

**ENGLISH LITERATURE**

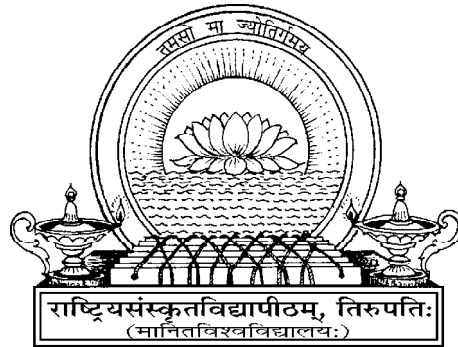
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**Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen**

**&**

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## PRIDE AND PREJUDICE BY JANE AUSTEN

### **About the author:**

Jane Austen was born in the year of American Revolution 1775 on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December to Reverend George Austen and Cassandra Leigh Austen. She was their seventh child. It is said that Jane Austen was widely read and know most of the 18<sup>th</sup> century writers – men and women. She began writing very early in life, during the spare time that she could gather away from helping in kitchen, doing embroidery, singing and sketching, the usual occupations of young women of those days. She wrote solely for pleasure and revised her works to make them as perfect as possible. Though she was not so popular in her own time, it would not be wrong to say that she is one of the most popular writers of all time in English literature. Her works include Pride and Prejudice, sense and sensibility, Mansfield Pank, Emma, North anger Abbey, Persuasion and a fragment the Watsons. She died in 1817.

Jane Austen lived during a time when England was born by wars – war between England and her colories in America, Napoleonic wars with France, rebellion in Ireland etc., Even the society in England was fast changing. But, Auston’s novels are seemingly unaffected by all these developments. She chase to write on things which she know well – the country of the upper middle class and its concouns like love, courtship, marriage, etc., which are of Universal significance . In her own words her canvas was “two inches of ivory” But she painted it neatly and precisely with memorable situations and characters.

### **A Brief Summary of the Pride and Prejudice:**

The story of the Pride and Prejudice revolves round a middle class family of The Bennets – Mr. Bennet the husband, Mrs. Bennet the wife and their marriageable daughters – Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Catherine an Lydia. The Bennets live in a village of Longburn in Hertfordshire. As Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet have no son his estate is entailed [on his death] to his cousin Mr. Collins a foolish pompous rector of Hunsford who is under the patronage of

Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Thus with little fortune to push her daughters in the world, Mrs. Bennet is always looking forward eagerly for prospective sons-in-law with a large fortune and who are ready to marry her daughters with little means.

One day Charles Bingley a rich bachelor with a fortune of 4 thousand a year comes to settle in Netherfield Park near Longbourn along with his two sisters and his rich friend Fitzwilliam Darcy of Pemberly, nephew of Lady Catherine. Mrs Bennet is all eagerness to meet him and hopes that he would fall in love with Jane. Soon, she and her daughters meet Bingley at a ball. While Bingley is at once attracted to Jane, Mr. Darcy who is somewhat vain and highbrow curtly refuses to dance with Elizabeth saying that she is not beautiful enough to tempt him. Soon, Bingley and Jane are in love. But sisters of Bingley and even Darcy feel that the possible marriage between Bingley and Jane is not suitable due to her Cheapside relatives as well as due to improprieties shown by Mrs Bennet and her younger daughters. Caroline Bingley, Bingley's sister, hopes by this and if Bingley marries Darcy's sister, it would brighten her prospects of marrying Darcy.

Darcy's proud behavior and also Wickham's [ a handsome young officer and son of Darcy's father's steward] account of Darcy's ungentlemanly behaviour towards him make Elizabeth not like Darcy as Darcy himself is gradually attracted towards her. Meanwhile the foolish Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth and is rejected. He promptly turns his attention to Charlotte Lucas, the eldest daughter of the Lucases, who live near Longbourn. Charlotte marries Collins.

Being invited by Charlotte, Elizabeth goes to live with her for a few weeks. There she meets Mr. Darcy once again who is visiting his aunt Lady Catherine. Now strongly attracted to her, in spite of himself, Darcy proposes to her. But Elizabeth who has already learnt from Colonel Fitzwilliam, Darcy's cousin about his role in separating Jane and Bingley and also from the accounts of Wickham rejects him outrightly and gives him reasons for it.

Extremely hurt by the rejection Darcy writes a letter to her answering to the charges she has leveled against him. He accepts his role in separating Bingley and Jane and says he has been forced to do so due to the improprieties shown by her family. As for Wickham he tells her of his diabolic nature and how he tried to elope with Darcy's sister Georgiana for her money.

Elizabeth returns to Longbourn to go on a trip with Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, her uncle and aunt. She visits Pemberly, Darcy's place in Derbyshire. There they are all cordially welcomed by Darcy and his sister. Elizabeth is much surprised by the change that has come over in Darcy's manners. Meanwhile Elizabeth gets the news that her youngest sister Lydia is eloped with Wickham and they could not be traced and also that with no money there is little chance of Wickham marrying Lydia.

Darcy takes upon himself the task of tracing Lydia and Wickham and sees to it that their marriage is brought about. Bingley comes back to Netherfield Park and his attachment to Jane is renewed and he gets engaged to her. Darcy too proposes to Elizabeth which she accepts even though Lady Catherine tries her best to stop it. The novel ends with the double marriage – Bingley marrying Jane and Darcy marrying Elizabeth.

#### **Justification of the title:**

It is often said that Jane Austen first gave the title **“First Impressions”** to her novel and then changed it into **“Pride and Prejudice”** after a lot of thinking.

Elizabeth and Darcy, who are the protagonists of the novel, go by their first impressions of people especially of each other. But the title **“First Impressions”** is limited in its implication. Darcy is blinded by his own superior status. He fails to understand the worth of Elizabeth in their first meeting and snubs her “not handsome enough to tempt me”. As a result, Elizabeth's first impression of Darcy is that of a proud and conceited man. It

also makes her to take whatever Wickham says about him without questioning. This also leads to the complication of the plot. Thus, the importance of the first impressions of Elizabeth and Darcy in the novel cannot be denied. But at the same time, it does not bring out the true significance of the novel. The failings which Austen exposes with irony and the way the complications of the plot are resolved are not indicated by this title. On the other hand the title **“Pride and Prejudice”** indicates to not only the failings of the protagonists but also to several other characters who show apart from foolishness and meanness, varieties of pride and prejudice.

1. Why is the title Pride and Prejudice a much better title than first impressions?

Darcy is conscious of his own high social rank. In his pride in high social status he is prejudiced against the people of lower status like that of the Bennets and people belonging to trade like the Gardiners. This is evident in the way he behaves in various balls in Hertfordshire. Indeed, it is his prejudice against socially inferior Bennets with no connections that makes him separate his friend Bingley and the eldest of the Bennet sisters, Jane. Yet he is drawn to the intelligent sparkling eyes of Elizabeth. He gradually finds himself in love with Elizabeth which his better judgement and his pride in his superior status desperately try to check. In his first proposal of marriage to Elizabeth he concentrates more on the damage it will cause to his status than his love of Elizabeth. The curt rejection of Elizabeth accusing him of ungentlemanly behavior sets him on the path of reformation and change

1. Why does Darcy separate Bingley and Jane?

Elizabeth on the other hand prides herself on her ability to understand people and her perception. Yet when she receives a snub from Darcy in the Meryton Ball she is hurt. She fails to judge him dispassionately and becomes prejudiced against Darcy. Her growing dislike of Darcy is fed by Wickham's account that Darcy has cheated him of his living. She believes whatever Wickham says unquestioned thus, committing yet another blunder of prejudice, a prejudice for Wickham. Her hatred for Darcy increases when she comes to know from Colonel Fitzwilliam that Darcy has been instrumental in separating Jane and Bingley, so very angrily rejects him.

1. Why is Elizabeth prejudiced against Darcy?

Elizabeth's curt rejection and her accusation of 'ungentlemanly behavior' forces Darcy to reevaluate himself. He realizes that though he has been taught good principles but left to follow it in pride and conceit. Even though Elizabeth's accusations are formed on mistaken premises, his behavior to her and to several people at Hertfordshire is unpardonable and deserves the reproof. He struggles hard to make acquaintance with those people who he initially had rejected as unworthy of his attention – the Gardiners. On the other hand, the letter he writes to Elizabeth giving explanations forces her to reevaluate her pride in her discerning capabilities. "How despicably have I acted.....I, who have prided myself on my discernment!- I, who have valued myself on my abilities!". She also realizes that she has been utterly prejudiced in her behavior. "Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted

prepossession and ignorance”. Thus, it is not proper to say that while Darcy’s failing is Pride and Elizabeth’s Prejudice. They in fact overlap.

As it has been noted earlier, it is not Darcy and Elizabeth alone who suffer from pride and prejudice. Miss Bingley and Lady Catherine De Borough, for instance, too suffer from the prejudice springing out of their birth and status and try in their own way to stop the love and marriage of Elizabeth and Darcy.

So, the title “**Pride and Prejudice**” indicates to the psychological tension between the protagonists. It initiates the complication of the plot. When the protagonists learn about their failings and overcome them it leads to the denouement of the novel. Thus the title is most aptly chosen than the title “First Impressions”.

#### **Theme of Marriage:**

The theme of marriage with all its variety and complications is central to the novel “**Pride and Prejudice**”. The novel begins with an ironical statement that “It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of fortune must be in want of a wife” and ends with not one but two marriages that of Jane and Bingley and Elizabeth and Darcy. Marriage is not a simple conclusion of a love story in the novel. It is a major social concern of the times. Marriage is not only an important decision of a girl’s life, it is her only source of security in case she doesn’t have enough money of her own. It was a serious preoccupation of many mothers of the middle classes like Mrs. Bennet to see their daughter well settled in marriage. It was also a means to intermixing of the social classes in a society where the old aristocracy and new middle class are gradually getting merged. In the novel, the theme of marriage is explored through the relationships of Elizabeth and Darcy, Jane and Bingley, Charlotte and Mr. Collins, Lydia and Wickham and Mr and Mrs Bennet.

Why is the theme of marriage so important in Jane Austen’s novels?
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The novel begins with the families in the neighborhood of Longbourn with daughters in marriageable age getting into an active competition with one another to get a rich son-in-law. It is a dream of every mother to see her daughters married into wealthy houses as it is of Mrs. Bennet. In this business of match making, money and status play an important role. Settlement and provisions are talked of along with desirability of a young man and young woman. Even Elizabeth who is not taken in by riches and wealth talks of ‘imprudent’ marriage if it done with no considerations to the couples’ economic status. So though she is attracted to Wickham, she never contemplates marrying him for he has no money just like her but it would be wrong to say that Austen tries to project commercial view of marriage.

Jane Austen presents a variety of incompatibility(unsuitability) in marriage. The Bennets are an incompatible couple. Though sensible, Mr Bennet captivated by youth and beauty has married a woman of weak understanding and illiberal mind. The result is there is no real affection and respect in the marriage. Mr. Bennet in disappointment, has turned cynical and has withdrawn not only from the society but from his responsibilities of the family which is a great disadvantage to her daughters. Charlotte – Collins’ marriage is another instance of incompatible marriage. Charlotte has married a man of mean understanding and foolishness. Because marriage is the only option left to charlotte to have a secure future. But happiness is as much missing in it as it is in the Bennets’. Another marriage which receives disapproval of Austen is that of Lydia and Wickham. Lydia is too silly and young to understand the requirements of marriage. Impulsive, she thinks only of the momentary pleasures in eloping with Wickham. Wickham, on the other hand, see marriage as means to cross the class boundaries and as a means to make money. Using his charm and attractive personality he tries to entice Georgiana Darcy in which he fails. His next victim appears to be Miss King

who he begins to woo as soon as she is left money by her grandfather. He elopes with Lydia not marry but satisfy his sensual pleasures. He is forced to marry Lydia finally to give respectability, to their relationship.

Name the incompatible couples in the novel?

Jane Austen also places her critical eye on individuals like Mrs Bennet and Lady Catherine De Borough who are blind to the moral significance of a marriage. Mrs. Bennet is not worried about whether the single man is good and honest. For her it is enough if he is wealthy. She is not worried about the circumstances in which Lydia's marriage takes place. She doesn't feel ashamed at all that Lydia has eloped but feels shame that she is not married from their parish. Lady Catherine shows another sort of blindness springing from her pride of her status and ignores love as the basis of marriage. Both come together ironically in their inadequate understanding of marriage.

It is with these incompatible marriages in the background that Jane Austen presents the marriages of Elizabeth and Darcy, Jane and Bingley. It is also significant that Elizabeth becomes aware of all these issues of incompatibility as she is gradually drawn towards Darcy. No doubt that difference in wealth and status are put forward by Darcy as reason for separating Jane and Bingley, Darcy himself learns to overcome these limitations as he gains in self knowledge and sees the worth of Elizabeth. Elizabeth though at one time thinks "It is something to be the mistress of Pemberly" is not drawn by the wealth or status of Darcy but the change that comes over him as a person and begins to respect him. Once they overcome their pride and prejudice and other personal limitations they learn to love, respect and trust each other. Their marriage as well as the marriage of Jane

and Bingley which stand the test of time and pressures of the society are ideal marriages.

Name the ideal marriages in the novel.

### **Theme of love and Courtship**

**Pride and Prejudice** contains of the most cherished love stories in English literature – the love and courtship of Elizabeth and Darcy. Like all good and interesting love stories it faces many obstacles before it achieves fulfillment in marriage. Status and wealth form one of the obstacles. Darcy belongs to the upper class gentry with a large estate and ten thousand pound income per annum. Though Elizabeth's father is a gentleman her mother is not. Further she has an uncle who is a tradesman and another uncle who is an attorney. Further the Bennet's estate is entailed to a distant cousin Mr. Collins. This forms one of objections of Darcy's to Bingley's marriage to Jane in the beginning. Mrs. Bennet's stupidity, want of manners and absolute lack of sense is also one of the causes which keep Darcy away from Elizabeth. But the main obstacle in the fulfillment of their love remains the lovers' own personalities. Blinded by the pride he has in his higher status Darcy calls Elizabeth not handsome enough to tempt him in the ball given at Meryton. Hurt by the comment, Elizabeth fails to understand the gentleman within the proud exterior of Darcy. Her vanity makes her prejudiced against him just as Darcy is drawn to the beautiful expression of her beautiful eyes. With the arrival of Wickham on the scene the gap between Darcy and Elizabeth only seem to increase as prejudiced Elizabeth believes as true all the falsehood spread by Wickham. Bingley leaving Nether field suddenly not to return makes Elizabeth suspect that Darcy has been responsible for it. It only turns

her prejudice into hatred just as Darcy becomes overpowered by the charms of Elizabeth and proposes to her when he meets her in Kent. But Darcy has not learnt yet to overpower his own pride and prejudice. He in his proposal of marriage dwells more on how he is defying his family pride and situation to marry Elizabeth than his love for her. Elizabeth rejects his love and accuses him of separating Jane and Bingley and cheating Wickham. She emphatically declares to him nothing in the world would ever tempt her to marry him because his behaviour has been very ungentlemanly. This comes as a surprise to Darcy who never has thought that Elizabeth could reject him. Thus begins the change in him, He writes a strongly worded letter to her describing the circumstances which made him separate Jane and Bingley and also the truth about Wickham. His letter dwelling on the stupidity and want of decency in the behaviour of her mother and younger sisters makes Elizabeth also think. Their love and courtship gets a boost when Elizabeth sees Darcy unexpectedly in Pemberly where she has gone on a tour along with her uncle and aunt. She sees a lot of change in his behaviour. He is more polite and gentle in his behaviour and sees that he is still interested in her. Her respect and esteem for him increases as she hears the house keeper's praise of him.

What brings change in Darcy's attitude?

Just when everything seem to go well Lydia's elopement with Wickham comes as a shock and forces Elizabeth to realize that it may be the end of their relationship. The real turning point in Elizabeth's emotions comes when she comes to know that it is Darcy who is responsible for forcing Wickham to marry Lydia. So when Lady Catherine de Borough comes to warn and threaten Elizabeth, she refuses to promise her that she won't marry Darcy. Darcy takes as a cue and proposes to her to be accepted by her. Thus

the protagonists have to go beyond personal prejudices to achieve fruitful love.

A love story which is similar to the love of Elizabeth and Darcy though less interesting is that of Jane and Bingley. They too face the same societal restrictions but they do not face troubles due to their own personalities as it happens with Elizabeth and Darcy, as they are of similar temperament. Lydia and Wickham prove a contrast to Elizabeth and Darcy in the love affair. They are drawn to each other not by love, respect and trust but by their own passionate natures and indulge themselves in it for sometime till the love loses its charm. Charlotte Lucas on the other hand knowingly accepts love and courtship of Mr. Collins even though she doesn't love him because marriage is the only future security she can have.

Jane Austen by making Elizabeth and Darcy overcome social forces of hierarchy, status and wealth views love as something independent of them and as something which one can capture only if one outgrows restricting feelings like pride and prejudice. Further, by making Elizabeth choose the love which she gradually gained for Darcy rather than her love at first sight for Wickham, Austen seems to approve love based on understanding, respect and trust to be a better one than the more romantic love at first sight.

Name the different types of love one notices in the novel.

### **Irony in Pride and Prejudice:**

Irony is the contrast between the appearance and reality or what appears outwardly and what actually is. It is a subtle method used by writers to tell the reality to the readers and also suggest to them their judgement of various characters and direct their attention to issues raised in their works. There is

such a variety of irony in the novel **Pride and Prejudice** that it becomes the main quality of Jane Austen's style for the novel. The novel is steeped in irony of situation, characters, narration and theme.

**a) Irony of Situation:** Irony of situation emerges in the novel when the characters do a particular action thinking something but it turns out to be completely different when they finish it. Darcy rather proudly declares in the beginning of their acquaintance that Elizabeth is not handsome enough to tempt him. The irony is that he not only falls in love with her but goes on to marry her. He removes Bingley from Netherfield citing the imprudence of marriage with Bennets who have neither money nor connections only to fall in love with Elizabeth and to propose to her no sooner than he separates Bingley and Jane. Darcy proposes to Elizabeth when she hates him the most. When Mr Collins proposes to Elizabeth declares emphatically that she not the type of person to reject the first time and accept the second time but she does exactly the same with Darcy. The departure of the militia Elizabeth hopes will put end to Lydia's flirtations but she ends up eloping with Wickham. Elizabeth thinks that Lydia-Wickham episode and Lady Catherine's intrusion will be obstacles to her union with Darcy but they turn out to be the instruments in bringing them together.

**b) Irony of Character:** Irony of character is of much more important in the novel affecting both major and minor characters. Elizabeth prides in her ability to read people's personalities. But it is so ironical that she is blinded by her own prejudices and pride in her ability that she judges wrongly not only Darcy but Wickham. Wickham looks very gentlemanly but turns out to be a big crook given to profligacy, dishonesty and indecency. Darcy when he prides in his gentleman background is in fact being very ungentlemanly. Bingley sisters look down upon the Bennets for their vulgarity and low connections. They turn out to be vulgar instead and the wealth on which they pride themselves so much has indeed come from trade.

Jane Austen uses irony in characterization to shake the major characters like Elizabeth and Darcy out of their self-deception and to bring them self-knowledge as well as knowledge of others. Irony is on other hand used to expose the hypocrisy and pretensions of Lady Catherine De Borough and Miss Bingely. It is used to expose stupidity and want of sense in Mrs Bennet and the younger Bennet sisters.

**c) Irony in Narration:** The first line of the novel sets of the ironic tone of the narration. Though most of the time, the novel presents the point of view of Elizabeth, the novel achieves objectivity with the ironic tone of the narrator. The first line of the novel is an excellent example of verbal irony: “It is a truth universally acknowledge that a single man in possession of good fortune must be in want of a wife”. As the novel progresses it becomes very clear to us that it is indeed a single woman who is search of a rich husband. The entire novel revolves around how many a mother and young woman go about this. The novel is full of such instances. The narrator comments about Mr. Bennet “To his wife he was very little otherwise indebted than as her ignorance and folly had contributed to his amusement”; or another one on Wickham “Mr. Wickham was so perfectly satisfied with this conversation that he never again distressed himself or provoked his dear sister Elizabeth.” This subtle verbal irony is reflected in Mr. Bennet’s speeches too. When he calls Wickham a pleasant fellow and best of his sons-in-law.

Which character in the novel speaks ironically?

**d) Irony in Theme:** Pride and Prejudice seem to be two separate entities in the title but as the novel progresses one becomes aware that in case of Darcy and Elizabeth prejudice and pride go together. Pride leads to prejudice and prejudice brings in pride. But Elizabeth and Darcy are not without their

virtues too. For, it is his pride of being a gentleman that leads Darcy to change. When Elizabeth is steeped in prejudice she recognizes the prejudice of Darcy.

Thus irony, on the whole, becomes the soul of *Pride and Prejudice* working in its themes, characterization and narrative technique. It becomes the novelist's means of presenting her moral vision i.e. what according to her is desirable in love, marriage, social behaviour and value system. As Jane Austen does not use irony with bitterness and cynicism but uses it in a good humoured way laughing at the follies and foibles of characters it is often considered comic irony.

Through what does Austen present her moral vision?

### **Pride and Prejudice as a 'Novel of Manners'**

The eighteenth century society especially the society of landed gentry which Jane Austen uses in her novel is a conventional society following very strict codes of conduct and etiquette of good manners. Jane Austen knew this narrow world very closely as she herself lived on the borders of it. She knew its positive as well as negative points. In the novel **Pride and Prejudice**, she deals with the manners of such a society criticizing some, justifying some others and laughing away at some more. That is why her novels have acquired the subtitle of *Novel of Manners* or *Comedy of Manners*.

What type of a society does Austen present in the novel ?

The society which the novel depicts expects certain set manners from every one. Introduction to the new acquaintance is one of them. Mrs Bennet



is horrified to know that if Mr. Bennet doesn't make the acquaintance of Bingley, the women of the family cannot make his acquaintance so urges to go Mr. Bennet and meet Mr. Bingley. Darcy too points it as one of the reasons for not dancing with many women in the ball. While the more liberal minded Elizabeth (so Austen) seem to think it is even more ill-mannered not to dance with them and keep them waiting than to wait for proper introduction. Balls are seen as the means for the two sexes to meet, love to develop and courtship to flourish. The way the younger Bennets cry for it make them not only look silly but hateful.

The life that one sees in the novel is the life of wealth, a life of quiet and enjoyment, a life without severe struggles or dangers and tragedies. The highlights of such a life was to go for morning visits, weddings, balls and shopping and going on travels. It is the life where marriage is the chief incident and settlement in a marriage or settlements and entailments are the most interesting things that people can talk about. All incidents are directed at bringing up a wedding between suitable couples. Nearly all the families in Hertfordshire have marriageable daughters and there is an active competition among families to catch a rich son in law. They scheme endlessly to outwit each other to secure the rich husband. Darcy to herself.

What seems to be the most important event of society in Austen?
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The marriages are expected to happen within the social circle and any attempt to cross the boundary is criticized and checked. Darcy himself objects in the beginning to the relationship of Bingley and Jane for she has low connections. Lady Catherine de Bourough objects to Darcy and Elizabeth's supposed marriage on the same grounds. Wickham, the son of the steward of Mr. Darcy too tries to cross the boundaries but through wrongful means. Colonel Fitzwilliam too is aware of the fact that he has to choose a girl of rich

fortune to keep with the convention wherever his heart may as he is a second son.

Austen does not approve of this attitude as she makes Elizabeth say that if being a steward's son is the only sin of Wickham she knows it from himself. Miss Bingley who is a snob and Lady Catherine who is very class conscious are exposed to ridicule in the novel. Yet, she does not decry it as all the marriages that happen whether they are prudent or imprudent happen within the circle. Further marriage is seen as the only future security for women of less money. Though Elizabeth is shocked at Charlotte's decision to marry for money she too comes to realize that for a twenty eight year old plain looking Charlotte her marriage to Mr Collins may be good enough.

Does Austen approve of Charlotte's marriage to Collins? Why?

The novel also focuses on the etiquette of a gentleman. Characters are endorsed by the author on the gentlemanly behaviour. More than one character is praised as gentleman-like by the author. Bingley does not belong to the landed gentry but rich enough to be one but his manners are all very gentlemanly. The Gardiners belong to the trading community but by their thought, speech and behaviour they prove themselves to be gentleman like. Darcy in his self deception thinks that he is not only a gentleman by birth but also in his behaviour. He gets a rude jolt when Elizabeth rejects him on his ungentlemanly behaviour. Though angry in the beginning he learns to see himself and correct himself and proves himself as a gentleman. Lady Catherine De Borough belongs to the noble class but has none of the refinement in her thought, speech or action. She mistakes being authoritative and imposing to be noble qualities. The Gardiners on the other hand even

though belong the so called inferior trading class show more refinement of thought and spirit which even Darcy is forced to acknowledge.

Who are praised in the novel for being 'gentlemanly'?

Jane Austen has claimed that she has taken up only two inches ivory for her art referring to the smallness of her canvas. Yet within this two inches of ivory, the novel of comedy of manners, Jane Austen does raise some perennial issues – the dichotomy of appearance and reality, self deception, self knowledge etc. It has to be said that these issues are discussed, elaborated and fictionally presented through the themes which often form the part of the comedy of manners like love, marriage and status. So her novel ultimately turns out to have universal relevance and significance.

#### **Character of Elizabeth Bennet:**

One of the most well known female characters in English Literature, Elizabeth Bennet is the protagonist of Jane Austen's **Pride and Prejudice**. The novel revolves round Elizabeth and her initial hatred of Darcy and how it changes into respect and love for him.

The second daughter of Mr and Mrs Bennet, she is her father's most favourite and mother's least favourite. She is lovely and beautiful. But her attractiveness does not depend merely on her physical charms but on extraordinary liveliness of her mind. She is intelligent, sensible and quick witted. In a novel full of excellent dialogue, she converses very well. She has a pair of beautiful and very expressive eyes symbolically referring to her critical mind and perception. She has the self assurance that comes with the critical mind. Her intelligence, her lively wit, her perception allow her to rise

above the nonsensical and petty minded behaviour of most of her family and the society around.

In her wit and repartee, Elizabeth is like her father but she is not happy just by making fun of the follies of others like her father. She likes to act and when found herself lacking she changes herself. She is always lively and does not brood over a problem for long and returns to her lively spirits once again. Her love and affection for her sister Jane is exemplary and admirable. Her prejudice against Darcy gets fixed into hatred as she suspects him to be instrumental in separating Jane and Bingley.

Who does Elizabeth resemble in her attitude?

Elizabeth is usually right about people. Her opinion that Ms Bingley is a snob and a false person proves right. She quickly identifies (from the letter of Mr Collins) that he is a pompous fool. She is also quick to recognize that Lady Catherine is a tyrant and the only virtue that she has is her wealth and so nothing to be afraid of. But at times she falls prey to pride in her own perceptiveness and brilliance and commits blunders. So, when a proud Mr Darcy snubs her in the Meryton ball her vanity is hurt, so she becomes prejudiced against Mr. Darcy which increases with time. The result is she fails to recognize the hypocrisy and lies of sweet tongued villain Wickham who tells her how Darcy has cheated her out of her only source of income. It adds to already existing prejudice against Darcy. The prejudice turns into hatred when she suspects Darcy has separated her beloved sister Jane and Mr Bingley.

In judging who does Elizabeth go wrong?

In her hurt pride and strong prejudice Elizabeth doesn't hesitate to curtly reject Darcy's proposal to marry. But Darcy's letter explaining his behaviour to Wickham and his justification in separating Jane and Bingley forces her to acknowledge to herself her own failings – her own vanity, her prejudice. She also reassess her family as well as Darcy and Wickham and leaves behind her self deception. This shows that she is capable of making amends. Her visit to Pemberley marks a change in her relationship with Darcy. She learns to see the brighter aspects of Darcy's character as a good master and good brother. When she perceives that Darcy has changed and trying his best to be better behaved, she has a change of heart too. Lydia's elopement makes her realize how much she likes him when she has lost him for ever. But ironically it brings them together as Darcy forces Wickham to marry Lydia. She in all perceptiveness realizes their marriage would be a happy and complementary one both of them benefiting from it. She thinks his knowledge of the world and experience can enlarge hers while her own liveliness can teach him politeness and more lively manners. So she has no hesitation to agree to marry Darcy when he proposes to her the second time.

#### **Character of Darcy:**

Fitzwilliam Darcy in the novel **Pride and Prejudice** is the male counter part of Elizabeth. He comes from a wealthy, well established family of landed gentry. He owns a great estate of Pemberley. He enters the novel as a friend of Bingley but gradually sidelines him to take the centre position in the novel.

He exhibits both good and bad qualities of his class. He is snobbish, arrogant and authoritative. At the same time he is very sure of himself and

honest. In fact he has a very strict notion of gentlemanly behaviour which rules his life.

Intelligent and forthright, he too like Elizabeth tends to judge people hastily and harshly. His high birth and wealth make him very proud and conscious of his social status. In his vanity he states that Elizabeth is not handsome enough to tempt him to dance, beginning their relationship on a wrong note. Yet he becomes aware of her charms, her liveliness and her intelligence. Yet in his self deception he thinks it proper to separate Jane and Bingley citing her low connections and stupid mother and sisters. But he himself is unable to resist Elizabeth's charms. He proposes to her in a very proud manner telling more about the lowness of her connections and how big a sacrifice it is for him to marry her than his love for her. He is full of self assurance and confidence that Elizabeth would certainly agree to marry him. So, he receives a rude jolt when she rejects him calling his behaviour to Jane, to Wickham and to herself as "ungentlemanly"

Why does Darcy suffer a rude jolt when Elizabeth refuses to marry him?

This unexpected rejection stirs him his 'nobility'. He gradually realizes how arrogant and assuming he has been. He later reflects later on, "I was given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit.... I was spoilt by my parents who though good themselves ....allowed, encouraged almost taught me to be selfish and overbearing....to think meanly of all the rest of the world..." (282). It builds a sense of humility which brings additional shine to other noble qualities like generosity. He continues his love and devotion to Elizabeth. When Lydia elopes with Wickham he takes the responsibility for it because his pride has stopped him from speaking openly about Wickham's true nature. He also wishes to relieve some pain for

Elizabeth. He goes and meets the very people he hates to even mention earlier – Wickham and Mrs Younge and brings about Lydia's marriage and thus saving the Bennet family from absolute disgrace. He does it secretly too. In his awareness of his limitations he becomes sympathetic to the follies of others. He willingly marries into a family of silly daughters, an embarrassing mother, low connections and Wickham for a brother in law. Thus Darcy proves himself worthy of Elizabeth just as by shedding her pride and prejudice Elizabeth proves worthy of Darcy.

The novel though told in third person omniscient narration, narrates most of the incidents from the point of view of Elizabeth. So, Darcy appears not so sympathetic figure in the beginning but as Elizabeth's perception of him changes, the novel too presents him in sympathetic and noble light.

### **Character of Mr. Bennet**

Mr. Bennet is the head of the Bennet household. He is the husband of Mrs. Bennet and father of Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Kitty and Lydia. Though intelligent, captivated by beauty and youth he has married Mrs. Bennet a woman of weak understanding and illiberal mind. He is driven to exasperation by the ridiculous wife and silly and difficult younger daughters. Soon after his marriage he finds that respect, esteem and trust have disappeared from his marriage so is his sense of domestic happiness. He is also disappointed not to have a son who would prevent the entailing of the property after his death to a distant cousin. He reacts to this by withdrawing from his family and assuming a detached attitude. In a novel in which people are seen actively visiting neighbours and going on trips Mr Bennet is rarely seen outside his library. His physical retreat from the world signifies his emotional retreat from his family. Though intelligent and morally upright he is satisfied with laughing at the silliness of his wife and younger daughters. Instead of correcting the foolishness of his wife and wild nature of his younger daughters, he wishes to be left alone in his library as if whatever they do outside of it is not his concern. He shuts his eyes to the problems rather than solving them.

Which is Mr. Bennet's emotional retreat?

Initially his intelligence, dry wit, and sarcastic humour in the face of his wife's foolish hysteria and wildness of his younger daughters make him a sympathetic figure. But as the novel progresses the reader loses some of the respect for him. Elizabeth warns him about the wildness of Lydia and warns him of possible disgrace to the family because of her. But he fails to judge it properly and laughs off the fears of Elizabeth of possible family disgrace. He looks for his peace rather than the reputation of the family. At the moment of deepest crisis in the family too he appears ineffectual. When Lydia elopes with Wickham it is Mr. Gardiner and Darcy who take the active lead in the matter. Mr. Bennet after his initial anger at Lydia's shameless behaviour is content to be lazy again. Even Elizabeth his favourite daughter cannot but think about his ineffectiveness as a father and his improper behaviour towards his wife when he exposes his wife to the contempt and ridicule of her children. But it has to be said that from his experience he surely warns Elizabeth not to marry without respect for her spouse for it would be a life long misery. It is only when she assures her being in really love with Darcy and that she respects him and esteems him that he agrees to give his consent to their marriage.

### **Character of Mr. Bingley**

Charles Bingley is one of the important characters in the novel **Pride and Prejudice** apart from the two protagonists Elizabeth and Darcy. The novel begins with his arrival to the neighbourhood of Longbourn. Bingley is a perfectly amiable rich young man with an annual income of five thousand



pounds. He has attractive personality and polished manners. He likes to enjoy life and has gusto for good things in life. In that he is a striking contrast to his best friend Mr. Darcy. Unlike Darcy who hates to meet people who are not acquainted with him, Bingley enjoys social life especially the balls where young men and women meet. He is a great dancer too dancing with all the women present at the ball whether hosted by him or by others. Because of his amiable manners he becomes an instant favourite with people. Jane too feels the same when she tells Elizabeth “He is just what a young man ought to be ... sensible, good humoured, lively and I never saw such happy manners! – so much ease, with such perfect good breeding.”

He is very patient too. When everyone else sneer at the stupidity of Mrs Bennet, Bingley puts up with it in good humour.

As hoped and expected by Mrs Bennet, he falls in love with the beautiful Jane. Unlike Darcy or his sisters who are much more socially conscious, Bingley does not see the low connections of Bennets would affect the chances of Jane or Elizabeth. When Jane falls ill during her visit to them at Netherfield, he is only one who is really concerned about her health. But Bingley is extremely modest when it comes to thinking of his own capabilities. So he depends too much on Darcy’s opinion even in the matters of love and marriage. He allows his friend to decide for him what is right for him. As Darcy once comments he is weak willed too and can be easily influenced. So when Darcy fears that Bingley is in love with Jane he feels it necessary to break their relationship. Bingley gets carried away by the argument of Darcy that a connection with the Bennets is most imprudent and that Jane does not love him at all. He goes away to London. But it has to be said that he does not entertain any other relationship especially with Miss Darcy as hoped by her sisters. It shows that he genuinely loves Jane and only her so called indifference has made him go away.

Why does Bingley go away from Netherfield?

Bingley comes back to Netherfield with the consent of his friend and resumes his relationship with Jane. It goes to his credit that to exonerate himself he does not betray his friend Darcy's interference in their affair to Jane. He is very much like Jane. He sees all the positive points in people and their circumstances while Darcy comments and find faults with everything. Like Jane he very patiently puts up with nonsense with good humour. The love of Jane and Bingley is ideal love though not as fiery and interesting as Elizabeth's and Darcy's.

Though it is with Bingley that the action of the novel begins, after that he does not initiate much action but becomes part of the plans of others. He proves an interesting contrast to Darcy. They are temperamentally poles apart. The simple, straight forward docile Bingley becomes foil to the complex and authoritative Darcy. He also becomes a contrast to Wickham. Both he and Wickham are very well mannered, while Wickham's charms are false, Bingley's are genuine and heartfelt.

### **Character of Jane Bennet**

Jane Bennet is the eldest daughter of the Bennet family. She is very beautiful and is considered a reputed beauty of Hertfordshire. She is equally beautiful at heart for she is blessed with a kind heart and unassuming manners. She is twenty two at the beginning of the novel so her mother is quite anxious to get her married away. Like Elizabeth she too is gifted with intelligent and foresight but not given to so much of lively manners nor wit and repartee in her speech as Elizabeth is. She is an excellent dancer and is often the centre of attraction of many balls that are given in the novel. She is endowed with

patience and forbearance of an angel. Almost every one in the novel likes her. Her mother dotes on her beauty, her father has high opinion of her judgement and good sense. Elizabeth adores her so much that she thinks no one could be sweeter than Jane. Mr. Bingley falls prey to her charms in their first meeting itself. Even the snobbish Mrs Hurst and Miss Bingley who are highbrow and fastidious consider her a sweet girl. Darcy cannot but recognize her merits.

Jane loves Bingley sincerely. It is her first love. As she has never been in love before she feels the emotion quite strongly. Further, she is the type of the girl who feels more than she talks about it. So, Darcy who thinks himself to be a great observer of people thinks she does not respond to the love of Bingley. Elizabeth who knows her sister well understands how much love Jane has for Bingley though she doesn't talk about it. Bingley's sudden removal to London and his decision not to return to Herfordshire leave her very sad. Though she tries every effort to control herself, she is sad. But her regard for Bingley remains undiminished. She has unflinching faith in human capacity for virtue. So she can never have prejudice or grudge against anyone. Even when Elizabeth tries to convince the meanness of Miss Bingley, Jane refuses to agree with her. It is this quality which makes her a contrast to Elizabeth. Her faith in the nobility of human nature so strong that she never tries to find fault with others and thinks the best of everyone. When everyone including Elizabeth has openly criticized Darcy for his haughtiness and pride, she alone thinks well of him. The same thing is repeated when Elizabeth reveals about the villainy of Wickham to Darcy. She thinks it as a misrepresentation of interested people. She is very optimistic so that she alone can hope for better things from Lydia and Wickham when they elope. She is very dutiful. She takes the responsibility of the entire family when Lydia elopes with Wickham. She acts with a lot of forbearance whenever her mother throws tantrums for one thing or the other and never complains. She has a capacity to suffering silently and never complains about Bingley using her ill.

Jane is very sweet, docile and self effacing as to appear colourless and uninteresting but she fills the novel with a sweetness and optimism. Just as

Bingley proves a foil to Darcy, Jane proves a foil to Elizabeth. Her love for Bingley is presented as the ideal one where both of them are of one mind, heart and soul.

Who appears as a contrast to Jane in the novel?

### **Character of Mr Collins**

Mr Collins is a distant cousin of Mr Bennet. He is the beneficiary of the entailment which makes him the owner of Longburn estate after the death of Mr Bennet. He is the rector of Hunsford Parsonage. He is stupid, pompous and conceited. The very letter he writes to Mr Bennet requesting him to allow a visit at to Longbourn is a symbol of his stupidity, pomposity and conceit. As the author informs he has been brought up an uneducated narrow minded dominant father whose influence even the university education could not wipe out. Added to it he got into a profession quite easily and has easy money with him at a quite early an age. All this have added to his limitations from the birth. So he turns out to be an odd mixture of pride and servility, self importance and humility. His patronage by Lady Catherine encourages all these qualities in him.

Mr. Collins is very class-conscious not of his class but of the superiority of Lady Catherine. He is quite happy enough to be associated with such a great lady as her. He glories in the reflected importance. He is so servile that he would bow even to the carriage which takes Lady Catherine or her daughter. He spends the entire day walking among the trees to ascertain the Lady's nephews have come and bow to them. That Lady Catherine is his patron, he projects as an advantage of marrying him. Talking to a great lady and making up her card party are projected as the greatest and enviable pleasures that he would offer in marriage to his fiancée.

Mr Collins' proposals of marriage to Elizabeth is one of the funniest episodes in the novel. He comes with the hope of marrying one of the Bennet sisters. As soon as he sees Jane he decides that he would marry her without ever thinking whether she would like to marry him or not. When he comes to know that Jane is to be engaged he shifts his attention immediately to Elizabeth. When she refuses, he thinks it to be her modesty refuses to believe her. When he realizes it, he doesn't even take a day to woo Charlotte and propose to her. When Elizabeth visits Hunsford it becomes his sole purpose to show off what she has lost by refusing him. When he comes to know of Lydia's elopement he writes a letter to Mr. Bennet, congratulating himself that he has narrowly escaped disgrace.

Mr Collins is unbearable in his civilities. Darcy frowns on him and others laugh behind his back. But it is only the vulgar Mrs Philips who finds his civilities extraordinary. As a rector, all his time goes away in praising his patron. His Christian charity is such that he advises Mr Bennet to throw off Lydia from his affection once and for all. The language he uses either in speech or in writing absolutely reflects the man – full of pompous, high sounding usages and clichés. As a character he turns out to be one of the most comic. He also plays important enough role in the novel especially in the progress of the plot. Because it is Elizabeth's visit to the Parsonage that brings her and Darcy face to face once again which leads to Darcy's second proposal.

Mr. Collins is under the patronage of \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Collins first wanted to marry \_\_\_\_\_

### **Mr. Wickham**

When Wickham enters the novel he comes as a very handsome young man with very pleasing manners who is an absolute contrast to the proud

arrogant Darcy. Elizabeth likes him very much and becomes his immediate attention. They fall in to conversation very easily and from his conversation she comes to know of the grave wrongs done by Darcy who Wickham claims has cheated him out of his money and position. Like Elizabeth we too are taken in by what Wickham says. But gradually the readers' opinion is shifted to see the other side of Wickham when Elizabeth rejects Darcy's love citing his ungentlemanly behaviour to Wickham and her sister. The letter that Darcy writes to Elizabeth to explain his behaviour brings out the truth of Wickham.

Mr. Wickham is the son of the steward of late Mr. Darcy. His father was a very kind and nice man who worked very honestly for several years for Pemberley estate. He is of the same age of Darcy. He was his childhood playmate. Late Mr. Darcy liked Wickham very much and was his god father. He supported him in his school and university too. Late Mr Darcy wanted Wickham to join the church and so made the provision for him in his will in addition to giving him a legacy of one thousand pounds. But Wickham grew up to be a wild, lazy young man given to pleasures of life. When the senior Mr. Darcy died followed by the death of his own father, Wickham expressed a desire not to join church but to study law. Though Darcy has known the real character of Wickham, he has compensated him generously for giving up the church position in addition to the thousand pound legacy. Wickham soon spends all the money away and comes back to Darcy to request to join the church again. Darcy knowing fully well Wickham's character refuses to oblige. As a revenge Wickham plans to elope with Georgiana. His aim is to take away her ten thousand pound legacy as well as to take revenge on Darcy through her. Darcy finds about it and takes his sister away. Wickham then finds a post in –militia with the help of some friends comes to Meryton.

Elizabeth herself then realizes how hypocritical and slanderous Wickham has been. She remembers that he dare not speak about Darcy to others till he stayed in the Nether field but as soon as he has left he has spoken ill of Darcy to every one. She also realizes that Wickham has shifted his attention to Miss King very soon after she has got a legacy of ten thousand

pounds and when Miss leaves Meryton he is once again back to show attention to Elizabeth. He gives a proof of his diabolic nature when he elopes with Lydia even though he doesn't want to marry her. He claims that it is Lydia's own problem and wishes not to marry her till he is suitably compensated. Wickham's shameless nature gets revealed when he comes to Longburn after his marriage. He behaves as if nothing has happened and shows no sign of repentance which shocks even Jane who never thinks ill of anyone.

He comes as a contrast to Darcy and as a rival too in the beginning. As Elizabeth comments if he has all the appearance of being good while Darcy is good in reality. The mistake she commits believing in Wickham makes Elizabeth finally realize and overcome her limitations and also learn to respect esteem and trust Darcy. It is Wickham's elopement that brings Elizabeth and Darcy together finally.

What is Wickham's father?

Why does Wickham want to take revenge on Darcy?

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# ***RAJA RAO'S KANTHAPURA***

## ***STRUCTURE***

### **3.0. Objectives**

#### **3.1. Introduction to Indian English Novels – Features**

##### **3.1.1. Salient Features**

#### **3.2. Introduction to Raja Rao**

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##### **3.5.19. Section XXI - XXII**

#### **3.6. Topics for Discussion and Character Analysis**

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##### **3.6.2. Gandhism in the Novel**

##### **3.6.3. Kanthapura as Sthala Purana**

##### **3.6.4. Myth in Kanthapura**

##### **3.6.5. Character of Moorthy**

##### **3.6.6. Achakka, the Narrator**

##### **3.6.7. Range Gowda**

##### **3.6.8. Bhatta**

##### **3.6.9. The Swami**

##### **3.6.10. Bade Khan**

##### **3.6.11. Ratna**

##### **3.6.12. Waterfall Venkamma**

#### **3.7. Historical Background**

#### **3.8. Summing Up**



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### **3.0. Objectives**

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This unit should help you to analyse the novel 'Kanthapura'. At the end of the lesson you should be able to:

- Critically analyse the novel.
- Understand the Gandhian Movement as depicted in the novel.
- Comment on the various characters.
- Comment on the dialect used in the novel.
- Have a grip on all aspects of the novel.

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### **3.1. Introduction to Indian English Novels**

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Indo-Anglian literature or Indian writing in English is the contribution of India's writers to the field of literatures written in the English language. The novel as a literary form in English flourished essentially from the eighteenth century onwards. Paradoxically, the growth of the English novel is closely allied with the periodical essays and the emergence of journalism in English. The novel, as a literary form is a part of the Indo colonial legacy, since we have been undoubtedly influenced by the west in terms of form.

Few Indians attempted to write novels in English from our country around the beginning of the twentieth century. While Henry Derozio's anthology of Poetry was published as early as 1823, the attempts made by the Indians in the area of novel was rather late. Today, in the twenty-first century, the situation is indeed topsy-turvy, since, no other genre of Indian writing in English is as popular as the novel. Eminent writers like Salman Rushdie or Vikram Seth received huge advances which reflects the popularity of the genre.

Some of the early attempts in Indo-Anglian novel writing include Toru Dutt's Bianca, Ramesh Chandra Dutt's The Slave Girl of Agra (1909), T. Ramakrishna's Padmini (1903) S.B. Banerjee's Tale of Bengal (1910) and K.S. Venkataramani's Paper Boats (1923) and On the Sand Dunes (1923).

Indo Anglian novels reached a greater level of maturity with the publication of Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable (1935), Coolie (1936), Raja Rao's Kanthapura (1938) and R. K. Narayan's Swami and his friends.

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#### **3.1.1. Salient features of Indo Anglian Novels**

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- (a) Although the form is English, Indo Anglian novel is very much Indian in terms of its themes, setting, characters and milieu.
- (b) The situations are uniquely Indian. The novels may deal with the Indian landscapes, situations, socio-cultural realities etc.

- (c) The language is English, undoubtedly, but it is not the queen's English. The Indian English novel captures the essence of the Indian culture by evolving its own brand of English. – probably Hinglish, Tamlish etc. Liberal use of Indian words, names of people, places etc. contribute towards a genuine Indian novel in English. The task of writing in English has never been easy. Raja Rao in his foreword to Kanthapura states that “One has to convey in a language that is not one's own, the spirit that is one's own”. The Indo Anglian novelist had to fuse the English language with Indian sensibility.
- (d) It was also essential, since, the Indo Anglian writers were constantly working against being servile children of Macaulay. It helped them to establish an identity of their own.

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### ***3.2. Introduction to Raja Rao***

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Raja Rao was born on November 5, 1908 at Hassan in Mysore into an orthodox Brahmin family. His father was a professor at Hyderabad- the city where he had his early education. At Aligarh, he came into contact with Prof. Dickinson who inspired him to study French. After his graduation at Nizam College, Hyderabad, he went to France to pursue higher studies in French literature, under a grant. His doctoral research at Sorbonne University won him accolades.

It was during his stay in France that Raja Rao wrote his first novel Kanthapura (1938). His second novel The Serpent and the Rope (1960) was also written during his visit to France. The difference between the first novel of Raja Rao and his second one lies in the fact that the setting of his first novel is a fictional village in India called Kathapura, while the second novel is set both in France and India, showing a global sweep. It is significant to remember that his second novel has become more popular and his first novel attained greater reputation after the second work.

Raja Rao has also written a few collection of short stories which include Javni (1930), The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories (1947), The Policies and the Rose and other stories (1978). He visited America for the first time in 1950. He rightly prophesied “America has great splendors. Once this nation finds itself, it will be truly magnificent” In America, he

taught Indian Philosophy at various American Universities, though he was at Texas for a long time. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan.

In an article which was published in the illustrated weekly of India (1963), Rao elaborates on his interest in Sanskrit, Kannada and English. French is the language of the aristocracy of the spirit, while Italian is “the musical language of golden humanity” to him. English is fascinating because Shakespeare wrote in it while Urdu is important because it has Ghalib.

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### ***3.3. Introduction to Kanthapura***

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The novel Kanthapura published in 1938, was Raja Rao’s first novel. It gives a realistic description of the spread of Gandhian movement during the 1930’s in a fictional but typical south Indian village called Kanthapura. The novel begins with a graphic description of the village and the areas surrounding it. The narrator is Achakka – an old woman. Through her narration we understand the caste divisions and social hierarchies in the novel. The novelist does not aim at depicting the life of any particular individual in the novel but it narrates the transformation of an entire village during the freedom struggles under the influence of Gandhi.

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### ***3.4. Important Facts of the Novel and Names of Characters***

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Name: Kanthapura

Author: Raja Rao

Year of Publication: 1938

Protagonist: Moorthy

Narrator: Achakka

Background: South India of the 1930’s

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#### ***3.4.1. Characters in the Novel***

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1. Achakka : She is an elderly woman of Kanthapura and is the narrator of the story.
2. Seenu : He is Achakka’s son and is a supporter of Moorthy.
3. Moorthy : He is Narasamma’s son. He is a freedom fighter.
4. Narasamma : Moorthy’s widowed mother

5. Rangamma : A rich widow living in Kanthapura who is a supporter of Moorthy
6. Venkamma : Rangamma's sister-in-law who is a widow.
7. Kamamma : Rangamma's widowed sister
8. Ratna : A girl of fifteen who is a widow and a supporter of Moorthy. She is Kamamma's daughter.
9. Bhatta : A rich Brahmin of Kanthapura. He is a money-lender.
10. Savithamma : Bhatta's first wife
11. Chinnamma : Bhatta's second wife
12. Seenappa : A lawyer. He marries Venkamma's daughter Ranga
13. Nanja : Venkamma's daughter
14. Rangappa : A priest living in Kanthapura
15. Subbe Gowda : The young man who was asked to initiate the plowing ceremony
16. Dore : A young man of Kanthapura
17. Ramakrishnayya : Rangamma's father
18. Range Gowda : He is the Patel of Kanthapura and belongs to the pariah community
19. Bade Khan : A policeman. He lives in Skeffington Coffee Estate
20. Jayaramachar : The *Harikatha*-man who came to Kanthapura from the city. He is a follower of Mahatma Gandhi.
21. The Sahib : The owner of Skeffington Coffee Estate
22. Ramanna : A Brahmin living in Kanthapura
23. Rachanna : A pariah who came to live in Kanthapur after he is thrown out of Skeffington Coffee Estate. Earlier, he was a worker in Skeffington Coffee Estate. He was thrown out from there because he had supported Moorthy. He was elected member of Congress

24. Rachi : Rachanna's wife.
25. Madanna : A worker in Skeffinton Coffee estate.
26. Sankar : An advocate who is a follower of Gandhi
27. Advocate Ranganna : An advocate who is a follower of Gandhi
28. Seetharamu : He is Rangamma's cousin who lives in Karwar
29. Boranna : Owner of toddy grove
30. Puttamma : A woman living in Kanthapura. She is a supporter of Moorthy
31. The swami : Religious Head. He is against the movement for the upliftment of the pariahs
32. Kenchamma : Presiding goddess of Kanthapura
33. Venkatanarayana : A coffee planter
34. Nanjundiah : Patwari of Kanthapura
35. Nanjamma : A Brahmin woman of Kanthapura

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### ***3.5. Chapter Wise Summary of the novel***

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#### ***3.5.1. Section – I***

The novel opens with the words “Our village” which indicates that it is concerned with the description of the village called Kanthapura which is located on the slopes of the Western Ghats. It is in the province of Kara, on the steep mountains that face the “cool Arabian seas”. The river Himavathy flows by and the roads are narrow and dusty, as they run through the forests of teak, jack, sandal and sal.

The narrator of the novel, an old woman called Achakka tells us about Kenchamma – the presiding deity of the village. The soil near Kanthapura is red because Kenchamma has descended from heaven and waged a long and fierce battle with a demon Tripura. The battle went for several days and blood flowed like streams. Finally the goddess killed the demon and saved the village. She is a saviour and bestower of boons. She saves the villagers from diseases for which the villagers walk on the holy fire on the annual fair. The only person in the village who died of small pox is widow Satamma's child

and drunkard Dhirappa's brother's son. Some sinners like young Sankamma and barber Channana's wife also died of diseases. Ramappa and Subbanna have contracted their disease in the city. People in this and other villages have full faith in the goddess.

The novelist takes utmost care to simultaneously describe the topography of Kanthapura as well as its social hierarchies. The houses of the village are divided into four quarters.

The first one is a Brahmin quarter, which also includes big houses like those belonging to postmaster Suryanarayana and Patwari Nanjundia. The Ramayya family owns the bigger house. Waterfall Venkamma (so named because she always mourns) is introduced. Achakka, the narrator is Seenu's mother. Moorthy and Dore are also introduced in this section itself. Venkamma's grudge against Rangamma a childless widow, also her sister-in-law is elaborated upon. She grudges Rangamma her sister-in-law should stay in a big house. Venkamma claims as it being built by her husband's ancestors her family should have it. Venkamma is a mother of two sons and five daughters and lives in a large house, but continues to remain jealous of Rangamma.

Dore and Moorthy are of differed natures. While Dore was proud about being branded as a "university graduate" although he did not even pass the intermediate examinations. He calls himself as "Gandhian Man". Corner House Moorthy is quiet, generous and calm. Coffee-planter Ramayya wanted to give his daughter to Moorthy in marriage, but it did not work out since the horoscopes did not tally.

In the pariah quarter there are around fifteen to twenty huts. Beadle Timmayya's house and Sidda's house are described. Sidda also owns a lot of land, but he has spent a great amount of money on treating the insanity of his wife. Bhatta becomes richer with the money spent on Sidda's wife's treatment. The potter's quarters is small with five houses. The four big houses are owned by Lingayya, Ramayya, Subbayya and Chandrayya. Old Kamamma and her son live in a little; dilapidated house. Making of pots, designed ones and agriculture are a way of life to them.

The village Patel, Range Gowda lives across the temple square. He is a rich man who helps people at times of trouble. A fat and sturdy man, his very appearance is like a tiger. He lives with his three daughters and sons-in-law.

S.A.Q. How is the topography of Kanthapura and What does it represent?

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### ***3.5.2. Section – II***

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This section focuses on the emergence of the Shiva temple at Kanthapura and its merger with the lives of the people of the village. The Shivalinga is actually discovered by Moorthy in the backyard of Achakka's house. Thus, the Kanthapureshwari temple comes into existence. There is initially a consecration ceremony and later the *Sankara Jayanthi* is celebrated on a regular basis. The entire village assembles at the temple when the *Sankara Vijaya* is also read out and young women discuss the *Maya-Vade*. *Harikathas* are also introduced and Moorthy introduces Jayaramacharya- the *Harikatha* man from the city. The introduction of Jayaramachar is significant, since his *Harikathas* are a fusion of traditional mythology and the Indian independence movement. Jayaramachar narrates about Gandhi and the freedom struggle in terms of the story of Rama and Sita. Sita is the mother land occupied by the Ravana, the British. Thus he motivates the villagers to wage war against the British. Jayaramachar is promptly arrested by the British. Moorthy, an ardent follower of Gandhi is therefore sorrow-struck when Jayaramachar is arrested. He and other young men in the city throw away their foreign clothes. Policeman Bade Khan comes to live in Kanthapura two days later.

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### ***3.5.3. Section – III***

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Bade Khan, the Muslim, is deputed to stay at Kanthapura. But he is not accommodated in the Potter's Street, Sudra Street or in the Brahmin Street. Even Patwar, Nanjundia or the Patel are of little help to him. Realizing the indifference of the people of Kanthapura towards him, the policeman Bade Khan goes to Skeffington coffee estate and requests its owners to help him with accommodation. On finding a lonely pariah woman, Bade Khan lives with her in the hut. The villagers of Kanthapura later realize that he had been sent by the government to report on the activities of the freedom fighters in that village.

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#### ***3.5.4. Section – IV***

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This section of the novel focuses on the deeper percolation of Gandhism in the village of Kanthapura. Moorthy brings *charkas* from the Karwar congress committee and distributes them among the villagers. He also explains to them in their terms why they should weave the cloth even though they can get it in market. Rangamma's house slowly becomes the centre of activity of the corner. The Karwar Congress Committee gives more free spinning wheels, books, and papers to Moorthy and asks him to distribute among the villagers. Moorthy not only distributes these items, but also propagates the value of khadi and abandonment of foreign cloth. The post master and the pariahs also receive *charkas* and the latter are particularly happy because they can both spin cloth and earn money.

S.A.Q. How does Gandhism spread in Kanthapura?

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#### ***3.5.5. Section – V***

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Another agent of the government – Bhatta the Brahmin is introduced. He is now a rich man, but, earlier he was poor. For a very small fee, he would fix auspicious dates for the villagers, work for marriage ceremonies and attend funeral dinners. Often gluttonous at funeral dinners, he never bothered about his wife Savitri. The money saved would be circulated among the poor villagers for a high rate of interest. By the time the novel opens he is a rich land owner, owning almost half of the entire village. On the death of Savitri, he marries another young girl, 12 years old, for a fat dowry. As the son-in-law of the village land owner, he earns social respect. Although he appears to be a supporter of the Gandhian movement initially, he later joins hand with the government and works against Gandhian followers in Kanthapura because it is more profitable for him to do so. Bhatta charges high rate of interest from the poor, but Subba Chetty and Rama Chetty charge even higher than him. Bhatta aligns with a Swami who is against the entry of the pariahs into the temple



and equal rights being given to them. Swami feels that every Brahmin who converses with a paraiah should be ex-communicated.

SAQ What do you think of Bhatta? Is he for or against the Gandhian movement? What is the reason behind his choice?

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### ***3.5.6. Section – VI***

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The villainy of Bhatta is further indicated. He tries to instigate Rangamma against Moorthy. But it is of no avail as Rangamma cleverly argues away his objections to Gandhism. He looks at education of women and the upliftment of pariahs with a great amount of disdain. Gandhi is also hated by Bhatta as he has adopted a paraiah girl. Swami also shares similar views with Bhatta. Kamamma's daughter Ratna is a child widow. But she refuses to dress like a widow. She appears very modern in her thoughts and action. In fact she appears to be a forerunner of a modern day feminist who asserts the autonomy of the self. Bhatta has a soft corner for Ratna as she is related to him and he had known her since childhood. Therefore, he ignores when villagers' gossip against Moorthy and Ratna though aware of the unconventional ways of Ratna. Moorthy's Mother Narasamma wants to see her son married, but he remains more wedded to Gandhism.

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### ***3.5.7. Section VII***

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The rift between Moorthy and his mother increases further when she argues with her son over his behaviour with the pariahs. As an orthodox Brahmin she fears ex-communication. She even pushes Moorthy down in a fit of anger though she later regrets her behaviour. Bhatta brings her the news of Swami's plan to ex-communicate Moorthy. The Swami passes such a decree and Moorthy is ex-communicated from the community. His mother dies of a shock but Moorthy refuses to change his ways and continues to work for the pariahs. Bhatta even refuses to perform the funeral rites of Narasamma. Moorthy performs it in an unknown place and waives back to go to Skeffington coffee estate to teach the pariahs living there.

SAQ. Does Moorthy's mother like his work? What are her fears? Do they come true?

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### ***3.5.8. Section – VIII***

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The condition of the coolies at Skeffington Coffee Estate and the forms of exploitation that they were being subjected to forms the core of this section. The coolies are brought to the Estate from the Godavari plains by a man who promises them four annas for a man and two annas for a woman. The coolies come dreaming of a land full of rice and their children eating to their fill and going back with their purses full. Rao vividly depicts the lives of the coolies at the estate. None of the promises made are ever fulfilled. Continuous toil like digging pits, cutting wood and women forced to kill vermin was a common lost for them. Continuously burdened with work, they are only fed with rice and ragi water. Sickesses like fever, stomach ache and dysentery were a common feature. Some who wanted to go back could not do so on account of lack of money for whatever they got paid is spent in paying the money lender. The new Sahib also sexually exploited vulnerable young pariah girls. Not all the coolies are paid their wages. At times they were beaten up if they dared to ask for wages.

SAQ. What are the various hardships that the coolies were subject to at the Skeffington coffee estate?

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### ***3.5.9. Section – IX***

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The coolies at the estate eagerly wait for to come to the estate and help them in upliftment. But Moorthy is not allowed to enter inside by Bade Khan and he is prohibited from entering it again. But Moorthy refuses to go back and protests in the Gandhian way. But, when Bade Khan hits Moorthy Rachanna unable to contain himself attacks Bade Khan inspite of Moorthy's pleas for peace. The coolies are whipped by the *Maistri* and Rachanaa is

thrown out of his hut and Skeffigton Coffee Estate. With the help of Moorthy and Ranga Gowda, he is sheltered by Timmayya in Kanthapura village.

SAQ. Who opposes Moorthy's presence in the Estate?

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### ***3.5.10 Section – X***

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Moorthy fasts for three days as an atonement for the violence which took place because of his presence in the Estate. He decides to take nothing but three cups of salted water which he would get for himself. His inability in having failed to live up to the ideals of the Mahatma induces feelings of guilt. The persistent efforts of Rangamma, seems and others are also of no avail. He feels very elated in his fast. As he is fasting Ratna comes to see him and is surprised at the change that has come around Moorthy. Rangamma too visits him and is unable to understand how any one could love Bade Khan as Moorthy says. Finally he breaks his fast only on the third day after *bhajans*. Raja Rao subtly indicates to the romantic inclination on part of Moorthy towards Ratna which he sheds after taking to the Gandhian way. After the fasting, Moorthy moves on to start the “Don't touch – the government' campaign.

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### ***3.5.11. Section – XI***

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Moorthy goes in search of support to start the Kantapura Congress committee. He seeks the help of Range Gowda first. For Range Gowda Moorthy's words are the ultimate truth so agrees. Moorthy then goes to Weaver Ramayya and Potter Siddhaiah who agree to be part of Congress Committee. The he goes to Rachanna's house. When Moorthy enters Rachanna's house, it is the first time that he has gone into the interiors of a pariah house. He experiences a discomfort when his offered milk to drink. He does succeed in converting them to the Congress. Back home he takes a purificatory bath. This section throws light on the innate difficulty that even a person with conviction may face to whole heartedly accept pariahs. Under the leadership of Moorthy, a Congress committee is started at Kanthapura. Moorthy is its president. Ranga Gowda, Rangamma and Rachanna and Seenu are the members of the Congress Committee. Many other potters and

weavers join the Congress There are 23 members in all, and they whole heartedly work for the Congress. They come to know that the picture of Moorthy has come in the papers and are happy. From Moorthy they come to know that the Mahatma is happy with their work.

SAQ. Who are the members of the Congress Committee in Kanthapura?

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### ***3.5.12. Section – XII***

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The opponents of Moorthy dislike his activities in the Congress and his work for the upliftment of the pariahs. Bhatta is the chief among them. He worries that Moorthy's fame is on the rise in spite of the excommunication of the Swami and so thinks of gaining some support for himself. He helps in the marriage of Venkamma's daughter Ranga with Seenappa, a widower who was above thirty and a father of three. Venkamma is also extremely happy at the riches of her son-in-law. This section throws light on the materialistic attitude of some villagers in Kanthapura. Every one in the village attend the wedding and partake in the wedding feast but Moorthy wanders along the river and worries about how anyone can be an untouchable.

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### ***3.5.13. Section – XIII***

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This section throws further light on the complications created in Kanthapura by the Britishers following the advent of the Congress. The section begins with a beautiful evocation of the month of Karthik. In this auspicious month, Moorthy is arrested by the police. When the police try to take away Moorthy, Rachanna wants to attack them. Rangamma stops him from it. The villagers then protest against the arrest by shouting 'Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai'. The police beat up the protesters and arrest them. Rachanna is also arrested along with 17 other people. While the others are released, Moorthy is not. He is taken to Karwar. A meeting is organized in Gandhi maidan where Sankar, Rangamma and Dasappa vindicate the honour of Moorthy as well as the greatness of charkha and ahimsa. Youngsters also speak in the meeting. Rangamma is also arrested by the police despite the

peoples' protests. They realise that Bhatta is also an agent of the police, and all of them pray for his release. Advocate Sankar takes care of Moorthy's case. He is aided by Rangamma. This section throws adequate light on Sankar who is not rich but a straight forward lawyer and stands committed to truth and justice. Rangamma helps him throughout. She comes back to Kanthapura only now and then. Moorthy gets three months imprisonment. Rangamma's father Ramakrishnayya passes away.

SAQ What are the complications created by the British at Kanthapura that disturbs the peace of the villagers?

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#### ***3.5.14 Section – XIV***

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Ratna is chosen after Ramakrishnayya to read the *Vedantic* texts to the villagers in spite of their doubts about her competence. Rangamma is chosen to explain the meaning of the text to the villagers. While explaining them the texts Rangamma initiates the other women of her village into meditation. Then, she encourages them to form a group and fight as she has seen women do in the city. She inspires them by telling the stories of Laksmi bai of Jhansi. Together, the women form a *sevika sangha* and they call themselves Sevis. In the Sangha Rangamma teaches them how remain fearless in spite of the beatings of the police. Thus group activity continues to champion the cause of the nation.

SAQ How do the women of the village unite for the goal of liberation?

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#### ***3.5.15. Section – XV***

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This section has an elaborate description of the ploughing ceremony in which all the villagers take part the upper castes and pariahs alike. Moorthy is released amid copious rains in the month of *Vaisakh*. When the villagers plan to give a warm welcome to Moorthy, Venkamma deliberately plans her daughter's nuptials also on the same day so that all the villagers do not go in

unison to cordially welcome him. Since the women are made to choose the nuptial ceremony, the others welcome Moorthy. It is significant that all sections of the people including pariahs, weavers, potters and betel sellers go there. But Moorthy does not appear there and he had been sent to Madur by bus. Towards the end of the chapter we find that another policeman called young Bade Khan is sent to the village. He also lives a hut in Skeffington Coffee estate with a woman

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### ***3.5.16. Section – XVI***

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The effect of the Dandi March on the people of Kanthapura is depicted in this section. Moorthy initiates the villagers to actively support the Mahatma in their own way. On the day of the Dandi March, at the same time, hundreds of villagers meet at the river bank early in the morning. They have a dip in the river on the same minute at which Gandhi was supposed to make salt. They are overjoyed at the news of the salt manufacture and the continuous protests made despite the efforts made at suppressing them. The people of Kanthapura also want for orders from the Karwar Congress Committee and wait for the call of the Mahatma.

SAQ How is the Dandi march conducted by the villagers?

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### ***3.5.17. Section – XVII***

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Another dimension of Gandhism, i.e. toddy picketing is delineated in this section. The villagers hear the news of Gandhi's arrest and commemorate it with fasting. At a meeting of the Congress panchayat in Kanthapura, Moorthy campaigns for the "Don't touch the government campaign". He asks people to refrain from paying taxes. They are also asked to picket toddy trees as they are government property. Moorthy also emphasizes the need to establish a parallel government and appoint Range Gowda as Patel again. After two days, a group of 134 people led by Moorthy, Rangamma, Range Gowda and Rachanna March to Boranna's toddy grove. When the police intervene, there is a clash between them. The *satyagrahis* are arrested amid slogan shouting. Some men are arrested and all the women are loaded into a

truck and left on the high way in the forest. In spite of the possible dangers they safely reach Kantapura once again. The *satyagrahis* experience a sense of achievement in spite of arrests and dangers.

S.A.Q. Why do the satyagrahis take to toddy picketing in Kanthapura?

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### **3.5.18. Sections XVIII-XX**

This section shows the toddy booth picketing by the satyagrahis. More number of coolies come to Kanthapura and they refuse to walk over the Satyagrahis when the police ask them to do so. This happens near the toddy booth. More coolies enter Kanthapura thus increasing the number of followers. 23 toddy shops are picketed by the satyagrahis. The villagers refuse to pay taxes (except 7 families). Now punitive taxes are levied. But the villagers write against non-payment of taxes.

The freedom fighters are tortured in jails. The coolies of the coffee estate are tied up and made to march in a slow procession. Women are raped while even the children are beaten mercilessly. There is chaos everywhere, Moorthy is arrested and Rangamma's house is sealed.

SAQ What are the dire consequences of the toddy picketing movement?

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### **3.5.19. Section XXI-XXII**

People from neighbouring places also come to Kanthapura. They unitedly resist the steps taken by the government to auction the lands on account of non-payment of taxes. The Satyagrahis decide to take out the Satyanarayana Procession in order to escape the eyes of the police. The procession starts with Ratna blowing the conch. Gradually the procession turns from a religious one to a political one. Slowly participants from the

Brahmin, pariah and weaver's street also join the march. The police assume *lathi* charge and use fire. Many are killed and some are wounded. As their properties are confiscated, the demonstrators walk towards Maddur, reach Mysore state and ultimately settle in Kashipur and start their life anew there.

Towards the end, the narrator mentions how life in Kashipura is not very different from that in Kanthapura. Many people from Kanthapura are now living in Kashipura. They are Seethamma and her daughter Nanja, pariah Rachanna's wife Rachi, Mari, Timmamma, Range Gowda's wife etc. Rangamma is to be released soon. Ratna has been released. Mahatma has made a pact with the viceroy. Many prisoners including Moorthy are released after Gandhi – Irwin pact. Moorthy also comes to know about Nehru when the freedom struggle is suspended and is drawn towards him. His devotion towards Gandhi seem to waver. But, most other Satyagrahis especially the women still retain their faith in Gandhi. They hope that Mahatma's trip to Britain would bring Swaraj. Their sufferings are quite a lot. But it gives them a feeling of achievement and a chastening and ennobling effect on them.

S.A.Q: How does Kashipura become another Kanthapura?.

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### ***3.6. Topics for Discussion***

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#### ***3.6.1. Plot and structure of Kanthapura***

Kanthapura appears like a formless novel at a first glance as there episodes after episodes, incidents after incidents, digressions and involutions which seem to distract us from the main point. Raja Rao hints at the nature of the plot in the preface to the novel itself. He emphasizes that the novel is told in ordinary style of Indian story telling exemplified in the puranas. So it would not be proper judge the novel from the Western point of view.

Kanthapura has a well organized and well knit plot when compared to Raja Rao's magnum opines The Serpent and the Rope. The structure is organized and the plot is also coherent and well-knit. The theme is that of the impact of Gandhi during the freedom movement on a village called Kanthapura. The novel has a beginning, middle and an end. There is rising



action which is developed. The story of satyagraha takes its birth and reaches its climax. There is conflict between Moorthy and the others. The main plot deals with Gandhian movement which raises the voice against the British imperialism, while the sub plot deals with Skeffington coffee estate which shows the marginalization of the workers there. The two plots start separately but get fused into one. In the climax, the tension reaches its pinnacle when there are clashes between the people of Kanthapura and the rulers. Ultimately, the satyagrahis are forced to leave Kanthapura and live in Kashipura.

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### ***3.6.2. Gandhism in the Novel***

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Novels dealing with Gandhism are not new to Indian literature. R.K. Narayan's Waiting for the Mahatma, K.S. Venkatramani's Murugan the Tiller, Kandan the Patriot are other examples. This novel is a proof of Raja Rao's admiration for Gandhian principles. Moorthy the protagonist is an ardent follower of Gandhian ideologies like truth, dharma, khadi, satyagraha etc. The novel is concerned with the conversion of an entire village to Gandhism. In other words it shows how a individual's fight and a village's fight gradually turns into a mass movement. The ordeals faced by the villagers are many. But the inhabitants do not turn back. Gandhi never appears in the novel, but his influence is ample. His is an *in absentia* living presence. Moorthy is a minor Gandhi himself. The novel assumes epic proportions in vindicating Gandhism especially because of the mythical and poetical narration of Achhakka. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, an eminent critic sums up the theme of the novel as "Gandhi and our village". But the novelist does not over idealized the Gandhian work. Through out the novel, there is constant disapproval of 'Gandhian Vagabondage'..

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### ***3.6.3. Kanthapura as a Sthala Purana***

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A *Sthalapuranas* is an indigenous Indian concept which is an innate part of Indian culture. It is a technique through which the topography of a place becomes closely intertwined with the culture, imagination, myth, folklores and the ethos of a place. A *sthalapurana* is not a mere geographical description of the topography of a place. It is different from the regional novels as written by the western masters of fiction like Hardy's Wessex. Every *sthalapurana* is in fact a saga. In his preface to the novel, Raja Rao

says “There is no village in India, however means, that has not got a rich sthalapurana, or legendary history of its own. Some god or god like hero has passed by the village – Rama might have rested under this papal-tree, Sita might have dried her clothes, ....Mahatma himself, on one of his many pilgrimages through the country, might have slept in this hut.... In this way the past mingles with the present, and the gods mingle with men to make the repertory of your grandmother always bright. One such story from the contemporary annals of my village.”

This passage illustrates how the concept of *Sthalapurana* is unique to India. The novel traces the advent of Gandhism in the village Kanthapura. Initially, the myths of Kanthapura are described in detail – How Kenchamma came to live in Kanthapura and she has become their protecting goddess. In the process of the Gandhian movement taking roots in the village, the myth, rituals, folk lore, customs, beliefs of the people are described. Birth, death, marriage, rituals, puja etc. are well depicted. As the novel progress and reaches its final conclusion the very Gandhian movement becomes the Sthalapurana of the place in addition to the myth of Kenchamma.

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#### ***3.6.4 Myth in Kanthapura***

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‘Myth’ is an important technique used by many Indo-Anglian writers in their works like drama, novel and poetry. Its use in fiction was very much in vogue when Raja Rao set but to write in that genre. His contemporaries like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Manohar Malgonkar etc. have used myths now and then in their works. But, ‘myth’ is never structurally intertwined in their works. In Raja Rao, myths are an integral part of his novels. M.K. Naik in his essay “The Achievement of Raja Rao” has stated that the Savitri myth in The Serpent and the Rope is “so vitally the centre of the novel, that any criticism, which ignores this is itself bound to appear peripheral....”.

Myths are rather the nucleus of the novel by itself and remain deeply entrenched in the theme and technique of the work. There have been disagreements in this perspective. For instance, Rajeev Taranath mentions that in comparison with T.S. Eliot’s use of mythology, that of Raja Rao is “subsidiary”. To him Raja Rao’s use of mythology is on the “periphery” and not at the “centre”. It would be difficult to accept such a view, since, myths seem to be at the centre of Raja Rao’s creative consciousness. It is closely linked with Raja Rao’s narrative technique. Meenakshi Mukherjee’s Twice

Born Fiction (1967) mentions how the novel Kanthapura is narrated by an old woman to a stranger. Such a choice enables Raja Rao to mingle facts and myths in an effective manner.

“For her, Gandhi has attained the status of God and Moorthy is regarded as an avatar in ... to her, the satyagraha becomes a religious ceremony....” Such a comparison is apt for her simple, uneducated mind. The comparison of Gandhi-British rule with Rama-Ravana situation is really elaborate. The past and present are juxtaposed and the characters from epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata and that of the Hindu gods and goddesses are mentioned along with contemporary characters. The Harikathas of Jayaramachar blends the two and give the story of the freedom struggle, mythic dimensions.

Raja Rao was deeply engrossed in Indian mythology, legends and philosophies that he effectively uses them in his works. His education in philosophy and his innate love for the deeper philosophical traditions of India is clearly evident in his works.

SAQ. Is myth central or peripheral in Kantapura?

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### ***3.6.5. Character of Moorthy***

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Moorthy is the protagonist of Kanthapura. He is frequently compared to Gandhi, Rama etc., implying his nature as a destroyer of sin and evil. Despite his access to wealth and education, Moorthy devotes his life for the upliftment of the poor and uneducated. He is particularly concerned with the pariahs, who were social outcast. Though young he is respected and admired by one and all in the village and is endearingly called ‘Our Moorthappa’. According to C.D. Narasimaiah, the author’s own self is projected in Moorthy.

Moorthy is an idealist and a visionary. He is an ardent follower of Gandhi in letter and spirit. He is influenced by the Mahatma’s ideals of equality, ahimsa and freedom. Mahatma’s love for charkhas, boycott of foreign goods and movement towards a swadeshi economy further triggers a passion for the legendary figure. Yet Moorthy hasn’t met Gandhi in person. He only has ‘visions’ of Gandhi.

Moorthy makes a conscious decision to abandon studies and work for the cause of the nation. There is considerable resistance to it in his village.

But, Moorthy is an earnest and imaginative reformer. He organises a non-co-operation movement at Kanthapura. Apart from door-to-door campaigns, he convinces the villagers to spin khadi cloth for at least 2 hours every day by explaining to them the economic implications of Swadeshi and charka in most personal terms. He makes them understand the dignity of the soil, nation and hard-work. He distributes the charkhas which have been given by the Congress, to be distributed among the public. He changes his strategy shrewdly from person to person. When people don't listen he enlists the sympathy of Range Gowda, the patel of Kanthapura. He mingles the freedom movement and the prayers at the temple. He champions the cause of the workers at the Skeffington coffee estate. Moorthy organises a picketing of toddy grove and toddy booths.

In spite of his idealization Moorthy's character rings of authenticity as he is also not completely free from flaws. When he visits the pariah quarter for the first time in its insides, he is unable to swallow food on account of his brahminical upbringing. This does not mean that Moorthy is sectarian. It is only an instance depicted by the novelist, to show how despite loud pronouncements, the processes of giving up one's inhibitions is not an easy one. He continues to work for the eradication of untouchability. At one point of time, he is even disillusioned with Gandhism and ponders over the pragmatic ideologies of Nehru. Similarly, his attraction is Ratna is yet another instance of Moorthy's fallible side of his personality. Raja Rao is only making a deliberate attempt at depicting an ordinary individual with inherent strengths and weaknesses, through the character of Moorthy.

SAQ. Is Moorthy faultless? If not what are the faults you see in him? Are they presented as faults?
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### ***3.6.6. Achakka- the Narrator:***

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In writing this novel, Raja Rao had to capture the ethos of Indian life in a language which was not Indian, and so the task was complex. Raja Rao says in the Preface to the novel, "We, in India think quickly, we talk quickly, and when we move we move quickly". This is quite a contrast to the western ways of thought, for, the expression of emotions is mostly restrained. The

writer believes that this is something that is typically Indian. His task was to capture this swiftness of movement and he has done it very skillfully and effectively through the character Achakka.

In Kanthapura the narrator is an old woman called Achakka. She tells the story to a woman who is new in Kashipura. This is after the people of Kanthapura had left the village and settled in Kashipura. She tells her about events that took place in the past. They are narrated as they emerge out of the memory of this old woman. A major technique used by Raja Rao through the character of Achakka is that of orality since it fits into the mouth of an illiterate but keenly observant old village woman. For this purpose, large scale descriptions, repetitions, minute observations of detail etc. are employed. As such the events are largely narrated chronologically, but, in some places the narrator does give some backward glances.

There is a copious amount of spontaneity and natural vigor in the manner in which the story is told. Episode follows episode and this goes on endlessly. The digressions are also numerous, befitting the nature of orality. Most importantly, she has been a part of the events narrated by her.

She is an ordinary woman of Kanthapura who is uneducated and with no particular distinguishing quality. However, she is intelligent enough to understand the implications of what Moorthy was doing and the principles of Mahatma Gandhi. She is endowed with a keen power of observation, if we consider her education and her background. An example of this is the passage describing the outbreak of monsoons on the Skeffington coffee estate. Similarly, the Satyanarayan puja, the opening descriptions of Kanthapura, its topography, the implications of caste hierarchy involved with the topography of the place, etc. are highlighted. The description befits great masters of the art.

The reader is not given any information about the kind of life she had lived or about her personal life. The only information given to us is that she is a widow and has no one except Seenu.

Her comments are minute, accurate and help the reader in seeing the events and characters in the right perspective. For instance, she says, "Bhatta left us after harvest on a pilgrimage to Kashi. I tell you that he was not a bad man, was Bhatta?" A comment like this does effect the way we see Bhatta. The narration, description and the evaluation of the action and the characters is done simultaneously. Achakka's judgement on the various events and characters are actually the evaluations of the novelist yet the novelist separates

himself from the narrator especially when certain prejudices are being expressed. The story is narrated simultaneously on two levels. It acquires a dramatic character through Achakka's narration and gains magnificence through the innate art of Raja Rao. Srinivasa Iyengar is of the opinion that Achakka's manner of telling the story is, "characteristically Indian, feminine with a spontaneity that is coupled with swiftness, raciness suffused with native vigour, and exciting with a rich sense of drama shot through and through with humour and lyricism".

He further adds that "although the feminine touches and mannerisms, the seemingly effortless rotation of the tongue, the meandering sentences and massive paragraphs are characteristic of the narrator-there is nevertheless a consummate art in all this riot of artlessness. There is careful selection behind the apparent abundant detail". Meenakshi Mukherji is of the opinion that making Achakka the narrator serves many useful purposes.

"Making this old woman the narrator enables Raja Rao to mingle fact and myth in an effective manner. For the old woman, Jawaharlal is a Bharata to the Mahatma- the Mahatma who, she believes, will slay Ravana so that Sita may be freed." She further adds that "The second advantage derived by this choice of narrator is that the language used by her is of an elemental quality. Her reaction to things is direct and vivid, not literary and second-hand."

The narrator while narrating the events many a times goes back in time which imparts a leisurely manner of story telling.

The language, the tone and the accent of the narrator changes according to the situation. The narrator creates vivid pictures of the environment and the characters in such a skillful manner that one does not feel that one is reading extraneous material. The narrator's presence almost becomes live. The images used by the narrator to depict change in appearance or attitude are concrete and taken from life. The following passage is an example of them.

"Narasamma was growing thin as a bamboo and shriveled like a banana bar". These are images which are familiar to people living in villages.

In conclusion we may say that the technique of narration used in *Kanthapura* is perfectly in consonance with the novelist's intention of narrating a *Sthalapurana*.

SAQ Can you think of a better alternative for Achakka to narrate the sthalapurana of Kanthapura? Give reasons for your answer.

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### **3.6.7. Range Gowda**

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Like Bade Khan, Range Gowda, is also an employee of the government. Range Gowda is a supporter of Moorthy and advocates the cause of the freedom fighters. When the Kanthapura Congress Committee is formed, Range Gowda is made the super president and protector of the Congress Committee. He actively participates in the mission of the Congress at Kanthapura. Range Gowda does not completely endorse Moorthy's views that enemies can be won over by a loving attitude. But still, he is a follower of Gandhi.

Range Gowda is a rich man and an esteemed elder of his community as well as the whole village. He is the first person approached by Moorthy when the latter forms the Congress party in the village. His joining the party had the potential to attract a large number of followers. People do not dare to oppose him. A father of three married daughters, who live with him with their husbands. The sons in law also work with him. Though they also own as much land as he does, they continue to be respectful towards him. Range Gowda is an honest man and helps the poor people of the village. He is kind, sympathetic, courageous and undaunted.. He is a sort of a bully who protects the people of his community. In terms of his physical appearance, he is a fat and sturdy man with a powerful voice and good personality. He is the Patel of Kanthapura, and his duty is to collect-tax. Though Moorthy is much younger, he respects Moorthy and has a lot of faith and confidence in him. Range Gowda proposes the name of Moorthy for the presidentship of the village panchayat. He gives his full support to Moorthy. In Moorthy's absence he guides and encourages the people of Kanthapura. He gives them strength to carry on. Range Gowda is later dismissed from Patelship on account of his active participation in the activities of the Congress.

He is the only one among the people of Kanthapura who goes back to Kanthapura after they had started living in Kashipur. He goes there to get

jewels that he has buried under the earth. When he comes back to Kashipur he tells the rest of them about Kanthapura. He describes the state it is in. Even Bhatta has sold his land and gone to Kashi. Venkamma has started living with her son-in-law. Concubine Chinna is the only one who still lives in Kanthapura. He says that the corner-house, Rangamma's house and Nanjamma's house were in ruins. Their houses are desolate. None of the original residents of Kanthapura are there. The novel ends with his words. Range Gowda is lovable in spite of his shortcomings.

SAQ. What is your estimate of the character of Range Gowda?

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### 3.6.8. *Bhatta*

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Bhatta is a rich money lender. Earlier he was a poor priest who made a living by taking a very small fee from people for telling the days of important festivals and fixing the auspicious *muhurtams* for marriage. He had earlier worked as a priest in marriage ceremonies. He always made it a point to attend every funeral dinner. He was never late for these dinners. In fact, he was always the first Brahmin to arrive on such occasions.

He is gluttonous and this is evident from the way he used to eat the obsequial dinner, “.....But Bhatta goes on munching and belching, drinking water and then munching again”. He tries his best to save as much as possible. In this way he saves three hundred and fifty rupees. Bhatta hardly cares for his wife. When he enjoys special feasts, his wife has only dal-soup and rice. On such days she never used to cook dinner for herself. Bhatta remains ignorant of her starvation. In fact he is rather happy to save some money through this means. After her death, he marries a girl who is just twelve and a half-years old. He gets one thousand rupees and five acres of wet land as dowry. After his marriage, he also gains a lot in terms of social prestige.

Bhatta is polite and smooth tongued and so he is liked by the people. He is adept in the art of reciting the *Gita* in an impressive manner. With the money that he had saved, he starts the business of money lending. Being extremely covetous and greedy, he charges very high rates of interest from



people. He exploits the poor and the needy. He does not leave any opportunity of fleecing the needy and the poor when they came to him for loans. He is profited by every occasion and by the time the novel opens, he owns almost half of the village. He is no longer a poor Brahmin. With increasing prosperity he loses interest in priesthood. In order to accelerate his income further, he introduces people who need legal help to lawyers. In certain cases he himself settles disputes between people. He is a symbol of corrupt humanity. Beauty and goodness and other soft sensibilities do not evoke any response in him as he has no eye of appreciation for them.

Bhatta initially displays interest in Gandhi *bhajans*. But his view towards the *bhajans* and the Gandhi Movement changes along with his increasing affluence. After one of his frequent visits to the city, he turns hostile to the Gandhian movement. He becomes an agent of the government to work against Moorthy and his followers at Kanthapura. Hence, Moorthy and his friends represent the freedom movement whereas Bhatta and Bade Khan represent government repression of this struggle for freedom.

Bhatta is a follower of the Swami who is against the movement for upliftment of pariahs. He had met the Swami during one of his visits to the city. Bhatta is hostile in the matter of Moorthy's mixing with Pariahs. Bhatta tries to suppress this movement in Kanthapura but is not successful. He also tries to form a lobby in Kanthapura against the freedom fighters led by Moorthy. He works hard for the excommunication of Moorthy.

Bhatta is not in favour of radical social reforms. He does not like the idea of boys and girls studying together in schools and colleges. It is true that he has a soft corner for Ratna but dislikes her modern ways. He is self-centered and despicable. But there are some positive qualities which individualise him. He sends fig-tree house Ramu to the city for studies. He gives him money when he needs it and does not charge any interest. The character of Bhatta cannot be categorized as black but is certainly grey.

SAQ How does Bhatta work hard against the positive measures undertaken by Moorthy?

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### ***3.6.9. The Swami***

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The Swami is against the movement for the upliftment of the pariahs. He is of the opinion that the movement should be crushed before things get out of control. He asks Bhatta to stop this movement in Kanthapura. Bhatta does his best to stop it. Bhatta met the swami in the city. Initially, Bhatta was a follower of Gandhi. It was after one of his visits to the city that he turned against Gandhi.

The Swami is a supporter of the British government. He received twelve hundred acres of wet land from the government. His love for Gandhism is superficial, since he abhors the idea of the social upliftment of the pariahs. The swami never comes to Kanthapura. He remains in the background throughout the novel. He never appears on the scene but he does have an influence on the events which take place in the novel. He is a conservative man who is very traditional in his views and ideas. He is an orthodox Brahmin and is able to influence the Brahmins living in Kanthapura. When the people of Kanthapura hear that anyone who mixes with the pariahs will be excommunicated, they are terrified. Moorthy is not affected by this and he continues to champion their cause. When Moorthy's mother receives the news that Moorthy, his family and his future progeny have been excommunicated, she is shocked. It ultimately leads to her death. This clearly shows the kind of influence which the swami had on the people.

SAQ. How does the Swami influence the people of Kanthapura?

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### ***3.6.10. Bade Khan***

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Bade Khan comes to live in Kanthapura after Jayaramachar is arrested. The government had sent this policeman to Kanthapura for a purpose. His main job was to give information to the government about the activities of the freedom fighters of Kanthapura. He finds it very difficult to get a house for himself in Kanthapura. The main reason for this is his being a Muslim and the government supporter. He approaches Patwari Nanjundia and then Patel Range Gowda but he is not able to get a house to live in within Kanthapura.

When he approaches Patwari Nanjundia, he sends him to Patel Range Gowda saying that he is the only person who could help him. Patel Range Gowda is also not very polite to him. He bluntly refuses to help him and says that his duty was to collect revenue. Finding houses for policemen is not his duty. Ultimately he finds a hut in Skeffington Coffee Estate. He lives there with a pariah woman.

He is an agent of the government and does his duty sincerely. The novelist does not give much information about the kind of person he is. He is described as a hefty, bearded man. Nothing else is said about his physical appearance.

Though he is an Indian, he is against the freedom fighters. He is a loyal and faithful servant of the Britishers and does his best to oppose the freedom movement. His presence on the Skeffington Coffee estate is helpful to the owner of the estate because he does the job of terrorizing the coolies. When Moorthy tries to enter the coffee estate it was Bade Khan who stops him. He is uneducated and crude in his manners and speech, displaying unrefinement. Instead of being on the side of his countrymen, he is with the British. To a certain extent this may be due to his ignorance but even then people like him cannot be forgiven. In spite of the fact that he does his work sincerely he cannot be termed as a positive character.

SAQ What sort of a man is Bade Khan?

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### ***3.6.11. Ratna***

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Ratna is Kamalamma's daughter. She is frank and outspoken. Though a widow, she does not dress up like one. She is a precursor to modern day's feminist movement as she willfully asserts herself in a traditional male domain. She has never actually lived with her husband but, the society expects her to behave like a widow. She wears bangles, uses kumkum and wears colorful saris. She moves freely in the village unhindered and uncaring for the traditional customs that often restrict a widow's movements, When the villagers complain that she was seeing a man a day, she only asserts they had better eat mud and drown themselves in the river. Her mother, who is conservative, prevents her daughter from speaking in a derisive tone. But Ratna continues to exercise her liberty. In terms of her physical appearance

also, she appears a bit outlandish. Ratna wears her hair in the style of concubines and wears nose-rings and ear-rings. Her mother concludes that Ratna's behaviour is the result of her going to school. The other women do not like her. Bhatta also does not like her ways but still he has a soft corner for her. Bhatta is Ratna's father's second cousin. Bhatta had seen her as a baby and seen her grow up gradually. She has now come of age and he wants her to behave like other girls do.

Ratna's mother is a widow. Her mother is Rangamma's sister. After his mother's death, Moorthy lives in Rangamma's house. Rangamma likes Moorthy. Both Ratna and Rangamma are supporters of Moorthy who is a freedom fighter. In Moorthy's absence, Ratna becomes the leader of the freedom fighters of Kanthapura, a sign of her ability to handle issues beyond the domestic domain.

After Ramakrishnayya's death Rangamma chooses Ratna for reading the religious texts. People dislike the idea at first. Ratna reads them and Rangamma explains them to the people. She plays an active part in the formation of the women's group called the Sevika Sangha. She is gifted with courage, determination, intelligence and resourcefulness. She is modern in her thinking. Gradually she gains the respect of the very people who have resented her earlier. After being released from jail, she goes to Kashipur. She is more mellowed and wants to play her part in India's struggle for freedom. She is disappointed when Gandhi reaches a compromise with the Britishers. After staying in Kashipur for sometime, she goes to Bombay. She is a close friend of Moorthy and there certainly was a kind of attraction between them but it is only hinted at.

SAQ "Ratna is the most modern woman in Kanthapura." Do you agree?  
Give reasons.

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### ***3.6.12. Waterfall Venkamma***

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She is Rangamma's sister-in-law. Both Rangamma and Venkamma are widows. She is called "Waterfall Venkamma" because she is always crying and shouting at people. She has a grudge against almost everybody.

She grudges against Moorthy because of his refusal to marry her second daughter. Therefore she spares no opportunity to insult him.

She is jealous of Rangamma because she has a big house. According to Venkamma, the house had been built by her husband's ancestors and not by Rangamma's husband. Venkamma has five daughters and two sons and Rangamma is a childless widow and even then she lives alone the big house. Actually Venkamma's house was equally big but her grudge against Rangamma was because she was living alone in such a big house, and Venkamma had a big family and they were living in a house which was of the same size as Rangamma's house. She feels that the house should have belonged to her instead of Rangamma. She agonises over the happiness of others. She is petty minded and is an orthodox Brahmin. She is very conservative and traditional in her way of thinking. She hates Rangamma so much that she even feels like killing her.

She is against the Gandhian movement and she conspires with Bhatta and the others who are against Gandhi. Bhatta arranges the match of one of Venkamma's daughters with advocate Seenappa. He does this to please her and gain her support. Bhatta is against the freedom fighters. He is against Moorthy and the others who were followers of Gandhi.

She is loud-mouthed and always curses people. When Rangamma stays for some days in advocate Sankar's house, she casts numerous aspersions on her. She says that Rangamma has now started openly living with her lover. She is the first to spread the rumour of Moorthy's excommunication. A rift is created between Moorthy and his mother. Ultimately Moorthy's mother dies. Venkamma does not like Ratna. Later when the people of Kanthapura settle in Kshipur, she also leaves Kanthapura and starts living with her son-in-law.

SAQ Justify the title "Waterfall" Venkamma.

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### ***3.7. Historical background to the Novel***

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Kanthapura is located in a specific period of Indian history. Its milieu is the non-cooperative movement of 1919-22 and 1930-31, and its impact on the social and political life of the country. There were protest movements

launched by Gandhi to pioneer freedom struggle. The novel concerns itself with the impact of these movements at Kanthapura. The novel makes pointed references to the spread of Swadeshi Movement, the value of the charkhas, Dandi March, Jallianwallabagh, Massacre, the Indian National Congress, growth of Nehru ideals etc.

Kanthapura encapsulates the history of the whole decade of 1920's and ends with the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 1931. This historical pact was actually a compromise formula between the Congress and the British government. It was formed to intensify the second upsurge of the civil disobedience movement towards attainment of complete independence. The purpose of the novelist is not to give a history of the freedom movement from the beginning towards the attainment of the movement, but to depict its impact over a particular point of time, at a particular place, which could be considered the prototype for any south Indian village.

It is the India which remained benefited from English language and education, especially the first generation of intellectuals who gained such an advantage. It is the post-renaissance India where thinkers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshav Chandra Sen, Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo etc. had already ushered in a renaissance of thought. Untouchability, sati, caste system, child marriage etc. were some of the evils which were rallied against.

A major aspect of the freedom struggle has been the fusion of religion with politics. Indian religions were perceived with a renewed gusto and vibrancy. Tilak re-vigorated the Ganapathi festival with the aim of renewing the religious sentiments of the rural folk and to create a feeling of belonging, unity and discipline amongst them. Students were also enthused to participate in such festivals. In the absence of modern media of mass communication, festivals like these were used to instill feelings of courage, patriotism, love for freedom etc. Students were also harnessed into these activities. In 1895, Tilak started the Shivaji festival to beckon the Marathas to emulate their fiery leader. Gandhi himself has seen the freedom struggle as a spiritual struggle where the self tries to defeat the evil. Prayers and fasts are part of the Gandhian way of mobilizing the masses because for him religion encompasses all aspects of life including politics. In *harikathas* and ballads, feelings of national integration, patriotism and sacrifice were depicted.

Such an aspect of politico-religious awakening has been used by Raja Rao in Kanthapura. The demand of the moderates for 'Home Rule' (Swarajya), the non-cooperation movements, the love for khaddar are the other

aspects of our freedom movement that Raja Rao has captured in the novel. The Gandhian concept of equality, fight against untouchability, boycott of foreign goods, salt satyagraha, civil disobedience movement are discussed in the novel. Rao also illustrates, the disillusionment caused among numerous Indians with regard to the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and the subsequent failures at the round table conference.

Thus, the numerous aspects of the India's freedom movement have been used effectively by Raja Rao not as an objective backdrop, but as an intrinsic aspect of the novel.

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### ***3.8. Summing Up***

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In this unit you have studied an interesting novel written by one of the Big Three novelists of Indian Writing English, Raja Rao. You have learnt in this unit the aspects of *Kantapura* like its plot, characters, and the topics which the author raises in the novel.

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### ***Questions***

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1. Explain the role of the narrator.
2. How does the novel depict the typical life of a South Indian Village?
3. Describe the character of Moorthy.
4. How does the novel turn into a Gandhipurana?
5. How does Moorthy inspire the people of his village to rebel against the British?
6. What role does the Sevila Sangha play in the final parts of the novel?
7. Describe briefly the plight of the coolies of Skeffington Coffee Estate.
8. Comment on the use of myth in *Kantapura*.
9. Write a note on the police action on the freedom fighters of *Kanthapura*

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### ***Suggested Reading***

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1. Indian Writing in English – K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar.
2. Twice Born Fiction- Meenakshi Mukerjee.