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## **Cracks in the Wall: Female Struggle for Honour and Freedom in Raja Roa's *Kanthapura***

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### **Abstract:**

Indian women would be empowered if only they were able to get economic power. Expert states that things cannot alter much unless women are empowered. Socio-economic is one way to do this as well as permitting women to participate in governance. The works on women have been widely read and analyzed as a powerful presentation from the point of view of the third world marginalized question of gender, caste and class are evaluated and remediated in the textual premises of a radical narratives. Women deserve to be provided the opportunity to operate for equal position, fair wages, access, credit and launch occupation. They also deserve equity in the political sphere, with similar access to elect the political parties and emancipation to petition their government. Raja Rao gives voice to social injustice. This is the core of his philosophy of life. Women participate successfully in the political, economic and cultural lives of the village Kanthapura. The period of colonization has also inspired women who had decided to throw away their veil, which had covered all their talents and accomplishments.

**Keywords: Sevika Sangh, Gandhian Movement, Achakka, Kanthapura, British Government.**

Females have been skillfully portrayed by Raja Rao. There is a great variety of women characters in the novel, *Kanthapura*. Rangamma is one of the literate women in the village. She studies the newspapers herself and thus keeps herself and others aware with day to day developments else where. She observes various things of common interest. Bhatta can never be fool Rangamma. She assists Moorthy literally, although she does not appear to share her thought that Untouchables and Brahmins are all equal. After meeting Sankar, Rangamma matures into a fine orator. she is able to fill the void designed by death of the father who used to interpret the Vedantic texts at *Harikatha* assemblies. It is she who frolicks the main role in organising the females of Kanthapura into a Sevika Sangh. Being practical minded, when she comes to realize that some males are grievancing that they are not getting proper response at home because their females are participating in drills. She once takes actual measures and narrates to Sevikas that they must not neglect their household responsibilities.

Next comes Ratna who is a child widow. She is influenced by modern ideas. She is not very welcomed by patriarchal society. She is criticised for her unconventional thinking but she does not bother for such criticism. She has strong sense of firmness and determination which is reflected in the choice of her own path and stick to it. She is skillfully influenced by the Gandhian movement. And the Gandhian movement becomes a source of inspiration and assists to Moorthy. When Jayaramachar, the Harikathamani is arrested, she conducts the Harikathas. After the demise of Rangamma, she reads out the news papers and other advertising material of the Congress for the advantage of the people of Kanthapura. After

Moorthy's arrestation, she continues his work and acts as leader. She arranges the females volunteer corps and imparts to the Sevikas requisite primary training. She presents great dare and resourcefulness in the face of government restraint and police activities. She is beaten up dishonoured and imprisoned as a consequence. But she meekly bears the torture and harassment when Gandhi has gone to England to participate in Round Table Conference, reaches a settlement with the Red-man government and the movement is drawn back. Ratna is in despair like other innumerable freedom revolutionaries in India. She reaches to Bombay (presently Mumbai) and through her letters we realize of her extreme admiration for Nehru, the "equal distributionist".

Achakka, the commentator and narrator, comments on persons and events. In the novel, *Kanthapura*, her action is representative and her courage lies in being anonymous. She is one of the various women of *Kanthapura* who reacted to the call of the Mahatma, represented through Moorthy. Her belief in the Goddess Kenchamma, her esteem for the local scholar Rangamma, her unquestioned love for Moorthy and her faith in him, all these feelings and emotions, she shares with other females of the village, *Kanthapura*.

However Achakka is a female with balanced mind, and the present of intelligent observation. She skillfully participates in non-cooperation movement. One of the commonest women in the village is poor Narasamma, mother of Moorthy, she cannot realize the ideas dear to her son but only understands that she contributed nothing to merit the adversity of excommunication that demeans and befalls her family. She is really very pathetic woman in the village.

Through the role of waterfall Venkamma, Raja Rao highlights the triviality and orthodoxy of females. In *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao shows women as many forms of empowerment. A typical Indian fairer sex is shy, submissive and coy, she is also as firm and strong as rock, excellent in suffering. Empowerment rises in them. They are mentally and physically strong to face the titanic like problems in their life. They learn so much from other's examples. It is to be mentioned that in the final phase of peaceful resistance, it is Ratna, a female who takes over from Moorthy and directs to Satyagrahis.

Various forms of power are clarified through the females of *Kanthapura*. Empowerment's indomitable soul possesses them in their non-violent struggle against the British Government. When police misbehaves them with their boots and sticks, the women understand and move for they are more definite in the devotional aspect. Females as eternal devotees, empowerment kneeling is rapt adoration in front of Shiva, disclose themselves through them as they listen to Jayaramachar renarrating epic tales and to Ramakrishnaya telling passages from the Scriptures. The most moving instance of their instructing belief is the narrator's musing on the ruins of *Kanthapura*. She imagines and dreams of a happy consequences to a modern Ramayana where Rama as (Gandhi) will come back from his exile like visit to England with Sita (like India) who had been captured by Ravana (like the British) and Rama returns to Ayodhya (Delhi) Bharata (Nehru) who has been reigning as regent, will welcome him and there will be divine flower showered upon him.

Moorthy's mother Narasamma wishes her son to prolong regarding the pariahs as lower caste untouchables just as the orthodox people like Swami and Bhatta have been performing. And since she fails to create Moorthy obey her- as he has become a disciple of Gandhi- the relationship of the son and the mother becomes stretched. This implies that she gives importance to traditions of her caste more than her son's ideals :

For instance, though Narasamma scolds Moorthy bitterly for mixing up with pariahs, she displays a tenderness of heart.

(Sharma 17)

In *Kanthapura*, Narasamma wants her son Moorthy to become a cog in this apparatus of the British Government by becoming an Assistant Commissioner and a sub-collector.

In patterns of community, Narasamma innocently becomes an instrument in the hands of the tools of British imperialists in India. She is too innocent to realize people's motives behind their demeanours and attitudes.

However, this must not understand that Narasamma has no contribution in Moorthy's becoming a freedom fighter for India's freedom when Moorthy refuses to give way from his raised platform on his pariah work. Moorthy and Narasamma do not speak to each other. He eats his food by the kitchen threshold and she is in the kitchen. Narasamma becomes thin and the account of her death on hearing of her son's excommunication. The fact exists that it is Narasamma who is immensely accountable for his having become the Gandhi of *Kanthapura* because it is Moorthy's mother Narasamma who has provided him values which produce him who he becomes. The truth comes to light when we observe the principles she has instilled in him. One of these is that he shall perform nothing that brings disgrace to his family and she is confident of her son following her authoritative order and maintaining the principles and ideals. When Narasamma is informed by Venkamma that for the actions of her son the entire village of *Kanthapura* will be excommunicated. After hearing this statement by Venkamma, she denies the charge confidently and she says that her son will never dishonour the family's ideals. The power in her reply signifies that she is completely confident of her son's cherishing esteem above every other consideration. On the point of fetching respect to the family there is always agreement between the mother and son. It is the mother of Moorthy who has instilled in him the moral values of having a faultless ethical behaviour. Narasamma :

...a pious old woman and her big, broad ash-marks gave her such an air of ascetic holiness.

(Rao 46-47)

These are Narasamma's ideals that Moorthy is an honest elephant. Much else too in Moorthy has obtained from his mother Narasamma. When Moorthy undertakes a fast, he chants Gayatri Mantras, thrice a thousand and eight times, and when the holy place lights started to twinkle he branched spread out his upper garment on the floor. This was the exercise of Narasamma too when she sat herself down to contemplate and she chants Gayatri mantras softly and fastly. Moorthy must have learnt Gayatri mantras from his mother.

Rangamma fosters anti-imperialist agilities in the village, *Kanthapura* and spreads her protective hand to Moorthy when he requires it. Under Rangamma's protective heed Moorthy is able to flourish the thoughts he has got from Narasamma and Gandhi. Narasamma has her confinements: she is not politically aware and is not conscious with the events happening in the political field and does not understand that her nation is in the hands of the Britishers who have no authority to own it. But Rangamma is furnished with all that a freedom fighter's mother requires:

Our Rangamma is no village kid. It is not for nothing she got papers from the city, Tai-nadu, Vishwakarataka, Deshbhandu and Jayabharatha and she understands so many, many things, too

of the plants that weep, of the monkeys that were the men we have become of the worms, thin as dust worms that get into your blood and give you dysentary and plague and cholera.

(Rao 41)

It is Rangamma who looks after Moorthy after the demise of his mother. When Moorthy takes fast for three days, Rangamma cares about his health just as a mother would be:

And when the evening meal is over Rangamma comes to find out Seenu, and lantern in hand and with a few bananas in her sari fringe, she goes to the temple, and Moorthy. When he sees the light, smiles and asks what it all about, Rangamma simply places the bananas before him and stands waiting for a word from him.

(Rao 87)

The story of Kanthapura is presented through the consciousness of Achakka a female narrator. Her awareness contains many well differentiated individuals: enlightened Rangamma but for whose support the congress could not have developed in the village; her sister Kamamma, mother of child-widow Ratna who worships Moorthy. The grandmother who narrates the story understands exactly how everyone is connected to everyone else:

Seethamma, and her daughter Nanja now live in Malur Shanbhog Chikkanna's house and they eat with them and grind with them and Chikkanna; who has no children is already searching for a bridegroom for Nanja. "I'll find her a Mysore B.A." he says and day after day horoscopes comes and he says, "This one is better, but the other one I have heard about is better still." But Nanjamma, a Pandit Venkateshia's wife is alone in Temple Vishveshvarayya's house, and she says, "I am no cook, and yet that's all I do for that Mahatma !" That one was never born to follow the Mahatma, I tell, you, she and her tongue and her arms, and her ever-fallig sari. And Pariah Rachanna's wife, Rachi, has found a place in Kanthenaholli Patel Chandrayya's houses and she comes now and again to the Brahmin quarters with her pounded rice or her dung-cakes. Her grand daughter Mari is working in Chenna's house and they say she's already asked for in marriage by kotwal Kirita's son, the second one, who works with the elephant merchant from the north. And the marriage is to take place as soon as the father is out of prison.

(Rao 248)

We observe that Achakka has not altered; even after being replaced, the community which develops her life. Achakka still realizes herself accountable for public morality and states with disapprobation.

That one was never born to follow the Mahatma, I tell you." She keeps her interest in marriages, and understands what the lower caste's granddaughter's fiance does for a maintenance. Ristudy makes one realize that this grandmother is a marvellously genuine production.

Rao's characters of Kanthapura have implicit faith in their Goddess Kenchamma when the baby of the migrant worker get fever, this is their retorts :

And Siddanna's wife, Sati asked her neighbour Satamma, who had lived there for one year and more, what goddess sanctified the neighbouring region, and when Satamma said it was our Kenchamma, she tore a rag from her sari fringe, and put into it a three-piece bit and a little rice and an areca-nut and hung it securely to the roof. And, of course, she woke up the next morning to find no fever at all.

(Rao 72-73)

Kanthapura is an ancient classic, dealing the issue of contemporary Indian society, representing all semblances topics of social milieu. Kanthapura is a small village of Kara province has many gods and goddesses adored by the villagers. Kenchamma is the chief goddess of the village. If anyone suffers from diseases like cholera and smallpox, the treatments are created through the religious ways.

Raja Rao highlights the heroic acts of women freedom fighters of our country. He reminds us the heroic women like Tantia Topi and Rani Laxmi Bai against the Britishers. Rangamma explicates as to how Rani Laxmi Bai fought against British Government :

Red man wanted the Hindus to eat cow's flesh and the Mohomendan to eat pig's flesh and the army rose and fought against the Red-man that is why they call it the soldiers Revolt, in their language and this king and that king said, "Now this is the time to strike the English, and they gathered together and worthiest of them was Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhanse. Why she rode the horse like a Rajput, and held her army against the British, beating them on the left and on the right and the British went back and back, but one day they defeated her and she died upon her horse fighting to the last fighting for her enslaved mother.

(Rao 150)

During the freedom struggle began around 1930-47 under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi another women fighters namely Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant and Kamala Devi also fought for the freedom of India.

Rangamma advised the crowd to lie down. Police started to kick the people in their back and the crowd shouted.' Mahatma Gandhi ki jai. Police did not spare women too. Ratna received slap on her face by police inspector that brought blood out of her mouth. Despite being beaten up rigorously pronounces to the toddy shops visitor not to drink on the name of Mahatma.

Raja Rao discovered medium that Indian woman could be an efficient medium for a writer who aspires to state something forcefully and has the ability to narrate it. He had discarded the nostalgic thoughts of the past and no longer indulged in the ethical stories and ephemeral fairy tale adventures which were often known by the reader. They attempted to present neither a false attention on themselves nor an idealised picture of their nation and its people. Yet there was much opportunity for the advancement in the delineation of female

characters. The journey of woman character, however, realistically presented, in her meek forbearance illustrated at best the contemporary Indian community's ethical values firmly fixed as ever in tradition.

Raja Rao; receiving shelter behind the Brahmanic culture, he grows from recommendation through his female characters and personal solution of the dilemma of the Indian woman.

The awakening of the woman's consciousness establishes a new set of values in the fictive system. The typo logical experiences of these women have constant elements like an abrupt awakening, intense introspection a status in time and action and an abrupt ending with a conscious decision. The ending does not lead to a resolution of her problems but the fictional shaping of a very specific kind of crisis seen through her eyes is rewarding, for it leads to rewarding, inner enrichment, a sense of exhilaration and vicarious achievement as we see her battling through harsh reality :

The novel gives an account of national movement for freedom in a small village, Kanthapura, shown to the readers through the eyes of a grandmother. The village is like another common village of South India. In a typical Indian traditional style, the narrator begins his narration referring to the events of Ancient History of India and of present times, mentioning sometimes Gods, sometimes the people existing in real life.

(P.K. Singh 48)

The woman in Indian writings now reveals the shift in the sensibility of the author as well as the reader. She is no longer the paragon of values and virtues to be magnified by scholars and philosophers. Gender equality is an issue of primary significance for the betterment and development of all countries. What humanity demands is a world that is free from all kinds of violence domination and discrimination, a place where scope and good fortune are shared by all. So why is discrimination against female characters? It is because disparity starts in the minds and thinking of the people, where gender-bias becomes a habit in views and deeds. These have over centuries progressed deep-rooted cultural traditions which consider females as subordinate.

The origin of all prejudices is ignorance, education, chief consciousness, national policy and the media can play a significant part in eliminating such prejudices. Indian writings in English have brought out very distinctly that females literacy and enlightened contribution in plannings within and outside family absolutely influence the relative esteem and honour for women's well- being.

Raja Rao deserves appreciation for bringing out Kanthapura on various aspects of women development and empowerment based on study of literary works and personal human observations. This novel will be a definite contribution to all regions of activities connected to women empowerment and attempts toward eradicating gender discrimination in very sphere.

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### **Appendix**

Raja Rao sees woman as Mother of Earth and the theme of empowerment. Women constitute a significant role of any community and frolicks various characters as daughters, sisters, wives, mothers, grandmothers, comrades, maid servants and prostitutes. Literacy and education are the effective mediums which develop the condition of women in patriarchal society. In Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* women's struggle is important. The novelist has psychologically prepared them for the titanic encounter. It is to be noted that in the last phase of peaceful resistance it is Ratna, a female, who takes over from Moorthy and leads the Satyagrahis.