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## Plot structure of Rao's Kanthapura

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**Abstract:** This paper aims at focusing on the plot structure of the novel "Kanthapura" which is written by the Indian author "Raja Rao". In his novel, Rao tried to build it in a conventional manner that could be in accord with the place and time of its actions, as well as the simplicity and humble thoughts of its characters. In addition to the instruments they use to achieve their goals. We also try to focus on the interrelationship between the plot structure and the characters especially the main ones. And how the author could maintain the unity of plot in spite of the sub-plot of the novel through linking them with the nature of text and the culture of the place of actions and people who lived in that place.

### 1- Aims and Objectives

- 1) To show the influence of plot on the construction and aesthetic of the novel Kanthapura.
- 2) To show the interrelationship between plot and characters in the novel Kanthapura.
- 3) To analyze how Raja Rao has managed to maintain the unity of plot by dealing with the subject.
- 4) To point out the shortcomings of Raja Rao's art of plot construction in Kanthapura.

### 2- Hypothesis

Plot of Kanthapura is a well-constructed which hides the minor blemishes.

### 3- Methodology

#### • Library work

- 1) Primary sources; text.
- 2) Secondary sources; books, research articles and websites.

### 4- Introduction

Kanthapura is a novel written by Raja Rao. In 1909, he was born in the village of Hassana, in Mysore. It is his first novel and his master piece. He wrote it in France far away from India, but it really portrayed the full bright, and realistic view of the Gandhian freedom thoughts in the 1930's and its effect on the people of India.

Kanthapura is entitled after the name of a small village in the south of India in the 1930's. Raja Rao has depicted the influence of Gandhian

Movement on the people of the village, Kanthapura. It is depicted as a great classic of the Indian freedom struggle. It gives us more essential truth about the Gandhism era than any official records or books of history.

Moorthy is the main character in the novel. He represents the Gandhism, he can be called the “Minor Gandhi”. He follows the principles of Gandhi. He is a Brahmin boy becomes the leader of the freedom movement of Kanthapura. Moorthy gets several supporters like Ratna, Rangamma and others from the Brahmins and Ranga Gowda from the Pariahs.

Moorthy is elected as a President of the local Congress Committee and Rangamma is declared as the Chief Patron. Then the local congress committee decides to launch the “no-tax” campaign, and Moorthy starts practicing the Principles of Gandhi. He makes successful plans; non-violent, the three days fast of self-purification and nobody has to pay the land revenue and other taxes.

Later, the suffering of the people of the village touches the hearts of the workers of the Skeffington Coffee Estate and they also share their suffering, a lot of them are arrested. Moorthy was one of them and being sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. Most of them leaves the village, and others are being shot to death, women are seduced and even raped. Though they have been defeated, but think that it is a kind of victory. Their great struggle has shocked the government officials. The British government was restricted to be greatly distressed and overthrown in a very few of time, and that was the way to enforce it to withdrew from their village, and then it was the day independence so over-thrown in 1947.

However, our study is the plot structure of Kanthapura. Plot is an important aspect in the construction of the novel, because plot is associated with the elements of a novel as of characters, actions and the story of the novel. So the writer has to build his novel effectively in order to reduce the shortcomings in the plot of his novel. Few critics have pointed out some shortcomings in the art of plot construction of Raja Rao’s novel, Kanthapura. David McCuthion is one of such critics, he calls Kanthapura “no novel at all” for in it “all the central concerns of the western novel are absent”.

Thus, this study will focus on the plot structure of the novel, Kanthapura. The merits and the blemishes of the plot construction in the novel, Kanthapura.

### **5- Definitions of Plot Structure**

1. “It is constituted by its events and actions, as these are rendered and ordered toward achieving particular artistic and emotional effects”.(A Glossary of Literary Terms, 2005:233)
2. “It is the pattern of events and situations in a narrative or dramatic work, as selected and arranged both to emphasize relationships-usually of cause and effect- between incidents and to elicit a

particular kind of interest in the reader or audience, such as surprise or suspense.” (Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms, 2001: 195)

3. “It is a term of highly varied status. It can mean just paraphrasable story of a work- the simple narrative line which we can then flesh out by considering character and description, tone and texture, pattern and myth; E. M. Forster’s ‘low’, ‘atavistic’ story- telling.” (Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms, 2006:177)
4. “It is a literary term used to describe the events that make up a story, or the main part of a story. These events relate to each other in a pattern or a sequence. It is known as the foundation of a novel or story, around which the characters and settings are built. It is meant to organize information and event in a logical manner.” ([www.literarydevices.net/plot](http://www.literarydevices.net/plot))
5. “It is the sequence of events that make up a story, whether it’s told, written, filmed, or sung.”([www.Literaryterms.net/plot](http://www.Literaryterms.net/plot))

## **6- Plot structure of Kanthapura**

Various Peculiarities of the plot structure of the novel can be given in details as follows:

### **6-1- Conventional Elements**

Plot is one of the important elements of the novel. Plot is the content of the novel. E.M. Forster differentiates it from story. Both are narratives of events but in plot the emphasis is on causality. “The King died and then the Queen died” is a story, but “The King died and then the Queen died of grief” is a plot.

As Aristotle has pointed out that the unified plot is a current series of the beginning, the middle and the end. The beginning launches with the central action in a manner which leads us to keep an eye on the upcoming actions; the middle assumes what has happened in the past and seeks much to follow; and the end follows from what has happened in the past, but it calls for no more actions and events; we realize that the plot of the literary work is fully completed (Tilak, 2008:77).

However, the novel Kanthapura has some conventional elements which are; Exposition, development of the plot, Climax, denouement and the ending. The following study will reveal the truth of this fact.

#### **6-1-1- Exposition**

The novel has followed most of the plot structure elements. It initiates with a story of the poor village in south of India, Kanthapura, its location, its product, its indigence, its ignorant and superstitions nature of its people. In spite of the fact that Kanthapura is a poor village, but it is consisted of four parts; the Brahmin, the Potters, Sudra and the Pariah part. The community of the village is dominated by sectarianism (Talik, 2006: 127).

The same as any Indian village, Kanthapura has its own legends. Kenchamma the goddess in the village. Legends which are connected with the kind goddess. Then many actions take place in the village and a few competitions and jealousies of the village society come to surface.

Hence, one of the conventional elements laid down by Raja Rao in his novel, Kanthapura, which is exposition([www.Indianetzone.com](http://www.Indianetzone.com)).

#### **6-1-2- Development**

After the exposition of actions in the village Kanthapura then comes the development of these actions, because every small action, of course will not be stable for a long time where there is human beings accompanied by motivations and aims to develop their lives. With the arrival of Moorthy, the actions developed. Moorthy is the central figure of Kanthapura. Moorthy differs from other young men in the village in being an educated man. He is indifferent of that thoughts of his age. He is a religious young man. When he finds a “half-sunken Linga” directly he cleaned it and wishes to sanctify it (Ibid, 2006:128)

So a tremendous religious activity started, the invocation to Kenchamma, goddess begins, and it is seemed that religion feeds the hearts of the citizens of Kanthapura. It is the symbol of growth of religion facts from the day the primitive man worshipped stock and stones, sang and danced round it in ecstasy. The people of Kanthapura especially the young had a great repast to glorify the occasion. These actions developed and developed and these religious actions became as the first step to build new generation in that poor village. The truth of this fact proved to be true when Moorthy has asked them to present a dinner for each day of the month, and it was a great action from all.

Then the actions developed and Moorthy is inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. He burns the foreign clothes and books, he starts thrilling the emotions hearts of the villagers, he gives them Charkhas and yarn free of charge. He mingles among the Pariahs and so is excommunicated by the Swami. Moorthy gets several supporters like Ratna, Rangamma and others from the Brahmins and Ranga Gowda from the Pariahs. Here Moorthy tries to unite the villagers, to stand against the unjust and also up rises them to be one hand and prevent the separation.

Thereupon Moorthy forms the local Congress Committee and becomes the President of it and Rangamma as the Chief Patron.

#### **6-1-3- Climax**

After the formation of the local congress committee, the real struggle has been started. The congress starts uprising the people by reading the news in newspapers and charity their rights. So several real actions appear in the village, first the “no-tax” campaign which is known as “Don’t touch the Government Campaign”, the three days fast of self-purification, and they will not pay the revenue of land and other taxes (Taluk, 2006:128).

The portrait of Gandhi is present in the sense of the villagers actions in spite of the absence of Gandhi. Even women join the men in their struggle. Women's volunteer corps is also organized. Then the patriots arouse the people to make a political, social and economic revival. So the government arrests many of the people, and Moorthy was one of them. At the time when Moorthy imprisoned for a long term, Ratna leads up the fellows and becomes the chief of the movement. Coolies from other places are brought. So a Satyagrah is arranged. Many people are shot dead. Woman are seduced and even raped. Bhatta's house is burnt out. Many of the people of Kanthapura leave the village. Many of the survivors of the massacre settle at a place in one of the villages near Kanthapura, the people of that village welcomed them and called them "the soldiers of Mahatma Gandhi" (Arp, Johnson, 2006:110)

#### **6-1- 4- Denouement**

After all that crucial days in that small village, some of the arrested people have released. Kanthapura has paid a lot of valuable things, the people felt satisfied, though they were in much terrible, but they experience a sense of fulfillment. One year and two months passed-by, and the thirty refugees from Kanthapura never settled in that village, Kashipur. They were sitting together as they were in their village Kanthapura, but they remembered the past. So they feel sad for many of their friends were missing (Ibid, 2006:110).

The Mahatma had to term with the Viceroy and the freedom struggle had been suspended. There was peace for the time being. But things could never be as they were before, for they had suffered terribly, and lost their near and dear ones.

Due to the treaty with the Viceroy, Moorthy was also released from jail. The young patriots begin to believe in the Socialistic principles of Jawaharlal Nehru. They were sure that he will make a change. He will make them all equals. In this sense, the novelist has given us an idea how Nehru was rising on the political scene of India, and already attracting the masses of India. He was with Gandhi, he also believed in non-violence, but he also had his individuality and his own views([www.Enotes.com](http://www.Enotes.com)).

Hence, Kanthapura stands for any village in which the patriots struggled for the independence of India. So the writer has made use of all the conventional elements in his novel, Kanthapura; the beginning, the middle and the end.

#### **6-2- The Compliance of the three Unities**

As we have previously mentioned, plot is one of the important elements of the novel, the observance of the three unities is also one of the Sub-division of the plot. So the compliance of the three unities in the novel is also an important to build the novel excellently. Raja Rao has observed the three unities in his novel Kanthapura (Bressler, 2011:20).

#### **6-2-1- Unity of place**

Kanthapura observes the unity of place, as the novel begins with a story of the situation, the home, Kanthapura. All the events take place in that small village Kanthapura in Maysore of Kara. It is a dent in the valley of Himavathy. And also some of the events occurs on the Skeffington Coffee Estate([www.Aparnaonline.com](http://www.Aparnaonline.com)).

So Kanthapura has observed the unity of place in being all the actions had happened within the area of Kanthapura and in the Skeffington Coffee Estate(Arp, Johnson, 2006:109).

#### **6-2-2- Unity of Time**

The Unity of Time is also observed in the novel of Raja Rao, Kanthapura. The time of the novel is the time of the Gandhian Movement. It is the time of the Gandhian Movement for freedom and Independence of India. So Raja Rao has taken a long time to detailed that actions of Gandhian Movement (Ibid, 2006: 109).

#### **6-2-3- Unity of Action**

Unity of Action is also observed in the novel of Raja Rao, Kanthapura. All the actions are about the struggle of that small village, Kanthapura. The struggle of the people of Kanthapura represents the Gandhian Movement for freedom and Independence of India (Barry, 2002:78)

#### **6-3- Compound Plot**

Compound plot is one of the types of the plot of the novel. The compound plot has one main plot and one or more sub-plots. However the sub-plots are inter-related with the main plot. Kanthapura has main and sub-plot.

##### **6-3-1- Main Plot**

The main plot of Kanthapura appears in the influence of the Gandhian Movement for freedom on the people of a poor and distanced Indian village. They follow all the principles of the Gandhian Movement.

##### **6-3-2- Sub-Plot**

The Sub-plot of Kanthapura appears in the incidents that occur on the Skeffington Coffee Estate, where the coolies are exploited there (Ibid, 2002: 82).

##### **6-3-3- Fusion of the main and sub-plot**

The main plot and the sub-plot of the novel Kanthapura are the two faces of the same coin which is about savagery of the British. The main plot is the affect of Gandhian Movement on the people of Kanthapura and the sub-plot is about the events or incidents that happened in Skeffington Coffee Estate, the two plots are, in some senses, the same, because the workers of the Coffee Estate had also, in the Climax of the actions of the village, followed the struggle of the Patriots for the freedom of India.

#### **6-4- Mythical Technique**

Kanthapura has a symbolic relevant. Kanthapura has mingled two themes or subjects, Kanthapura the small village where its people are engaged with their example of struggle of its people against the British for the freedom of India.

However, Kanthapura is a new kind of legendary work of art or “Sathala-Purana”. It is a microcosm of the macrocosm, as Kanthapura here represents India as a whole. Also there is the legendary of Kenchamma the local goddess. It is believed that she protects the villagers of the village from harm. She is the mother of Himavathy. She killed the demon on the hill and so she is called the Kenchamma Hill and the hill is still red. She is believed that she is helping for rain and the days of famine (Tilak, 2006: 128).

In that way Kanthapura is full of that kinds of Mythical Technique and it is a “Sathala-Purana” as well as a regional novel by itself.

#### **6-5- Shortcomings of the plot of Kanthapura**

Any novel has its shortcomings. Kanthapura is also has its shortcomings. First, Kanthapura is a superfluous novel, it is a breathless tale. The narrator consists of the stream of memory of its narrator, the old woman, and on the whole, the sequence of events is chronological. The detailed and the extravagance of the narration of some unimportant events can be kept away from being narrated (Ibid, 2006: 130)

Secondly, there is the long digression into the nature, kind of snakes covering over four pages, has no relevance whatsoever.

#### **7- Conclusion**

Raja Rao has taken in the consideration of writing his novel, that he has to build his novel precisely. He has depicted his characters in a way that makes them in an inter-relationship with the plot of the novel.

The Raja Rao has also demonstrated the impact of the plot on the well-constructed of his novel and also on the mood of the reader of such novel.

Finally, Kanthapura has been described as the most satisfying of all modern Indian novels and recognized as a major landmark in Indian fiction. It is the story of Gandhian struggle for Independence came to one small village in South India.

There is no doubt that the novel which deals with one motif, will be accepted by readers. Thus, Kanthapura is a well-constructed novel by Raja Rao in spite of its few minor blemishes. If it is compared with its merits, they are not to be mentioned as blemishes of its plot structure.



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