daily in order to keep itself in proper condition. We have a system of our own to follow: that's "Ram Dhan," spinning on the "Charkha" and the practice of absolute truth and non violence.

In the novel, Gandhi has respect and honors for the women in society. The women are to be given due honor and prestige in the society. All women are our sisters and mothers. They are the prestige in the society. They are the protective figures of the society. He elevates the stature and dignity of the women in the society by declaring: "All women are our sisters and brothers. Never look at them with thoughts of lust". Gandhi also explains how nonviolence can be practiced in daily life. Nonviolence is a method and procedure of life. One must implement it in a simple way in one's life. Peace, tranquility and serenity are the elements of nonviolence. One must have deep faith in it. Hostility and animosity are the features of violence. These are two days diff sides of human life. Gandhi appeals to mankind to follow the path of nonviolence by ignoring the means of violence. He tells: "It is perfectly simple procedure provided you have faith in it.....when someone has wronged you or has done something which appears you to be evil, just pray for the destruction of that evil. Cultivation an extra affecting for the person and you will find that you are able to bring about a change in him. Two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ meant the same thing when he said, "turn the other cheek".

He inspires people to develop love and affection for the people of mankind. He implorers not to follow means of bitterness for the people: "It's very well for you to take up the cry and create uproar. But it is not enough. I want you to clear your heart and minds and make certain that only love resides there and there is no residue of bitterness for past history. Only then can you say to the British, please leave this to be managed or mismanaged by us, that's purely our own

businesses, and come back any time you like as our friends and distinguished guests ,not as our rulers. But be sure you have in your heart love and not bitterness”.

R.K. Narayan has introduced the theme of love between Sriram and Bharti after presenting Mahatma's hectic political meetings. Sriram, a young man if Malgudi, attend all the political meetings if Mahatma not because he was a patriot but because he was attached by the beautiful girl named Bharti. Sriram thought that if he became a nonviolent soldier if the Mahatma, he would be able to remain near Bharti always. He managed to meet Bharti who promised to fix a meeting between him and Gandhi. During their early meeting at 3a.m. Gandhi was spinning on the charkha. He was doing several things at a time. While his hands were spinning, his eyes perused a letter held before him by another, and he found it possible to put in word of welcome to Sriram. At 4a.m Sriram was invited and Gandhi said: “Bharti has been just mentioning you.... Nowadays I generally get up as an hour earlier in order to be able to do this; spinning certain length is my most important work; ever my prayer comes after that. I would very much like you to take a vow to wear only that cloth made out of your own hands each day” .Then he invited Sriram to a morning walk for half -an -hour.

Mahatma Gandhi, Sriram and Bharti went out. Many others followed them. A couple of scavengers of the colony joined the group. Gandhi praised Malgudi in their company. He said: God is everywhere, and if you want to feel his presence you will see him in a place like this with a beautiful river flowing, the sunrise with all its colours, and the air is so fresh. Feeling a beautiful hour or a beautiful scene or a beautiful object is itself a form of prayer. The role of Mahatma Gandhi is very prominent for the union of Sriram with Bharti. In Sriram replies immediately: “I like to be where bharti is?” This is a sincere reply of Sriram showing his love for Bharti. This reply was the source of Gandhi's happiness. He patted Bharti's back and praised Sriram as devoted friend of Bharti: “what fine friend you have! You must be pleased to have such a devoted friend. How long have you known him?” Bharti said like a shot: “Since yesterday. I saw him for the first time sitting g in your hut and asked him who he was”. Sriram interposed and added: “But I know her before, although I spoke to her yesterday.” Sriram s grandmother has a different attitude to the Mahatma. For her, Mahatma was one who preached dangerously, who tried to being untouchables into the temples and who involved people in difficulties with the police. Sriram was angry with her. The following conversation displays their respective views of Gandhi’s character:

“Oh! He is your God, is he?”

“Yes, he is, and I hear any one speak lightly of him.”

“What else can I know? A poor ignorant hag like me! Do I read the newspapers? Do I listen to lectures? Am I told what is what by anyone? “How should I anything about that man, Gandhiji?

“He is not a man: he is a Mahatma! Cried Sriram.”

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