Kanthapura

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF RAJA RAO

Raja Rao was born to a historically influential Brahmin family in the South Indian state of Mysore (now Karnataka), where *Kanthapura* is also set. Rao's father taught Kannada (the local language that the book's characters presumably speak) and his mother died when Rao was four years old. Rao was the only Hindu student at his Muslim public school before he went to study English at the University of Madras and graduated in 1929, the same year he originally finished writing *Kanthapura*. He soon moved to France, where he studied French history and literature, and spent the next thirty years living between there and India. During the 1940s, he was active in the Indian independence movement. Rao moved to the United States in 1966, where he taught philosophy at the University of Texas until his retirement in 1986. He married three times: to the French teacher Camille Mouly in 1931, to the American actress Katherine Jones in 1965, and to the American Susan Vaught in 1986. From the 1960s onward, he won a number of prominent literary prizes, including the Indian Padma Bhushan in 1969 and the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 1988.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Kanthapura is set during the early days of the Indian independence movement that ultimately liberated the nation from British colonial rule in 1947. This movement arguably lasted for the entire duration of British colonialism in South Asia, but the campaign of organized nonviolent resistance headed by Mohandas Gandhi and his Indian National Congress began in the 1920s after a British general ordered his troops to shoot thousands of peaceful protestors in the northern city of Amritsar. After deciding that it would be immoral to cooperate with the British government, Gandhi launched the Non-Cooperation Movement in an attempt to achieve Swaraj (self-rule) for India by encouraging Indians to refuse foreign goods (especially British liquor and clothing), resign their posts in British schools and government jobs, and refuse to fight for the British in World War II. Gandhi famously served two years in prison, went on numerous hunger strikes (including one to demand nonviolence among his own supporters after a group of Gandhists burned down a police station), and protested a new British tax on salt by marching nearly 400 kilometers to the ocean and making his own salt. He also gave women a prominent role in the independence movement. Ultimately, although the British imprisoned more than 100,000 Indians on political grounds, Gandhi's explicit demands for independence in the 1940s (called the Quit India Movement) succeeded in 1947, although Gandhi opposed the ultimate decision to partition South Asia into Indian and Muslim states. He was assassinated by a Hindu nationalist shortly after India won independence, in 1948, and over two million people attended his funeral.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Although *Kanthapura* is Rao's best-known work, his second novel, *The Serpent and the Rope*, is often considered his masterpiece. This novel, published 22 years after *Kanthapura*, explores philosophical encounters between West and East through a relationship between an Indian and a French student that models his own failed first marriage to Camille Mouly. The short stories he wrote during the 1930s are collected in *The Cow of the Barricades, and Other Stories* (1947), and he went on to publish three more novels, two more collections of stories, and numerous works of nonfiction, including a biography of Mahatma Gandhi. Rao is widely considered one of the three earliest major "Indo-Anglian" writers, or English-language writers from India. Another is R.K. Narayan, who wrote more than a dozen novels, the most famous of which is *Swami and Friends*. The third is Mulk Raj Anand, often called the Indian Dickens, whose writings focused on the oppression of lower-caste Indians. His novels include *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, and *The Sword and the Sickle*. Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* was the independence movement's central text.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Kanthapura*
- **When Written:** 1929
- **Where Written:** Chennai (Madras), India
- **When Published:** 1938
- **Literary Period:** Modern Indian Literature, Colonial Literature
- **Genre:** Novel, Sthala-Purana (legendary history)
- **Setting:** Kanthapura, a small village in Southwest India circa 1930
- **Climax:** The townspeople burn Kanthapura to the ground and move to surrounding villages.
- **Antagonist:** The British colonial government, as embodied by the policeman Badè Khan, the Sahib at the Skeffington Estate, locals who defend the colonial system, and the military and police forces that crush Kanthapura's rebellion
- **Point of View:** First-person oral history told by Achakka.

EXTRA CREDIT

Surname Traditionally, many South Indians do not use surnames; Raja Rao only adopted his in adulthood in order to get a passport.

Spirituality and the Absolute Like *Kanthapura*'s protagonist Moorthy, Rao was deeply concerned with metaphysical questions, and his work became increasingly philosophical throughout his life. He considered writing and reading to be spiritual practices aimed at elevating consciousness, and during his acceptance speech for the Neustadt Prize in 1988, Rao explained that he considered himself "a man of silence" and the prize "not given to me, but to the That which is far beyond me, yet in me—because I alone know I am incapable of writing what people say I have written."

PLOT SUMMARY

Kanthapura recounts the rise of a Gandhian nationalist movement in a small South Indian village of the same name. The story is narrated by Achakka, an elder brahmin woman with an encyclopedic knowledge about everyone in her village; she tells the story in the meandering, nonlinear style of a sthala-purana, a traditional "legendary history" of a village, its people, and its gods.

Achakka begins her tale by situating Kanthapura in its immediate landscape, the Western Ghats mountain range in southwest India that has recently become a center of the British colonial spice trade. The village's patron deity is the goddess Kenchamma, who fought a demon on the **Kenchamma Hill** above Kanthapura ages ago and has protected the villagers ever since. Achakka introduces the village's numerous residents of all caste. She introduces the educated and well-off brahmins, including the wealthy orphan Dorè, who proclaims to be a Gandhian after attending a term of university in the city, and the much more beloved Moorthy, who refuses to marry into one wealthy family after another. Then she introduces the potters and weavers, who are largely turning to agriculture, and finally the pariahs, who live in decrepit huts at the edge of town. But caste does not always translate to wealth. The loincloth-wearing brahmin Bhatta and the shrewd but honest patel and sudra Rangè Gowda are the village's two most powerful figures.

One day, Moorthy finds a linga (small idol depicting the Lord Siva) in Ahakka's backyard and the brahmins begins convening prayers for it; soon thereafter, Moorthy begins collecting money from everyone in the village to have a Harikatha-man named Jayaramachar perform his religious discourse about Mahatma Gandhi's promise to save India from foreign domination. This creates a commotion, especially as Moorthy begins to convert other villagers to Gandhi's cause and a Muslim policeman named Badè Khan moves into town. Patel Rangè Gowda will not give Khan a place to stay, so he goes to the nearby Skeffington Coffee Estate, where the presiding Sahib offers him a hut among the workers. Meanwhile, Moorthy convinces various villagers to start spinning their own wool and weaving their own khadi cloth, since Gandhi believes that foreign goods impoverish India and sees weaving as a form of spiritual practice.

But Bhatta despises Gandhism, for his business runs on high-interest loans to small farmers who sell their rice to city-people. He decries the modernization of India and the erosion of the caste system, so he proposes establishing a brahmin party to fight Moorthy's spreading Gandhism and wins the support of many villagers, most notably the rambling Waterfall Venkamma, the priest Temple Rangappa and his wife Lakshamma, Moorthy's own mother Narsamma, and his own wife Chinnamma. Moorthy, who has a vision of Gandhi giving a discourse and decides to dedicate his life to the Mahatma's work, wins over the wealthy widow Rangamma, at whose large house he stockpiles spinning-wheels and books about nonviolent resistance. The powerful Swami in Mysore promises to excommunicate anyone who "pollutes" the traditional system by interacting with people from different castes, and when Narsamma finds out that her son Moorthy will likely be first, she is distraught and refuses to associate with him. But he does not budge and, when the Swami excommunicates his entire family after Moorthy is seen carrying a corpse, Narsamma dies on the banks of the nearby **River Himavathy** and Moorthy moves into Rangamma's house.

The narrative cuts to the Skeffington Estate, where the maistri convinces coolie workers from impoverished villages around India to come do backbreaking work in horrible conditions at the estate. Their wages are low and the Sahib finds every available means to keep them indentured at the Estate for life, from beating them to raising the prices on daily goods to stealing their wages to, most insidiously, encouraging them to spend their money drinking at the nearby toddy stand. Nobody has managed to leave for ten years, even as a new Sahib has taken over who is kinder than the first (except to the women, Achakka notes, whom he systematically raped until he became embroiled in a legal battle for murdering a father who refused to give up his daughter). But Moorthy's Gandhians, with the help of the brahmin clerk Vasudev, begin teaching the coolies to read and write and recruiting them to join the protest movement. Badè Khan breaks up one of these lessons, which only strengthens Moorthy's resolve, and soon a coolie named Rachanna moves off the estate and into Kanthapura. During the commotion some of the coolie women grabbed the Khan's beard, and Moorthy takes personal responsibility for this attack, which runs counter to the Mahatma's doctrine of nonviolence. He fasts for three days, meditating continuously in the village temple and receiving visions of Siva and Hari as Rangamma, the wise elder brahmin Ramakrishnayya, and the widowed pariah girl Ratna care for him. He grows stronger,

responding to threats from Waterfall Venkamma and Bhatta with love and resolving to launch what he calls the "don't-touch-the-Government campaign."

Moorthy approaches Patel Rangè Gowda with his plan, and the powerful town representative and landowner quickly resolves to follow the Mahatma. Together, they convene a Village Congress, which promises to serve as a local branch of Gandhi's Congress of All India. Moorthy visits the house of the former coolie Rachanna, who is now living as a pariah in the village, but finds himself anxious at the thought of going inside or drinking the milk Rachanna's wife Rachi offers him, since he grew up as a brahmin and has never actually been so close to a pariah. He does so nonetheless and soon convinces a congregation of confused pariah women to spin cloth and join the movement. But when he returns home, Rangamma makes him enter through the back and drink Ganges water to purify himself.

Bhatta soon realizes that he can lead Venkamma to "set fire where we want" if he can find her daughter a husband, so he arranges a marriage with his favorite lawyer, the middle-aged widow Advocate Seenappa. Shortly thereafter, during the holy festival of Kartik, the police come to Rangamma's house and arrest Moorthy. Rachanna cries out, "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!" (or, "Glory to Mahatma Gandhi!"), a battle cry that the Gandhians employ when the police attack them through the rest of the book. The police begin beating and arresting the rest of the villagers, taking 17 in total and releasing all but Moorthy.

In jail, Moorthy refuses the help of lawyers and spiritual leaders until Advocate Sankar, the Congress Committee Secretary in nearby Karwar city, tells him that the national movement needs him released. Moorthy falls at Sankar's feet and the lawyer holds an enormous meeting for his benefit, although a nameless old man (whom the Swami has paid off) speaks in defense of the British government and the "Beloved Sovereign" Queen Victoria. The Police Inspector comes to the meeting and arrests another of its leaders, Advocate Ranganna, and news spreads fast in Kanthapura by means of a newspaper Rangamma has begun to publish. The villagers read it voraciously, with even the illiterate insisting that others read it to them, and they debate when and whether Moorthy will be released.

Rangamma and the Gandhian Nanjamma go to Karwar to visit Advocate Sankar, who is notorious for being an honest and socially-conscious man. Rangamma decides to stay for awhile, and meanwhile the colonial government fires Rangè Gowda, installing another patel for the village in his place. Moorthy is sentenced to three months' imprisonment, and the wise elder Ramakrishnayya dies after stumbling into a pillar during heavy rains the following day. During his cremation, the Himavathy River overflows and swallows his ashes.

The villagers decide that the widowed girl Ratna should replace Ramakrishnayya to lead the village's readings from Hindu scriptures, and after Rangamma's return she begins to interpret the texts Ratna reads as calls for the end of British rule in India. The women resolve to form their own Volunteer group, and Rangamma begins to lead them in group meditation and drills to practice nonviolent resistance to beatings from the police. On an auspicious day soon thereafter, the villagers perform a ceremony honoring the Goddess Kenchamma before planting their fields, and Venkamma decides to move her daughter's wedding to the same day as Moorthy's homecoming from prison so that villagers will be forced to choose their allegiance. On the day he is supposed to arrive, the villagers wait to receive him but he does not come, until they realize that the police have secretly escorted him back into Rangamma's house and go there to greet him, shouting Gandhian slogans and nearly starting another clash with the police.

Moorthy again takes the helm of the village's Gandhian movement, reminding the others about their obligation to speak Truth, reject caste hierarchy, and spin wool each morning. The villagers follow the news of Gandhi's protest of the British salt tax, in which he marches to the sea and makes his own salt, and they bathe in the holy Himavathy River at the precise moment Gandhi reaches the ocean and the police start arresting his followers *en masse*. Moorthy and Rangamma continue to lead the others in practice drills, waiting for orders from the national Gandhian Congress, but soon discover that the Mahatma has been arrested and decide to officially launch the "don't-touch-the-Government campaign" by protesting toddy stands, refusing to pay taxes or abide by the colonial government's orders, and setting up a "parallel government" for their village that keeps Rangè Gowda as Patel.

Two days later, 139 Kanthapura villagers march to the toddy grove near the Skeffington Coffee Estate and Moorthy refuses to honor the Police Inspector's orders to back down. The Gandhians climb into the grove and begin tearing branches off the trees as the police beat them down with lathis and arrest three villagers: the pariah Rachanna and the potters Lingayya and Siddayya. They corral the rest of the protestors into trucks, which drive them off in different directions and drop them by the side of the road in various parts of the Western Ghats. The protestors march back toward Kanthapura, encountering cart-men who support Gandhi's movement and offer to take them home for free as well as people in the nearby village of Santhapura who decide to join their Satyagraha movement.

The next week, the villagers repeat their protest, encountering various people from the region who proclaim their oppression under British rule and ask Moorthy to help them. When they reach the toddy grove, the Police Inspector marches the coolies off the Skeffington Estate to Boranna's toddy stand, but the Gandhians convince the coolies to join the protest instead of drinking. The police are more violent this time, and they seriously injure Rangamma, Ratna, and Moorthy before dumping the rest on the side of the road, as before. But when they return to Kanthapura, the Gandhians discover that many

of the coolies and Gandhi sympathizers from the region have decided to join them, and their movement continues to grow as they launch various other protests, get 24 toddy stands in the area to shut down, and closely follow the accelerating national protest movement.

Besides the few brahmins who still oppose the Gandhi movement, the villagers refuse to cooperate with the government, which infuriates the police and leads them to more and more aggressive tactics. The police barricade every exit out of town, secretly arrest numerous protestors (including the movement's two main leaders, Moorthy and Rangamma) in the middle of the night, and begin assaulting female villagers. One officer nearly rapes Ratna, but Achakka and some of the other women Volunteers find her just in time and decide that she will be the new leader of the protest movement. This group of women, whose perspective the narrative follows closely from this point onward, hide out in the temple and watch Bhatta's house burn down. But a policeman sees them and locks them inside overnight, until the pariah Rachi lets them out.

Three days later, the villagers undertake their fourth and most consequential protest against the police. Rich Europeans come to Kanthapura as the government begins auctioning off the villagers' land, and they bring coolies from the city to begin working the fields. Gandhians from around the region, including Advocate Sankar, flood into the town to help the protest effort. Achakka and the other women begin questioning their loyalty to Gandhi, wondering whether nonviolent resistance will truly save their livelihoods, but soon the march is underway and the police are more vicious than ever before. One of the protestors raises the Gandhian revolutionary flag and the police begin firing against the protestors, massacring them even as they proclaim their commitment to nonviolence. The women hide out in sugarcane fields as they watch their neighbors and party-members get slaughtered, and as they begin to flee Kanthapura, Rachi decides to burn the village down.

Rachi makes a bonfire and sets the village alight before all the women continue marching as far as they can from Kanthapura, across the mountains and into the jungle, where people honor them as "pilgrims of the Mahatma" and offer them a new home in the village of Kashipura. In the year since Kanthapura's destruction, Achakka explains, the villagers have scattered and moved on with their lives, and Moorthy has been released from prison, although he gave up on Gandhi, who started to compromise with the British, and decided to join Jawaharlal Nehru's movement for the equal distribution of wealth. Rangamma is still in jail, and the only person who has returned to Kanthapura is Rangè Gowda, who tells Achakka that the village has been sold away to city-people from Bombay.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Achakka – The story's narrator is a woman from the village of Kanthapura. She reveals little about herself, but she is an elder and brahmin who is very familiar with everyone in her village. She calls other characters by a variety of epithets, especially their physical characteristics ("pock-marked Sidda") and the places they live ("corner-house Moorthy"). Her narration is circuitous and digressive, full of flashbacks and endless sentences she composes by joining often unrelated ideas with "and." At the beginning of the book, she sympathizes with the brahmins who see Moorthy's belief in equality as a form of pollution, but later in the book she helps lead the women's rebellion against the colonial police forces. Through Achakka's stream-of-consciousness style of narration, the author gives Kanthapura's story the form of a sthala-purana—an oral, legendary, local history.

Moorthy – The book's central protagonist and the leader of the Kanthapura villagers' Gandhian resistance movement, Moorthy is a "quiet, generous, serene, deferent" young brahmin who rejects the hierarchical caste system in favor of social equality. He starts "all the trouble" in Kanthapura when he finds a linga in Achakka's backyard, foreshadowing the villagers' gradual shift from worshipping their traditional goddess Kenchamma to championing Lord Siva, which comes to symbolize the villagers' transition to nationalism since Siva is worshipped across India. He brings the Harikatha-man Jayaramachar to Kanthapura, initiating the village's conversation about Mahatma Gandhi's politics, and gradually builds a Gandhian movement in the village after he has a vision of the Mahatma. Moorthy recruits people to spin their own khadi-cloth, and eventually the Swami excommunicates him, turning him into an outcaste and driving his mother Narsamma to die of despair on the banks of the **Himavathy river**. But Moorthy's movement continues to grow as he undertakes a three-day meditative fast, sings bhajans and tells stories about Gandhi's faith in nonviolence and Truth, and leads the villagers in nonviolent protests at Boranna's toddy grove and the Skeffington Coffee Estate. The police imprison him, and the people of Kanthapura eventually begin to worship him as "our Gandhi;" he becomes the village's most powerful figure after he returns from his first imprisonment. He is jailed again during a subsequent protest and never appears again in the book except in a letter that Ratna recounts at the very end. In this letter, Moorthy disavows Gandhi (who had begun to cooperate with the British) and argues that Jawaharlal Nehru's redistributionist politics are a better option to limit long-term inequality in India. Moorthy is the driving force behind the villagers' resistance to caste and colonialism and the gradual erosion of Kanthapura's traditional social structure.

Rangamma – A widow in Kanthapura who becomes the Gandhian movement's secondary leader, after her close

confidant Moorthy. She comes from a wealthy city family and becomes Waterfall Venkamma's sister-in-law, living in her husband's large house after his death. This house becomes the center of the village's Congress and its protest movement. Although she initially worries about the erosion of the caste system, she is one of the first villagers to join Moorthy's movement and soon becomes its second-in-command; she also leads the group of women "Volunteers" that the book's narrator, Achakka, eventually joins. Owing to her upbringing in a city, Rangamma is well-read and knowledgeable about events beyond the village, and she begins to publish a newspaper that quickly spreads news of the national Gandhian movement around Kanthapura. After the police arrest Moorthy, Rangamma stays with Advocate Sankar in Karwar city and learns about the Congress of All India. Upon her return, she becomes the leader of Kanthapura's protests and takes over Moorthy's role of leading bhajans and giving discourses about Hinduism and Gandhi. She gets arrested the night before the final conflict in Kanthapura and the villagers are still waiting for her release at the end of the book. Rangamma's prominence in the protest movement demonstrates how Gandhism overturns traditional gender roles, offering a prominent political role to women (and particularly widows, who are generally ostracized under the caste system). But her roots in the city also demonstrate how, while to a certain extent Gandhism was a bottom-up movement led by oppressed Indians, the knowledge and resources of powerful people were also instrumental to its success.

Ratna – Kamalamma's daughter, a young girl whose husband died soon after she married him at the age of ten. After Ratna becomes a widow, her mother ostracizes her, and the rest of the village treats her as a pariah and source of shame. She gets close to Moorthy early in his campaign of resistance and cares for him during his three-day fast. Ratna gains a central role in the Gandhian campaign once Ramakrishnayya dies and she begins to read religious texts to the rest of the Satyagrahis (even though she has little interest in philosophy). During the final massacre in Kanthapura, a policeman tries to rape her but she fights him off. With Rangamma and Moorthy in jail, Ratna becomes the movement's leader during this final protest. The police arrest her, and in the book's final section she returns after her release to tell Achakka and the other women Volunteers about Moorthy's letter to her (in which he disavows Gandhi). Ultimately, she moves away to Bombay. Early in the book, Ratna represents the cruel reality of a caste system that will reject a young girl whose chosen husband dies before she is old enough to even recognize her place in the world, but her involvement in the Satyagrahi campaign demonstrates the way Gandhism empowers women and outcastes through its insistence on equality and drive for freedom.

Bhatta – A powerful and shrewd businessman who amasses land and power in Kanthapura. While he acts friendly and appears generous to the villagers who borrow money from him, he actually charges them very high interest rates and systematically manipulates them for his own financial gain. He is close to the Swami and takes government money to oppose Moorthy's Gandhian movement, which he sees as "bad business." He pays off other villagers and even arranges Waterfall Venkamma's daughter's wedding in order to maintain the village's favor, but fails to do so as more and more of Kanthapura's people join Moorthy. Ultimately, his house is the first part of Kanthapura to burn down, and Achakka and Rangamma's other women Volunteers are delighted to watch the flames.

Mahatma Gandhi – The most important leader of the Indian independence movement, most famous for his belief in Satyagraha, or nonviolent resistance. He also advocated wearing only khadi (domestically produced Indian cloth) and undertook numerous marches and fasts for the cause of swaraj (Indian self-rule) that the villagers reference as they conduct their own political actions. The villagers of Kanthapura worship Gandhi as a reincarnation of Siva, and Moorthy leads them in launching their own Gandhian protest campaign after he has a vision of the Mahatma giving a discourse. However, Gandhi never actually appears in the book (except in Moorthy's vision) and largely serves a symbolic function in the villagers' political campaign. Moorthy's followers identify themselves by their loyalty to Gandhi, tell stories about the Mahatma, and shout "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!*" (or "Glory to Mahatma Gandhi") as they march against the police. By the end of the book, some of the villagers seem to recognize that Gandhi is a figurehead more than he is an effective leader and wonder why they are sacrificing their lives, homes, and land for the Mahatma's idealistic political goals.

Patel Rangè Gowda – Kanthapura's patel, or government representative, village headman, and landholder. Achakka likens the hot-tempered and powerful (but lazy) patel to a tiger, noting that in Kanthapura "nothing can be done without Rangè Gowda." Everyone in the village fears him, and after his faith in Mahatma Gandhi leads him to join Moorthy's movement as the second-in-command, much of the village follows. After he joins the Gandhian protests, the colonial government replaces Rangè Gowda with a new patel, but Rangè Gowda maintains the people's favor and continues to effectively serve as patel, which demonstrates the success of Gandhian Satyagraha in disrupting the colonial power structure by refusing to acknowledge its legitimacy. He is the only resident of Kanthapura who returns to visit it after Rachi burns it down.

The Swami – The regional Hindu religious leader based in the city of Mysore who supports the brahmins' campaign against Moorthy's Gandhian movement. The colonial government gives him 1200 acres of land to defend the rigid caste system that keeps much of Kanthapura's population impoverished and powerless. He excommunicates Moorthy for "polluting" the

caste system by "mixing with the pariahs." Although he never directly appears in the book, he is incredibly powerful and exemplifies the decentralized, distant mechanisms of colonial rule.

Rachanna – A coolie who joins the Gandhians early in the book and eventually becomes one of the group's most important leaders after the maistri kicks him off the Skeffington Coffee Estate and he moves into Kanthapura as a pariah. He is the fourth leader of the Village Congress and the most fearless of the Gandhians—he regularly taunts the police and is the second Satyagrahi to get arrested, after Moorthy. After the colonial government releases him, Rachanna helps lead the toddy protests and is the first to jump the fence into Boranna's toddy grove. He is arrested again, never to return.

Rachi – Pariah Rachanna's wife, who ultimately burns down the village of Kanthapura. She welcomes Moorthy into Rachanna's house when he comes to discuss the Village Congress with a group of pariah women. But Moorthy is afraid to enter and drink the milk she offers him, since he has never been inside a pariah's home. Later, Rachi lets Achakka and the other women Volunteers out of the temple after they are locked inside overnight and sets fire to Kanthapura "in the name of the goddess" (Kenchamma).

Waterfall Venkamma – A bitter and loquacious brahmin woman in the village, Venkamma is the Gandhian campaign's most vocal and open critic. She hates Rangamma, her widowed sister-in-law who lives in her brother's old house, as well as Moorthy, who rejected her daughter's hand in marriage and "pollutes" the village by supporting the intermixing of castes. She does Bhatta's bidding after he arranges her daughter to marry Advocate Seenappa, ensuring that the marriage takes place on the same day as Moorthy's return from prison so that she can test the other villagers' loyalty.

Dorè – A young brahmin man from the village who went to the city for University, adopted city ways, and is widely called "the University Graduate" even though he did not even make it to his second term. At the beginning of the book, Dorè proclaims himself a Gandhian and wears khadi-cloth, but Achakka voices her disdain for Dorè's self-importance and suggests that he only pretends to follow Gandhi to seem sophisticated. Although he joins the village's Gandhian movement, he is often condescending toward its leader, Moorthy.

Narsamma – Moorthy's pious, elderly mother who steadfastly opposes his anti-caste positions and wants him to marry the daughter of a wealthy brahmin family. She is furious when Moorthy rejects marriage proposals and kicks him out of the house when he shows up with khadi cloth and books about Gandhism. After Bhatta informs her that Moorthy will be excommunicated, she never speaks to him again, and after she finds out that he has carried a dead body (a task usually reserved for untouchables), she falls dead on the banks of the **Himavathy river**. Her conflict with Moorthy demonstrates the social power of the traditional caste system and the incredible lengths to which Moorthy will go for the sake of social equality.

Badè Khan – A Muslim police officer who moves to the Skeffington Coffee Estate to keep an eye on Kanthapura after Moorthy hires the Harikatha-man Jayaramachar to talk about Mahatma Gandhi's movement. Achakka's descriptions of Khan often liken him to an animal. Khan enforces and represents the government's will in Kanthapura, and commits the book's first act of violence when he attacks Moorthy. When the Gandhians practice their resistance methods, they imagine Khan attacking them. Moorthy wants to convert Khan to Gandhism and even convinces him to attend some of his bhajans, but Khan ultimately ends up helping the police suppress the rebellion.

Sahib – The original head of the Skeffington Coffee Estate, the Sahib is a cruel and violent profiteer who exemplifies colonial greed in India. He employs the maistri to terrorize the coolies, preventing them from resisting or leaving the Estate, and takes pleasure in threatening the seven-year-old Chenna on the child's first day at the Estate.

New Sahib – The Sahib's nephew, who takes control of the Skeffington Estate after his uncle's death. While the new Sahib treats some of the coolies at the estate less cruelly than his uncle, he also systematically coerces coolie women into sleeping with him by threatening to withhold their husbands' and fathers' salaries. He murders Seetharam when he refuses to give up his daughter.

Maistri – The Sahib's right-hand man, the maistri directly oversees the coolies as they work on the Skeffington Coffee Estate. He recruits workers from distraught villages and convinces them to work at the estate. He translates the Sahib's instructions into the coolies' native languages, beats them on a regular basis, and frequently kicks them off the estate when they demand their unpaid wages. Later, the maistri helps put down the Gandhian rebellion.

Kenchamma Kanthapura's patron goddess, Kenchamma supposedly battled a demon on the red Kenchamma Hill near town "ages, ages ago" and has protected Kanthapura's people ever since. The villagers frequently pray to her for help, perform ceremonies to honor her, and thank her for their good fortune. Kenchamma exemplifies the traditional religion that Kanthapura's people gradually come to leave behind.

Sankar Sankar is the Secretary of the Congress Committee in the city of Karwar, which is not so far from Kanthapura. A Gandhian and a lawyer (or "advocate"), Sankar holds rallies on Moorthy's behalf after his first arrest, where villagers protest for his release from prison. Sankar refused to remarry after losing his wife, a "god-like woman" named Usha, at age 26. A devout follower of Gandhi, Sankar is known for his honorable reputation, and is referred to by many as the "Acestic Advocate" because of his refusal to drink like the other lawyers or take a

case he does not believe in. In fact, he is so principled in his commitment to Gandhist nationalism that he takes Hindi class (Hindi will be India's national language) and begins speaking to everyone in Hindi—even to those, like his mother, who understand not a word of it. Nonetheless, the Kanthapura villagers often view Sankar with at least some suspicion, simply because he is from the city, which they do not trust.

MINOR CHARACTERS

The Police Inspector – The commander of the police forces who orders attacks against the villagers and arrests various members of Moorthy's Gandhian movement. The Police Inspector embodies the merciless, repressive violence of English colonialism.

Lingayya – One of the potters and a trumpet player, Lingayya is a dedicated Gandhian and follower of Moorthy who gets arrested after jumping the fence to cut down trees at Boranna's toddy grove, and then is never seen again.

Ramakrishnayya – A learned, elder brahmin in the village who explains ancient Hindu texts to the others and often serves as the voice of reason during the conflict between Moorthy's Gandhians and the traditional brahmins who support the caste system (including Bhatta, Venkamma, Rangappa, and Lakshamma).

Jayaramachar – A famed Harikatha-man whom Moorthy pays to come to Kanthapura in the first chapter. He speaks about Indians' oppression under colonialism and Gandhi's promise to liberate the people of India.

Nanjamma – A village woman who joins Rangamma's group of Volunteers. Achakka calls her "Nose-scratching Nanjamma" and seems to consider her clumsy and unintelligent at times.

Subba Chetty – A merchant in Kanthapura who takes advantage of the constant flow of goods passing through the town and remains loyal to Bhatta and the other pro-government brahmins. Chetty frames a man named Rahman Khan for attempted murder by paying a woman named Dasi to seduce and provoke him.

Satamma – A village woman and Suryanarayana's wife, Satamma at first fears caste mixture but eventually joins Rangamma's group of Volunteer women to resist the colonial government. (Not to be confused with the widowed Satamma mentioned by Achakka at the beginning of the book.)

Temple Rangappa – The village's priest and effective religious leader, Rangappa leads prayers and ceremonies (such as the procession in Section 12) and remains loyal to the colonial government. His wife is Lakshamma, and he is loyal to Bhatta, who pays him to oppose the Gandhians.

Patwari Nanjundia – A wealthy and prominent brahmin in the village who supports Bhatta and the colonial government instead of joining the Gandhian movement.

Temple Lakshamma – A Kanthapura brahmin and wife to Priest Rangappa who opposes the Gandhians.

Betel Lakshamma – A woman who meets Moorthy on the side of the road and asks him to free her from the revenue collector.

Seenu – A villager, a close friend of Moorthy's since childhood, and the fifth leader of the Village Congress. He is usually responsible for calling the Volunteers to congregate by ringing a bell or blowing a conch.

Pariah Siddayya – An old and experienced coolie at the Skeffington Estate who guides the new coolies through their early days before joining the Gandhian rebellion.

Potter Siddayya – The elder potter who agrees to join Moorthy's Congress in Section 8.

Madanna – A coolie at the Skeffington Estate whose child dies of fever when Madanna is too afraid to use the Sahib's pills. He later leaves the Estate and joins the Kanthapura villagers' rebellion.

Advocate Ranganna – A Karwar lawyer who tries to convince Moorthy to fight his first imprisonment and later helps lead in the rallies for Moorthy's freedom.

Temple Ranganna – A brahmin in the village.

Boranna – Owner of the toddy grove that the Kanthapura villagers picket and eventually shut down.

Rama Chetty – A merchant and Subba Chetty's brother.

Chinnamma – A village brahmin and Bhatta's wife, Chinnamma debates the implications of Moorthy's caste-mixing with the other brahmin women.

Vasudev – A brahmin clerk at the Skeffington Estate who helps teach the coolies to read and becomes a prominent member of the Gandhian movement.

Sidda – A relatively well-off pariah who joins Moorthy's Gandhian movement.

Coffee-Planter Ramayya – A wealthy man who visits Kanthapura in his expensive car at the beginning of the book. He tries to marry his daughter to Moorthy, who refuses.

Potter Ramayya – One of Kanthapura's Gandhian Volunteers, who at times sneaks out of the village to help protestors in other cities.

Weaver Ramayya – The Elder weaver who agrees to join Moorthy's Congress in Section 8.

Coolie Ramayya – One of the coolies who is tasked with walking the maistri's bicycle through the mountains back up to the Skeffington Estate.

Postman Subbayya – The postman who delivers Rangamma's Blue paper. Not to be confused with the potter also named Subbayya.

Chandrayya – A potter who is taken during a protest and beaten in jail by the government.

Kamalamma – One of the five potters, sister to Rangamma, and mother to Ratna.

Beadle Timmayya – A priest in the village who helps shelter coolies kicked off the Skeffington Estate in Section Six.

Pariah Timmayya – A pariah who grumbles at the wealthier villages in Section 12.

Postman Suryanarayana – An influential villager with a large house, and the son of Venkatalakshamma.

Venkatalakshamma – An elderly villager and mother to Suryanarayana who complains that Jayaramachar's discourse is about Gandhi rather than Hindu religious stories.

Advocate Seenappa – Bhatta's preferred lawyer. Bhatta arranges to have Venkamma's daughter married to Advocate Seenappa.

Advocate Seetharamu – A lawyer who informs the Gandhians about the Swami's intentions, refers them to Sankar, and later gets arrested and worked nearly to death in the British prison.

Seetharam – A brahmin and coolie who refuses to let the new Sahib rape his daughter. The new Sahib promptly murders Seetharam.

Beadle Chenna – A priest in town.

Coolie Chenna – A seven-year-old boy whom the Sahib scares and then offers a peppermint in order to teach the rest of the coolies a lesson.

Dasappa – Runs a khadi-shop in the city of Karwar. Not to be confused with "Chennayya's Dasappa," the coolie who dies by snakebite.

Puttamma – A villager and Gandhian whom one of the policeman tries to rape in the bushes outside Kanthapura.

Sastri A poet who performs for the brahmins.

Front-House Suranna A landowner who escorts Bhatta to the river, where Bhatta gives out loans.

Timmamma An older woman who lives in Kanthapura. She cuts the umbilical cord of Radhamma's baby, when Radhamma gives birth to it while running from the police.

Radhamma A pregnant woman. She gives birth early, at seven months, while being chased by the police.

Ramanna An elder brahmin who holds an esteemed position in the town. He is sometimes referred to as the Second Brahmin. He eventually joins with the Ghandhians and is brutally beaten by the police.

Sadhu Narayan A holy man who "had renounced hair and home" and spent his time meditating on the banks of the Vedavathy River.

TERMS

Sthala-Purana – Vernacular South Indian texts or oral traditions telling the traditional stories of particular localities, villages, and temples. Rao describes *Kanthapura* as a sthala-purana, which he defines as a "legendary history."

Dhoti – A kind of knee-length, cloth pant traditionally worn by Hindu men. In the 1920s, **Gandhi** decided to start wearing dhoti instead of Western clothing in order to identify himself with the Indian poor.

Khadi – Refers to hand-woven Indian cloth. **Gandhi** encouraged his supporters to wear khadi and boycott British-made cloth.

Caste – A traditional Hindu system of social stratification that traditionally divides people into separate communities of brahmins (priests and teachers), kshatriyas (governors, administrators, and warriors), vaishyas (merchants, artists, and farmers), and shudras (manual laborers). The different castes traditionally do not mix, which underlies the conflict between Kanthapura's brahmins and **Moorthy's** Gandhism.

Brahmin – The traditionally highest and most powerful caste, composed of priests and teachers.

Shudra – A low caste of manual laborers. Also called sudra.

Pariah / Outcaste – People who live beneath the caste system and are therefore considered unworthy of interaction with people from other castes.

Untouchables – A more common and non-regionally specific term for outcastes like Kanthapura's pariahs.

Linga – A small idol that abstractly represents the Hindu god Siva.

Sankara-jayanthi – A prayer ritual for Adi Shankara, the eighth century philosopher who is credited with standardizing Hindu scriptures and first conceiving India as a unified territory.

Sankara-Vijayas – Important biographies of Adi Shankara.

Bhajan – Refers to any song performance with religious themes.

Harikatha – A South Indian genre of storytelling with religious themes that combines poetry, philosophy, song, dance and theatre. **Sastri** usually gives harikathas in Kanthapura, and **Moorthy** pays **Jayaramchar** to give a harikatha about **Gandhi** in the village.

Pandit – A Hindu religious leader.

Red-men – A colloquial term for British colonists.

Coolies – A term for indentured servants, generally in British colonies but especially from India, who worked on plantations. Although they were not technically slaves, after the abolition of slavery their labor largely replaced slave labor. Planters often forced them to work long hours in horrible conditions for little to no pay, encouraging them to take on debt that their wages

would never pay off. Few ever actually returned to their homelands, as they were promised. Today, the term has various meanings but is considered derogatory in much of the world. The coolies at the Skeffington Coffee Estate move there after they can no longer produce enough food in their home villages and generally end up staying for life, largely because the Sahibs who run the estate encourage them to drink away their paltry wages at the toddy stands.

Maharaja – An originally Sanskrit word for a great ruler or king. Over time, it became a relatively common title denoting honor.

Lathi – A police baton.

Gayathri Mantra – An important Sanskrit chant from the Rig Veda, which many Hindus and some Buddhists recite during daily prayers.

Hari – An important Hindu term with various meanings in different contexts and languages. It often refers to the god Vishnu and the notion of absolute, unified being. As a child, **Moorthy** once felt he saw Hari while meditating by the Himavathy river.

Panchayat – A five-person village council traditionally composed of village elders. **Gandhi** wanted India to be governed based on a decentralized system of panchayats, which the Kanthapura villagers' Congress exemplifies.

Kartik – Refers to the seventh month of the Hindu calendar, as well as the holy festival of lights held on the fifteenth day of that month.

Dharma – An important term in Indian religions with various contextual meanings that generally refers to proper religious practice, or acting in accordance with the flow of the universe.

Dharma Sastras – A collection of numerous ancient Hindu texts about dharma, written in Sanskrit.

Mohomedan – Archaic term for Muslims, now broadly considered offensive.

Satyagraha – The Gandhian practice of nonviolent resistance. It literally translates as "holding onto truth" and its practitioners are called satyagrahis.

Swaraj – Literally "self-rule," swaraj refers to the concept of Indian independence from foreign government.

Patel – A village chief and large landholder.

Krishna – The Hindu god of love and compassion.

Siva – One of the most important Hindu gods, Siva (or Shiva) is the destroyer, responsible for death and transformation. Whereas many gods are only worshipped in particular areas, Siva is worshipped across India.

Rani Lakshmi Bai – A North Indian queen who was a central leader of the 1857 Indian Rebellion. She is a source of inspiration for the Gandhian Volunteer women.

Toddy Also known as palm wine, an alcoholic beverage made from the sap of toddy palm trees.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

ORAL TRADITION, WRITING, AND POLITICAL POWER

The village of Kanthapura is a traditional society based in oral culture: few of its inhabitants can read or write, and storytelling ceremonies are a crucial aspect of the town's collective life. Oral tradition is a source of power in the village, for it allows Kanthapura's residents to shape their understanding of history, consolidate their identity as a community around shared religious values, and organize politically against the repressive British colonial government. But Kanthapura's oral traditions are threatened when writing intervenes as a competing source of power: wealthy landowners, the colonial government, and even the Gandhian congress exert their power through written orders from cities that most of Kanthapura's inhabitants have never visited. Moorthy, the young Gandhian who leads Kanthapura's campaign of nonviolent resistance against the colonial occupation, realizes that saving traditional culture requires fighting writing with writing. And the novel itself reflects Raja Rao's desire to preserve oral tradition through the written word.

Traditional, oral forms of knowledge form core of Kanthapura's collective life, as the townspeople congregate and participate collectively in politics through storytelling and religious discourse. At the beginning of the story, the village's communal life is structured around the shared myth of the village's goddess, Kenchamma, who supposedly fought a battle to protect it ages ago and left a hill near the city stained in blood. Religious discourses, including bhajan songs and elaborate theatrical performances called Harikathas, are the main motivations for the village to congregate as a community. And one of these Harikathas, by the famous visiting performer Jayaramchar, first introduces Gandhism in the book. During Jayaramchar's story, the elderly Venkatalakshamma complains that he is talking "city-nonsense" rather than telling about traditional Hindu gods—she weeps because she sees new myths overtaking traditional ones. But oral discourse is actually Gandhism's *modus operandi*: Moorthy becomes a Gandhian after his vision of the Mahatma giving a discourse. In this vision, Moorthy declares himself Gandhi's slave—the Mahatma orders him to seek Truth and spread his message orally "among the

dumb millions" in the villages (who presumably cannot read his writings). Throughout the rest of the novel's first half, Moorthy persuades the townspeople to join his movement through bhajans and speeches about love, nonviolence, and independence.

In contrast to the oral traditions Moorthy uses to spread his message, written language is associated with Western imperial and economic power—it carries the force of the law from afar. Many of Kanthapura's villagers are illiterate, so they cannot access the knowledge and power that written documents hold—instead, the wealthy and powerful manipulate such documents to oppress the villagers. Bhatta, the village's moneylender and landowner, conducts most of his business through papers, including contracts that his borrowers must sign but which few of them can read. (This allows him to arbitrarily change the contracts later in the book, charging peasants extra interest because they support Gandhi.) He takes advantage of the fact that the villagers cannot understand written contracts—while he frequently makes informal agreements with farmers early on in the book, once he realizes that they are fighting against the government that protects him, he starts enforcing the written contracts and calling in debts. Later, the government justifies suppressing the village's rebellion by presenting their written orders from the British Crown. Whereas oral traditions represent the village's internal source of power, through which they assert their own identity and politics, written orders and contracts represent an external power, originating in cities and the colonial government, that oppresses the villagers in part because they cannot read the laws to which that government holds them.

But the power of writing also works *for* the villagers at times, and Moorthy expertly harnesses it to spread nonviolent rebellion. He is "always piling books and books" about Gandhi's message in the Village Congress's headquarters, and he later starts a newspaper that convinces many members of the literate brahmin caste to join his cause. One of his main political activities is teaching reading and writing to the illiterate pariahs (Hindus considered beneath the caste system) and coolies (indentured laborers at the Skeffington Coffee Estate). He also holds public readings, which unite written and oral traditions by offering illiterate villagers the revolutionary ideas that his books hold.

Rao's novel also tries to unite both traditions in this way, overcoming the opposition between the oral traditions that hold the villagers' identity and the written language that transmits information across geographical space but remains inaccessible to the illiterate. His novel is not a linear narrative in conventional literary prose but rather a meandering, colloquially-written story told by the elder brahmin woman Achakka, who speaks for the village as a whole in the collective "we." In the foreword, Rao argues that the novel is itself a legendary history, or sthala-purana, of the village—in fact, it not only textualizes the history of Kanthapura but also of the innumerable small-scale struggles for independence that took place in villages across India from the 1920s through the 1940s. By writing down a fictional oral tradition, Rao's book memorializes a history of resistance that has been erased from India's landscape—both in the imaginary village of Kanthapura, which is ultimately bought out by wealthy landowners after its inhabitants burn it down, and in other sites of anticolonial resistance across the Indian subcontinent.

GANDHISM AND THE EROSION OF CASTE

The conflict between the traditional caste hierarchy and the Gandhian ideal of equality lies at the heart of the first half of *Kanthapura*. Many of Kanthapura's residents initially fear Moorthy's campaign of Gandhian nonviolent resistance, believing that he is "polluting" the village by overturning holy caste divisions, but most ultimately join the rebellion when they see that it promises to liberate them from the hierarchies of colonial governance and caste. By the end of the book, the vast majority of Kanthapura's people have abandoned their traditional beliefs in the caste system and the town's local goddess Kenchamma; instead, they begin worshipping Gandhi and Moorthy. This radical shift demonstrates how shared religious beliefs can determine and perpetuate social hierarchies, but also how a movement for equality and democracy can use the same tactic to strike back at hierarchy.

At the beginning of the book, traditional caste divisions permeate Kanthapura, determining every aspect of life: caste dictates who may associate with whom, who does certain work, and who may live in and enter certain places. The caste system oppresses the majority of the village's population, working to the advantage of those in power. It benefits the brahmins, the religious leaders who stand at the top of the caste hierarchy, as well as the colonial government that benefits from people's strong trust in the brahmins: the government collaborates with brahmins like the landowner Bhatta and the Swami in Mysore (an important religious teacher), in order to convince the villagers not to resist and preserve the caste system.

Gandhism's belief in equality threatens to do away with the caste system entirely. Its first demand on the villagers is that all of them, no matter their caste, do the same work—spinning yarn and making cloth—which violates the village's traditional division of labor along caste lines. The powerful brahmins are especially opposed to Moorthy's Gandhian campaign, which they see as "polluting" the village. By threatening to excommunicate Moorthy and convert him into a pariah, the Swami prevents other villagers from joining him at first. Even Moorthy's own mother, Narsamma, is so distraught over her son's conversion to Gandhi's movement—which means he will not marry and pass down the family bloodline—that she refuses

to speak with him. In particular, many of Kanthapura's inhabitants are horrified at Moorthy's willingness to fraternize with the pariahs, which they consider a form of pollution. Even Achakka, the narrator, initially agrees, arguing that "we shall be dead before the world is polluted." In fact, even Moorthy has considerable difficulty looking past caste, which demonstrates how powerful its hold can be. When he visits the pariah Rachanna's house, Moorthy "stands trembling and undecided" in the doorway because he has never entered a pariah's home, suspects that he smells animal carcasses (which pariahs, but no other Hindus, are allowed to touch), and is terrified to drink their milk. Later, his closest confidant Rangamma makes him enter through the rear door, shower, and drink water from the holy river Ganges because he has been inside a pariah's home.

Moorthy overcomes the Swami's injunction and convinces the villagers to join his resistance movement by offering them not only the promise of equality among castes but also an alternate belief system: he first appeals to their self-interest and second offers Gandhi as a religious figure to worship in place of the brahmins and local goddess. Moorthy's first appeal to people of all castes is the promise of free spinning-wheels. Even though many refuse to believe, at first, that the wheels are truly free, they soon realize that they have the opportunity to produce something for themselves and that this will offer them an opportunity for spiritual practice (most are low-caste and do not perform rituals like the brahmins, but Gandhi argued that weaving was an important form of prayer), at which point many immediately accept. Once they begin spinning, Moorthy brings them to discourses and performances where he explains the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolent resistance and turns the language of "pollution" against the caste system. He argues that "everything foreign makes us poor and pollutes us," encouraging his followers to reject the caste system for the ways in which it props up Western imperialism. Soon, hierarchy and government become the "polluters" and Gandhi becomes the savior who could purify the village through his promise of equality. Eventually, the villagers start worshipping and acting in the name of the Mahatma, who they consider an incarnation of the nationally-worshipped god Siva, rather than their local goddess Kenchamma.

While the introduction of Gandhism into Kanthapura does not entirely do away with the brahmin caste's power, it does displace caste as a system of belief, replacing the villagers' worship of Kenchamma and respect for social hierarchy with reverence for the Mahatma and belief that everyone is equal before God. At the end of the book, the village women's decision to burn down Kanthapura symbolically marks their rejection of the caste system that vested both political and religious authority in the brahmin caste; instead, they claim political power for themselves and reject social hierarchy. Moorthy was able to successfully transform the village forever by making an alternative system of worship accessible to and viable for Kanthapura's poor, but their new politics is a form of worship nonetheless. Rao seems to be suggesting that, while democracy and equality are in oppressed people's best interests, achieving them often requires using the same organizing tactics that the powerful use to sustain the status quo.

NATIONALISM AND COLONIALISM

The second half of *Kanthapura* stages a different conflict: the Gandhian nationalist villagers, who have largely ceased worrying about caste, nonviolently resist the British colonial government in the name of the Indian nation. Gandhism inspires Kanthapura's residents to fight against the oppression of the British colonial government in the name of India, a mythical nation to come, out of a sense of loyalty to a leader and population that they have never encountered and likely never will. However, the way that Gandhism exerts power over them largely resembles the way colonial governors rule from without. For the Indian people, resisting an oppressive and far-reaching colonial government requires large-scale political organizing of their own. Thus, the villagers overcome colonialism by strategically assimilating elements of it. Like the nationalist movement in India, the novel itself—one of the first prominent English-language works by an Indian author—appropriates elements of colonial culture in order to resist colonial power.

The India for which the villagers fight is a largely intangible idea, rather than a concrete political alternative to colonialism; similarly, Gandhi's ideas animate the villagers' fight against colonialism, but he is as much a myth to them as the idea of India. At the beginning of the novel, Moorthy invites the famous performer Jayaramchar to give a discourse describing how Brahma (the supreme creator in Hinduism) has abandoned his daughter Bharatha (the traditional Sanskrit word for the land of India) to foreign invaders. This is the first time the idea of the Indian people as a unified nation enters the book and the villagers' minds, and Jayaramchar presents Gandhi as a divine figure—the reincarnation of the god Siva—whose duty is to bring about that unity. Even Moorthy, who leads the resistance movement, never actually sees Gandhi but rather pledges allegiance to the Mahatma based on a vision. Similarly, Gandhi is a distant figure for the village, more myth than human—the pariah women joke about whether Gandhi will get mad at them for spinning too little yarn because they all understand that the Mahatma they fight for will likely never even hear about their allegiance. The villagers shout "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*" when the police assault them throughout their resistance campaign, and the final conflict that dissolves Kanthapura is also one over national symbols: the colonists' attack on the villagers succeeds in part because they rush to hoist the national flag on Bebbur Mound outside the village and refuse to honor the British one. Throughout their resistance campaign, the villagers act for the

sake of a sacred leader they will never meet and a sacred land as nation even though most have never traveled outside Kanthapura. The scale of their political will is radically out of line with the scale of their political experience.

Even though Gandhian nationalism poses a challenge to colonialism, it also borrows elements from colonial rule, exerting external control over Kanthapura in a way that ultimately looks similar to colonialism; its power is distant and its demands seem ridiculous to many of the villagers who end up dying in its name. This parallel between Gandhism and colonialism demonstrates that resisting large, oppressive regimes requires political organization on a similarly large scale, which often places the greatest burden on those at the lowest ranks, like the inhabitants of Kanthapura. Like the colonial government, which initially encourages the villagers to oppose Gandhism because they fear being "polluted," Gandhism uses fear to win allegiance—Patel Rangè Gowda, the powerful landholder, fears the disapproval of Gandhi as a spiritual guide; many of the villagers later join the Village Congress that Moorthy sets up because they in turn fear the wrath of Patel Rangè Gowda. Although the townspeople have their own village Congress, which makes them feel that they are participating in this national movement, they they never interact with the national Congress of All India except when they receive its orders from the city—the relationship is thoroughly one-sided. Just as Kanthapura's residents are nameless peasants and laborers to the colonial state, they become nameless peasants and laborers within the Gandhian movement that never truly acknowledges their sacrifices.

Yet the Gandhian movement would never have succeeded without the cooperation of so many nameless, everyday Indians in small villages, who were imprisoned and killed in the name of a nation whose expansiveness and diversity they could hardly imagine. Rao points to this paradox at the heart of anti colonial nationalism: previously self-sufficient communities who become oppressed by a powerful government can only win their freedom by appealing to another powerful government that operates in many of the same ways as the oppressive one.

The style of Rao's novel reflects this difficult truth throughout: responding to colonialism requires incorporating and assimilating its elements. Rao decided to write the novel in the colonial language, English, which is equally common (and equally alien) to all Indians. He chose this rather than Kannada, the Kanthapura villagers' local language, or Hindi, which is now India's national political language but is only indigenous to part of the country. Indeed, when one character and Congress Committee member in the novel, Sankar, decides to begin speaking Hindi, the rest of the villagers find him ridiculous because nobody for miles around can understand. Practically speaking, writing in English allowed Rao's novel to be accessible to people across India. It is a novel for the nation, rather than any specific region or group within it. One of his goals was to develop a distinctive Indian voice in English, an anticolonial way of using the colonial language. This is why he aimed to make Achakka's narration reflect the "tempo of Indian life."

Gandhist nationalism is both a success and a failure for the inhabitants of Kanthapura: it helps them develop an identity as Indians who fight for freedom from colonial rule, but it also—much like colonialism—exploits them economically, leads them to slaughter, and causes them to lose their village for the sake of an imagined nation whose supposed leaders never acknowledge them and whom they never meet. Rao realizes that nationhood's promise of freedom is bittersweet, since it entails the consolidation of power and marginalization of poor rural dwellers like Kanthapura's inhabitants. Clearly, he thinks that the benefits of Gandhi's independence movement outweighed its costs to Indian people, particularly since they were already suffering so severely under colonialism. However, he has no illusion that nationalism will suddenly make everyone self-governing all at once—indeed, although Gandhi wanted village-level government across the new nation, the events of the book demonstrate that Kanthapura's village Congress was still controlled by a national body, and in fact Gandhi's proposal never came about. Rather, Rao points out that a national government necessarily perpetuates many of the colonial government's evils, and particularly its concentration of power. But it can nevertheless be a distinctly Indian government while still employing the colonizer's tools, just as Rao creates a distinctly Indian version of the colonial language.

LAND, GEOGRAPHY, AND BELONGING

Kanthapura is as much about a people displaced as about a place that loses its people. As the legendary history of a village, the book emphasizes the topography of Kanthapura's region as people actually experience it and suggests an inherent link between the villagers and their land. But this sense of belonging unravels throughout the book as the villagers' national identity surpasses their local one, the coolies (indentured laborers at the Skeffington Coffee Estate) move into Kanthapura, and the British wrest control of the village from its people. Ultimately, the pariah woman Rachi's decision to burn down Kanthapura reflects its people's decision to abandon their local identity after the British have decimated their population, representing the way that colonialism—as well as the anticolonial nationalism necessary to defeat it—forces people to sever their traditional bonds with land.

Achakka's narration pays close attention to the geography of Kanthapura and the region around it. The village and Western Ghats are saturated with symbolic significance, demonstrating the way the villagers' identity is founded on place. In the book's opening paragraph, Achakka situates Kanthapura in relation to the broader world by telescoping out from the village to the mountains that surround it and the global networks of colonial

power in which it is embedded. Kanthapura is clearly a peripheral place in relation to global networks of power, since the goods that traverse it are sent across the "seven oceans into the countries where our rulers live," but it is also clearly the center of her own universe (and therefore the book's). Kanthapura also has its own local goddess, Kenchamma, to whom villagers pray for rain and good health; the red Kenchamma Hill, which is always on the horizon and which Achakka almost always mentions when anyone travels into or out of town, symbolizes the goddess's providence over Kanthapura's people and marks the boundary of the territory in which the villagers' identity is embedded. At the beginning of the book, Achakka explains that the hill is red because, ages ago, Kenchamma killed a demon there—the people's connection to the land is so ancient that it seems eternal. Further reinforcing the connection between place and identity, Achakka pays close attention to the layout of the village, frequently noting how characters get from one part to another and often using place names as epithets for the story's characters (e.g. Front-House Akkamma and Temple Lakshamma). And the villagers are so tied to their land that, even though many of the novel's important events take place far from Kanthapura, Achakka's narration never ventures beyond the Skeffington Estate that borders Kanthapura. The narrative voice itself, like Kanthapura's inhabitants, is confined to its village.

The villagers' traditional ties to their land contrast with the colonial attitude toward land as property, existing only to be exploited in the pursuit of wealth. The Skeffington Coffee Estate is the primary example of this ideology: it grows exponentially over the years, to the point that nobody can tell how large it is. Achakka's epic description of it at the beginning of the fifth section demonstrates its unfathomable size. And this colonial attitude is not limited to actual colonists: Bhatta, who owns much of the town's land and continues to accumulate more, initially has more power than anyone else in the village besides perhaps Patel Rangè Gowda (whose power also stems from his land holdings). Everyone, from pariahs to brahmins, "owe[s Bhatta] something." Ultimately, after the colonial police forces its residents out, Kanthapura is bought out by wealthy city-people from Bombay. In this way, land is shown to be a commodity in the eyes of colonialists, whereas for the villagers land is deeply comingled with their sense of having a collective identity. Even the way colonists traverse the landscape manifests their empty relation to it: whereas the policeman and owners of the vast Skeffington Estate take cars, the disempowered villagers and indentured workers are forced to walk through the landscape—new workers have to march up the mountains to the Skeffington Coffee Estate, and one of them, Ramayya, even has to push the maistri's bicycle through the mountains instead of riding it. When they finally abandon Kanthapura, the villagers "trudge" by foot to Maddur.

Ultimately, the Indians in *Kanthapura* abandon their roots and disperse, reflecting their shift from a local to a national vision of territorial belonging. The coolies are uprooted twice: they come to the Skeffington Estate from villages across India that can no longer support their own agriculture, then move to Kanthapura once the village's Gandhians start clashing with the Estate's European owners and the colonial government that backs them. During the government's final assault on Kanthapura and its people, a pariah woman, Rachi, finally decides to "burn this village" because she "can bear the sight [of the British assault] no more." If Kanthapura's people cannot have the village, she implies, nobody can—and, indeed, the novel itself serves as their post-facto assertion of their true ownership over the land. While the villagers ultimately disperse to neighboring villages (and some to faraway jails), they maintain a unified identity around the "Brother saint" Gandhi. In the end, the villagers' embrace of Gandhian nationalism reflects a conceptual shift in the idea of ownership and belonging: whereas before the people belonged to the land, now the land belongs to the people collectively as a nation. To an extent, then, the villagers in the novel take on the colonial attitude toward land, destroying their traditional ties to their village and abandoning their goddess Kenchamma—but only because their struggle for national independence demands it. Postcolonial independence is not about evicting the colonizer and reverting to an earlier way of life, but rather about transforming the colonial state into something that works for a colonized people as they begin to conceive themselves as a nation.

LABOR, EXPLOITATION, AND ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

Besides the military assaults that eventually repress Kanthapura's dissent, the colonial system's primary means of oppressing Indians is economic: it makes them work while Europeans profit, deprives them of their land through unfair property agreements, and forces indentured servants into lifelong slavery by saddling them with increasing levels of debt. Moorthy's Gandhism is primarily focused on redressing this systematic economic exploitation. Because Gandhi recognizes that depriving the British Empire of its profits is the best way to grind the colonial system to a halt, the fight for self-rule and economic independence are intertwined. However, Gandhi's system ultimately does little to help the villagers economically and actually ends up forcing them into a different kind of thankless labor. Rao's novel demonstrates the fundamentally economic motivations behind colonialism and shows how refusing to participate in an exploitative system can be more radical—and more dangerous—than challenging it directly. Yet he also illustrates how independence does not end economic exploitation, but rather simply changes the identity of the oppressor: Indians themselves switch to a system of

capitalist relations that perpetuates the inequalities of colonialism. While national independence is clearly an important goal for Rao, he sees that that land and labor are both more fundamental and more enduring forms of oppression.

In this book, labor nearly always takes place within exploitative relations, usually with Europeans at the top and consistently with landless Indian workers at the bottom. At the beginning of the book, Kanthapura is a largely agricultural society, although labor is divided based on caste and there is already growing inequality due to Bhatta and Patel Rangè Gowda's property rights over much of the village's land—indeed, everyone seems to owe these two men money, and they use this debt to maintain political control over the village. The Skeffington Estate also reflects this strategy of using economic incentives to gain political control and in turn secure continuing profits from laborers who have no choice but to work: the coolies (indentured workers) enter the plantation owing an inflated debt for their transport there, make very low wages, and are strongly pressured by their bosses to spend anything they make on improving their living conditions at the plantation or getting drunk at the toddy stand. The result is a cycle of increasing debt that never gets repaid, no matter how long the coolies work at the plantation, and increasing profits for the plantation owners. And the colonial government is designed to protect those wealthy owners—for instance, after the coolie Seetharam refuses to let the new Sahib (plantation boss) rape his daughter, the Crown orders the Sahib to pay restitution but never enforces the order, so he never pays.

Gandhi recognized that Europeans and wealthy Indians carefully design the economic opportunities they offer to the poor with the intention of keeping them poor and therefore in need of further wages. Therefore, Gandhism resists colonialism by cutting off the empire's profits rather than through violence. As Moorthy explains it, his movement's central goal is to stop the country's dependence on foreign goods (particularly cloth). While, initially, foreign traders might appear to offer better rates and opportunities, Moorthy thinks that, over the long term, they will use this trust to get Indians in debt. He gives the example of someone who sells all their rice because the foreign traders offer such high prices, but then is left with nothing to eat. The Gandhians deliberately weave their own cloth, refuse to buy foreign goods, and picket the toddy stands at the Skeffington Estate because they see an inherent danger in economic dependence on the British. But their refusal to participate in the exploitative economic system is so threatening to the British that the government equivocates violations of formal property laws with physical violence: before the soldiers open fire on the Gandhians, they warn the demonstrators not to "march this side of the fields" because the British own them—they contend that the violation of economic property rights justifies physical violence. But a peasant protests that "it's we who have put the plough to the earth and fed her with water"—he sees that British ownership guarantees continued fruitless labor by Indians.

However, the Gandhian movement does not truly address the problems of exploitative labor and economic inequality. In some ways, it actually reinforces them. After joining the Congress, the villagers start to spend hours spinning wool and weaving cloth every day. Although Gandhi considers this a means of spiritual purification and the fruits of the villagers' labor ultimately go to the independence struggle, they are nevertheless forced to work simply in order to pay their dues to the Congress of All India. Just like the colonial system, Gandhism's promise of free equipment is too good to be true, so people accept it, but in the long term they end up forced to work and give up their labor's fruits. There is no clear evidence that the villagers gain anything but new clothes from Gandhi's system—the fact that Bhatta manages to raise interest on the Gandhians suggests that they still depended on him for their subsistence needs. The second stated goal behind Gandhism is the desire to "give work to the workless, and work to the lazy," which assumes that there is something desirable or noble about work in the first place. Achakka realizes this during the resistance campaign when she says, "brothels are picketed and toddy booths and opium booths and courts are set up and men tried and condemned, and money set in circulation, the money of the Mahatma, and the salt of the sea sold, and the money sent to whom? To the Congress." When Moorthy meets the coolie Betel Lakshamma outside the Skeffington Estate, she asks him to "free us from the Revenue Collector," for he professes to be "against all tyrants," but he dodges the question and insists that he will write the Congress for answers.

Ultimately, Moorthy comes to recognize that the Gandhian proposal offers no cure for economic inequality in the long run, since it sustains unequal relations of production among Indians themselves, like the ones between landowners and peasants in Kanthapura. Producing their own cloth and refusing English goods did not allow the villagers to avoid their debts or rise socioeconomically. This is why, in the book's closing pages, Moorthy switches his allegiance to join Jawaharlal Nehru's fight for the equal distribution of land, which would allow self-reliance for individuals rather than simply self-rule for an internally unequal India. Ultimately, Rao's vision of equality begins to seem less about the democratic vision of politics to which Moorthy recruits the villagers during the novel than about giving people the means to subsist self-sufficiently, without needing to participate in capitalist economic relations that tend toward exploitation.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

KENCHAMMA HILL

According to village lore, the Kenchamma Hill near Kanthapura is red because the goddess Kenchamma fought off an evil demon there, and the blood from the battle soaked the hill. Kenchamma Hill offers Kanthapura's residents physical proof of their goddess's providence for them and demonstrates the way the village's traditional religion is grounded in the landscape and topography of its surroundings. The hill is an important directional landmark for Kanthapura's people, and Achakka frequently notes when people pass it on their travels, as passing the hill demonstrates that one has entered Kenchamma's domain. Kenchamma Hill plays an important role in the villagers' resistance campaign, too. Achakka believes that "no policeman could catch" anyone who hides out there, presumably because of Kenchamma's protection. Ultimately, this proves false—the policemen beat protestors there just before the villagers burn Kanthapura to the ground. In this way, although Kenchamma hill symbolizes the villager's deep cultural and physical sense of connection to the land on which their village rests, it also symbolizes the ways in which that connection can be violently severed.

THE RIVER HIMAVATHY

The Himavathy runs through the Western Ghats, nourishing its valley and the people of Kanthapura. At the beginning of the book, Achakka explains that Himavathy has its own river goddess, who is a daughter of Kenchamma. The river is holy to the villagers—the brahmins drink its water to purify themselves and everyone washes their clothes in it. When she is furious at her son Moorthy, Narsamma goes to the river and takes her anger out by hitting her clothes on rocks until she decides to accept him. Later, she dies on the same riverbank after the Swami excommunicates her family and all their future children. When Moorthy begins preaching Gandhism, he warns that merchants who keep buying foreign goods "will have nothing else to eat but the pebbles of the Himavathy, and drink her water;" the Himavathy is the villagers' primary source of sustenance, both physical and spiritual. After Ramakrishnayya's death, the pariahs wash his body in the river before cremating it on a funeral pyre, but "all of the sudden the river began to swell" and washed the pyre away. Achakka suggests that this foreshadows the "path of our outgoing Soul;" at the end of the book, after the villagers burn down Kanthapura, they wade through the Himavathy, wash the wounded and satiate the thirsty with its waters, and leave the ashes of the dead in the river, just as with Ramakrishnayya. Indeed, they purify their "outgoing Soul[s]" by passing through the river as they abandon their town. Thus, throughout the novel, the Himavathy represents the ideas of purity around which Kanthapura's religion and society are organized.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Oxford University Press edition of *Kanthapura* published in 1963.

Foreword Quotes

❝ We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or American. Time alone will justify it.

Related Themes:

Page Number: v

Explanation and Analysis

Rao lays out the stakes of his decision to write this novel in English while also maintaining a distinctively Indian narrative style: because English is the language of education in India, it is an important part of Indians' intellectual development and perhaps, to an extent, their cultural heritage. Its role is much closer to that of the literary languages Sanskrit and Persian than vernacular languages like Kannada or Hindi. It is a language of texts and authority rather than the familiar language of everyday life. Writing in English guaranteed that Rao's work would be accessible to educated Indians across the subcontinent—the population that was most likely to benefit from the colonial regime, but also the best-poised to effectively resist that system. Similarly, throughout *Kanthapura*, contact with the English gives the villagers both the power to oppress other Indians and the power to resist colonialism: Rangamma and Moorthy learn to effectively practice nonviolent resistance when they spend time with British-educated lawyers in the city, but characters like Bhatta and the Swami help enforce colonial rule for the sake of personal gain. Just as the Gandhian movement selectively adopts the colonizer's tools (like the written word and the centralization of political power) in order to spread an alternative vision for India, Rao's uses English (the colonialists' language) to help spread pro-independence sentiment and assert that Indians have as much a right to English as other former colonies like Ireland and the United States.

We have neither punctuation nor the treacherous "ats" and "ons" to bother us—we tell one interminable tale. Episode follows episode, and when our thoughts stop our breath stops, and we move on to another thought. This was and still is the ordinary style of our story-telling. I have tried to follow it myself in this story.

Related Characters: Achakka

Related Themes:

Page Number: vi

Explanation and Analysis

Rao explains the stylistic choices that he has made in order to portray the distinctive Indian mode of storytelling he wishes to imitate in *Kanthapura*. Even though English is a language of education in India, this narrative is distinctively oral: the tale of Kanthapura and its people's struggle for self-determination is preserved through the memory of Rao's rambling narrator, Achakka, rather than the linear explanations and storylines of historical scholarship. Achakka's narration is full of digressions about the people and places she mentions, and she often spends far less time on essential plot points than on rich descriptions of animals, technologies, or the physical environment. Rather than simply describing events as a matter of fact, Achakka expresses history through the sensory experiences of those who observed it. For Achakka, language does not lend itself to neatly package ideas with the maximum amount of information conveyed in each unit of text, as in a conventional written history; rather, she uses language to translate her immediate thoughts, and the reader experiences her story as a series of ideas, remembered perceptions, and realizations, as though she were recalling the events in real time. For Rao, this is a distinctively Indian way of thinking, which reflects his famous reference to India as an "idea" or "metaphysic" rather than a true country—a way of being and moving through the world is what truly unites Indians. And the villagers' conflicted relationship to nationalism—which gives them a means to resist the British but also leads them into massacres for the sake of an imagined nation that has relatively little underlying ethnic, linguistic, or historical unity—demonstrates some of the issues with this idea's translation into a political reality.

Section 1 Quotes

Our village—I don't think you have ever heard about it—Kanthapura is its name, and it is in the province of Kara. High on the Ghats it is, high up the steep mountains that face the cool Arabian seas, up the Malabar coast it is, up Mangalore and Puttur and many a centre of cardamom and coffee, rice and sugarcane. Roads, narrow, dusty, rut-covered roads, wind through the forests of teak and of jack, of sandal and of salt, and hanging over bellowing gorges and leaping over elephant-haunted valleys, they now turn to the left and now to the right and bring you through the Alambè and Champa and Mena and Kola passes into the great granaries of trade. There, on the blue waters, they say, our carted cardamoms and coffee get into the ships the Red-men bring, and, so they say, they go across the seven oceans into the countries where our rulers live.

Related Characters: Achakka (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1

Explanation and Analysis

In the opening paragraph of Rao's *Kanthapura*, the narrator Achakka zooms out from the titular village out across the "seven oceans" where its exports are shipped. Although she knows Kanthapura is just one town among others, Achakka triangulates it geographically for the reader, who is presumed to be an outsider. Here, Achakka foregrounds Kanthapura's geographical isolation as much as its deep interconnection with the whole world through colonial trade networks. By discussing "the countries where our rulers live," she reveals her worldly knowledge of India's broader political predicament and sets the stage for the story of the village Gandhians' resistance campaigns. These meandering opening sentences also demonstrate the distinctive Indian oral storytelling style that Rao emphasizes in the preface: Achakka speaks in short clauses stacked upon one another, as if letting each thought flow out as soon as it arrives, thereby beginning to record a distinctive place-based history (*sthala-purana*) for future generations.

Sometimes people say to themselves, the Goddess of the River plays through the night with the Goddess of the Hill. Kenchamma is the mother of Himavathy. May the goddess bless us!

Related Characters: Achakka (speaker), Kenchamma

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 1

Explanation and Analysis

Achakka personifies the Hill and River as goddesses, introducing her village's two most important geographical landmarks and illustrating how the people of Kanthapura and their culture are deeply intertwined with their landscape. Kenchamma Hill shows the villagers that Kenchamma watches over the village because it is red on the spot where the goddess allegedly slew a demon, and the villagers explain the Himavathy River's constant noise and motion by treating the river as another goddess. In both cases the villagers see their gods not as abstract entities governing humankind as a whole, but rather as entities embedded in the land and looking out for Kanthapura in particular. This contrasts with the villagers' faith in Lord Siva, one of the primary gods worshipped across India, whom they increasingly center in their collective religious life as they join Moorthy's Gandhian movement.

> Till now I've spoken only of the Brahmin quarter. Our village had a Pariah quarter too, a Potters' quarter, a Weavers' quarter, and a Sudra quarter. How many huts had we there? I do not know. There may have been ninety or a hundred—though a hundred may be the right number. Of course you wouldn't expect me to go into the Pariah quarter, but I have seen from the street-corner Beadle Timmayya's hut.

Related Characters: Achakka (speaker), Moorthy, Beadle Timmayya

Related Themes:

Page Number: 5

Explanation and Analysis

The rigidity and centrality of the caste system in Kanthapura is evident in the village's landscape: each caste has a different neighborhood and ordinarily keeps to itself, fulfilling its distinctive role in the village's collective life. The brahmins are priests and teachers, the weavers and potters perform their traditional occupations (although they increasingly shift to agriculture), and the sudras and pariahs mostly perform manual labor. Because Achakka is a member of the powerful brahmin caste that effectively runs the village and enforces the strict caste hierarchy, it would be unusual for her to "pollute" herself by entering neighborhoods where sudras or pariahs live. Indeed, the brahmin villagers' belief that caste mixing is improper and unholy underlies their opposition to Moorthy's Gandhian politics, which rejects caste divisions in favor of equality. Although Achakka is deeply knowledgeable about most of the other brahmins, the village's history, and its religious traditions, she lacks access to a substantial segment of her village's population because her status as a member of the dominant caste limits her vantage point on the lower castes to the entryway of their quarters.

> I closed my ears when I heard [Moorthy] went to the Pariah quarter. We said to ourselves, he is one of these Gandhi-men, who say there is neither caste nor clan nor family, and yet they pray like us and they live like us. Only they say, too, one should not marry early, one should allow widows to take husbands and a Brahmin might marry a pariah and a pariah a Brahmin. Well, well, let them say it, how does it affect us? We shall be dead before the world is polluted. We shall have closed our eyes.

Related Characters: Achakka (speaker), Mahatma Gandhi, Moorthy

Related Themes:

Page Number: 10

Explanation and Analysis

Achakka initially agrees with the conventional wisdom that castes should not mix, even though she ultimately ends up joining Moorthy's movement much later in the book. She cannot bring herself to see how "these Gandhi-men" retain every dimension of her own Hinduism except the caste system, which she and the other brahmins believe is foundational to their religion, but which Gandhi (and Moorthy) reject because they see it as an oppressive force. Achakka's statement that "we shall be dead before the world is polluted" demonstrates the conviction with which she initially believes in caste purity—in particular, the prevailing idea among brahmins that caste mixing interferes with reincarnation, so accepting death before pollution would ordinarily ensure the preservation of that caste status in subsequent lives. Whereas Achakka sees turning away from caste as "clos[ing] our eyes," Gandhi sees precisely how the British use caste to keep Indians' eyes closed to their ongoing exploitation.

Siva himself will forthwith go and incarnate on the Earth and free my beloved daughter from her enforced slavery.

Related Characters: Jayaramachar (speaker), Mahatma Gandhi, Moorthy

Related Themes:

Page Number: 11

Explanation and Analysis

After Moorthy hires the famous harikatha-man Jayaramachar to visit Kanthapura, Achakka paraphrases Jayaramachar's discourse about a conversation between the creator god, Brahma, and a great sage who accuses Brahma of neglecting his daughter Bharatha (the traditional Sanskrit word for India) by allowing her to be colonized by the British. At this point in his story, Jayaramachar argues that the great transformer god Siva has been incarnated on Earth as Mahatma Gandhi at Brahma's request. Equating Gandhi with Siva allows Moorthy's movement to gain momentum, since it frames Gandhism's demand for Indian independence (swaraj) within the villagers' existing religious beliefs. Later in the book, the villagers quite literally worship Gandhi as divine and begin to emphasize their devotion to Lord Siva as much as their local goddess, Kenchamma. Although Moorthy does not seem to win any followers through Jayaramachar's harikatha alone, it ultimately proves essential to his movement's development in the book because it introduces both the concept of a unified India (by invoking the ancient notion of Bharatha) and the idea of Gandhi as savior, and it does all this through the village's primary communal practice of oral storytelling.

Section 2 Quotes

"Free spinning-wheels in the name of the Mahatma!"

Related Characters: Moorthy (speaker), Mahatma Gandhi

Related Themes:

Page Number: 17

Explanation and Analysis

Moorthy first introduces Gandhism to Kanthapura by shouting the promise of free spinning-wheels throughout the town. The spinning-wheels are available to all, regardless of caste or political affiliation, which reflects Gandhism's tenet of social equality. In requiring that every Gandhian spin wool and weave cloth daily, Gandhi expects that all Indians will do the same work. Moorthy appeals to poor villagers' desire for economic independence from the landowners that force them to work as peasant farmers by associating Gandhism with a self-sufficiency that it ultimately never provides for the villagers. Rather, it adds another kind of obligatory labor to the harsh work regimens they already endure (and in fact, at the end of the book, Rachi burns down Kanthapura by setting alight the khadi cloth that she had spun herself, perhaps a symbolic rejection of this new Gandhian variety of forced labor).

"May I ask one thing, Moorthy? How much has one to pay?"

"Nothing, sister. I tell you the Congress gives it free."

"And why should the Congress give it free?"

"Because millions and millions of yards of foreign cloth come to this country, and everything foreign makes us poor and pollutes us. To wear cloth spun and woven with your own God-given hands is sacred, says the Mahatma. And it gives work to the workless, and work to the lazy. And if you don't need the cloth, sister—well, you can say, 'Give it away to the poor,' and we will give it to the poor. Our country is being bled to death by foreigners. We have to protect our mother."

Related Characters: Nanjamma, Moorthy (speaker), Maistri

Related Themes:

Page Number: 17

Explanation and Analysis

Moorthy turns the language of pollution against the caste system by suggesting that foreigners, rather than caste-mixing villagers, are the ones truly polluting India. He recognizes that, by buying so many foreign goods, Indians might become penniless and further reliant on European markets that seek to extract profit from their labor. On a large scale, the colonial regime uses this economic reliance as a strategy to cement its rule more thoroughly than it could through physical violence alone. Indeed, Nanjamma's hesitancy about whether the wheels are truly free demonstrates that she is unaccustomed to any labor arrangements designed to truly benefit the worker. Moorthy also presents spinning as a kind of spiritual practice available to all—this contrasts with the existing caste system in Kanthapura, under which brahmins are the gatekeepers of religion and mediate the other castes' access to sacred experiences and spaces (such as the temple).

Section 3 Quotes

❝ Every fellow with Matric or Inter asks, "What dowry do you offer? How far will you finance my studies?—I want to have this degree and that degree." Degrees. Degrees. Nothing but degrees or this Gandhi vagabondage. When there are boys like Moorthy, who should safely get married and settle down, they begin this Gandhi business.

Related Characters: Bhatta (speaker), Mahatma Gandhi, Moorthy, Ramakrishnayya, Rangamma, Satamma

Related Themes:

Page Number: 28

Explanation and Analysis

Bhatta is Gandhi's most powerful opponent in Kanthapura. In this passage, he complains to Satamma, Rangamma, and Ramakrishnayya about the difficulty he has had in marrying off his daughters. He blames Gandhism's intellectual bent for encouraging potential brides to focus too much on their studies and reject traditional caste divisions. Bhatta's concern demonstrates how Gandhism relies substantially on the colonial education system. For many of the more traditional villagers like Bhatta, "this degree and that degree" seem like a waste of time and energy because they do not help people succeed in the economic activities on which Kanthapura runs. This demonstrates how the written word gives the villagers one of the tools they desperately need to effectively resist the British empire. But there is also another dimension to Bhatta's fears; although Moorthy and Bhatta are both brahmins, Bhatta's other fear is that lower castes will take over his caste's traditional place at the top of the hierarchy if they get too much education. He wants brahmins (besides Gandhians like Moorthy) to use the knowledge they gain in the colonial education system to preserve their traditional power, but recognizes that this same power, in the hands of revolutionaries, could easily be used oto dismantle the entire system.

❝ "There is but one force in life and that is Truth, and there is but one love in life and that is the love of mankind, and there is but one God in life and that is the god of all."

Related Characters: Mahatma Gandhi (speaker), Moorthy

Related Themes:

Page Number: 35-6

Explanation and Analysis

Moorthy has a vision in which he fans the Mahatma and hears these words; although Achakka does not outright state that the Mahatma spoke them, she certainly implies it. This ambiguity illustrates how, in this book, Gandhi operates more as an idea developed by the villagers themselves (akin to the goddess Kenchamma, for instance) than an active political force. Despite the villagers' willingness to die for Gandhi, he never shows up in the book except for in this vision, and the "Truth" he ostensibly preaches here becomes an empty concept for Moorthy. When he is imprisoned, he initially refuses to seek help from lawyers because of his blind faith in the Truth. The notion of a "god of all" foreshadows the villagers' increasing allegiance to Siva before they burn down Kanthapura and leave their patron goddess Kenchamma behind; Moorthy also comes to champion the "love of mankind," including his enemies, until he decides at the end of the book that this stance makes Gandhi a pushover, unable to effectively negotiate with the British. Although Gandhi inspires the villagers to action, the vague philosophy he expounds in this passage—which becomes the basis for Moorthy's own teachings in Kanthapura—illustrates the significant gap between the independence movement's national and local manifestations.

Section 4 Quotes

❝ There was something deep and desperate that hurried her on, and [Narsamma] passed by Rangamma's sugarcane field and by the mango grove to the river, just where the whirlpool gropes and gurgles, and she looked up at the moonlit sky, and the winds of the night and the shadows of the night and the jackals of the night so pierced her breast that she shuddered and sank unconscious upon the sands, and the cold so pierced her that the next morning she was dead.

Related Characters: Achakka (speaker), The Swami, Moorthy, Narsamma

Related Themes:

Page Number: 46

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Narsamma dies on the bank of the Himavathy River after she discovers that the Swami has officially excommunicated her entire family after her son Moorthy carried Timmayya's daughter-in-law's body by the river a few days before. Under the traditional caste system,

dead people and animals are considered polluting, so only pariahs and untouchables are supposed to make physical contact with them (this is why the pariahs prepare the funeral pyres throughout *Kanthapura*). Narsamma had previously cooled her anger at the holy, purifying Himavathy river, but on this occasion she could not. As she loses her role in Kanthapura's social world, she also loses her life, which demonstrates the caste system's powerful, foundational role in structuring the village's social life and the personal lives of its residents.

Section 5 Quotes

❝ The Skeffington Coffee Estate rises beyond the Bebbur Mound over the Bear's Hill, and hanging over Tippur and Subbur and Kantur, it swings round the Elephant Valley, and rising to shoulder the Snow Mountains and the Beda Ghats, it dips sheer into the Himavathy, and follows on from the Balepur Toll-gate Corner to the Kenchamma Hill, where it turns again and skirts Bhatta Devil's fields and Rangè Gowda's coconut garden, and at the Tippur stream it rises again and is lost amidst the jungle growths of the Horse-head Hill.

Related Characters: Achakka (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 48

Explanation and Analysis

Achakka's description of the Skeffington Coffee Estate exemplifies the way she narrates places in and around Kanthapura. Her meandering speech always takes the reader through territory in time, as though from the perspective of a person traversing the landscape rather than from a bird's-eye view. While most of the specific landmarks she mentions are essentially irrelevant to the book as a whole, their inclusion demonstrates Achakka's encyclopedic knowledge of Kanthapura's surroundings and evokes a sense of continual motion through and across those surroundings. Crucially, the landmarks she uses are all relative to her village: she skirts the Estate's boundaries, describing where Kanthapura's people and places fade into the Estate, rather than describing the Estate from the inside. Her descriptions, here as elsewhere, are *emplaced*—grounded in and narrated from the particular village that nobody will ever know better than she does. In this sense, Achakka's description of the estate is really narrated from the perspective of her village itself; by constantly rooting the story in the village's perspective, Rao successfully writes *Kanthapura* as a sthala-purana, or the "legendary history" of a particular place and its people.

❝ And they all rose up like one rock and fell on the ground saying, "You are a dispenser of good, O Maharaja, we are the lickers of your feet..."

Related Characters: Achakka (speaker), Maistri, Coolie Chenna, Sahib

Related Themes:

Page Number: 50

Explanation and Analysis

After the maistri marches the group of coolies up the hill to the Skeffington Coffee Estate and the Sahib threatens seven-year-old Chenna to explain his policies about discipline and punishment, the coolies bow down to the Sahib and proclaim their loyalty to him. They do so because they are frightened, calling the Sahib by the traditional term for a king or ruler ("Maharaja"). By conflating the Sahib's power over the coolies' lives as laborers with the traditional role of an Indian ruler, this quote in turn illustrates how political and economic power are conflated under colonialism: the British colonial regime's main motivations and forms of power are economic, and the Gandhian movement ultimately disrupts that power by refusing to participate in a labor system that diverts the fruits of their labor to the British.

❝ [Pariah Siddayya] tells you about the *dasara havu* that is so clever that he got into the Sahib's drawer and lay there curled up, and how, the other day, when the sahib goes to the bathroom, a lamp in his hand, and opens the drawer to take out some soap, what does he see but our Maharaja, nice and clean and shining with his eyes glittering in the lamplight, and the Sahib, he closes the drawer as calmly as a prince; but by the time he is back with his pistol, our Maharaja has given him the slip. And the Sahib opens towel after towel to greet the Maharaja, but the Maharaja has gone on his nuptial ceremony and he will never be found.

Related Characters: Achakka (speaker), Sahib, Potter Siddayya

Related Themes:

Page Number: 52

Explanation and Analysis

Siddayya's story about a "dasara havu" (a kind of snake) that he calls the Maharaja inverts the coolies' prostration before the Sahib as Maharaja just two pages before. Siddayya, who has worked on the Skeffington Coffee Estate for longer than anyone else, knows about every variety of snake that lives nearby and argues that snakes only attack deserving victims. His deep knowledge of the Estate's local environment naturally makes him a leader and an elder figure among the coolies, and he passes down this local knowledge orally, creating an tradition that is grounded in place, much like the one that ties Kanthapura's villagers to the place where they live. Whereas the coolies call the Sahib "Maharaja" as a show of deference, Siddayya worships the snake who nearly attacked the Sahib as "our Maharaja" because it promised to free them from their economic servitude and then managed to escape the Sahib's violence, as the coolies surely wish they could.

"What is a policeman before a Gandhi's man? Tell me, does a boar stand before a lion or a jackal before an elephant?

Related Characters: Achakka (speaker), Rachanna, Sahib, Vasudev, Badè Khan

Related Themes:

Page Number: 60

Explanation and Analysis

Achakka makes this remark after explaining that the Sahib saw Badè Khan's presence at the Skeffington Estate as a means to prevent the coolies from rebelling, but the Gandhians decided to educate them nonetheless. Although Badè Khan has a monopoly on the use of physical force after the Gandhians begin incorporating the coolies into their movement, "a policeman" is nothing "before a Gandhi's man" because a "Gandhi's man" is unfazed by the policeman's only tool: violence. Achakka's statement also attests to the political power that literacy confers on Gandhians who, through reading, suddenly gain the means to contextualize their local experience within the larger history and territory of India, as well as understand the conditions of their economic exploitation.

Section 10 Quotes

"Brothers, in the name of the Mahatma, let there be peace and love and order. As long as there is a God in Heaven and purity in our hearts evil cannot touch us. We hide nothing. We hurt none. And if these gentlemen want to arrest us, let them. Give yourself up to them. That is the true spirit of the Satyagrahi."

Related Characters: Moorthy (speaker), Mahatma Gandhi

Related Themes:

Page Number: 88

Explanation and Analysis

As the police arrest Moorthy for the first time in Rangamma's house, he gives this speech to his followers, encouraging them to endure the violence done to them and maintain the purity of their methods, including submitting to arrest if necessary. The core of his Gandhian campaign is resistance through refusal: the villagers reject British goods and government posts, offer exploited workers an alternative livelihood based around community rather than profit, and refuse to sacrifice their moral principles for their physical safety. Although this gets many of them arrested and killed, it also allows them to maintain the moral high ground, which ultimately leads the movement to spread more effectively in the long run. In fact, Moorthy's own arrest turns him into a virtually mythological character in the region; the rest of the Gandhians eagerly await his return and begin thinking of him as "our Gandhi." Nonviolent methods allow Indians to grind the colonial system to a halt by making colonial rule unprofitable for the British, rather than by taking back their land by force.

Section 11 Quotes

Changing he changes not,
Ash-smeared, he's Parvati's sire,
Moon on his head,
And poison in his throat,
Chant, chant, chant the name of Eesh,
Chant the name of Siva Lord!

Related Characters: Sankar, Kenchamma, Moorthy

Related Themes:

Page Number: 113

Explanation and Analysis

Although Moorthy had previously warned Advocate Sankar not to let the other villagers continue singing bhajans, "lest the police fall on them," Rangamma, Vasudev, and Seenu nevertheless decide to restart them and first sing this song about the destroyer god, Lord Siva. All the villagers continue to worship Kenchamma throughout the book, but after Moorthy discovers the linga in the first section, the Gandhians shift toward specifically honoring Lord Siva. Kenchamma is a local goddess, but Siva is worshipped by Hindus across India, and the villagers' increasing reverence for him demonstrates how they increasingly define their identity on a national rather than local scale as the book progresses. The bhajans sustain the Gandhian movement in Moorthy's absence. Siva himself "changes not" as he transforms the universe, and in this case transforms Kanthapura from a village controlled by the systems of caste and colonialism into one where the people themselves govern.

Section 13 Quotes

❝ We are out for action. A cock does not make a morning, nor a single man a revolution, but we'll build a thousand-pillared temple, a temple more irm than any that hath yet been builded, and each one of you be ye pillars in it, and when the temple is built, stone by stone, and man by man, and the bell hung to the roof and the Eagle-tower shaped and planted, we shall invoke the Mother to reside with us in dream and in life. India then will live in a temple of our making.

Related Characters: Moorthy (speaker), Mahatma Gandhi

Related Themes:

Page Number: 123

Explanation and Analysis

When Moorthy returns from prison, this is how he first addresses the other Gandhians. He reminds them that their efforts are part of a greater, national project and they should not judge the success of each Satyagraha march by its immediate effects, but rather by its role in advancing this greater project. By comparing India to a temple, he references the structure that stands at the center of Kanthapura geographically, politically, and religiously. The imagery of a temple also suggests that the coming nation of India is at once a political and spiritual force, one that brings religious unity to the colonized territory and creates a broad sense of belonging based on Indians' collective participation in the independence movement. But the sheer scale of the movement also often demoralizes villagers who feel their efforts are insignificant, and they never reap the benefits of their nonviolent resistance during the book.

❝ "This is all *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*; such things never happen in our times."

Related Characters: Dorè (speaker), Kenchamma, Mahatma Gandhi, Moorthy, Rangamma

Related Themes:

Page Number: 125

Explanation and Analysis

Dorè, who falsely declares himself a "university graduate" and proclaims his adherence to Gandhism early in the book, laughs before uttering this line when Rangamma suggests that Gandhi's salt march will succeed without the Mahatma needing to even reach the ocean. To protest a British salt tax, Gandhi and his followers were marching to the sea in his western home state of Gujarat to make their own salt. The Kanthapura villagers eagerly await news of the Mahatma's arrival, telling stories and making predictions about him much as they gathered to discuss ancient Hindu epics and scriptures early in the book. Rangamma suggests that the gods will intervene to grant India freedom before Gandhi finishes the march, but Dorè draws a sharp distinction between the mythical Indian past where the gods were providential, interfering in human affairs to reward the virtuous in books like the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and the modern era, where the British exploit Indians without punishment. Dorè's viewpoint contrasts with both the villagers' view that Kenchamma protects them and with Rao's suggestion, in the preface, that his book is a sthala-purana or "legendary history" in which gods do meddle in human affairs. Even so, it is debatable whether Dorè's view is confirmed by the course the book takes, and by history, for while Gandhi's salt march was incredibly successful and drove the wave of protests in which the Kanthapura villagers participated, independence was won through a drawn-out struggle by the people, not by divine intervention—and was not won until two decades after this book takes place and a decade after its publication.

Section 17 Quotes

He'll never come again, He'll never come again,
He'll never come again, Moorthappa.
The God of death has sent for him,
Buffalo and rope and all,
They stole him from us, they lassoed him at night,
He's gone, He's gone, He's gone, Moorthappa.

Related Characters: Moorthy

Related Themes:

Page Number: 154

Explanation and Analysis

After Moorthy is arrested for the second time during the night, the pariah women of Kanthapura chant these lines while blocking the procession of coolies marched through Kanthapura by colonial policemen. Whereas the villagers eagerly anticipated Moorthy's return after his first arrest, this time they correctly predict that "he'll never come again," and use his disappearance as evidence of the colonial regime's injustice. Crucially, the pariah women are now leading the chant and the resistance movement as a whole. Soon after this quote, the other villagers discover that Rangamma has disappeared, too, and Ratna, a widowed pariah, becomes the Gandhian campaign's de facto leader. The replacement of a brahmin man, Moorthy, with a pariah woman, Ratna, demonstrates the Satyagraha movement's success in overturning the caste hierarchy that previously dominated Kanthapura. But Moorthy's disappearance and this chant about him also foreshadow the dissolution of the village as a whole. The "God of death" referenced here is Yama, a Hindu god who rides a water buffalo and holds a rope. Traditionally, Yama is considered the first mortal to have died, which mirrors Moorthy's position as the first villager to disappear.

The whole world seems a jungle in battle, trees rumbling, lions roaring, jackals wailing, parrots piping, panthers screeching, monkeys jabbering, jeering, chatter-chattering, black monkeys and white monkeys and the long-tailed ones, and the flame of forest angry around us, and if Mother Earth had opened herself and said, "Come in, children," we should have walked down the steps and the great rock would have closed itself upon us—and yet the sun was frying-hot.

Related Characters: Achakka (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 156

Explanation and Analysis

Throughout Achakka's narration, the natural environment frequently mirrors human affairs, and animals cry out as the villagers are beaten by the police. In this passage, after the police attack the elderly woman Seethamma, Achakka and the other Volunteer women hide out in the temple and hear the forest in chaos. Beyond serving as a narrative technique to suggest conflict, these consistent parallels between human affairs and the natural world demonstrate the close ties between Kanthapura's villagers and the landscape around their village. As the police attack the villagers, animals around the jungle feel their pain, as though the whole forest were burning down. The imagery of Mother Earth welcoming the villagers into herself suggests their state of harmony with the world, which the violence of colonialism has disrupted.

Section 18 Quotes

"Satyanarayan Maharaj ki jai!"

Related Characters: Mahatma Gandhi

Related Themes:

Page Number: 172

Explanation and Analysis

In lieu of their usual cries ("*Vandé Mataram!*," "*Inquilab Zindabad!*," and "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!*"), the Kanthapura Gandhians open their final march against the police with a new cry of "*Satyanarayan Maharaj ki jai!*." Instead of declaring victory for Gandhi, they declare victory for Satyanarayan, a manifestation of the god Vishnu that effectively translates to "truth as the highest being," which is also their Maharaja (or great ruler). They choose this cry because it is religious rather than political in content, and they correctly believe that the police will be more reluctant to stop them during an ostensibly religious march than during an overtly political one. Although the Hindu underpinnings of their Gandhian beliefs demonstrate that religion and politics are effectively unified for the villagers, by strategically proclaiming their march a religious ceremony, they take advantage of the British colonists' preconceptions about the sharp division between the political and religious spheres.

"*Vandé Mataram! Inquilab Zindabad! Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!*"

Related Characters: Mahatma Gandhi

Related Themes:

Page Number: 175

Explanation and Analysis

These are the Kanthapura Gandhians' three primary battle cries: they shout them repeatedly each time they march against police and soldiers, proclaiming their loyalty to the independence movement and rejection of the colonial state. "*Vandé Mataram*" is the title of an important revolutionary poem that translates to "I praise thee, mother," with the word "mother" implicitly referring to mother India. "Inquilab Zindabad" translates to "long live the revolution," and the most common battle cry of all, "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai," translates to "victory to Mahatma Gandhi." All three of these cries focus not on the villagers' immediate actions and grievances but rather on the broader context of the independence movement, leading the police to a violence that mirrors their suppression of Gandhi's movement on a broader scale. The chants also serve a practical purpose during the protests by permitting Gandhians to identify one another, recruit bystanders to their movement, and join forces under the banner of a unified Indian nation.

"In the name of the goddess, I'll burn this village"

Related Characters: Rachi (speaker), Rachanna, Kenchamma

Related Themes:

Page Number: 184

Explanation and Analysis

The pariah woman Rachi, who moved with her husband Rachanna to Kanthapura after they were kicked off the Skeffington Estate, destroys Kanthapura "in the name of the goddess" Kenchamma. Although she is an outsider, by invoking Kenchamma she suggests that the goddess would rightfully want the village destroyed after its people are massacred and its land auctioned off to rich city-people. However, the destruction of Kanthapura also represents the destruction of the villagers' previous way of life, including their reverence for Kenchamma. This destruction was carried out by the British colonial system that ignored the particular significance of the villagers land, as well as by the Gandhian movement that put the idea of a unified Indian nation front and center. The village is destroyed to make way for the nation, but its story is not forgotten. Like the thousands of villages that colonialism destroyed, Kanthapura's history (and the history of Indians' previous way of life) is preserved in memory and, through Rao's book, in written form.

Section 19 Quotes

It is the way of the masters that is wrong. And I have come to realize bit by bit, and bit by bit, when I was in prison, that as long as there will be iron gates and barbed wires round the Skeffington Coffee Estate, and city cars that can roll up the Bebbur Mound, and gas-lights and coolie cars, there will always be pariahs and poverty.

Related Characters: Moorthy (speaker), Achakka, Rangamma

Related Themes:

Page Number: 188-9

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage from Moorthy's letter to Rangamma, the former leader of the Kanthapura Gandhian movement declares that he has given up on Gandhi and decided to favor another central leader of the independence movement, Jawaharlal Nehru, who is calling for the equal distribution of land amongst people. Moorthy's abandonment of Gandhism is surprising, perhaps, given that his movement led to the village's destruction in Gandhi's name, but he does so because he believes Gandhi's movement is insufficient to give Indians true independence. While Achakka and Rangamma continue to worship the Mahatma, Rao makes it unclear whether he agrees with Moorthy's changed viewpoint or the idea that economic relations are the true mechanism that oppresses Indians. Moorthy blames technology for allowing the relation of master and servant that keeps people impoverished, but also recognizes that this technology is in India for good, and the Mahatma's desire for a return to village-level political power risks allowing the rich to dominate India. In this way, Rao calls into question the political ideology that animated much of the book, challenging readers to decide for themselves what they believe is the best way to deal with such oppression.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

FOREWORD

Rao explains that every Indian village has a "sthala-purana, or legendary history, of its own." Often, a god or hero has passed through the village and left their mark in the memories of its inhabitants, so that in everyday life "the past mingles with the present, and the gods mingle with men." *Kanthapura* is one such story about a village.

By narrating Kanthapura as a sthala-purana, Rao translates a traditional genre of oral history grounded in the peculiarities of local religion into the modern medium of the English-language novel. As a story of anticolonial resistance, it is worth noting that Rao is appropriating the colonialists' language to tell this story. It suggests that it was important to him that the British and other westerners be able to read his words.

Rao notes that "the telling has not been easy," chiefly because translating Indian ways of thinking and constructing meaning into an "alien" language like English is so difficult. But English is not truly alien to Indians—it forms their "intellectual make-up." Indians can write in English, but they "cannot write like the English"—rather, Indian English must become a "distinctive and colourful" dialect of the language, which "time alone will justify." Indian writing in English must express "the tempo of Indian life," which is a process of "rush and tumble and move on."

Rao justifies his decision to tell Kanthapura's history in Achakka's distinctive style, which breaks most conventions of narrative voice by following a meandering stream of consciousness rather than a linear storyline. Thus, even though English is a colonial language, it still offers Indians a form of expression that subverts the colonial regime. Rao adapts a colonial tool to anticolonial purposes, writing in a style of English that is not the dry language of education and recordkeeping but rather the sort of vernacular language in which a sthala-purana would ordinarily be told.

Rao suggests that this distinctive tempo accounts for the length of important Hindu epics like the *Mahabharatha* and *Ramayana*, which demonstrate the rambling, "ordinary style of our story-telling" that his narrator adopts. Rao imagines the story told by a grandmother, addressing a newcomer on her veranda at dusk, recounting her village's "sad tale."

Rao sees India as a way of thinking, layered and additive rather than linear and argumentative, and Achakka's oral style reflects that. He makes explicit her role as a village elder and suggests that his story of a village responding to colonialism can be read as the story of India's struggle against colonialism in miniature.

SECTION 1

"Our village," the narrator Achakka begins, "I don't think you have ever heard about it—Kanthapura is its name." The village is high in the Western Ghats, "the steep mountains that face the cool Arabian seas" in India's southwest. Past Kanthapura, "cardamom and coffee, rice and sugarcane" are funneled down rudimentary roads that wind through the mountains and forests toward "the great granaries of trade" and then on "across the seven oceans and into the countries where our rulers live."

The distinctive style that Rao describes in the preface becomes immediately apparent through Achakka's lengthy first sentence, which situates her village in the broader context of India and the British empire as a whole. She does this from the viewpoint of someone traversing the landscape. The flood of place names she provides demonstrates her deep familiarity with the place and establishes her as an authority on her village.

"Cart after cart groans" through Kanthapura's roads, all day and all night, heading over the mountains to the sea. When Rama or Subba Chetty is out selling merchandise, the carts stop in town and Subba loads up his own. Everyone can hear the "long harsh monotony" of them taking off into the night, until they pass over Tippur Hill and out of earshot. People sometimes hear this as the Goddess of the River playing with the Goddess of the Hill. "Kenchamma is the mother of **Himavathy**," explains the narrator.

Kanthapura's economic role in empire is obvious to its inhabitants through the noise of the carts that pass through town. That the noise disappears past the Kenchamma Hill and Himavathy River suggests that these landmarks delimit the boundaries of Kanthapura. locality and the local goddess Kenchamma's domain.

"Great and bounteous" Kenchamma is the town's goddess. Once, "ages, ages ago," a demon came to take Kanthapura's children as food and wives, and the goddess fought him back all night. The battle soaked her namesake **Kenchamma Hill** in blood, and now the part above the Tippur stream is red, which is proof that the battle happened. Kenchamma settled in the town, and has never failed to answer the villagers' prayers for rain.

The villagers' traditional religion is tied to the place where they live in the sense that the goddess they worship is embedded in the landscape and that landscape records the history of what has happened in the village. The villagers do not need documents or scholars to record their history; rather, the physical landscape and locals' memories are their history books.

The goddess Kenchamma also cures disease. By walking through a holy fire, everyone has been cured of smallpox (besides one child), and by offering Kenchamma "a sari and a gold trinket," the town has saved all from cholera except some "old ones" who "would have died one way or the other anyway." And yes, the narrator admits, one woman died of it too—but "her child was born ten months and four days" after her husband died, and "such whores always die untimely." Two others who died of cholera in Kanthapura were not from the town; they should have stayed in their own, the narrator claims, and prayed to their own goddess.

Achakka quickly contradicts herself, establishing her unreliability as a narrator. She suggests that the fates of those who died from disease are tied to those people's moral failings. The lack of smallpox and cholera in the village also suggests that it has had relatively little direct contact with European colonizers. Kanthapura's universe is saturated with religion: even disease is attributed to Kenchamma.

The narrator prays that Kenchamma will protect the village "through famine and disease, death and despair." She promises that the villagers "shall wake thinking of you, sleep prostrating before you," and perform a ritual dance and song all through harvest night. The next morning, people will come from the plantation estates around Kanthapura with offerings and sing.

Even during her story, Achakka carefully acknowledges the goddess and her continuing role in protecting Kanthapura's people. The fact that people from the plantations surrounding Kanthapura descend upon the village to pray to Kenchamma demonstrates both that the village is an important center within its immediate region and that it is not completely isolated from the outside world or the effects of colonialism.

There are 24 houses in Kanthapura, from Postmaster Suryanarayana's large two-story home to much smaller ones that "were really not bad to look at" and Patwari Nanjundia's, which has a fabulous veranda. So does the Kannayya-House, but Waterfall Venkamma is constantly furious that her widowed sister-in-law Rangamma gets to live there. Venkamma has to squeeze into a house she believes is too small (although the narrator explains that, in truth, her house is "as big and strong" as the Kannayya-House) while Rangamma gets to bring her family of "city-bred fashionable idiots" from Bombay to stay at the Kannayya-House in the summers. One day Venkamma tells the fellow villager Akkamma how she wishes to poison the family, and "Front-House Ankamma" runs inside her own house.

Achakka introduces a number of characters all at once with little context, overwhelming the reader with her extensive and detailed knowledge of seemingly everyone and everything in Kanthapura. She attaches epithets to many of the characters, generally based on personality traits or where they live within the village. Characters' houses clearly reflect their social status within the village. Here, Achakka introduces Venkamma's bitter and confrontational character, as well as her feud with Rangamma. The villagers' opposition to city-people is also clear from the start.

Akkamma's sister-in-law's cousin, "Coffee-Planter Ramayya," is staying with her on his way through town. He parks his Ford across the river and an enormous crowd descends on Akkamma's house to see him, including Dorè, whom everyone calls "the 'University graduate.'"

Ramayya and Dorè represent the kind of city-people that the villagers disdain and see as tied to the colonial government. Ramayya's car contrasts with the villagers' limited means of transportation, reflecting his power and ties to the city.

Dorè's parents died and sisters married when he was young, so he found himself "all alone with fifteen acres of wet land and twenty acres of dry land." Actually, Dorè never made it to his second term at university but "had city-ways, read city-books, and even called himself a Gandhi-man." When he came back to town two years ago, he started wearing a dhoti and khadi, and he even quit "his city habit of smoking."

Dorè is clearly a charlatan, using his brief sojourn in the city as an excuse to proclaim his superiority to the others in his village. He also gives Achakka a means to introduce Gandhi, whose movement later becomes the main focus of the characters in Kanthapura.

But honestly, the narrator remarks, "we never liked [Dorè]. He had always been such a braggart," unlike "Corner-House Moorthy," who lived "like a noble cow, quiet, generous, serene, deferent and brahmanic" and was loved by all. The narrator, who reveals in passing that her name is Achakka, would even have married her granddaughter to him if she had one. Moorthy and Achakka's son Seenu are the same age and were always close friends. Coffee-Planter Ramayya was there to offer his own daughter to Moorthy—however, "the horoscopes did not agree. And we were all so satisfied…"

Moorthy embodies the ideal Gandhian and contrasts strongly with Dorè. Achakka finally reveals her name as an aside, underscoring the wending nature of her narrative. The failure of Moorthy's marriage to Ramayya's daughter illustrates both the dependence of Kanthapura's society on the institution of marriage and also the extent to which Indians of all stripes in this book—including Moorthy and Ramayya from the city—follow astrology to make important decisions.

Achakka notes that, so far, she has only talked about the village's Brahmin Quarter—there are a number of others, and perhaps "ninety or a hundred" huts in total. Achakka explains that she would never go into the Pariah Quarter, but she estimates that there are "fifteen or twenty" huts there. "Pock-marked Sidda" has a huge house there, but he recently had to take his wife to Poona for treatment because she "went mad," and he lost much of his land to clever Bhatta, who already owned "half Kanthapura" and "was sure to become the Zamindar [landowner] of the whole village" even though he walked around in only a loincloth.

Recognizing the way caste divides Kanthapura, Achakka zooms out from the world in which she lives in and acknowledges her lack of insight into the lives of lower-caste villagers. Bhatta's economic power over Kanthapura is evident, as is the sharp division between the villagers' traditional ways of life, organized around the religious power of the brahmin caste, and the new social structures introduced by colonialism, which revolves around money and property.

The Potters' Street is the smallest, with five houses and five inhabitants: Lingayya, Ramayya, Subbayya, Chandrayya, and the dying Kamalamma, who lives in "a little broken house at the end of the street" with her son. With "modern Mangalore tiles" taking over the market, the Potters are suffering and most have turned to agriculture.

The potters' disappearing lifestyle illustrates how Kanthapura is increasingly shifting toward a market economy, and how the majority of its citizens are forced into the lowest rungs of that society: they become farmers, while landowners (both British and Indian) profit from their labor.

Patel Rangè Gowda, "a fat, sturdy fellow, a veritable tiger amongst us," lives just past the Temple Square with his fortune in gold and bangles. He works his sons-in-law "like slaves" even though they also own land; "his words were law in our village." Achakka considers him an "honest man" who has "helped many a poor peasant"—but he is also "a terror [...] to the authorities!" He protects his fellow sudras, who "were always badly dressed" and never paid their debts on time.

Rangè Gowda has immense power in Kanthapura despite being low caste, which demonstrates how wealth is increasingly displacing caste as the dominant hierarchy in the village. He is both revered and feared for his power as a revenue collector, since his willingness to use the same cruel tactics as the colonial government makes him Kanthapura's best defense against the British.

Across the Sudra Street is the Brahmin Street, where Achakka herself lives, Subba Chetty has his shop, and the local temple stands. The street is the "centre of our life," but only three years old, and "that's where all the trouble began."

The temple is both the physical and religious center of Kanthapura, and Achakka insinuates that "the trouble" that unraveled Kanthapura can be traced to the brahmin quarter.

One day, Moorthy found a "half-sunk" linga (an idol that represents Lord Siva) in Achakka's backyard and convinced the other brahmins to clean and build a small shrine for it. Postmaster Suryanarayana proposes a Sankara-jayantha—the Brahmins jump at the opportunity to participate and start later that day. Ramakrishnayya, the most "serene and deep-voiced" of all the Brahmins, reads the Sankara-Vijaya day in and out with his "calm, bell-metal voice" while the brahmins watch and weep. A series of boys served dinner "like veritable princes," then Lingayya plays a bhajan on his trumpet before the brahmins go to bed "with the god's face framed within our eyes."

Moorthy initiates the events of the book by discovering an idol to Siva, a prominent Hindu god who is worshipped across India. This foreshadows the villagers' gradual shift to prioritizing Siva over their local goddess Kenchamma. Ceremonies like the one Moorthy proposes are the centerpiece of public life in Kanthapura, for they offer the villagers their main chance to assemble and make important communal decisions.

Sometimes, the poet Sastri delivers Harikathas—he has been honored by the Maharaja of Mysore and, according to rumors, even has a permanent role lined up in the court. Sastri makes "the god-world" feel "true and near and brilliant" to the brahmins and they can watch him perform for hours.

Sastri is an important figure in the village because of his oral discourses, but as a powerful brahmin he also allies with the maharaja (whose court is indirectly ruled by the British).

The next morning, Moorthy proposes holding festivals for the gods Rama, Krishna, and Ganesh. He asks Achakka for money, which would enable them to bring the best Harikatha-men from afar to perform in Kanthapura. She gives him a rupee—a lot of money for her—and Moorthy continues around the village collecting money, even from the Potters, Weavers, and Sudras. Achakka worries when she hears Moorthy even went to the Pariah quarter, wondering whether "he is one of these Gandhi-men" who disregard caste. "How does it affect us?" asks Achakka, who asserts that "we shall be dead before the world is polluted. We shall have closed our eyes."

Achakka's willingness to give Moorthy a rupee demonstrates that religious purposes are still deeply important for her, as for most of the other villagers. Therefore, getting an important Harikatha-man to come to Kanthapura would be a great source of honor. At the same time, Achakka is put off by Moorthy's willingness to mix with people from other castes; Moorthy at once appeals to the other villagers' devout religiosity and defies one of their religion's central tenets.

Altogether, Moorthy collects 147 rupees. Rangamma is generous—she does not know what to do with all her money—and the festival is extravagant. The famous Harikatha-man Jayaramachar performs, telling a story permeated with lessons about Swaraj. Then, he tells the story of Gandhi's birth—Venkatalakshamma complains to her son Postmaster Suryanarayana that she wants to hear about Rama and Krishna, not Gandhi, and weeps through the Harikatha.

Rangamma is one of three wealthy characters in Kanthapura, alongside Bhatta and Rangè Gowda, but unlike the other men, she rejects the colonial ideology that values hoarding money. Venkatalakshamma's aversion to the story about Gandhi reflects the villagers' (and especially the brahmins') deep commitment to the caste system and traditional Hindu scriptures.

Achakka summarizes Jayaramachar's story. A sage approaches the creator god Brahma in the Heavens and laments that Brahma has forgotten Bharatha (the Sanskrit word for India), his "chief daughter" and "the goddess of wisdom and well-being." Now, Bharatha has been invaded by men who "trample on our wisdom" and "spit on virtue itself." The sage asks Brahma to incarnate a god on Earth to save "your enslaved daughter," and Brahma promises that "Siva himself will forthwith go and incarnate on the Earth and free my beloved daughter from her enforced slavery."

Jayaramachar presents the image of a unified Indian nation, which contrasts sharply with the Kanthapura villagers' distinctly local way of life. Few think about the world outside their village, and unlike Siva, their goddess does not reliably help them when they travel beyond the hill that bears her name. However, for Jayaramachar, India herself is a goddess who has been attacked from overseas, and he calls Indians to act in their god's name.

In Gujarat, Jayaramachar's story continues, "a son such as the world has never beheld" is born. His room glows "like the Kingdom of the Sun" and he immediately "began to lisp the language of wisdom." Like the lord Krishna started fighting demons as a child, Gandhi began fighting India's enemies, assembling villagers around the country "to slay the serpent of the foreign rule." He preaches nonviolence, asceticism, and love for all—he proclaims that wealth hides Truth, his only God, and encourages people to spin and weave their own cloth so that they can keep "the money that goes to the Red-man" within India. Jayaramachar declares Mahatma Gandhi a saint who converts his enemies to followers with love.

Jayaramachar presents Gandhi as divinely ordained from birth to end colonialism and introduces the key tenets of Gandhism that become the villagers' core beliefs later in the book. His story offers a religious basis for following Mahatma Gandhi, whom he likens to Siva. This implies that the villagers must choose between Gandhi's (true) stand of Hinduism and the (outmoded) caste system that supports the colonial government.

Jayaramachar tells other stories, but afterwards a policeman talks to him and he is never seen again in Kanthapura. Moorthy becomes "sorrowful and calm" thereafter, but he soon starts converting the villagers to Gandhi's cause. After two days, Policeman Badè Khan moves into the village.

The colonial government and the Indian police who enforce its will immediately see Jayaramachar's discourse as a threat to their control over Kanthapura and take measures to demonstrate their power in the village.

SECTION 2

Badè Khan was a Muslim, and nobody in Kanthapura wanted him to live with them. Patwari Nanjundia sends Khan to Patel Rangè Gowda's house, where he waits in frustration—Rangè Gowda is busy ordering his sons-in-law around and tells Khan he has no house for him.

Although Badè Khan works for the police, he is still subject to Rangè Gowda's local authority and the caste system that views him as a pariah because of his religion.

But Rangè Gowda is the Government Representative in town, Badè Khan remarks, so finding Khan a house is Gowda's responsibility. The Patel responds that he just collects taxes and has no such responsibility. Khan accuses the Patel of being a traitor, requests a house again to no avail, and threatens that "the first time I corner you, I shall squash you like a bug." The Patel says "enough!"

Rangè Gowda and Badè Khan argue about whether Rangè Gowda's role as Patel (revenue collector) means he works for the government. He sees himself as representing the people to the government, but Badè Khan sees him as representing the government to the people. Again, Rangè Gowda's local authority beats out Badè Khan's authority from the national government.

The Khan sulks away, kicking the town's one-eared dog on his way to the Skeffington Coffee Estate. When Khan arrives, Mr. Skeffington offers him a hut and the butler guides him there. Khan moves in with one of the pariah women, whom he chose from "among the lonely ones."

Although Mr. Skeffington does not work for the government, he is allied with the government, as he has an economic interest in stopping a Gandhian movement and the government has a political interest in keeping the estate economically successful. This demonstrates how economic exploitation serves as the core of colonial politics.

Nobody in the village sees Badè Khan for the next few days, and rumors spread about his motives for coming to Kanthapura. Some villagers think he has come to bring the Police Inspector; others think he is just a "passing policeman." Waterfall Venkamma thinks Khan has come "because of this Moorthy and all this Gandhi affair." Venkamma hates Moorthy—he rejected her second daughter for marriage and has started assembling Gandhians in Rangamma's house, bringing books and spinning-wheels from the local Gandhian Karwar Congress Committee.

The rumors' spread demonstrates how quickly information moves throughout Kanthapura's tight social networks. This becomes an asset in the villagers' later campaign against the colonial regime. Moorthy's rejection of Venkamma's daughter shows his stern rejection of the caste system and the expectations it places on young adults to marry as soon as possible.

Moorthy and his boys visit every corner of Kanthapura, recruiting people from all castes to use the free spinning-wheels. Nose-scratching Nanjamma cannot believe that they are truly free—Moorthy explains that "millions and millions of yards of foreign cloth come to this country, and everything foreign makes us poor and pollutes us." Gandhi thinks wearing one's own cloth is sacred; the spinning-wheels give work and cloth to those who need it. "Brahmins do not spin," Nanjamma protests—that is the weavers' job.

The wheels offer Moorthy a means to give Gandhi's ideas an audience among even initially skeptical villagers. Nanjamma expects that the wheels could not possibly be free, reflecting the extent to which unequal and exploitative economic relations have become the norm in Kanthapura. She also worries that spinning would break the rules of caste, again staging a conflict between Gandhi's version of Hinduism and the traditional one that maintains the brahmins' power.

But Moorthy says that the weavers buy foreign cloth, and he explains why this is a problem through an analogy: Nanjamma might sell her rice to foreigners who pay higher prices, but then she is left without her own rice, which has gone "to fatten some dissipated Red-man in his own country." City-people and foreigners will come to sell their wares, and villagers will buy them, making themselves "poorer and poorer" until they have sold away all their rice and starve.

Free spinning-wheels promise the villagers an alternative to agriculture, which is increasingly precarious for all because of Bhatta's steep interest rates and increasing competition from colonial plantations. Foreign cloth, similarly, threatens to outcompete Indian cloth, and when Indians sell the goods they produce for money (rather than using them and trading them for other goods locally), wealth gets sucked out of the village on a massive scale.

"I am no learned person," declares Nanjamma, who then asks whether the Mahatma himself spins. Of course, replies Moorthy—"he says spinning is as purifying as praying" and does it for two hours every morning. Nanjamma finally agrees, but still does not believe that the spinning-wheel truly costs nothing until Moorthy explains the process again.

If spinning is a spiritual ritual, then the Mahatma opens religious practices to people of all castes equally rather than restricting them to brahmins. Moorthy mentions that Gandhi himself spins because this offers the villagers a much more relatable political role model than the distant colonial government that is unlike and indifferent toward them.

Moorthy visits the other brahmins and then the pariahs, convincing all the people he meets to start spinning. A crowd follows him to the village gate, where Badè Khan is smoking a cigarette on the village train platform in plain clothes. After they pass, he jumps down and walks over to the brahmin street.

As Moorthy's Gandhian politics spreads, Kanthapura becomes more and more of a threat to the colonial system that relies on caste and economic inequality to perpetuate its power.

SECTION 3

Bhatta, unlike the rest of Kanthapura, wants "nothing to do with these Gandhi-bhajans." He used to sympathize with Moorthy's cause but gave up after visiting the city to register some business papers and allegedly lend some money. He helped buy an election, managed a widow's lands, and was "always smiling, always ready, always friendly" whenever he saw an opportunity to profit. Achakka swears that "he would one day own the whole village [...] had not the stream run the way it did."

Bhatta exerts his power in Kanthapura through written documents sent to and from the city. Whereas most of the villagers are illiterate, Bhatta takes advantage of the written basis of the colonial government.

In his youth, Bhatta was poor and astrologically adept. He is always the "First Brahmin" at the Pandit's house for the holy obsequial dinner, which he eats slowly and heavily. When he returns home, he runs through his daily transactions. One day, his first wife falls into a well and dies, but Bhatta soon remarries a new girl in an extravagant ceremony.

Achakka's narration again suddenly shifts from general statements to specific episodes. Although Bhatta's devoutness and business savvy might seem contradictory, in fact they are consistent—and both work to the benefit of the colonial government.

Bhatta's wealth inflates and he becomes a major landowner. Every morning, Front-House Suranna and the priest Temple Rangappa fetch him from his house and take him to the river, where people from all over congregate to take out loans when the rain ruins their rice or they need a lawyer. Bhatta often settles disputes himself, calling himself "your humble servant."

Again, brahmins' religious power and landowners' economic power are aligned—the village priest even facilitates the transactions that build Bhatta's wealth at the expense of the other villagers. But he also does help those villagers who often need loans and lawyers.

Now, Bhatta owns more than 100 acres of land and everyone in Kanthapura owes him something, but nobody much minded because he was "so smiling and so good" (and charged more reasonable interest than Rama and Subba Chetty, "the ruin of our village"). He even sent a distant relative to study in the city, asking only that he "bring a name to Kanthapura" (or send back money if he strikes it rich). Achakka declares that, given Bhatta's reputation, his disdain for Gandhi was a surprise—although not really, since "after all there was no money in it."

Bhatta uses his reputation for religiosity and knowledge of the colonial system to help the other villagers, but his true underlying motive is always profit first (and reputation second). He therefore helps the villagers only when he can act as a middleman between them and the colonial government—but not when their interests conflict with his financial prospects.

One day, Bhatta stops by Rangamma's Kannayya House. Satamma greets him and asks about his family, and Bhatta replies by explaining that his business is terrible. Rangamma and meditating Ramakrishnayya join, and Bhatta complains about how hard it is to marry off his daughters with the focus on "nothing but degrees or this Gandhi vagabondage."

Bhatta talks about his business when Satamma asks about his family, and then only mentions his family insofar as he cannot find suitably wealthy and traditional husbands for his daughters. These statements show that his mind is entirely oriented toward wealth and status.

Bhatta complains that pariahs are mixing with brahmins, perhaps to one day usurp their place. Rangamma says not to worry, for elsewhere pariahs can even enter the temple once a year, but Bhatta claims that he is the one who truly knows the city and, actually, a temple there is *welcoming* pariahs. He laments the "strange age" Indians are living in, "what with their modern education and their modern women" who increasingly pick school over marriage, and sometimes even marry Muslims.

Despite his disdain for "modern" schooling and women, in many ways Bhatta is ironically one of the most modern villagers, with his profitable business run on English contracts. Achakka suggests that he disdains "modern" ways because they get in the way of his high status in Kanthapura. Educated villagers and the dissolution of caste could lead others to reject or overtake him as the village's financial cornerstone.

Satamma blames recent floods for the "confusion of castes" and Rangamma worries that "the Mahatma is not for all this pollution," but Bhatta complains that Gandhi has himself "adopted a pariah girl as a daughter." Bhatta says that he recently visited the Swami in Mysore and saw his "wife's elder brother's wife's brother-in-law" Seetharamu, who told him that the Swami "wants to crush" the Gandhian pariah movement "in its seed." Seetharamu asked Bhatta to start a brahmin party in Kanthapura before Gandhi convinces villagers to accept even Mohomedans and Europeans. The Swami plans to "outcast every brahmin who has touched a pariah," Seetharamu explained, and Bhatta returned to Kanthapura as a "pontifical brahmin" to convince others of his caste to drop Gandhism.

Bhatta reveals his underlying motivations for visiting Rangamma and Satamma: he wants to recruit them to his anti-Gandhian party. He appears to visit in his capacity as a devout brahmin, rather than as a businessperson, and invokes the authority of a higher religious leader, the Swami. But it is clear to Achakka that he is truly motivated by his business interests.

Rangamma, Satamma, and Ramakrishnayya sit in silence, hearing a children's song and the noises of calves, wall-lizards, and bats in the village. They see a shooting star, and Ramakrishnayya says "some good soul has left the earth." Bhatta tells Rangamma he wants to save her from all this "pariah business," keep her on guard about "Moorthy and these city boys." Achakka interjects that "our Rangamma is no village kid"—she reads newspapers from the city and knows about everything from worms that cause disease to modern technologies like radio and airplanes.

The noises and shooting star suggest that the environment of Kanthapura is somehow responding to Bhatta's deceptive proposal. The departure of a "good soul," pointed out by the village sage Ramakrishnayya, might refer to Bhatta's apparent turn toward evil. Rangamma, like Bhatta, is literate and knowledgeable in the ways of the city (and, by extension, the British), so she understands that his pro-brahmin religious ideas are actually grounded in his pro-city and pro-government interests.

But Achakka explains that there was one thing Rangamma never stopped talking about—the day after a Northern sandal merchant stopped in town and told her about the distant land "of the hammer and sickle and electricity," where women worked the same as men and families could take holiday in palaces when they were tired or having children, and where the Government fed and educated children, gave them jobs and homes and wives "and they lived on happily ever after." Rangamma said that in that land "all men were equal—every one equal to every other—and there were neither the rich nor the poor." One village pariah thinks this must be a "strange country" without castes or rice or farmers, although Rangamma replies that her paper "says nothing about that."

Rangamma, like Moorthy, yearns deeply for a more equal world. This ideological commitment is far more important than her material interests as a wealthy brahmin woman. The land of "hammer and sickle and electricity" is probably the Soviet Union. By mentioning it, Rao foreshadows the debate between prioritizing freedom from British rule and prioritizing the equal distribution of wealth and property, which becomes important at the very end of the book. The pariah's inability to conceive such an equal society demonstrates that even the people most oppressed within the caste system cannot imagine an alternative to it.

So Rangamma was knowledgeable and "could hold a word-for-word fight with Bhatta," but chose instead to simply say she would see what Gandhi's book and Moorthy say about the pariahs. Seething, Bhatta threatens to have Moorthy ostracized if he visits the pariahs, but Ramakrishnayya convinces him to calm down—Moorthy was an idealistic "nice brahmanic boy" not worth harming, and Bhatta calms down and says he hopes that Moorthy will marry soon.

Moorthy, Ramakrishnayya, and Rangamma exemplify the brahmanic ideal of spiritual wisdom much more than the furious Bhatta, who nevertheless claims to speak for their caste. The threat of excommunication, which would turn Moorthy into a pariah himself by ejecting him from the caste system, only matters insofar as the other villagers continue to closely follow that system.

Kamalamma, Rangamma's sister, stops by with her daughter Ratna. Ratna is a widow but "still kept her bangles and her nose-rings and ear-rings," dressing and acting like her husband hadn't died. Kamalamma silenced and denounced her daughter, and Ratna would do laundry in the river alone as other women "would spit behind her and make this face and that, and throwing a handful of dust in her direction, pray for the destruction of the house."

Widows are often ostracized in traditional Hindu societies, even when their marriages were arranged at such a young age that they had little understanding of the matter, let alone choice. Ratna is at the absolute bottom of the caste system even though she was born a brahmin, as proven by her own mother's disdain for her. Oddly, Rangamma is also a widow, but she is nevertheless respected in Kanthapura.

Bhatta does not mention this, since he is not a woman; plus, Ratna's father is his second cousin, and he used to play with her when she was a baby, and everyone who claims "she was found openly talking to Moorthy in the temple" is lying. But Bhatta also cannot bear to see Ratna's "modern ways," and especially the way she "bared her bodice," so he runs off.

Although Bhatta has little sympathy for most of the pariahs, he does feel an affinity for Ratna because she is family. Despite his conflicting feelings, he cannot accept her if she contradicts his belief in the caste system. He rejects her not because of her widowhood but because of her modern ways, which suggests that his motives are not truly religious.

On his way home, as he passes Rama Chetty's shop, Bhatta sees "a figure moving with slow, heavy steps" and slowly approaches. "Who's there, brother?" he asks, and he hears "a cough and a sneeze and the beating of a stick," and then the figure says, "what does that matter to you?" Bhatta follows the figure into the courtyard and he turns out to be Badè Khan, who prostrates himself before Bhatta.

Badè Khan's reverence for Bhatta is initially puzzling, since he has so far treated the rest of the villagers with condescension. Moreover, Badè Khan is a Muslim, and Bhatta decried the notion that Hindus would accept Muslims into their villages just a few pages before. However, they are natural allies, for both have a strong interest in preserving the caste system, and Bhatta's knowledge about Kanthapura and his economic power lead Badè Khan to view him as a superior.

Waterfall Venkamma, Temple Lakshamma, Timmamamma, and Chinnamma debate whether Moorthy truly wants the mixing of castes. Moorthy's pious old mother, Narsamma, married his five sisters to large, well-to-do families, but Moorthy was her youngest and favorite even though he wanted nothing to do with marriage.

Since Moorthy is the only male child in his family, its continuation depends on him—traditionally, women move into their husbands' households upon marriage in Hindu culture.

One day, Moorthy has a vision of Gandhi giving a discourse to a large crowd; he feels a "mellowed force and love" emanating from the Mahatma's body. Moorthy takes over for a weary fanner and fans Gandhi as he preaches Truth, love of mankind, and "the God of all." Moorthy feels called to stay and weeps before jumping onto the platform and prostrating himself at the Mahatma's feet, saying "I am your slave." The Mahatma asks what he can do for Moorthy, who asks for a command—the Mahatma's only command is to seek Truth, but Moorthy is ignorant, wearing foreign cloth and educated at a foreign university. The Mahatma tells him to work "among the dumb millions of the villages" and Moorthy throws out his foreign clothes and books later that evening.

Moorthy's reverence for Gandhi comes from his experience of the Mahatma as an idea rather than a real man, which reflects Gandhi's entirely symbolic role in this book. He never appears again except for in this imagined scene, but this discourse introduces the ideals of Truth and love that become the center of Moorthy's movement.

When Moorthy returned to Kanthapura as a Gandhian, Narsamma was distraught but ultimately let him stay, even after he rejected three more marriage proposals for the sake of maintaining his purity. Narsamma wants to marry him to the daughter of the wealthy landowner Maddur Coffee-Planter Venkatanarayana, working tirelessly to convince the family and plan the unlikely wedding. Waterfall Venkamma visits Narsamma's house to proclaim that the marriage will never happen, and that she is delighted her daughter did not marry a "dirt-gobbling cur" like Moorthy. The next morning they briefly reconcile, but before long, she starts raging again, suggesting that the Swami has ordered the whole village excommunicated unless Moorthy stops "mixing with the pariahs."

Moorthy's mother Narsamma believes strongly in the caste system, and she deeply fears the Swami's power to demote her family's caste status. Whereas Narsamma holds out hope that Moorthy will change his mind, her son sees his Gandhian love for all of humanity as prohibiting him from marrying to perpetuate the caste system. Waterfall Venkamma, like Bhatta, defends the brahmin caste's position in a way that fundamentally contradicts how brahmins are intended to act—that is,as the wise bearers of an ancient tradition.

Post-Office-House Chinnamma knows that this is a lie and suggests that only people who mix with pariahs will be excommunicated. Narsamma is unsure whether to believe her or Venkamma, since each claims to have heard the news from Bhatta earliest, and "burst[s] out sobbing" as she considers the dishonor Moorthy will bring his family. Chinnamma and Venkamma try to comfort her, "but Narsamma would have nothing of it" and weeps all the way home.

Chinnamma finds it unlikely that the Swami would punish the whole village for one inhabitant's opposition to caste, but Venkamma's fear that Moorthy will derail the entire village's way of life is well-founded, for she knows that he is spreading Gandhism among Kanthapura's inhabitants.

SECTION 4

The sun rises in the Ghats and the carts start up for the day, carrying their goods in every direction. With "a bundle of khadi on his back and a bundle of books in his arms," Moorthy heads to Kanthapura, where his mother Narsamma asks him to "never show himself again until he had sought *prayaschitta* [penance] from the Swami himself." She laments that her son has become a pariah and runs off, spitting and shouting at a pariah she encounters on the way before resolving to "go to Benares and die there a holy death lest the evil follow her."

Moorthy carries two crucial symbols of Gandhism: books that are intended to bring the Mahatma's ideas to a wide audience across India, and the khadi cloth that symbolizes Gandhian nationalism's insistence on economic independence. Narsamma demands that Moorthy recommit to the caste system; her loyalty to caste continues to supersede her loyalty to family.

When she arrives, Narsamma starts washing her clothes on the **Himavathy river**'s stones with the other villagers and begins to calm down, so she goes home and starts cooking like her usual self. But Moorthy is not there, so she begins to rage again and tries to calm herself with meditation and prayer.

Narsamma purifies her conscience by washing her clothes in the holy Himavathy River and then meditating. She manages to briefly find spiritual solace from the terror she feels at Moorthy's rejection of caste, but only because she comes to hope he will change (rather than coming to accept him).

Narsamma cannot see Moorthy on Rangamma's veranda, and tells the passing Seenu to search for him there. Bhatta visits and tells Narsamma that he has spoken to Moorthy, whom the Swami has not yet excommunicated. But, "if he continued with this pariah business," Moorthy will be excommunicated, since he has no intention of stopping and even called the Swami a heartless, "self-chosen fool" without "thinking power."

Moorthy believes that the Swami lacks "thinking power" because he is controlled by a broader, more powerful ideology—the rigid adherence to caste that the colonial regime uses to keep lower-caste Indians subjugated. But Narsamma and Bhatta see Moorthy's blind adherence to the Mahatma's ideas as analogous.

Narsamma is horrified and Bhatta says there is nothing he can do—in fact, he will have to tell the Swami soon, for he does not "want our community polluted and the manes of our ancestors insatiate." Narsamma finds her son's arguments at once "reasonable" and unbelievable, but Bhatta assures her she "cannot even imagine the pollutions that go on" in the city. Moorthy returns and goes to the bathroom; Bhatta leaves and Narsamma cries, leaving Moorthy's food in the hallway, where he eats it "like a servant" as Narsamma eats in the kitchen.

Although Bhatta clearly stands to gain from Moorthy's excommunication (which would promise to stymie the village's Gandhian movement), he acts as though he must inform the Swami out of religious obligation. Narsamma's realization that Moorthy's arguments are "reasonable" seems to reflect her increasing realization that the caste system treats her cruelly without cause.

"From that day on," Achakka laments, "they never spoke to each other, Narsamma and Moorthy." They continued to eat separately and Narsamma grew "thin as a bamboo and shriveled like banana bark" as Moorthy spent more and more time with the pariahs. He even openly carries the corpse of a dead woman during her funeral procession, and everybody who saw shouted "oh, he's lost!" Bhatta runs to the city and, two days later, reports that the Swami has officially excommunicated Moorthy, plus his family "and all the generations to come."

Moorthy becomes something of a pariah even before he is excommunicated, as his relationships with brahmins, including his mother, begin to fall apart and he begins to associate primarily with under-caste villagers. Touching any dead person or animal is considered incredibly taboo for anyone but pariahs in Hinduism, which is why it seems to cross a line—even to Achakka—and justify the excommunication of Moorthy and all of his descendants.

Narsamma is distraught, and that night she runs to the village gate, where she spits in all four cardinal directions and then at the pariah huts, shivers thinking of "ghosts and the spirits and the evil ones of flame" and carries on because of "something deep and desperate." She runs to the **river Himavathy** and looks at the sky, shudders and falls unconscious at the riverbanks, and is dead by the next morning. The townspeople cremate her on the spot and throw her ashes in the river.

The mysterious force that compels Narsamma toward the river seems to be the force of her caste ideology, and as she loses her position in the caste system (and that of her entire bloodline), she also loses her life. She dies in the holy river, as though trying to purify herself of Moorthy's pollution, sacrificing herself in an attempt to do so.

Rangamma wants to hold Narsamma's funeral ceremonies at her house, but Bhatta refuses to officiate and "sell [his] soul to a pariah." That night, Moorthy leaves. Achakka explains that nobody knows where he went, or even talks about his departure anymore, but when he comes back he moves into Rangamma's house. He still eats "by the kitchen door" and goes with the pariahs, brings them cotton and yarn, and teaches "alphabets and grammar and arithmetic and Hindi." Regretfully, Achakka notes that Seenu, too, is going with him, and they even start teaching the pariahs at the Skeffington Coffee Estate.

Moorthy seems to embrace his newfound position as a pariah, as though his excommunication demonstrates his willingness to put the abstract love for all humans above the particular caste commitments into which he was born. Although his own family home is empty after Narsamma's death, Moorthy nevertheless chooses the Gandhian headquarters (at Rangamma's house) over the property that he would ordinarily inherit. Although she is nowhere near as extreme as Narsamma, Achakka is clearly worried that her own son has joined Moorthy's movement, which suggests that (at this point in the narrative) she sides with the other brahmins who worry about caste "pollution."

SECTION 5

Achakka describes the vast Skeffington Coffee Estate, which snakes through the Western Ghats' landscape and is steeped in local rumor; "nobody knows how large it is or when it was founded," but there are tales about both, and it has continued to grow for years as "more and more coolies" came to farm there, "till it touched all the hills around our village." Decrepit, miserable, starving coolies were regularly marched through Kanthapura, past the Kenchamma Temple to the Estate, by the maistri who recruited them from their dried-up, foodless villages.

Achakka cuts to an entirely different setting in this chapter: the Skeffington Coffee Estate near Kanthapura, which exemplifies the exploitative economic relations that form the basis of British colonialism. She describes the Estate in much the same narrative mode as she described Kanthapura in the book's opening lines: she adopts the viewpoint of an individual traversing the landscape, remarking on the Estate's vastness and the unknowable nature of its limits.

At the estate, the maistri "banged the gate behind them" and brought them to the Sahib, "a tall, fat man with golden hair." The Sahib touched seven-year-old Chenna "with the butt of his whip" and started laughing at the crying child, who cried harder and harder as the Sahib laughed harder and harder—until he suddenly brought Chenna a peppermint and explained that "everybody would get a beating when they deserved one and sweets when they worked well," which the maistri repeated in their native language. The coolies begin worshipping the Sahib as a Maharaja, and the maistri spits in one worker's face when she asks for pay. The maistri orders them to their huts and the Sahib offers the children candy. The women follow their children, and the maistri beats the men when they follow, too, instead driving them down to their huts at the bottom of the hill.

The Sahib embodies an archetype of British colonial cruelty: he laughs at a small child's pain because his desire to profit off the coolies' labor has made him heartless. The Indian maistri in turn represents the numerous Indians who collaborated with the colonial regime and turned against their countrymen for the sake of personal gain. Together, the maistri and sahib govern through terror, treating coolies who voluntarily chose to come to the Estate (albeit under misleading pretenses) as slaves. There is no concept of the coolies' right to fair treatment, but only of the Sahib's absolute right to treat them however he wishes because he has financial power over them.

The coolies spend the night repairing their huts and begin cleaning their environs in the morning, but the maistri runs down and shouts at them to work. One coolie named Papamma begins to read from the *Ramayana* but hears a "crunch of feet;" the coolies return to work and another coolie yells that there is a snake, and the rest rush to look. Pariah Siddayya says not to worry about cobras, who are harmless unless attacked, and sits to tell the story of a snake he calls the Maharaja, which hid in the Sahib's drawer and slithered away when the Sahib fetched his pistol.

The coolies, like the Kanthapura villagers, congregate around traditional stories. Siddayya's deep knowledge of the estate's ways and snakes recalls Achakka's deep knowledge of Kanthapura; both characters are elders where they live and sustain the history of their places through memory.

Water snakes are harmless, Pariah Siddayya explains, but green snakes often blend in with bamboo leaves. A coolie named Sankamma once reached out and grabbed one while collecting cow-dung, but luckily it slithered away and "left a palm's-width of poison on the ground." The flying snakes are "another monster," although they prefer cardamom to coffee and have killed many a "cardamom-garden coolie." Just the other day, coolie Ramayya was delivering the maistri's bicycle via a mountain road and ran over a cobra by mistake—he fled, and so did the cobra. "Never," Siddayya assures the coolies, "has a cobra bitten an innocent man."

The snakes who only attack evildoers represent a certain kind of poetic justice enforced by the land and its animals. The fact that Ramayya is forced to walk rather than ride the maistri's bicycle demonstrates how access to transportation across the land mirrors different characters' social status in this book.

"Chennayya's Dasappa" is the only one who has died by cobra bite—six months after he overconfidently "poked and poked" his stick into a cobra's hole, one slithered into his hut and bit him, but spared his family. Siddayya continues telling stories and watching out for the maistri as the coolies chew tobacco and betel leaves. Suddenly, without a sound, "the maistri's cane has touched" three of them. Everyone goes back to work until nightfall, and then again in the morning.

Siddayya suggests that Dasappa deserved to be bitten after disturbing the cobra's home; disrupting the natural order of things invites vengeance from the natural world. The maistri disrupts Siddayya's speech to the others, which is dangerous to the estate's owners not only because the coolies are not working but also because they are assembling to hear ideas that are different from their masters'.

The coolies perspire endlessly in the heavy afternoon sun, and suddenly "a gurgle and grunt" emanates from the trees, growing to "swallow up the whole sky" and startle animals throughout the valley. "The earth itself seems to heave up and cheep in the monsoon rains," soaking the coolies and surprising those who are new to the mountains.

The monsoon rains offer a break in both the narrative's structure and the coolies' endless, backbreaking labor. They also demonstrate that natural forces can still overwhelm human ones.

"Three nights and four days" later, when the rain stops, everyone returns to work beside three children and two women who get a high fever that goes down the next morning, but they still feel dizzy and nauseated. Siddayya remarks that this fever is common, and people can even work with it—but they could not, and the Sahib gives them pills that Siddayya says not to take, for they work in the Sahib's country "but he does not know our country, does he?"

The Sahib's pills are intended to help the coolies recover, but only for the sake of getting them to return to work. The pills represent the intervention of colonial technology in India, and the coolies' are accordingly reluctant to use them; "[their] country" is governed by nature and gods rather than rulers and technology.

One of the ill asks who the local goddess is and then makes a small charm to Kenchamma; she wakes up without fever, but one of the children gets worse and worse despite the offering. Madanna, the child's father, worries that if he uses the pills then "Kenchamma would not forgive him." The child becomes delirious, the coolies call the Sahib, and the child dies in the Sahib's arms. The Sahib whips Madanna and makes everyone take six pills a day. Some agree, but others throw them away. The southwest rain goes and the northeast wind comes, "whilst the fevers still came and went" and many more coolies, including Madanna's second child, pass away.

Kenchamma clearly protects all the land around Kanthapura, and not just the villagers whose families have lived there for generations. When the coolies are forced to choose between colonial technology and local traditions, they side with the people they trust: other Indians, rather than their employer. The pills then become a means of punishment, coming to symbolize the colonial coercion that the coolies initially feared they constituted.

Pariah Rangayya wants them to make off with their money and start their own farms down the valley, but Siddayya laughs him off, for "he knew that when one came to the Blue Mountain one never left it." In part, this is because they drink much of their money away with the "white frothy toddy" and spend the rest on "marriages and deaths and festivals and caste-dinners" and finer food and fuel and livestock.

Siddayya reveals the Estate's most sinister secret: everything is designed to keep the coolies indentured there for as long as possible. By making sure that the coolies only ever incur further debt, the Sahib effectively transforms them into slaves.

In ten years nobody has gone back; the old Sahib died and was been replaced by his nephew, the new Sahib, who has brought more coolies but treats them kindly—except that the women "know they have to go away" to spend their nights with him, and know that their husbands and fathers will lose their salaries if they refuse to send their female family members. As a brahmin, Seetharam refuses to send his daughter, and the new Sahib shoots him in the stomach. The court orders the Sahib to pay Seetharam's family, which he never does, and then "the Red-Man's Court forgave him." But the coolies now know that "he'll never touch a brahmin girl" and he barely uses violence to coerce any of them anymore.

Although Achakka suggests that the new Sahib is better to the coolies, he simply replaces physical violence against the men with sexual violence against the women. The fact that the colonial government never enforces its case against the new Sahib demonstrates that the legal system is deeply biased toward British elites and reluctant to take any action that interferes with the growing plantation system—it exists to protect the colonizers' economic interests. Finally, caste remains a powerful force within the Skeffington Estate: after Seetharam's murder, only brahmin women get protected.

When Badè Khan came to the Estate, the new Sahib figured he would be useful. In fact, the brahmin clerks Gangadhar and Vasudev ignore the policeman and the rest of the coolies follow suit—they decide to help the pariahs learn to read and write, and there is nothing Badè Khan can do about it, for "what is a policeman before a Gandhi's man?"

The new Sahib sees Badè Khan as an enforcer to help him prevent the coolies from rebelling, but the Kanthapura villagers see the coolies as a great asset in the fight against colonialism. Achakka's final line suggests that the ideology of nonviolence is likely to beat out physical strength in the fight for independence.

SECTION 6

"Moorthy is coming up tonight," and the coolies put out their lights and gather around the courtyard, excitedly awaiting his arrival and watching a lantern in the distance. The coolie Rachanna thinks he hears Moorthy in Vasudev's shed, but the noise is actually Badè Khan and Achakka warns that "Moorthy will not come tonight." Rachanna and Madanna head down to Vasudev's shed, where they run into Badè Khan and Moorthy.

Just as Kanthapura often assembles for religious discourses, in this scene the Skeffington Estate's coolies assemble to hear Moorthy speak about Gandhi. His movement has begun to take on a religious character and spread beyond the bounds of his own village.

Badè Khan orders Moorthy to leave—even if he is a free man, says Khan, Moorthy is not free to speak at the Skeffington Estate. Vasudev and Gangadhar arrive and Badè Khan exchanges insults with the rest before attacking Moorthy with his lathi, but Rachanna and Madanna wrest it from Khan and hit him on the head with it. The maistri breaks them away but the coolie women attack him and begin tearing off Khan's beard, even as Moorthy shouts "no beatings, in the name of the Mahatma." Khan threatens to arrest the whole lot, and Vasudev and Moorthy head back down to Kanthapura.

Badè Khan invokes the Skeffington Estate's property rights over the land where the coolies live in order to keep Moorthy out. While Moorthy keeps in line with Gandhian principles by refusing to fight back, the coolies break the most important rule: nonviolence.

The morning after the fight, the maistri kicks Rachanna off the Estate and drives his family out by force when he asks for his 76 rupees in unpaid wages. The family before goddess Kenchamma's grove and heads to Kanthapura, where Moorthy brings them to Patel Rangè Gowda, who orders Beadle Timmayya to give them "shelter and water and fire." Rachanna and his family moved to Kanthapura for good and Moorthy "began his 'Don't-touch-the-Government campaign.'"

Rachanna has no means to win his wages back, but by getting kicked off the Skeffington Estate he ironically becomes one of the first coolies who is able to leave it and gains a new home in Kanthapura after praying to Kenchamma as a rite of passage. By firing Rachanna, the maistri actually strengthens the Gandhian movement fighting the Skeffington Estate's owners.

SECTION 7

Moorthy tells Rangamma that he blames himself for the evening's violence and plans to fast for three days in Kanthapura's temple. He heads directly there over Rangamma's protests and begins to meditate. Later, Rangamma and Seenu bring bananas but Moorthy rejects them, saying that he will only drink "three cups of salted water" per day. Rangamma begins to cry and Seenu tells Moorthy that "this is all very well for the Mahatma, but not for us poor creatures," but Moorthy still wants to try. Ramakrishnayya comes and brings Rangamma back home.

As the movement's leader, Moorthy takes full responsibility for attacks by coolie women who had not even heard him speak about Gandhi yet. His decision to fast mirrors Gandhi's own tactics and his sole choice of sustenance, salt water, foreshadows the salt march that Gandhi leads in 1930. Ramakrishnayya is one of the only powerful brahmin leaders who supports Moorthy's efforts, which is unsurprising since he is known as the village's wisest elder.

Moorthy says the gayathri mantra "thrice a thousand and eight times" before drifting slowly into a deep sleep. He meditates through the next day as people come and go in the temple, until Waterfall Venkamma rouses him by laughing and accusing him of polluting the village. "I shall love even my enemies," Moorthy tells himself before returning to meditation. He "sends out rays of love" and sings a poem by the 15th century poet Kabir until he begins to weep and sees "a great blue radiance" filling the earth. He "falls prostrate before the god" and chants, "Sivoham, Sivoham. I am Siva. I am Siva. Siva am I."

In coping with his followers' violence, Moorthy finds himself embodying the Gandhian ideal of responding to violence with love. The "great blue radiance" he sees refers to Siva's traditional depiction in blue. Siva is the transformer of the world; meanwhile, Gandhi and Moorthy seek to transform the world, as well.

Moorthy returns to meditate by the temple's central pillar and wonders why he can "meditate so deeply," release his thoughts so easily. He feels a "vital softness" he has not felt since childhood, praying as he sat in the **Himavathy river** while his mother washed clothes, trying to see Hari everywhere. At that time he felt himself sink into the earth "and then there was a dark burning light in the heart of the sanctum," and he went in the temple "like a sparrow," flooded by light and fear of "the Holy." He opened his eyes and saw "nothing but light and that cool, blue-spreading light had entered his limbs." His last such experience was his vision of the Mahatma.

Moorthy feels something very similar to the energy he felt emanate from Gandhi in his earlier vision, extending the parallel between himself and the Mahatma. The river Moorthy recalls is the same one where his mother died after he was excommunicated. While it signified caste purity for his mother, it signifies the unity of all preached by Gandhi for Moorthy.

This morning, Moorthy feels like he could fly and fall back to earth, catching "a little of that primordial radiance" and feeling love "pour out of him" with every breath. Ratna visits him and he feels differently toward her, no longer seeming "so feminine and soft and distant" like a sister. She prays with him—although she seems too young to truly understand Moorthy's idea "that the sins of others may be purified with our prayers"—and returns home.

Moorthy sees his meditation as a common good—something that he can share with the other villagers and a means to right wrongs that are not his own. Just as his own family ties dissolved when his mother died and he moved into Rangamma's house, Moorthy's previously familial relationship with Ratna transforms into a Gandhian camaraderie.

Rangamma brings salt for Moorthy's water. He drinks and shivers at "the coolness in his empty stomach" but then feels a surge of strength, even though he is still too weak to speak back to Rangamma and rejects her offer of food.

Moorthy's physical weakness belies his mental strength, which parallels his belief that Gandhi's movement will win through its resilience and commitment to values rather than through physical strength.

A large crowd assembles around Moorthy—Dorè laughs at him, and he is visibly losing strength. By nightfall, only Rangamma is left, and Moorthy explains that he believes "fearless, calm affection towards our fellow men" can convert enemies. He hopes to win over Badè Khan in particular. Achakka admits that "Rangamma did not understand this, neither, to tell you the truth, did any of us."

Moorthy overcomes the other brahmins' ridicule through the Gandhian ideal of absolute love and sees the chance to convert Badè Khan, Gandhi's ultimate enemy in Kanthapura, as a test of his power. In staying the latest with Moorthy, Rangamma reveals that she has become his greatest ally.

The second day, Bhatta visits a weaker-still Moorthy, who simply smiles back, "for love was growing in him." On the third day Moorthy feels "such exaltation" that "he could touch the stones and they would hang to his hands, he felt he could touch a snake and it would spread its sheltering hood above him." Standing, he finds himself too dizzy to walk. He lies down and falls unconscious.

In these lines, it is unclear whether Moorthy is growing stronger or weaker, gaining insight or losing his mind, discovering or hallucinating divine powers in himself. His unwavering faith in Gandhi and grueling meditation regimen begin to seem extreme and uncritical.

When Moorthy awakens, Rangamma, Seenu, and Ratna are watching him and Pariah Rachanna and Lingayya stand nearby. Moorthy feels that "something was the matter," looks around Kanthapura, and suddenly breaks into tears, "for somewhere behind the dizzy blare [of the sunshine in the valley] was a shadow that seemed to wail like an ominous crow." Rangamma offers him an orange, but he says that he cannot eat it and asks for salted water. He drinks and returns to sleep.

Achakka shows which major characters have joined Moorthy's movement by this stage in the book. His followers worry about his health, but he refuses to subjugate mind to matter and continues his fast.

Rangamma asks Ratna to watch when Moorthy wakes, and she prays to God for him. When he awakes, Moorthy feels stronger and leads a bhajan attended by people from throughout Kanthapura, including even Badè Khan—but very few of the brahmins. Moorthy vows yet again to "send out love where there was hatred and compassion where there was misery." He is overcome with a vital peace, and the next morning, he breaks his fast and begins preaching his "Don't-touch-the-Government campaign."

Ratna prays to a unitary God, as opposed to the village's local goddess, which suggests that the Gandhian god of all has begun to supplant Kenchamma as the villagers' focus in worship (but also recalls colonial Christianity). Badè Khan's attendance at the bhajan could signal either that Moorthy successfully convinced him to consider Gandhism or that he is simply continuing to keep tabs on the Gandhians.

SECTION 8

Moorthy approaches Rangè Gowda first, for "nothing can be done without Rangè Gowda." Rangè Gowda tells Moorthy "if there's anything this fool can do, do but open your mouth and it shall be done." Moorthy explains his program. Fewer brahmins are coming to the bhajans, and some—like Waterfall Venkamma, Temple Rangappa, Patwari Nanjundia, Schoolmaster Devarayya, and especially Bhatta—are staunchly opposed to Moorthy's ideas. Rangè Gowda admits that Bhatta had come to visit him, asking him to become "his dog's tail," but Rangè Gowda admits he is on the Mahatma's side and they argue about pollution.

Rangè Gowda has significant power in Kanthapura, especially among the lower castes: beyond his significant landholdings, he is responsible as Patel for collecting taxes from the other villagers. He both represents the government in this capacity and becomes a crucial figure in resisting it. The village brahmins, whose power depends on their caste supremacy over other groups, continue to favor the traditional caste system.

Moorthy tells Rangè Gowda that he wants to create a Congress in Kanthapura that can join the Congress of All India. This would require them to pay a small sum and length of yarn yearly, plus "vow to speak Truth, and wear no cloth but the khadi cloth." Moorthy admits that this might bring trouble with the government in the future, especially with Badè Khan around.

Moorthy recognizes that resisting the colonial government requires participating in a parallel, national Gandhian government. Much like the existing government, the Gandhian Congress would take significant control over their lives, forcing them to pay taxes and perform labor by making cloth.

When Rangè Gowda mentions his fury at Badè Khan, Moorthy explains that "the Mahatma says you must love even your enemies" but Rangè Gowda insists that this love is "not for us poor folk!" Moorthy suggests that hate just spreads more hate, whereas love creates compromise. Rangè Gowda argues that he cannot convince farmers to till their lands through love and respect, but Moorthy argues that, as a village Elder, Rangè Gowda must model the Congress's values—in fact, to even join the Congress in the first place he must practice ahimsa (nonviolence), speak Truth and spin yarn. Rangè Gowda concludes that he shall do whatever Moorthy wishes, for the Mahatma's word is the word of God and he will suffer anything to fulfill it. Before heading away, Moorthy reminds Rangè Gowda that the Congress's word is also the Mahatma's and therefore God's.

While Rangè Gowda is justifiably angry at the policeman who has come to silence the villagers' demands for freedom, Moorthy insists that every Gandhian mirror Gandhi's personal character and love their enemies. Whereas Moorthy seems to see a world of equals capable of compromise through love, Rangè Gowda seems unable to shake a fundamental belief in hierarchy. Indeed, he worries about how he can persuade farmers to work and only follows the Mahatma because he sees Gandhi as relaying a divine command.


Moorthy visits Ramayya, the Weavers' Elder, and then Siddayya, the Potters' Elder, and both agree to join the Panchayat (village council or Congress). He goes to visit the pariah Rachanna, but he is out and his wife, Rachi, invites Moorthy inside. For the first time, Moorthy enters a pariah's house—previously, he always met them outside—and panics, smelling "the stench of hide and the stench of pickled pigs" and hearing "all the gods and all the manes of heaven" crying his sinfulness. Rachi offers Moorthy milk, but he is afraid to take it and claims he just had coffee. She asks him to simply touch it, and "with many a trembling prayer," he slowly takes a sip.

Despite his Gandhism, Moorthy still cannot shake his residual fear of caste pollution: the stench he believes he smells references the prohibition against touching dead people or animals for everyone but pariahs (even though he has become a pariah and was excommunicated precisely for carrying a dead body). This illustrates both the caste system's incredible power in the minds of Kanthapura's people and the partial nature of Moorthy's belief in equality across castes.

Rachanna's grandchildren enter, and then Madanna's and his wife, and then "all the children of the pariah quarter" come and stare at Moorthy "as though the sacred eagle had suddenly appeared in the heavens." Moorthy tells the group that "there is a huge Panchayat of all India called the Congress" that belongs to the Mahatma. He explains that they need to spin yarn, and the women laugh in agreement, joking that they want to meet the Mahatma and show him their cloth. Frustrated, Moorthy asks if they can truly spin a hundred yards of yarn per day, and he asks them to take an oath before the goddess Kenchamma—but they refuse, saying they cannot handle her anger.

Moorthy assembles the pariahs, the villagers most oppressed by caste divisions and those who stand to gain the most from Gandhism's anti-caste position. But the women's laughter indicates that they understand that they will never meet or answer directly to the Mahatma, while they do still believe in Kenchamma's direct providence over them. In other words, even the pariahs initially choose their traditional religion over the Gandhian movement, whose promise of freedom seems far-fetched.



In desperation, Moorthy asks Rachi if she will spin, and she says she will if her husband orders her to. He says he will return that evening and heads to the temple, where he performs blessings before heading home to chat with Rangamma.

Rachi refuses to decide for herself whether she will spin, which again shows the pariahs' deep entrenchment in tradition (here, gender roles).

On his way to Rangamma's house, Moorthy remembers the milk at Rachanna's house and asks if he is permitted to enter. Rangamma asks him to enter through the rear and bathe first. He does, but he cannot change his holy thread every day if he is planning to keep visiting the pariahs. He takes a spoonful of Ganges water instead. He meditates by the river after dinner and then heads to the Pariah Night School in the Panchayat Hall and informs Seenu about the Congress Committee, to his delight.

Like Moorthy, Rangamma continues to fear caste pollution despite her overt opposition to the caste system. Holy water, this time from the Ganges, again figures as a purifying force in contrast to the pollution of caste-mixing.

Moorthy heads back to see Rachanna, who sits with Siddanna, Madanna, and Lingayya on the veranda. He tells them about the Congress Committee; they agree to join and bring their women. He returns to the potters and weavers, who affirm their commitment (for their Elder, Patel Rangè Gowda, and the Panchayat all said yes), and tells Rangè Gowda about everyone's agreement in the morning.

Although Moorthy successfully wins much of the village to the Gandhian cause, they do not believe the Mahatma's teachings in the same fundamental way as Moorthy—rather, they follow Rangè Gowda out of conformity and fear, which are the same forces that keep them economically subjugated to the British.

That evening, Moorthy convenes a procession and gives a bhajan. Rangè Gowda begins to explain the Congress but everyone stands when Moorthy enters, which he finds presumptuous—Rangè Gowda calls him "our Gandhi" and the crowd roars in agreement as Moorthy cries a tear in "quiet exaltation." He speaks to the crowd and then asks their loyalty to the Congress and, although some worry they may not be able to produce the requisite yarn, Rangè Gowda shouts that they must keep their promise and they agree out of fear. The pariahs ask to take their vows in the courtyard, and a confused Moorthy agrees as Rangè Gowda encourages them to go ahead.

Rangè Gowda intimidates skeptical villagers into swearing loyalty to the Mahatma, again using methods contrary to Gandhi's movement in order to win adherents to it. Similarly, the pariahs remain in the courtyard rather than entering the temple due to their caste at the precise moment when the villagers commit themselves to an ideology whose core is the rejection of caste. There is a consistent gulf between Moorthy's values and everyone's practices, and Rao seems to be questioning whether actual Gandhian congresses used (or even could have used) true Gandhian methods to win support.

Rangè Gowda declares Moorthy "our president" and Seenu jokingly declares Rangè Gowda "our Super-President and Protector" before asking Rangamma to be "the third member," but she declines. Moorthy says they need a woman and Rangamma reluctantly agrees. Moorthy calls for a pariah to join the committee, "and then there is such a silence that a moving ant could be heard." He appoints Rachanna as the fourth member and Seenu the fifth.

The villagers pick five members to form a council analogous to a traditional panchayat (which roughly translates to "five-person assembly"). Moorthy is careful to have the village's most oppressed groups—women and pariahs—represented on the council, and Achakka's personal stake in the narrative increases as her son Seenu is chosen to be the panchayat's fifth member.

Two days later, Moorthy's final list of members counts 23, and they apply to the Provincial Congress Committee. Rangamma receives a blue paper with Moorthy's picture and "everybody" wants to see it. They declare Moorthy "a great man" and accelerate production, spinning "bundles and bundles of yarn" for Moorthy, who says that "the Mahatma was very pleased." Achakka declares that "maybe he would remember us!"

The blue paper is alluring to the villagers because it shows Moorthy's importance in the places beyond Kanthapura where it was published.

SECTION 9

Bhatta hears about the Congress Committee, which he considers "bad business," and plots on his veranda as the carts' noise dies down in the evening. "There must be an end to this chatter," he thinks, for "if not, the very walls of Kanthapura will crackle and fall before the year is out." Even after his excommunication, Moorthy was succeeding in persuading the other villagers. Bhatta decides to charge every Gandhian extra interest and stop offering them credit. But he recalls that a few of the brahmins—Temple Rangappa, Patwari Nanjundia, Schoolmaster Devarayya, Rama and Subba Chetty, and Venkamma—are still on his side, and that Venkamma "will set fire where we want" if he can find her daughter a husband.

True to his reputation as a profiteer, Bhatta's main complaint with the Congress Committee is that it might affect his business. After he sees that the other villagers are more willing to reject the caste system than Moorthy, he decides to try making his own "bad business" for the Gandhians because he wrongly thinks that they, like the colonial government, want primarily to protect their economic interests. While he wants to take advantage of Venkamma's sardonic and belligerent character, it is possible that the other Gandhians—like Moorthy during his fast in the temple—will brush off rather than escalate the conflict.

Bhatta decides that Advocate Seenappa is the best candidate to marry Venkamma's daughter, even though it would be his second marriage, and he is so thrilled that he wakes his wife up and "she said he had never loved her as on that night." He meets Venkamma in the morning and says that he has found a horoscope compatible with her daughter Ranga's. She is so delighted that she weeps and thanks Kenchamma. Word spreads around the village; the other brahmins congratulate Venkamma and Ranga on their luck.

When Bhatta finally does marry off a daughter, as he hoped to do in the book's fourth section, it is not even his own. Indeed, the marriage is his calculated attempt to preserve the brahmins' wealth in Kanthapura.

On the wedding day, it turns out that Seenappa is middle-aged and missing teeth, while Venkamma had promised her daughter he was 25. He is, however, wealthy, and the marriage party is extravagant, "and every pariah and cur in Kanthapura was satisfied." The villagers praise Bhatta and Venkamma, finding them "not so wicked after all." Moorthy, however, did not attend, and begins to wonder "how, how is one an outcaste?"

Bhatta briefly wins back a limited favor among the villagers with the large wedding party, which illustrates how easily the villagers' public opinion is swayed and continues to suggest that most of the Kanthapura Village Congress members chose Gandhism on a whim rather than by reflecting on their options and vision of the Indian future.

SECTION 10

During the holy month Kartik, lights of all colors illuminate every corner of Kanthapura, and the village's residents see gods pass by in the flickering lights. At night, children keep the lamps alight and, one morning, there is a commotion in the courtyard outside Suryanarayana's house.

The festival's lights help manifest the gods' presence in the physical world, offering the villagers proof that their prayers are answered and Kanthapura is under watchful eyes.

The villagers debate who has died, and Waterfall Venkamma notices a policeman at the home's front steps. Seenu goes to investigate, but the policeman tells him that nobody can enter. The rest of the villagers follow to the front steps, they hear Rangamma's mother yell from inside, and then Rangamma and Ramakrishnayya come outside.

The people of Kanthapura assume that such a commotion on a holy day must indicate a death in the village, but once Venkamma sees a policeman it is clear that the commotion relates to the Gandhian movement.

They go to the villager Sami's house for a better vantage point and see Moorthy talking with the Police Inspector while policemen rummage through his boxes of books and cloth. They cannot hear anything yet but see that Moorthy "nods and nods and seems to smile at nothing."

Although the police are clearly after Moorthy, he treats them with an attitude of either Gandhian love toward his enemies or utter naivety, smiling as the police threaten his role in the village's Congress.

Suddenly, the Police Inspector shouts to Badè Khan: "bind this man!" Rangè Gowda stands at Rangamma's door with "Pariah Rachanna and Madanna and Lingayya and Lingayya's woman" and shouts at the policemen, "what are you doing with our master?" A policeman tells them to shut up, but they insist that they will not stay silent and Rachanna even dares the policemen to "beat me if you have the courage." Rangamma tells him to stop, but he insists.

The villagers view Moorthy as "our master," validating the police's understanding that he is responsible for the village's turn to Gandhism and extending the parallel between Moorthy and Gandhi. Although Rachanna does not attack the police, he seems to want to prove his loyalty to Moorthy and Gandhi by provoking a confrontation.

When she sees Moorthy, Rachanna shouts "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!*" More and more policemen rush in and beat the group with lathis, and even local animals start crying out at the scene's chaos. Rachanna continues to shout "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!*" and the Police Inspector orders his underlings to arrest Moorthy and "give [the rest] a good licking." They attack the crowd, including women and children.

Rachanna's chant introduces one of the book's most important nationalist slogans, which translates to "victory for Mahatma Gandhi." The police clearly have no moral qualms about beating nonviolent protestors (and even children), which confirms that the colonial regime considers Indians to be of little value.

With the Police Inspector's permission, Moorthy stands on the veranda and demands that "in the name of the Mahatma, let there be peace and love and order." The spirit of Satyagrahi, he argues, requires letting themselves be arrested, just as the Mahatma has done. But, when he mentions the Mahatma, the Inspector drags him back toward the doorway and then slaps him in the face.

By mentioning the Mahatma and turning his injunction to the villagers into part of the Gandhian movement, Moorthy subverts the Police Inspector's intentions and manages to continue leading the Gandhians even while under arrest.

Rachanna again shouts "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!*" and "in sinister omen" the Kartik lights suddenly go out. The officers arrest him and the two people standing behind him, spitting on them and tying them with rope, then kicking their heads and stomachs. Rangè Gowda rushes across over and knocks out a policeman with "one bang on the head." The Inspector demands that the policemen "disperse the crowd," which they instead simply continue to beat down.

The lights that illuminate the gods' presence in the world suddenly extinguish at the precise moment when the police begin indiscriminately beating the Gandhians. The scene suddenly shifts from holy to vulgar, and the violence of the colonial state obscures the gods who are powerless to save the villagers in this instance. Rangè Gowda demonstrates that he follows Gandhi only in name when he attacks a policeman, violating his oath of nonviolence.

Shouts of "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!*" come from the brahmin quarter, and the policemen go there to beat them, too. Ramanna and Dorè proclaim their loyalty to Gandhi and "the policemen beat them till they were flat on the floor, mud in their mouths and mist in their eyes." All in all, they arrest 17 villagers, lock them up in the police station and beat them further, and then release them one by one—except Moorthy.

Surprisingly, the village brahmins (including the charlatan Dorè) have also come around to support the Gandhian movement. The police's excessive use of force and decision to release the protestors one by one suggests that their tactics are designed primarily to inspire fear amongst the protestors, who are not breaking the law.

The village prays and fasts, hoping that the gods will bring Moorthy home, and "the gods indeed did hear our feeble voices"—since a flood of lawyers starts stopping by and offering to defend Moorthy. He rejects the help, saying repeatedly that Truth will vindicate him, but Ranganna reminds him that the government is designed to protect the British and their police, not Indians and their Truth. Moorthy does not budge, and the frustrated Ranganna slams Moorthy's cell door.

The villagers still turn to the gods for help, seeing the Gandhian lawyers who try to defend Moorthy as evidence of divine providence. Moorthy's insistence on Truth proves to be empty talk, as he neither explains what constitutes this Truth nor recognizes that the colonial legal system pays no mind to it.

Sadhu Narayan, who was living a life of meditation on the riverbank, comes to tell Moorthy that his imprisonment is unjust and he has to speak out—otherwise, all his religious practice is for naught. But Moorthy rejects him, too, saying that he wants "no soul to come between me and Truth."

Even a wise Hindu sage who spends his time contemplating Truth and the divine cannot convince Moorthy to speak out against injustice, for Moorthy irrationally believes that justice will naturally come about if he waits long enough.

Finally, Sankar, the Secretary of the Congress Committee in the nearby city of Karwar, comes to visit Moorthy and explains that he supports his decision because "a Satyagrahi needs no advocates," even though he himself is an advocate (or lawyer). Moorthy falls at Sankar's feet, asking for his blessings as "my elder and a householder," and he agrees to let Sankar hold meetings for his cause.

Sankar is the only person capable of convincing Moorthy to fight back against his imprisonment because he works for the city Congress and occupies a higher position in the national Gandhian movement's power structure than Moorthy, not because he has any personal credibility or wisdom. This demonstrates that, despite his belief in equality and love, Moorthy still reveres hierarchy within the Gandhian movement.

Sankar enlists Advocate Ranganna, Khadi-shop Dasappa, and a number of other volunteers to bring in a crowd for the meeting about Moorthy. At this meeting, Sankar, Ranganna, and Dasappa give speeches praising Moorthy and lampooning the government, reminding the crowd of Gandhi's principles and affirming the Mahatma's support for Untouchables. A man from the crowd announces that "our religion is going to be desecrated by you youngsters," and Sankar offers him the stage.

The city Gandhians immediately mobilize their resources to help Moorthy, and again public meetings offer Gandhians a natural forum for consolidating their support base. They idolize Moorthy because he has sacrificed his physical security for his principles and hold him as a role model for the Gandhian movement.

The man comes to speak, describing himself as a "toothless old man" who has "seen many a change pass before me." If the colonial government left tomorrow, he argues, the "disorder, corruption, and egoism" that governed India before the British would simply come back. He sees the British as India's protectors, come (like Krishna) to defend its dharma. He praises "the great Queen Victoria," India's "Beloved Sovereign" whom Hindus honored upon her death, and says that she defended the Hindu faith "better than any Mohomedan prince." He says he fears "the corruption of castes and of the great traditions our ancestors have bequeathed us."

The old man exemplifies the contradictions of native Indian loyalism to the British, at once claiming to speak for timeless Indian traditions and considering that traditional way of life full of "disorder, corruption, and egotism." The mythology of colonialism that he offers inverts the one Jayaramachar presented in the book's first section, portraying the British as protectors sent by the gods (rather than invaders betraying the gods).

As the man steps down, someone asks if he follows the Swami—which he affirms he does—and then announces that the Government has just given the Swami 1200 acres of land. "The Swami is a Government man?" asks the young heckler, and the old man claims that the Swami simply defends "all who respect the ancient ways of our race."

The government's alliance with the region's brahmins is undeniable once it is revealed that the Swami has also been paid off. The entire caste system is emptied of its original religious basis, and instead Hinduism becomes a scheme for profit.

After the old man steps down, "youngster after youngster" comes to defend Moorthy against the Swami, who excommunicated him. Ranganna stands and declares that he, too, has been excommunicated. He receives a "violent ovation" and recounts his recent meeting with the Swami, who proclaimed his desire to fight "pollution" by stopping "this pariah business." The Swami said that Gandhi met with him and suggested that he misinterpreted the dharma sastras, but he insisted that he obviously knows better. Ranganna asked how the Swami could accept foreign rule, since foreigners are Untouchables according to the dharma sastras, but the Swami argued that "governments are sent by the Divine Will and we may not question it." Ranganna walked out and "took the vow to open our temple to the pariahs," which he did shortly thereafter.

The Gandhians are proud to have been excommunicated because it demonstrates that the brahmin-government alliance views them as a legitimate threat. Within their parallel anti-caste form of Hinduism, which follows Gandhi's egalitarian interpretation of the dharma sastras, the Swami never had any legitimacy to begin with. The debate over interpreting the ancient dharma sastras illustrates how texts, far removed from their original contexts, nevertheless determine the structure of society and government in Hindu and colonial contexts alike.

The Police Inspector arrives and arrests Advocate Ranganna, showing him an order from a magistrate, and the crowd immediately begins marching before the police break it up with violence. Rangamma's paper brings news of these events to Kanthapura the following morning, and the villagers realize that Bhatta, too, is being paid off by the government. Looking up at the stars, Ramakrishnayya assures the rest that there are still good people in the world, and the villagers chant "the Holy Name" until they leave "with the light in our souls." "Somewhere beyond the Bebbur Mound and the **Kenchamma Hill**," Achakka assures the reader, Moorthy "had grown even more sorrowful and calm."

As with the previous protest in Kanthapura, the police's violent response to the assembly for Moorthy is initially effective, but only strengthens the Gandhians' cause in the long run. When they find out that Bhatta has been paid off by the Swami, who has in turn been paid off by the government, the villagers realize that all their worries about purity and pollution were essentially an ideology imposed on them to preserve the colonial system and its control over India's wealth.

More and more of the villagers begin ordering Rangamma's Blue paper, including illiterates like Rangè Gowda (who has his son read it aloud), and they discuss it every night after Ramakrishnayya's discourses on Rangamma's veranda. Seenu and Vasudev bring news from their trips to Karwar and the Skeffington Estate, respectively, and the Gandhian villagers agree that the goddess Kenchamma will free Moorthy—except Vasudev, who thinks the government will hold him for "a good six months." Rangamma and Nanjamma decide to go visit Moorthy in Karwar to visit Seetharamu, who is also an advocate.

Rangamma's newspaper becomes a crucial means of translating faraway events into local action, since it brings information about the Gandhian movement to Kanthapura even though many of the villagers are illiterate. By creating a network of information, it helps the villagers organize protests and recruit others to their cause. Suddenly, Moorthy's arrest in Karwar has turned Kanthapura's village-level struggle into a regional one.

Seetharamu brings Rangamma and Nanjamma to Sankar, and they agree that Moorthy is saintly and capable of "holy deeds." Sankar explains that the police blamed Moorthy for "the assault of the pariahs on the Police," and that there is nothing they can do to get him out.

Although the Gandhians are well-organized, they ultimately cannot find remedy with the colonial legal system that views them as enemies and exists primarily to preserve British colonists' property rights.

Just after the harvest, various people from Kanthapura ask Rangamma about Moorthy and continue to talk against the government. Rangè Gowda loses his "Patel-ship," which means the government has broken "the ancient laws," and the villagers pray that Kenchamma will destroy the government.

Rangè Gowda is fired from his position as Kanthapura's revenue collector, which incenses the villagers because it means that the government no longer respects their choice of village headman. His dismissal shows the villagers that they have been formally disenfranchised. Although Kenchamma is a local goddess, the villagers still believe she has the power to destroy the national government.

Rangamma returns to Karwar, where she stays with Sankar to help manage his Congress papers. Waterfall Venkamma claimed that Rangamma was breaking her religious obligations as a widow by moving in with another man, but actually Sankar refused to remarry after losing his own wife, a "god-like woman" named Usha, at age 26. His family pushed him to remarry but soon realized that Usha was irreplaceable and gave up.

The strategies Rangamma learns from Sankar in the city ultimately help her better organize Kanthapura's Gandhians on a larger scale, and although Sankar is a lawyer trained in the colonial education system, he also embodies the ideal of the noble Gandhian ascetic.

Sankar's father helped Dasappa run the khadi shop, where he sold cloth from around India and distributed political leaflets to aspiring Gandhians. His mother hoped he would make more money, to his chagrin, but Satamma cited Sankar's reputation as the "Ascetic Advocate" who refused to take a false case. He threatens to withdraw from any case in which he finds out his client is lying, and he has done this a number of times before.

Dasappa's business shows how Indians can operate a fair economy parallel to and independent from the British colonial one. Sankar insists on using Truth for justice, which contrasts with Moorthy's insistence that Truth will liberate him by itself, without anyone's interference or support.

Sankar once withdrew from a case against a Rahman Khan, who supposedly tried to murder Sankar's longtime client shopkeeper Subba Chetty. Khan had gone off with Subba's mistress Dasi—Subba Chetty insisted that he did not want Dasi, who was "very ill," to appear before the court, but Sankar put her on the bench nonetheless, and Subba Chetty became furious as Desi cried on the witness stand and claimed to know nothing. Sankar asked the magistrate to adjourn the court and Subba Chetty finally told him the truth: hoping to win Khan's coconut-garden, Subba had paid Dasi to seduce Rahman Khan and anger him into making a threat. Sankar made Subba Chetty confess to the magistrate, and he went to jail alongside Dasi and Rahman Khan.

Beyond confirming Sankar's honesty, the case against Subba Chetty shows how greed (and especially the desire to own land) leads villagers to lie and deceive one another. Dasi is victimized by every side in this case as Subba Chetty manipulates her and the government imprisons her, showing that women often become the worst and most powerless victims of the colonial economic system that agrees with the caste system in treating them as property.

Since the Subba Chetty case, Sankar has become the most popular lawyer in Karwar—people know he never takes a false case, he only takes minimal fees, and, unlike other lawyers, he neither dresses extravagantly nor spends his after-work hours drinking at the Bar Club.

Sankar's moral purity pays off, leading him to social prominence and stable work. Even so, he sees his purity itself as valuable, rather than merely valuing the benefits it brings him.

Rather, Sankar takes Hindi classes above the khadi shop, since Hindi will be India's national language. He does not greet people in Kannada, but says "Ram-Ram" in Hindi, and even talks to his own mother in Hindi even though she "understood not a word of it." Anytime he speaks a word of English, he drops a coin in a jar that he donates to the Congress—and he makes his friends do it, too. He only wears khadi and refuses to go to any event or wedding whose attendees do otherwise; he makes his family fast on days of his choosing and spins 300 yards of yarn every morning.

Sankar's commitment to the idea of India as a nation verges on absurdity: the ostensibly common national language of Hindi, which is indigenous to the north of India, is incomprehensible to most of the people in his part of southwestern India. This anecdote helps explain Rao's decision to write this book in English, which (despite being a colonial language) is equally accessible to all Indians.

According to Rangamma, nobody was happier or healthier than Sankar, and after staying with him she felt the same. She even spoke about Moorthy at some Congress meetings, and two days after she returned to Kanthapura the villagers discovered that Moorthy had been sentenced to three months in prison. They decided to fast.

Much like Moorthy wished for himself during his fast, Sankar's love and positivity benefit those around him, helping Rangamma transform herself into a better satyagrahi and more effective public flag-bearer for the Gandhian movement.

It rained the next day, and Ramakrishnayya stumbled into a pillar and fell unconscious, never to wake up. The villagers worry how they might cremate him during the rains, but the pariahs diligently wash his corpse and set up the funeral pyre the next morning. As they light the flame, the **Himavathy river** swells up and washes away Ramakrishnayya's body. All night, it rained hard and no cow would yield milk—Achakka exclaims, "Lord, may such be the path of our outgoing soul!"

As when children fell sick with fever after rains on the Skeffington Estate, here the rains again predict injury and death. Although the villagers fail to cremate Ramakrishnayya as planned, the holy Himavathy river seems to honor him by washing away his corpse and Achakka understandably wishes that the other villagers will be similarly reintegrated into their precious natural environment.

SECTION 11

After Ramakrishnayya's passing, the villagers wonder who can explain philosophy and the Vedantic scriptures to them. Nanjamma suggests Temple Ranganna, but the rest agree that he knows little and follows Bhatta's lead. Instead, Nanjamma suggests, someone should read out the books and Rangamma lead the discussion, and she agrees. The group decides that, even though "never was a girl born in Kanthapura that had less interest in philosophy," Ratna would be the one to read.

By picking Rangamma to explicate the Vedantas instead of the highest brahmin priest, Temple Rangappa, the villagers signal their definitive shift to Gandhism and its casteless form of Hinduism. Ratna, who was doubly ostracized as a widowed woman under the traditional Hindu caste system in Kanthapura, becomes essential to the Gandhian movement. The movement's commitment to equality has concretely changed the village's social dynamics by giving Rangamma such an important role.

So each afternoon, Ratna read the texts and Rangamma interpreted them, "bring[ing] the British Government into every page and line." Achakka thinks "it must have been all due to her stay with Sankaru" and the villagers ask if Rangamma's newfound knowledge is truly from the city, but she denies it, saying she learned to practice meditation from Sadhu Narayan and teaching the others in turn.

Rangamma has learned enough about national politics and Gandhi's movement from Sankar to become the new intellectual leader of the Village Congress, but knows that she must hide the fact that her methods came from the city, which represents colonial power and modernity.

After a few days of meditation, the others feel stronger in mind and spirit, and Rangamma suggests that the other women learn to resist like the Mahatma when the time comes. "Nay, nay, we are not men," protest the other women, but Rangamma assures them that they need not be men to fight, for in the city women can be Gandhian "Volunteers," too. She tells them the story of Rani Lakshmi Bai, who led a revolt against the British during the early days of colonialism before dying in battle, "fighting for her enslaved Mother."

Rangamma insists that Gandhian equality includes equality for women, so she offers them a central role in Kanthapura's campaign. Indeed, India itself is an "enslaved Mother" and now the Gandhian movement's two leaders, Rangamma and Ratna, are both widowed women who would have been socially invisible under the caste system.

Rangamma determines that the women should form a Volunteer corps that can meet Moorthy upon his return. Everyone plans their outfits, and most want to wear expensive, foreign Darmawar saris, greeting Moorthy "like a Bridegroom's Welcome ceremony." Rangamma decides to call their group "Sevika Sangha" (which translates roughly to "women's association.")

Although the women want to honor Moorthy by wearing expensive saris, this violates the Gandhian injunction to only wear Indian khadi cloth. By equating wealth and honor, as well as envisioning Moorthy's return through the metaphor of marriage, the women show that they retain their previous focus on family and property above moral purity.

The village's men recoil at the new development, and they beat and ignore their wives because they fear that the women will stop looking after them and cooking because of Sevika Sangha. The women determine to maintain their wifely duties, as well as boycotting foreign cloth and picketing cigarette and toddy shops. They roleplay war with their children, casting them in the role of Rani Lakshmi Bai.

The men feel threatened by their wives' independence because they fear that it means they will no longer have them as reliable servants in the domestic sphere. As when the brahmins oppose Gandhism because it threatens their dominance, those in power oppose equality because they put themselves above the ideal of equality. But the women resolve to work twice as hard, maintaining their traditional roles while also protesting for the Mahatma.

Rangamma instructs the women how to resist the police without budging or using violence. Nanjamma tells them about a dream where her husband beat her, but then she looked up and it was actually Badè Khan. She worries that she cannot fight, but Rangamma insists that they all must.

Nanjamma's dream shows the parallel between patriarchal and colonial power: both operate through violence and terror that can only be overcome by a principled and resilient resistance.

Seenu and Vasudev join some of the exercises and propose that the villagers organize a corps for the pariahs. Rangamma says that boys must come, but Seenu explains that they are all too afraid of going to jail since Moorthy's arrest. The men support the Mahatma but worry that their lands will lay empty and their families become destitute. They have no choice, say the women, but the boys do not budge.

The village's original social hierarchy has been inverted: the women lead the protest movement, fighting for their principles while the men are afraid to join them.

The women approach Rangè Gowda, who promises to force the pariah boys to follow Gandhi after the harvests. He worries that Badè Khan will attack the men, and Vasudev agrees, citing his violence at the Skeffington Estate. But Badè Khan is also sick, and "his woman" gives Vasudev a signal when he is sleeping.

Although the women first tried to convert the men on principle, once this fails they make recourse to Rangè Gowda's social and coercive power. The pariah woman whom Badè Khan took to the Skeffington Estate also plays a crucial role in helping the Gandhians.


Vasudev, Rangamma and Seenu decide to restart the bhajans that Moorthy used to perform, although in prison Moorthy warned Sankar not to let them have processions or bhajans, "lest the police fall on them!" The bhajans start again that Saturday, and the villagers sing a song to Lord Siva.

Although Moorthy worried about the villagers' ability to sustain a Gandhian movement without him and felt responsible for their abuse at the hands of the police, the women successfully start holding the same meetings and performances that Moorthy used to preach the Mahatma's beliefs.


SECTION 12

The rains come, and Achakka follows them from the mountains through the valleys and into Kanthapura, where its residents thank the goddess Kenchamma. Rangè Gowda, who no longer runs Kanthapura, asks the villagers about their preparations for the auspicious *rohini* star's appearance the next day, and the pariah Timmayya grumbles as he walks out into the street, watching the wealthier villagers drive their well-adorned bulls to the temple courtyard.

Achakka again describes the landscape through a series of places, and perspectives, as a local would experience it, rather than from the bird's-eye view of colonial landowners, surveyors, or administrators who view land through the lenses of property and profit.


Priest Rangappa presides as everyone assembles with their cattle and Rangè Gowda, whom the people still recognize as their true Patel, rides his horse into town. The Goddess Kenchamma appears to the townspeople, and Rangappa splashes the bulls with holy water. Rangè Gowda identifies the youngest bulls and asks their proud owner to tie them to the yoke; they await the goddess's eagle, which promptly flies over the temple, and the bulls rush forward, ploughing the ground all the way to the village's outskirts. Rangappa throws holy water in all eight directions and declares that "now, we can till the earth."

The villagers reject the new patel, keeping Rangè Gowda as their headman and refusing to let the colonial government's decrees determine their way of life in Kanthapura. This ceremony is particularly important because it marks the beginning of the growing season and agriculture is still the villagers' primary means of self-sustenance.

It begins pouring rain again, and the villagers take refuge under the tamarind trees, yelling for the "prostitute of a wind" to die down. They ask for rain and Moorthy's return, in exchange for which they make various offerings to Kenchamma. That afternoon, Postman Subbayya runs to Rangamma's house town with the Blue paper and announces that Moorthy has been released, and the villagers sing, "the Blue-god he comes, prancing and playing" as they plan his return on Tuesday. Rangè Gowda even donates two banana trees from his garden, with which the people make an offering of leaves.

The villagers again invoke Kenchamma to intervene in natural and human affairs alike, and Moorthy's release seems to answer their prayers, proving that they retain Kenchamma's favor. They now see Moorthy, in addition to Gandhi, as a reincarnation of the "blue-god" and transformer, Siva. Rangè Gowda, whose laziness and greed Achakka frequently notes, even sacrifices some of his possessions to honor Moorthy.

Venkamma laments this celebration by the "polluted ones" and asks Rangappa to move her daughter's wedding to Tuesday, the same day as Moorthy's arrival, so that she can force the villagers to "choose between a brahmanic feast and a feast for a polluted pig." Lakshamma, Priest Rangappa's wife, brings wedding invitations to the villagers, who know they cannot refuse lest their own children's weddings be polluted. On Tuesday, the villagers prepare for both Moorthy's return and Venkamma's son-in-law's family, and Badè Khan arrives as "the cornets are already piping the Song of Welcome on Venkamma's veranda."

Again, Venkamma stirs up trouble by testing the others' loyalties to Gandhism and the caste system while striving to push them toward the latter. It is unclear whether the cornets are playing for Moorthy or the wedding.

The villagers, "even lazy Rangè Gowda," all assemble in the courtyard, debating when Moorthy will arrive. They hear "a screech and a hoot" and expect a "firm and softeyed and pilgrim-looking" Moorthy to arrive—but he does not, and they are so anxious that the bus has not arrived that Rangamma sends Pariah Lingayya and Ratna, then Chenna and Sidda, to check around town for him.

Although most of the villagers choose to go and see Moorthy rather than attending the wedding, they are sorely disappointed and worry that the government has deceived them yet again.

Seenu calls out to say that Moorthy has arrived at Rangamma's house, silently and escorted by police. The villagers shout "*Vandè Mataram!*" and "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!*," but Rangamma insists that they keep quiet and disperse "in the name of Moorthy." From afar, they watch the policemen congregated on Rangamma's veranda and depart at night. Another policeman joins Badè Khan at the Skeffington Estate, and in the morning the villagers see Moorthy by the river.

The police have intentionally prevented the villagers from greeting Moorthy in order to stop them from assembling. Rangamma sees that a protest in this moment would risk disrupting Moorthy's return and asks the Gandhians to put their long-term interests over their short-term desire to decry the police.

SECTION 13

Moorthy spurs the rest to action, likening their collective resistance to building the "thousand-pillared temple" that shall become the nation of India. He tells his followers that they will follow the news of Gandhi's final pilgrimage to manufacture salt in the ocean, and he reminds them that as Congress members they must swear to speak Truth, spin wool and "put aside the idea of the holy brahmin and the untouchable pariah."

Achakka opens this section with another discourse by Moorthy, reemphasizing the centrality of such meetings in the village's collective and political life. Moorthy reminds the villagers that their efforts are both deeply meaningful and insufficient to effect change on a national level. He orients them toward this national struggle by following the salt march.

Moorthy explains that they sit in the "temple of the One," and they are all one no matter their caste, charged to do the same work and pray for the Mahatma. They sit for a moment in silent prayer to "be united in the One," and "strength flowed from the wide heavens into the hearts of all men." The others wonder what "binds our heart" to Moorthy, whom they still see "as a child."

The metaphor of a temple again positions Gandhism as a religious imperative, drawing a distinction between caste-based Hinduism and the Hinduism of "the One" that unites all Indians. The others see that Moorthy remains naïve, like a child, and question their motives for believing him.

Moorthy gets daily information from the Congress Committee and frequent visitors from the city. Seenu rings the gong to call the Gandhians for bhajans, during which Moorthy tells them stories about activists across India, like the 170 Patels that resigned and the thousands who came to watch the Mahatma's pilgrimage. Rangamma thinks the gods will evict the British from India before Gandhi completes his march, but Dorè laughs that "this is all *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*; such things never happen in our times."

The Congress Committee sends orders in private documents for Moorthy, who reveals the national movement's mysterious commands to the rest of the village. He is powerful in large part because of this role mediating written messages, which allows him to offer the villagers a perspective on their role in the broader movement.

On a Monday evening, the Gandhians cannot sleep, for they know that the Mahatma is about to arrive at the sea, and early the next morning they go to bathe in the **Himavathy river**, believing it to be the precise minute the Mahatma reaches the sea. Temple Rangappa meets them and claims surprise at their early arrival, but the Gandhians know that Bhatta has paid him off, and "another one is lost for us!"

Although the salt march occurs halfway across India and the villagers have no personal knowledge of it, they nevertheless feel deeply connected to the Mahatma's pilgrimage and perform their own pilgrimage to the holy Himavathy in order to feel a part of the national movement.

The Gandhians wash their clothes, meditate, and feel "something new within our hearts." The next morning, they learn from the papers that "everybody" followed the Mahatma to the sea and made "cartloads" of salt, but the police began arresting them en masse, beating the nonviolent protestors and dragging them to prison day after day as they go to make salt in the ocean, and in turn emptying out villages whose people grew fond of the Mahatma.

The idea of Gandhi's pilgrimage nourishes the villagers from afar, before they even learn about the circumstances of the salt march and the police's response to it from Rangamma's paper. The mass arrests demonstrate the escalating stakes of the independence movement.

Moorthy promises that Kanthapura's people will start marching once they receive orders from the Karwar Committee, and they continue to do practice drills in Rangamma's courtyard, imagining "Badè Khans after Badè Khans" beating them and becoming "more and more familiar" with the idea. They begin to feel stronger and imagine withstanding the beatings beside the Mahatma, whom Nanjamma compares to a mountain, "high yet seeable, firm and yet blue with dusk," standing as a temple above the procession of pilgrims that marches to him. They resolve to call Gandhi "the Mountain" and Moorthy "the Small Mountain."

Although the villagers are preparing for physical violence at the hands of the police, the most important component of their preparations is mental: once they learn to remember why they will endure the police's beatings, they cease to imagine them as painful and begin to see themselves as martyrs for Gandhi's cause. The imagery of a mountain portrays the Mahatma as an unshakeable model of good character.

SECTION 14

Unfortunately, "the call of the Big Mountain never came," as the villagers learn that Gandhi has been arrested and decide to begin marching the next week. Everyone gathers around the temple, and Seenu rings the bell to announce the Mahatma's arrest. The town spends all afternoon on edge, and "bicycle after bicycle" comes delivering orders for Moorthy from the city.

Gandhi's arrest, like Moorthy's, spurs the villagers to action. Seenu announces it from the temple, the center of power in Kanthapura. Although Achakka is not privy to the orders delivered by bicycle, the sheer volume of documents and information demonstrates to her that the Congress has reached a critical moment for action.

The Village Congress assembles, feeling as though "they were of one caste, one breath." Moorthy arrives and tells them it is time to start the "Don't-touch-the-Government campaign." They will not pay taxes; they will protest toddy booths, which "are there to exploit the poor and the unhappy;" and they will "establish a parallel Government" with Rangè Gowda back in charge as Patel.

Moorthy's campaign aims to grind the colonial government to a halt by simply refusing to recognize its legitimacy and starting an Indian government to which the people actually consent. Yet this parallel government must naturally fulfill the same roles that the colonial one already does.

Moorthy continues: they will refuse to engage the government but "never be harsh to them nor wicked" and remember that they are all responsible for one another, and that if any of them commits any act of violence they must stop the movement for six months to pray for redemption. They do not fight "the white man" himself, Moorthy emphasizes, but rather "the demoniac corruption that has entered their hearts." They must be ready to "obey your chief and love your enemy" by following "the path of the spirit," whose greatest values are truth, non-violence, and love.

The Gandhians' worst possible approach would be to respond to the colonial government in kind, with physical violence. Beyond eroding their moral purity, this would compromise the Gandhians' public image by allowing the British to paint the protestors as violent revolutionaries. Loving their enemies means viewing the colonial police as the unwitting agents of an even greater evil.

Rangamma begins to "unknowingly" strike the gong, and everyone "felt there was something in the air." They all proclaim their allegiance to the movement and opposition to violence, plan a start date, and weep together to music.

Although the congress has received numerous documents with instructions from the city, the ultimate decision about planning their protests lies in group deliberation.

Two days later, 139 villagers begin marching to Boranna's toddy grove, led by Moorthy, Rangamma, Rangè Gowda, and Pariah Rachanna in a cart. They announce their intentions in song and stop for prayers along the way. "Hardly at the Main Road Corner," they encounter the Police Inspector and the four leaders get out of their cart and begin to walking. As they approach the toddy grove, they see more and more policemen holding lathis.

The Gandhians picket the toddy grove because the Sahib convinces the coolies at the Skeffington Estate to drink away all their wages there once they have finished work; this prevents them from making enough money to leave the Estate. But the policemen are willing to defend the grove with force because it economically benefits the British.

The Police Inspector approaches them on a bridge and warns them that they may not go to the toddy grove. Moorthy thanks the Inspector and continues, claiming that "he would follow [the Congress's instructions] unto death if need be." Moorthy and Rangè Gowda try to open the toddy grove's gate as Pariah Rachanna leads the other marchers in cries of "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!*"

True to his campaign, Moorthy rejects the Inspector's orders as illegitimate. But his claim that he would die for the Congress reveals that he nevertheless realizes that he is a pawn for the national Gandhian movement.

As the policemen try to push back the marchers, Rachanna runs and jumps the fence, climbing a toddy tree. The policemen rush to attack him and quickly drag him down as the rest sing and march forward. The Inspector orders them to attack and they beat the Gandhians with their lathis as the villagers yell "*Mataram Vandè!*" louder and louder. Lingayya crosses the fence and Moorthy yells "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!*" as the policemen surround and beat him. Finally, the women charge, led by Rangamma, reminding themselves as they are beaten that "after all it is not so bad."

Rachanna, consistently the most enthusiastic of the protestors, tries to tear down the tree, which symbolizes the Skeffington Estate's exploitative treatment of its workers. The police intervene as soon as he crosses into the toddy grove, for the protestors are not breaking the law until they enter private property, and the police's primary role in India is to protect British property rights.

The women break down the gate to the toddy grove and begin to tear branches and leaves from the trees. Atop a tree, one protestor cuts "branch after branch" and the crowd cheers, laughing as the man spits on the policemen who tear him down.

Rangamma's female Volunteers drive the action, breaking down the gate that keeps the protestors from destroying the trees. The Gandhians enjoy a brief moment of triumph while the police cannot reach them up in the trees.

The policemen take the women outside the grove, and Achakka and her sisters feel their fresh wounds but also a sense of accomplishment and purpose. The police arrest pariah Rachanna and the potters Lingayya and Siddayya, separating the other men, young women, and old women into trucks that head away in different directions and drop each group on the side of a different road.

The women see their wounds as marks of pride, evidence that they have threatened the colonial regime enough to warrant a violent response. The Britisih punish the protestors by displacing them, dropping them in unfamiliar territory far from their own land.

As they reunite with the other groups on the highway and march deep into the jungle, Rangamma tells the other old women to form a line and start singing. The longer and louder they sing, the more the women forget their injuries and fears. They meet a cart-man, who offers them food, and more carts come and offer to take them back to Kanthapura. They try to negotiate a price, but the cart men fear the Mahatma's ire and agree to take the women back to Kanthapura for free.

When they feel unsafe in unfamiliar territory, chants and protest songs give the villagers a newfound sense of shared purpose and reconsolidates their opposition to the government through an oral tradition in which everyone can participate. The cart-men offer the villagers free passage because they see the Mahatma as a god figure and therefore the villagers as pilgrims fighting a worthy battle.

The villagers get off the carts in the village of Santhapura, near Kanthapura, where Rangamma's cousin lives and his wife offers them food and milk. The Gandhians tell the Santhapura villagers about the Mahatma and their campaign, and the people in Santhapura follow them to Kanthapura shortly thereafter.

In fact, the villagers' displacement has helped them grow their movement by recruiting people in Santhapura. Again, the government's use of force undermines its own position by inadvertently strengthening the Gandhian movement.

Upon returning, the villagers felt "as though the whole air was filled with some pouring presence," perhaps that of the gods watching out for them. At the temple the morning after, they line up their "trophies": five twigs from the toddy trees and a toddy-pot.

Although the police broke them up, the villagers consider their protest a resounding success. The violence has broken neither their beliefs nor their resilience.

SECTION 15

The next Tuesday, the villagers gather in the temple and again march to picket the toddy shops. Along their way, various people ask about their purposes; at the Skeffington Estate, they encounter Betel Lakshamma, who asks if Moorthy and his "soldiers of the Mahatma" will free her from the Revenue Collector. "We are against all tyrants," declares Moorthy, who simply says that "we shall see" about helping Lakshamma with the Revenue Collector. She calls him "my Lord" and believes that he will "bring a good name to the **Himavathy**."

Kanthapura's villagers continue to spread Gandhi's ideas as they march through the Western Ghats, much like Moorthy saw meditation as a means to spread positive energy. However, Moorthy's encounter with Betel Lakshamma again shows the limits of his politics: despite her faith in him, he realizes that he can do little about individual cases like her own, and that his own nonviolent resistance likely cannot relieve her of her debts.

Down the Karwar Road, vendors of every sort offer the Gandhians free goods and shout the names of the colonial agents and sympathizers who are oppressing them. The crowd grows as they approach the toddy booth, where the police are waiting for them. Although they had not gone to the Coffee Estate Road, they feared that each passing cart was the Sahib; this day, they were afraid and surprised to see Moorthy standing calmly at the gate, waiting for the coolies to come out for the toddy booth.

Like Betel Lakshamma, the people whom the villagers encounter initially want Gandhism to solve their own personal problems but soon decide to join the movement. The villagers anxiously wait for the police to attack them, for they know that this is the government's only available tactic.

The shops in Kanthapura close up (it is market day), and the shopkeepers' stop by the Gandhians in their carts and meet them on the road. The shopkeepers laugh, suggesting that the protestors "will never stop a man drinking!"

By ridiculing the Gandhians, the shopkeepers reveal that they both see immediate pleasure as naturally preferable to principled action, and do not understand how drinking keeps the coolies economically enslaved to the Sahib.

Moorthy runs suddenly back towards the Skeffington Estate gate as it begins to rain and the maistri comes out of the trees. Moorthy and the Gandhians march forward, and the Police Inspector comes to open the Skeffington gate for a flood of exhausted coolies who come out "like clogged bulls," followed by policemen and their women, and head for Boranna's toddy booth.

Again, the environment foreshadows danger and injury through rain. The coolies' expressions demonstrate how the Sahib strategically makes their work conditions horrible in order to force them to cope by drinking away their wages.

Moorthy tells the Gandhians to squat in front of the toddy booth, and as the rain begins to pick up the policemen begin to beat the protestors down and "beat the coolies forward" with their lathis. From his toddy booth, Boranna shouts that he will give all the brahmins free drinks, and the shopkeepers join the policemen in rushing at the protestors. The protestors lay down and the coolies stop moving before deciding to lie down as well, all the while shouting "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!*"

By "beat[ing] the coolies forward," the policemen make it clear that they are there to enforce the Sahib's will on the coolies by forcing them to the toddy stand, rather than protecting the coolies who decide to drink from the protestors. Therefore, the coolies' decision to join the protestors is a way of opposing the Sahib, replacing the toddy as a coping mechanism. In offering brahmins special treatment, Boranna reflects how the colonial government rewards brahmins for keeping lower-caste Indians far from power.

The police and the Gandhians fight for the coolies' loyalty with whips and shouts, respectively. The police try to lift up the protestors by their hair—one kicks Rangamma so hard that she passes out, and another slaps Ratna until her mouth is bloodied. When Moorthy's calls of "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!*" stop because a policeman has hit him in the mouth, the villagers believe he is dead.

The police become more violent than during the last protest, and they begin to attack with means besides their lathis. Moorthy's continuous chants remind the group of their goals as well as his physical position at the head of the march, so his silence frightens the villagers who think their movement has suddenly lost its leader.

The police keep beating the protestors, who continue to lay on the ground and tell the coolies "do not drink, in the name of the Mahatma." The coolies agree not to drink, and the Police Inspector orders his men to throw pots of water at the protestors. They pour it in their mouths and up their dresses as the rain continues to pour down.

The police throw water on the protestors while it is already raining. They literally force the Gandhians to drink when the coolies refuse to do so. The imagery here foreshadows the sexual violence during the book's final protest.

Sixty-seven of the villagers wake up to the police kicking them out of yet another truck, and they march back to Kanthapura. When they arrive, they discover that a few dozen of the coolies have moved into their village's Pariah Street, and people from all around are converging to meet Moorthy and join the "army of Mahatma."

The police have beaten the villagers so hard that they have gone unconscious. Their punishment is the same as before, and so is their reward; despite their injuries, their nonviolent methods and dedication to Gandhi's cause have inspired others (this time, the coolies) to join their cause. The Gandhians literally liberate the coolies from the Skeffington Estate by offering them a place to live and do meaningful work (spinning cloth and working for the Congress).

SECTION 16

People throughout India picket toddy booths near their towns, and all day and night they sing songs about the evil of drinking and their allegiance to Gandhi, "our king." Some educated "city boys" express this in rational argument, and others ask lower-caste villagers from Kanthapura to sneak out in the night and help them protest elsewhere.

The Kanthapura villagers' protests are representative of similar events across India. Achakka portrays the village as a center of such resistance. People of different caste and educational backgrounds all help with the movement in ways suited to their character and experience, from protesting on the ground to helping theorize Indian independence.

After Potter Ramayya comes back from one such trip, he says that in "house after house" people pasted newspaper pictures of Moorthy on the walls and asked for stories about his campaign. The villagers become proud to "bear the lathi blows and the prisons" and every day there is a new mission.

The pictures of Moorthy reveal how a colonial means of documenting and distributing information—newspapers—can be turned against the government by serving to venerate anticolonial leaders.

One day, the villagers threw a homecoming welcome feast for Potter Chandrayya, who told of being beaten with canes dipped in hot oil and then with lathis when they refused to salute the Government flag. One protestor climbed the building and raised the national flag; the police put him in solitary confinement and he was never seen again.

Again, the brutality of state violence is both a badge of honor for dedicated Gandhians and evidence that the colonial regime must be overthrown. Directly claiming independence by raising the national flag is the most dangerous challenge a Gandhian can make to the government.

Seetharamu has "the most terrible story" from prison. He came down with fever but the police forced him to continue working, beating him before binding him in a yoke, like a bull, and making him run around the mill until "nothing but blood" came from his mouth and they were forced to release him. Moorthy praises Seetharamu's endurance and will, and this inspires the rest.

By forcing Seetharamu to work like an animal, the colonial government took the everyday exploitation of Indian laborers to its logical extreme, nearly killing a man whose life loses value to them when he cannot work.

The villagers continue to picket toddy shops, and 24 of them close down in the area nearby, including Boranna's. Some of the toddy sellers even join the Gandhians.

The protests finally begin to concretely effect change by shutting down businesses that oppress Indians and even converting some of Gandhi's enemies.

The new Patel tries to collect revenues, but the villagers refuse despite the government's threats. The police go around town, finding reasons to beat up whomever they wish. Only the few remaining pro-government brahmins pay their dues; the rest hide their jewels, sacks of food and other valuables in the ground. The policemen do not come to their houses, but they barricade every road out of Kanthapura.

The villagers do not acknowledge the false Patel named by the British; this officially brings the entire village outside the law, depriving the villagers of any legal rights at all.

Later, the police march a beadle through Kanthapura, and he announces that everyone who did not pay owns a fine "as punitive tax" to pay for the new policemen who would come "to protect" the villagers from "the troublesome ones." Moorthy comes to Achakka's house in the night, saying that "the fight has really begun" and warning her to ring a bell if the police come into her house. With Rangamma and Ratna's help, he managed to inform everyone in the village that night, and everyone stayed up in fear until dawn.

The government doubles down on its demand for tax revenue, arbitrarily imposing a punitive tax but holding out hope that the villagers will finally back down. The empty rhetoric of police "protection" reflects the more broadly farcical nature of the Indian colonial police system, which acts in the name of the public but only truly protects the wealthy (almost entirely British) minority.

SECTION 17

The next morning, the villagers see a "slow-moving procession of coolies" tied together at the hands, marched through Kanthapura by policemen "to show who our true masters were." The villagers know they must find Moorthy but cannot, and suddenly they hear a shout from the temple. They rush there and see all the pariah women and children trying to stop the coolies' march with their bodies, singing that Moorthy has been taken away in the night and shall never return.

Moorthy's final disappearance happens in secret, just like his reentry into the village after his first arrest. While his second arrest is invisible, the coolies, marched through Kanthapura like slaves, are hyper-visible. The fact that the pariahs shout from the temple (which they were never allowed to enter) demonstrates the complete inversion of caste in Kanthapura that has occurred.

As the adults clap and cry, the children throw stones at the police—one hits its mark, and the police start to round up the children. They beat Rachanna's grandson "on the buttocks and head and spine and knee" and throw him down on the grass, and the women rush to him, but he does not speak.

One child breaks the Gandhian prohibition on violence, which leads the police to justify punishing all of the children with the severest forms of violence and cruelty they can muster.

The Gandhians call the police "butchers, butchers, dung-eating curs!" The police begin to chase the villagers, who cannot run fast enough—one beats a woman named Puttamma and tells her, "you know what I would do with you." The others run away but think of her and feel they have to return, and when they do they see the policeman on top of her and yell for help. But nobody comes and all they can see in Kanthapura are policemen everywhere.

By raping Puttamma, the police continue to escalate their cruelty against the villagers, moving from mere beatings that the Gandhians can stand to more terrifying and egregious crimes that could never be justified as a means of breaking up a protest.

Another policeman threatens a village woman who goes to visit her elderly neighbor and knocks her down just as Achakka and a few of the other women arrive. He then chases them all out of the house.

Even innocent villagers become guilty by association, and for the first time in the book Achakka herself becomes a significant part of the narrative.

Achakka and the others hear shrieks from every corner of the village, and "the whole world seems a jungle in battle" as every imaginable animal screeches from the forest. They run from house to house seeking a place to hide, but in each "man after man had been taken away during the night, while we had slept the sleep of asses," and their women were gagged and tied to pillars. Rangamma has also gone missing.

The animals around Kanthapura mirror its residents' sense of terror, which suggests that the land remains deeply tied to the village's people, as the natural world continues to feel their pain. Rangamma's disappearance leaves the Gandhian movement without a clear leader of any sort, making it truly equal for the first time.

They decide that there is only one safe place in Kanthapura: the temple sanctum. On Rangamma's veranda, they see an elephant crouching, wailing, surrounded by a crowd as its driver kicks it to rise. Some policemen see Achakka and the other women and chase them to the edge of town, where they see a police barricade on the Karwar Road and the coolies marching up the Bebbur Mound above the town.

As the heart of Kanthapura, the temple provides the women with both spiritual and physical security. The police abuse the elephant, forcing it to help them enforce the colonial law against its will, which reflects their cruelty toward the villagers.

They decide to go to the house of a sick (actually pregnant) woman named Radhamma, but on the way see her running through town from the police. Radhamma sees them and rushes over; they decide to go to Nanjamma's back yard, but on the way Radhamma falls to the ground and begins to scream. "It's only seven months," another older village woman named Timmamma assures her, but Radhamma's baby comes out and Timmamma cuts its umbilical cord with the fringe of her sari.

Radhamma's child is born suddenly and prematurely, as though torn from her by the terror imposed by the colonial police. Nevertheless, the women save her baby as they hide from the police, recalling their insistence on balancing their traditional obligations as mothers and wives with their dedication to the Gandhian campaign.

They hear a yell in the post office and find Ratna laying on the ground there as a police officer runs off. Ratna tells the women how she fought off the policemen, and it turns out that they came just in time to stop him. They rest in the post office kitchen and Ratna washes up. Ratna tells them that "this is no safe place" and they must find refuge elsewhere, and Achakka hears "the voice of Rangamma in her speech, the voice of Moorthy." Before they head to the temple, Ratna looks outside and brings the others to watch Bhatta's house burning down. They hear the pariah women's shouts grow louder and shriller, and they run toward the temple. They hear Bhatta's roof fall and Satamma worries that her own house will burn down, but Ratna encourages her to be patient and they take refuge in the temple, where they call Siva to protect them and make offerings to the god.

Achakka feels Ratna expressing the same energy as Kanthapura's wise Gandhian leaders, who have already been arrested the previous night. Ratna quickly begins to take charge among the women Volunteers, stepping in as the leader of the entire movement even though she started out as a widowed pariah girl. There is some poetic justice in the fact that Bhatta's house burns first, since he was Kanthapura's main representative of the colonial viewpoint and resistance to Gandhism. The women pray to Siva, who is associated with Gandhi and India as a whole, rather than their local goddess Kenchamma. This reflects their shift from an identity based on their village to one based on the nation for whose independence they struggle.

They hear "another crash from Bhatta's burning house" and then the elephant spraying water onto it. But then the elephant runs for the town gates and the fire rises, bringing down the buildings where rice, cattle, and hay are kept. The women cheer, for "it is not for nothing Bhatta lent us money at 18 per cent and 20 per cent interest, and made us bleed."

The police try to save the loyalist Bhatta's house, but the elephant manages to escape, extending the metaphorical relationship between it and the protestors. Bhatta's sizable house represents the wealth he squeezed out of the other villagers while pretending to defend their interests; thus, when it burns down, the villagers see the main symbol of their economic oppression fall.

They hear another "long cry" across town, this time from the Skeffington Estate coolies, who "raised a clamour to receive the coolies that were being dragged in" and seem to be coming to help the people of Kanthapura, too.

The coolies come to the Volunteers' rescue, fully recognizing their shared interests with the villagers who were similarly (although less directly) impoverished by the colonial economic structure.

One woman feels feverish, and Ratna offers to fetch a blanket. Although the others protest, a policeman sees her as soon as she leaves the temple. She runs back in and the women barricade the door from inside as the policeman beats on it until he gives up and locks them inside. All afternoon, the women "cry and moan and beg and weep and bang and kick and lament" inside, but nobody comes for them and they hear nobody through the door. In the temple, they light the sacred flame and sing a bhajan for Lord Siva.

Ratna's desire to help the sick woman ends up revealing the Volunteers' position to the policeman, but together they find a strength superior to his. The women end up trapped inside the temple that serves at the core of their village's collective and religious life, and now as both sanctuary and prison.

When the women can sing no more, Ratna tells the rest stories about women who marched for Gandhi in cities around India. They turned back to chanting and "forgot the pariahs and the policemen and Moorthy and the Mahatma" before dozing off to sleep, but started to see Siva and suddenly awake in terror, waking one another up and banging on the temple door until the morning, when Rachi, Pariah Rachanna's wife, finally opens it and lets them back out into Kanthapura.

Ratna takes over the previous Congress leaders' most distinctive job: telling stories to motivate the others and contextualize their struggles within the broader movement for independence. By focusing on the role of women in Gandhian politics, she demonstrates how women's struggle for independence has also given them a freedom from their former social subservience in societies across India. Indeed, it is Rachi—a pariah woman at the bottom of the formal caste system—who liberates them from their imprisonment in the temple.

Puttamma, who Achakka and the other women saw the policeman assault in the bushes the previous day, is crying to her child in bed and lamenting that she has sinned. She thinks her husband will throw her into a well, but in fact he has been arrested. Pariah Siddayya had found the policeman with her and brought her to his backyard.

Puttamma fears that she was sexually polluted, as it were, when the policeman raped her. Although the women find strength and freedom among themselves, they recognize that they remain embedded in a patriarchal society that objectifies and evaluates them based on factors they can't control.

That night, the women do not sleep, "for we knew our men were not far and their eyelids did not shut."

In addition to staying vigilant, the women stay awake to remember, honor, and empathize with their disappeared loved ones. This parallels the way Achakka preserves and honors the story of her disappeared village by remembering the stories recorded in this book.

SECTION 18

After three days spent repairing and cleaning the village, as the men begin to return home, the villagers see cars heading up the Bebbur Mound "like a marriage procession." They see Europeans marching "pariah-looking people" out, but something seems wrong, and Rachi brings the other women to Ratna, "for she is our chief now."

Ratna officially becomes the leader of the Gandhian movement, which has shifted from following a brahmin man to a pariah woman. But caste still exists elsewhere under colonialism, as evidenced by the villagers' immediate sense that Europeans are marching "pariah-looking people" into town.

A drummer beats in the Temple Square, declaring "something about the supreme Government and the no-taxer and the rebels" before naming various fields around the village, even Rangè Gowda's big field. Suddenly, the villagers realize what is happening and begin to weep. Achakka and the women meet Satamma, who blames Moorthy for "all this misery" and at first refuses to follow them to Ratna, but eventually gives in and joins.

Since the villagers have rejected the legitimacy of the British government, that government has decided to confiscate their lands and sell them to the highest bidder. At the hands of the government, Kanthapura transforms from a village saturated with personal and religious significance for its inhabitants into a massive property to be sold for profit.

They go to Sami's house, where Ratna is staying, and find about a dozen other villagers looking at a door behind which "the Mahatma's boys" are speaking. The women feel relieved, since Moorthy promised that "city people" would come help them, and more people come to join them at Sami's house.

Fortunately, Gandhians from the city have come to stop the colonial government. The villagers' power lies in their newfound network of relations with independence fighters throughout the subcontinent.

The door opens, and Ratna is behind it along with many of the men who had been arrested and a number of city boys, one of whom addresses the audience and explains that hundreds of Volunteers will come from the city to save the village's lands, "for the Government is afraid of us." In Karwar, he explains, all public services have stopped and "every white man" has a policeman for personal protection as Gandhians have taken over and refuse to stop even when millions are beaten and thrown in jail. They only buy khadi cloth and the money in circulation ends up with the Congress, not the government. Gandhians conquered the northern city of Peshawar, he continues, even though hundreds were shot, and eventually the soldiers stopped shooting them altogether because they came to understand their purpose. He believes that Gandhians' love will even convert these soldiers, and the whole group takes a moment for silent prayer.

Elsewhere, the city men promise, the independence movement has succeeded in blocking the colonial government by withdrawing Indians' participation in it. The Gandhian movement seems to be succeeding on a national scale, as police violence, murders, and the threat of arrest do little to deter Indians who have found freedom in their shared commitment to independence. But the Congress still collects taxes and issues national policies, like the colonial government, which suggests that it is impossible to truly devolve such power once it has been centralized.

During the prayers, the women see more and more cars drive through town and suddenly they blurt out, "no, no—this will not do, this will not do." Ratna assures them that the Congress will take care of them, but the women cannot bring themselves to abandon their lands and homes "and the sacred banks of the **Himavathy**."

The women suddenly lose trust in the national Gandhian movement, which (exactly like the colonial government) seems to void their land of the particular meaning it holds for its particular people.

Ratna had already left, and everyone returns home in frustration as Achakka wonders whether Gandhism has helped them at all. She declares that they were "mad to follow Moorthy." The goddess Kenchamma and **river Himavathy** never refused their prayers, she laments. But suddenly she feels "some strange fever" inside her and has a change of heart. Achakka begs forgiveness from Moorthy, Gandhi, and Kenchamma, and declares that the women will do their pilgrimage "to the end."

Achakka suddenly experiences a conflict between the traditional and Gandhian sides of herself. After she spends months fighting Gandhi's battles, Achakka suddenly wishes she had rejected the Mahatma's nationalistic ideology and sustained the local religion that bestowed her with her particular identity, even if the colonial government strategically exploited that identity in order to keep Indians economically oppressed. But then she reverts because of a feeling that she cannot shake (like the feelings that moved Moorthy follow to Gandhi throughout the book).

The Gandhians block the police's view of the courtyard with two carts and plan their Satyagraha march. Someone runs into the courtyard and says that women have arrived for the land auction, and Timmamma sees that they are women from their own village, including Kamalamma and Venkatalakshamma and Lakshamma. Ratna hopes that they want to buy out Bhatta's lands. They have trouble discerning who is coming and return to their preparations as pariah women shriek and shriek around the valley.

The Gandhians discover that even former residents of the village have decided to participate in the auction, likely paying the colonial government for what used to be their own lands. Ironically, the brahmins who rejected Gandhi in favor of the caste system have now abandoned their traditional position as religious leaders in order to rule Kanthapura through their wealth.

The police and protestors continue to clash in town, and the Gandhians see Sankar come to the door with a number of city boys in tow. He asks if everything is ready but reveals neither his motives nor who will blow the conch to start their protest. That evening, they hear more commotion in the town and look out to see "pariah-looking men" spread to all the village's fields and the Europeans' cars drive off. They bring out "big, strong gas-lights of the city" and illuminate the fields around the village; when he sees them, Sankar shouts at Ratna to blow the conch.

Although Sankar professes his support for the villagers, Achakka feels as though he is hiding information from them, coopting their struggle to save their own lands for his broader cause. To the villagers' horror, their lands have been turned into a plantation like the Skeffington Estate, and the gas lights show that city technology has come to transform the village's landscape.

The Gandhians immediately begin to march, chanting and singing as the policemen file into town with their lathis raised. But they are singing a religious song and chanting "*Satyanarayan Maharaj ki jai*!" They tell the police officers they do not know where they are going, but soon the villagers' cries turn back to "*Vandè Mataram*!" and "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*!" as the city boys come out to join them in the streets and march with them in the direction of the barricades outside the Skeffington Estate.

The Gandhians' religious chant gives them plausible deniability, since the colonial government views politics and religion as separate spheres (whereas they are intimately intertwined in Kanthapura). Crucially, they praise Satyanarayan, or "truth as the highest being," which suggests that they have recommitted to Gandhi's cause and emphasis on Truth.

The police beat the marchers once again with their lathis, but at the village gate one Gandhian raises "the flag of the Revolution," singing it and passing it around the protestors as the police try to seize it. The police begin throwing stones at the crowd but are outnumbered by protestors.

By raising the flag, the villagers claim Kanthapura for the Congress of All India's parallel government, and the previous chapter's image of children throwing rocks at the police is inverted as the police throw rocks at the mass of protestors.

The protestors approach the Skeffington Estate's guarded barricades and see the city coolies continue their labor. The police throw one woman on a cactus and run the others down to the canal and then into its waters. From afar, the village women see dozens of new soldiers approaching with rifles and bayonets. They hide amidst the season's harvests as one soldier fires a warning shot and then a deafening silence falls.

The villagers see distinct signs that this confrontation will be still more violent than the last. While the city Gandhians initially helped the villagers outnumber the police, the government quickly calls in reinforcements and signals its willingness to shoot protestors.

From their vantage point above the village, the women see the soldiers surround the city boys and demand that they must lower the flag or else will be shot. When the boys insist that their protest is nonviolent, the police say that this does not allow them to march into the fields. Those are their fields, protest the villagers, for "it's we who have put the plough to the earth and fed her with water," but the soldiers shoo them off and threaten again to shoot.

The women now view Kanthapura from above, a perspective Achakka has never before adopted in relation to her village. This suggests that her relationship to it is changing. Indeed, the villagers and soldiers clash over ideologies of the land: Kanthapura's people claim that their ties to the land through history, religion, and labor supersede the formal property rights through which the colonial government claims it can sell their village.

Ratna drives the protestors forward and they all hear a volley of shots and close their eyes, only to quickly realize that these were more warning shots. Afraid, the villagers hide in Bhatta's sugarcane fields. They see the city coolies begin to cut their harvest as the crowd approaches them, chanting. They see the Skeffington coolies marching a flag down from the Estate to the barricades.

Bhatta used to oppress the villagers with his predatory moneylending, amassing land at their expense; now, the people of Kanthapura have occupied his fields. Similarly, the Skeffington coolies have raised the national flag over the estate where they are indentured, seemingly claiming the land for themselves.

Suddenly, the city coolies in Kanthapura shut off all the lights. The villagers see the police start to beat the Skeffington coolies at the barricade, then fire warning shots and finally shoot one of the coolies. Astonished, the other three thousand coolies leap over the barricades and rush towards the top of the hill where the police stand and begin to open fire.

Just as the Kartik lights go out before the police arrest Rachanna in section 10 of the book, the gas lights go out here just before the police kill the first protestor. But, as in all the book's protests, physical violence initially motivates the Gandhians to fight harder rather than scaring them away.

After "a long tilting silence," the women decide to join the coolies, and Nanjamma stays to watch the children. Achakka goes and sees bullets flying every which way, until one strikes one of the Volunteers with her. A protestor from the city bandages the injured woman and carries her to the Congress ambulance. The others hear the yells of the wounded and, from the front of the march, a song—"O, lift the flag high, / Lift the flag high, / This is the flag of the Revolution."

The police have no qualms about massacring nonviolent, unarmed protestors who have already rejected their government's legitimacy. As she frequently does throughout the book, Achakka narrates this chaotic conflict between the police and Gandhians through the competing sounds she hears: the noise of gunshots and the song of the Revolution.

The city coolies give up the harvest and join in the protests, telling the women "*Gandhi Mahatma ki jai!*" even though they otherwise do not understand one another. They look for the Skeffington coolies but do not see them, although an enormous crowd of coolies and women comes from the river bend. The soldiers fire and charge at the protestors, trampling them, waving around their bayonets, and hitting them with their rifle butts.

Like the Skeffington Coolies and villagers throughout the Western Ghats in previous protests, the city coolies who have been brought to work the newly bought-out fields join the Gandhians who share their political interest in ending colonial rule. The soldiers' gruesome violence continues to escalate.

Sometime later, the women wake, and a Gandhian immediately gets shot near them and falls over them, dead. In the big field, Achakka wonders where all her fellow Volunteers have gone. She looks up over the fields and sees her village, completely empty: "there seems to be not a beating pulse in all Kanthapura." She hears the British soldiers plan their next attack.

When they wake up, the women immediately confront the aftermath of the massacre. Achakka again takes in all of Kanthapura at once, seeing it completely evacuated from this new perspective. But, even though the village is empty and there appears to be nothing left to destroy, the British are still planning another attack. Their cruelty extends beyond their particular mission of putting down Kanthapura's protestors.

The attack starts "not from their side but ours," since one of the Gandhians broke open one of the city lights and it made a noise so loud that the soldiers mistook it for a gunshot. The soldiers charge at the protestors, shooting and thrusting their bayonets, and the Gandhians flee with the coolies as someone hoists the flag of India. The soldiers begin massacring the protestors.

The protestor's attack on the city technology of the gas light is interpreted by the soldiers as a violent physical attack, even though they know the Gandhians are unarmed. Attacking colonial objects, like invading colonial property, amounts to an attack on colonialism itself and leads the soldiers to feel that further violence is justified.

One of the protestors tells a soldier "do not fire on innocent men." The soldiers laugh and ask if the Gandhians are loyal to the British Government, but they say they "know only one Government and that is the Government of the Mahatma." The soldiers plant a Government flag and demand that the protestors march by it, but again the Gandhians start singing about "the flag of the Revolution."

The soldiers define disloyalty to the British Empire as a form of criminal guilt, promising safety in exchange for allegiance to the symbol of colonial rule. Again, the Gandhians' principled rejection of the British government supersedes their concern for their physical safety, even though they appear to be leading themselves into a massacre.

Boys rush at the flag and the soldiers stab them with bayonets, starting another chaotic massacre. Someone strikes one of the officers and Achakka hears Ratna's voice saying, "no violence, in the name of the Mahatma" but cannot find her anywhere. "Men grip men and men crush men and men bite men and men tear men" in the confusion. Protestor after protestor falls dead, and the villagers cry out for them.

Like Moorthy's refusal to accept legal help or Sankar's insistence on speaking Hindi, the protestors' suicidal proclamation of loyalty to Gandhi seems to cross the line of principled resistance and look like an absurd, blind adherence to the party line in a context that does not justify it.

Achakka and the women "creep back through the village lane," watching the police slaughter countless men beneath the Gandhian flag. To their relief, many of the villagers are standing at the town gate, but they wonder "who will ever set foot again in this village?" More wounded men return from the hill, bleeding and wailing.

Kanthapura's sanctity for its inhabitants seems to be violated. As Gandhians are massacred on the Kenchamma Hill, Achakka implies, she begins to lose her deep affinity for the land and her faith in its goddess. Similarly, as the national flag flies over a massacre of Gandhians, Rao seems to imply that their faith in the Mahatma goes too far and undermines the purity of Gandhi's message.

Rachi declares that "in the name of the goddess, I'll burn this village." Against the others' protests, she spits thrice toward the Bebbur Mound and the village gate before leading four others to make a bonfire of their clothing and spread the flames throughout their village. They hear gunshots and shrieking animals, and they run out of the village and through the **Himavathy river** as more and more of the protestors join them, heading toward Maddur.

When Rachi burns the village in Kenchamma's name, she is both destroying the site of the massacre that has devastated Kenchamma's people and leading those people to abandon their goddess and move elsewhere. The clothes she burns are likely domestic khadi-cloth, which suggests that she may be rejecting the Gandhism that led to Kanthapura's destruction and gave the villagers little in return. On their way out of town, the Gandhians cleanse themselves in the holy Himavathy river, which guides them away from Kanthapura toward safety.

In Maddur, more policemen immediately attack the Gandhians, but locals quickly rush to their rescue and tend to their wounded. The able-bodied continue over the Ghats and into the jungle, across into Mysore state, where people come and "hung garlands on our necks and called us the pilgrims of the Mahatma." The people of this town, Kashipura, invite the Gandhians to stay, and they move there permanently.

The further the villagers go from Kanthapura, the more locals around the Ghats support their cause; in abandoning their village, the Gandhians unite with others under the banner of the nation for which they have fought.

SECTION 19

Achakka explains that a year and two months have passed since the events at Kanthapura. The villagers have moved in with others in Kashipura, and life continues as usual, with the women cooking and arranging marriages for their sons and daughters. The village's children consider them relations of the Mahatma and listen fondly to their stories. A local student even holds readings of Hindu scripture (but "it can never be like Ramakrishnayya's").

Achakka zooms back out from her narrative to the present, where, although the massacres have ended, unfortunately little has changed in people's everyday lives. Women have returned to their previous role in the domestic sphere and Kashipura, like Kanthapura, is organized around storytelling gatherings—although the most popular story is precisely the one Achakka has told here.

Rangamma and Seenu will supposedly be released from prison soon, and Ratna has already gotten out. When she visited, Ratna told them about "the beatings and the tortures and the 'Salute the Union Jack' in the prison."

The Gandhians continue to suffer from the government's response to their protests. This includes Achakka, who has been separated from her son for over a year.

But the Mahatma and the Viceroy have come to an agreement, compromising many of the pilgrims' initial conditions: Gandhians have to pay revenues and stop boycotting toddy shops, and "everything they say, will be as before." Yet "nothing an ever be the same again," for while they certainly lost something with Kanthapura's destruction, they also gained "an abundance like the **Himavathy** on Gauri's night" when the lights of their village scattered "down the Ghats to the morning of the sea," where "the Mahatma will gather it all" and bless everyone.

In contrast to the Gandhians' unflinching demand for independence and rejection of the colonial government, Gandhi himself has acquiesced to British demands. It seems that the villagers' efforts were all for naught, although Achakka retains a deep faith that the Mahatma will save India and his disciples from Kanthapura will spread his message in their new homes. Achakka's ambivalence about the independence movement also reflects the book's circumstances of publication, for Rao wrote Kanthapura *early in the Indian independence movement and published it ten years later, but ten years before India was freed from the British.*

The dead have been cremated on the **Himavathy's** banks. Ratna reported that Moorthy has been released, but he never returned to see the other villagers from Kanthapura. In fact, he sent a letter saying that the English will cheat the Mahatma, for he has too much faith in his enemies. "It is the way of the masters that is wrong," writes Moorthy, for "there will always be pariahs and poverty" as long as modern technological progress continues to divide rich from poor. He has decided to follow Jawaharlal Nehru, who favors nonviolence but is also an "equal-distributionist" when it comes to wealth.

Most shockingly of all, the leader of the Gandhian movement that swallowed Kanthapura has abandoned Gandhi. Rao may be suggesting that Moorthy was too naïve a leader, confused or insincere in his Gandhism all along, but Moorthy's newfound support for Nehru may also express Rao's critique of Gandhi. After independence, Indians risk oppressing one another in much the same way unless they prioritize the equal distribution of power and wealth above ideals of moral purity.

Ratna went to Bombay the week after her visit, but Achakka is hopeful about Rangamma's upcoming release, for she still supports Gandhi and "we are all for the Mahatma." Around India, there are people for the Mahatma, and "they say the Mahatma will go to the Red-man's country and he will get us Swaraj. He will bring us Swaraj, the Mahatma. And we shall all be happy." She likens this to the *Mahabharata*, in which the lord Rama returns from exile to be with his love Sita and defeat the evil demon Ravana.

Like Moorthy, Ratna abandons the other villagers and takes up a modern form of independence politics in the city. But Achakka still believes in Gandhi as a mythical hero, ordained by the gods to save India even through the nonsensical method of going to Britain and "get[ting] us Swaraj." As throughout the legendary history she narrates, Achakka continues to see a world saturated with magic and morality.

Rangè Gowda was the only villager to return to Kanthapura. His wife and daughter went to stay with the Patel in Kishipura and waited for his return. He told them he "couldn't leave" Kanthapura until he had "three handfuls of **Himavathy** water." In reality, Achakka admits, Rangè Gowda went to dig up the jewels that he hid underground.

Rangè Gowda used to have political control over Kanthapura, and the fact that he is the only villager to return there suggests that its existence has come to be defined by its political and economic relationships to the rest of India, rather than its local inhabitants and landscape. While he professes to have been motivated by religion, Achakka knows that Rangè Gowda really wanted to retrieve the wealth he hid there.

Rangè Gowda reports that most of the houses are destroyed and men from Bombay have taken over the land and built houses for coolies on the hill where the massacre took place. Even Bhatta sold his land to the Bombay men, and even Waterfall Venkamma left town. Rangè Gowda prayed for blessings from Mother Kenchamma and Father Siva before leaving town, but admits that "my heart it beat like a drum."

Ultimately, as with much of India during the 20th century, Kanthapura's history is erased and the village is converted from a locality with deep significance for its inhabitants into mere property to be exploited for the sake of profit. Rangè Gowda's final prayer to Siva cements the villagers' shift from a local to national basis for their collective identity.

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