DOI: 10.17846/aa-2025-17-1-93-113

Pockets of Gandhian resistance in Indian literature: Reading indigenous consciousness through Fanonism and Cabralism within the ambit of national culture in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*

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Abstract: *This paper proposes an interdisciplinary exploration of how the theoretical frameworks of the triadic thinkers – Mahatma Gandhi, Franz Fanon, and Amilcar Cabral – might adumbrate a discursive theory/praxis of indigenous consciousness and national culture in Raja Rao's 1938 novel* Kanthapura. *The present study aims at warranting a proper analysis of endogenous counter-colonial resistance contextually grounded in* Kanthapura. *It argues that*

Rao's novel construes the ineluctable scope of India as it encompasses a collectively political consciousness of the cultural, religious, and socio-political contexts by presenting a meticulous picture of a village, which in turn provides a majoritarian macrocosmic representation of India's national culture. Through this initial hypothesis, Kanthapura *foregrounds a contextualization of a dialectical opposition between imperialistic and colonial domination of the colonizer, and an ontological-existential resistance of the colonized. This paper will, thus, analyse how the premise of the novel buttresses its cultural nationalistic underpinnings by reading it epistemologically as a conduit for Gandhian, Fanonian, and Cabralian polemics and praxis. By highlighting cultural and civilizational diversity and memory, this study aims to reveal that, through the strength of a hermeneutic reading,* Kanthapura *still bespeaks the urgency of our contemporary time.*

Introduction

Since the dawn of civilization, colonial rivalries between behemoth powers have witnessed India as the base camp for the scaling of their imperial Everest. Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) invaded India in 327 BC, and by the 17th century, major European countries like Great Britain, France, the Dutch Republic, and Denmark had sought imperialistic power through establishing a plethora of trading posts there. Excogitating historical investigation also evinces that the power structures of empire played a crucial role in furthering imperialism. For instance, Lord Randolph Churchill, the father of the former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, took part in advancing the macroeconomics of empire by progressing its expansionism after he was appointed Secretary of State for India in 1885. In another instance, the royal family of Britain also took part firsthand in colonialism when Prince Philip's uncle, Louis Mountbatten (who was accorded the title of the first Earl Mountbatten of Burma for his participation in colonial subjugation), was later appointed to oversee the empire's colonial mission in India. On this basis, colonialism by the 19th century had become a systematic form of subjugation, with an enduring presence within the fabric of human society, notwithstanding that the last vestiges of its etiolated presence had become apparent during the end of the First World War, as the French existentialist philosopher Jean Paul Sartre enunciates in *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*:

> The fact is that colonization is neither a series of chance occurrences nor the statistical result of thousands of individual undertakings. It is a system which was put in place around the middle of the nineteenth century, began to bear fruit in about 1880, started

> to decline after the First World War, and is today turning against the colonizing nation. (1964, p. 83)

Thenceforth, writing back to the empire has been a praxis of re-existence by a coterie of Indian intellectuals who wanted to cement their indigenous consciousness through philosophy and literature. Within this initial hypothesis, *Kanthapura* is a novel that underscores the rudimentary realities of colonization; the colonizers adopted certain methods in dominating and colonizing the natives. For instance, they forcefully snatched their lands and ruled over them. Thus, the colonized were alienated and displaced by the colonizers, both physically and mentally. Since the Europeans who took part in colonization have a sense of hegemony over their own civilization, they started making the colonized natives feel inferior, barbaric, and illiterate. More specifically, language and culture have been the essential tools of colonization. That is, the colonizer performs his colonial role adroitly through the tool of language, by exercising coercion in the enforcement of the English language in the colonies. In fact, this forced the natives to become mutely dumb, for it was extremely hard for them to communicate and express themselves, or raise their voice against any form of exploitation. The aforementioned implementation can be delineated in the literature of the colonized Other and is what Fanon succinctly describes as "a literature of combat" (Fanon, 1963, p. 240). On this basis, the literature of the colonized becomes veritably political, as it depicts the quotidian experiences of colonialism and counter-colonialism.

Analogously, in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari unearth the socio-political elements in non-Western literatures, which brings what they describe as "minor literatures" into the sphere of politics, in juxtaposition to the Western-centric canonical literatures that are canvassed with preoccupations of universality, which they denote as "major literatures":

> Everything in them [minor Literatures] is political. In major literatures, in contrast, the individual concern (familial, marital, and so on) joins with other no less individual concerns, the social milieu serving as a mere environment or a background ... Minor literature is completely different; its crumpled space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics. (1986, p. 17)

Accordingly, minor literature becomes an elemental polemical basis that is "positively charged with the role and function of collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p. 17). More acutely, the political insignia of minor literature retrospectively reinterprets historical events by decentring the power of the structural narrative of major literatures. Approaching from

these two critical viewpoints, the selected novel, along with the theories that are going to be expounded upon in this paper, encompasses the quintessential elements of national culture that express the socio-political contours of a collectively political consciousness. *Kanthapura* contains pockets of Gandhian resistance, and accordingly, this study weaves and interweaves between the theories of Franz Fanon (1925–1961) and Amilcar Cabral (1924-1973). The context of the novel is a malleable bulwark for incorporating the national polemical praxis of these triadic figures.

Mahatma Gandhi's praxis of indigenous resistance and national culture

The figure of Mahatma Gandhi, who originally went by the name of Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948), is the locus of this paper and the common core in contextualizing salient praxes of national culture. Gandhi's teachings were an influential driving force that propelled people out of their orthodoxy to resist colonization, and this, in turn, solidified his reputation as an Indian spiritual figure and prominent political leader who embodied a collective consciousness and a commitment to struggle against imperial powers. During his imprisonment, Gandhi read the essay "Civil Disobedience" (1849) by Henry David Thoreau, and adopted the term "civil disobedience" to establish a strategy of non-violence – a strategy of rejecting submission to injustice through non-violent means. More essentially, he proceeded to effectuate the Sanskrit word *satyagraha*, a term that was particularly given to the demand for non-violent resistance and civil disobedience. Following his release from prison, Gandhi rectified the dominant ideological laws by enacting a myriad of praxes including protesting the registration law, and supporting labour strikes that were very much in line with his satyagraha. To sum up, each and every polemical act by Gandhi derives from his principles of non-violence.

Within the societal and cultural ambit, Gandhi attacked the evil caste system, which encompassed the practices of untouchability[1]. Furthermore, he advocated a countervailing stance towards child marriage, and emphasized gender equality by blurring the borders between the gendering of spheres through the praxis of non-violent resistance: "This however, I will admit: that even a man weak in body is capable of offering this resistance... Both men and women can indulge in it. It does not require the training of an army" (1938, p. 72). Another explication that postulates Gandhi's praxis of indigenous resistance and national culture is his contribution to the economic and educational spheres. Within the economic sphere, Gandhi's activism is often regarded as a precursor to resisting economic colonialism by advocating a national praxis through the production of Swadeshi[2] and antagonizing large-scale industries. Gandhi's credo puts undue emphasis on the necessity of reliance on cottage industries, as it would make India economically independent and self-sustainable. Henceforth, he initiates a conversation by sharpening his focus on the materialistic upshot

of colonial trade through the ascendancy of English machinery. On this basis, the macroeconomic structure of the British Empire is facilitated through the surplus of machinery entrenchment that negated Indian handicraft: "It is machinery that has impoverished India. It is difficult to measure the harm that Manchester has done to us. It is due to Manchester that Indian handicraft has all but disappeared" (Gandhi, 1938, p. 81).

Another major facet that Gandhi introduces in *Hind Swaraj* is the homogeneous nature of Indian nationalism. Gandhi articulates an argument where he infers that Indians formed a co-existing nation much before the arrival of colonial Britain, which indeed goes against the British dictum that India was never a nation. In this latter respect, he contends that India does not cease to be a nation merely because its residing inhabitants belong to miscellaneous religions. On the contrary, and because India brings within its compass religious diversity, it would incessantly maintain a one-dimensional nation so long as its people uphold, by dint of indigenous consciousness, the principle of non-interference in one another's religion. Throughout his text, Gandhi stressed the transformative role of religious unity through his Hindu-Muslim discourse, as he opines:

> If the Hindus believe that India should be peopled only by Hindus, they are living in dreamland. Hindus, Mohammedans, Parsees and Christians who have made India their country are fellow countrymen and they will have to live in unity if only for their own interests. In no part of the world are one nationality and one religion synonymous terms nor has it ever been in India. (Gandhi, 1938, p. 45)

Frantz Fanon

Considered one of the most influential thinkers of the 20th century, Frantz Fanon is a giant name who had a major role in articulating the anti-colonial discourse of armed resistance. A psychiatrist who was sent to Algeria on a colonial mission to treat soldiers whose sole aim was to colonize and "Exterminate all the brutes" (Conrad, 2019, p. 147), Fanon's psychological metamorphosis materialized through a shift in his colonial mentality when he decided to side with the periphery, the marginal and colonized Algerians. By contextually grounding the praxis of re-existence imbued with a revolutionary spirit, he contests ideological and hegemonic Western discourses that generate a lore of justifiable utopian colonial dogmatism. Fanon published *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), which invokes the concrete and parallel worlds of colonial expansionism and racial praxis during the anti-colonial war of liberation in Algeria against colonial France in the 1950s. It is considered a magnum opus within the postcolonial canon, since it expertly illustrates the dialectical resistance between colonizers and colonized.

In particular, since the premise of this study adumbrates an analysis of national consciousness, the Fanonian theoretical framework will sharpen its focus on Fanon's chapter "On National Culture", while also incorporating a number of ideas in other chapters published in *The Wretched of the Earth*, considered to be a blueprint for utilizing national culture within a counter-hegemonic discourse. Fanon explains that the most crucial praxis for the colonized towards attaining liberation is through constructing a national culture, stating: "For these individuals, the demand for a national culture and the affirmation of the existence of such a culture represent a special battlefield" (Fanon, 1963, p. 209). Essentially, it is the only way to resist the colonizer, who establishes colonization and imperialistic expansion within a geopolitical context by first suppressing and then inevitably erasing the culture of the colonized. Therefore, when the culture of a certain nation is expunged, the nation's memory, which predominantly integrates indigenous consciousness within its layers, will be historically erased. Hence, citizens without a culture will never be able to cement their national existence within a nation, and, subsequently, Fanon discerns that for a nation to achieve its liberation and effectively coordinate resistance, it must construct a vigorous national culture that leaves its mark on every historical stage. This insight led Fanon to recognize that mere resistance is insufficient on its own; he argued that only through counter-violence can a colonized nation truly achieve its liberation. This perspective contrasts sharply with Gandhi's principle of satyagraha, which advocates for non-violent resistance.

Fanon proposes a series of questions regarding the potential interrelationship between culture and struggle: Are political, military, and cultural struggles intrinsically interconnected? Moreover, is the struggle for liberation fundamentally a cultural praxis? Fanon asserts that culture is at the core of struggle and is essential from the outset to "make possible the existence of an authentic national culture" (Fanon, 1963, p. 175). Counter-colonial resistance should appositely encompass culture, as Sartre infers in the preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*: "For the only true culture is that of the revolution; that is to say, it is constantly in the making" (1963, p. 12). Henceforth, culture gives birth to any national movement; it is the cradle of resistance intertwined with violence and arm struggle. In his view, Fanon believes that native intellectuals play a vital role in shaping the praxis of national culture. He singles out intellectuals because they are astute thinkers who strive to understand and analyse their contemporary status quo.

While the bilateral polemical discourses of Gandhi and Fanon are interpellated in *Kanthapura*, a degree of divergence in both figures can be cognized; Gandhi's ideas about attaining liberation against colonialism espoused non-violence, on the grounds that they w inherently rooted in religion, specifically in Hinduism. Fanon, on the other hand, asserts that for natives to achieve liberation and independence, it is essential to view violence as the only effective form of counter-colonialism,

opining that "The existence of an armed struggle shows that the people are decided to trust to violent methods only" (1963, p. 84). This perspective profoundly influenced various revolutionary leaders who adopted similar strategies in their struggles for freedom. One of the most notable figures who took inspiration from Fanon and was significantly influenced by his ideas was Amílcar Cabral.

The voice of Cabral, poet and revolutionary, continues to speak to revolutions all around the world, especially in African countries. He was a leader of the national liberation movement of Guinea Bissau until he was assassinated by the Portuguese colonial power in 1973 on the day of national independence. Cabral was a prolific writer, and his speech "National Liberation and Culture" (1970), renders an insight into the importance of national culture in the struggle towards liberation. Cabral observes that when a nation exists without being economically independent and self-sustainable, it will never be able to determine its independence because of its contingent dependency on the colonizer. As his argument unfolds, he underscores the important role of national culture that fundamentally utilizes efficaciousness: "The value of culture as an element of resistance to foreign domination lies in the fact that culture is the vigorous manifestation on the ideological or idealist plane of the physical and historical reality of the society that is dominated or to be dominated" (1974, p. 54). Furthermore, in "National Liberation and Culture", Cabral examines the numerous ways in which a colonial power can dominate nations. First and foremost, it begins by exterminating the entire population, primarily through the perpetration of genocide. Second, it morphs into controlling the economic and political landscape of the nation. The third stage involves destabilizing the culture of that particular nation. Therefore, Cabral denotes that in order to achieve national liberation, the natives must control the local productive forces, on the grounds that the ones who control the productive forces control the nation. In point of fact, the touchstone of national liberation is for the colonized masses to reclaim their rights, forcefully robbed by imperialistic domination. The colonized people must regain their national productive forces and free them from all kinds of foreign domination in order for national liberation to take place. Similar to Fanon, he believes that foreign domination always attempts to liquidate and destroy the culture of the dominated people. Therefore, in order to liberate the nation, he supports armed struggle. He clarifies that "The need of such analysis of cultural values becomes more acute when, in order to face colonial violence, the liberation movement must mobilize and organize the people, under the direction of strong and disciplined political organization, in order to resort to violence in the cause of freedom – the armed struggle for the national liberation" (Cabral, 1974, p. 13). To summarize, the nuances of Fanon's and Cabral's theories are intrinsically interdependent in that both advocate for an armed liberation struggle requiring the mobilization of various social classes. Cabral seeks to eliminate the "tribal mentality" because it divides and separates a nation and reinforces ideological fixities of social stratification.

Pockets of Gandhian resistance in Raja Roa's *Kanthapura*: Reading indigenous consciousness through Fanonism and Cabralism within the scope of national culture

Kanthapura is Rao's ingenious work that underscores the broader foundations of Gandhian resistance, as it chronicles the impact of Gandhi's teachings during the early days of India's struggle for independence from British rule.

Rao's novel is considered to construe the ineluctable scope of India, as it encompasses the social, religious, and political contexts by presenting a meticulous picture of a village, which in turn, provides a macrocosmic representation of India's culture. The novel depicts India's path towards liberation at the time of the Civil Disobedience in Kanthapura, a fictional village in southern India under British rule that serves as a microcosm for the macrocosm of India. It is considered to be Rao's most acclaimed novel that predominantly substantiates an iconoclastic critique of the traditional Indian caste system, for according to Gandhian views, villages face significant difficulty acclimating to societal changes, particularly within their caste system, which has deep roots in society. The cultural, traditional, and philosophical intersections between religion and legendary myths lurk within the structural basis of national resistance, which reveals how Gandhi's struggle for independence is a reiterated motif actualized in *Kanthapura*. E.M. Forster described the work as the "finest novel to come out of India in recent years" (Abraham 2003, p. 162) and the best novel ever written in English by an Indian writer. The novel also meticulously mirrors how the people of the village react to Gandhi's call to unite the people of India against British imperialist rule. Rao articulates the symbolic meaning of a formative national identity and indigenous consciousness, which allows him to navigate the channels of Indian independence as a quest for liberation. Decolonizing political discourses involve the interpretive and representational power of Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* (1909), which contextualizes non-Western writings and philosophies that have been decontextualized by imperial modes of representation.

In applying Gandhian and Fanonian thinking, Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* analogously stipulates the Fanonian idea of intellectuality. This intellectual approach reflects Rao's distinctive engagement with literature, which frames an indigenous consciousness through his nationalist concerns and dedicated literary efforts. Rao is recognized as one of the most innovative writers of the 20th century (Parthasarathy, 2014, p. 13) due to his deliberate departure from the Euro-Westernized canonical tradition of the novel. He has significantly "indigenized" the novel by integrating elements from the Indian literary tradition (Parthasarathy, 2014, p. 18). Building on this line of thought, Rao's contextualization of the novel's preface within this analytical framework reveals its deep connection to India's political, socio-economic, and colonial contexts. The preface of *Kanthapura* stands out as

revolutionary for its assertion of independence from English literary norms, and it has subsequently emerged as "a classic stylistic guide for non-native English writers everywhere" (Parthasarathy, 2014, p. 9). Accordingly, Rao pioneers a narrative that seems to coalesce with a national culture and indigenous consciousness by offering a figural paradigm of Indian literature written in English. "There is no village in India, however mean, that has not a rich sthala-purana, or legendary history, of its own. Some god or godlike hero has passed by the village . . . the Mahatma himself, on one of his many pilgrimages through the country, might have slept in this hut, the low one, by the village gate" (2014, p. 30).

Essentially, the literary devices which are incorporated in *Kanthapura* assert a model for a committed Indian village that "allows to present it as homogeneous, unified, an identity that held stupendous call for intellectuals in the 1930s" (Et al., 2021, p. 4701). This committed consciousness aligns with Fanon's emphasis on the importance of having intellectuals to channel an emancipatory insignia within the collective consciousness: "What the intellectual demands is the right to multiply the emancipated, and the opportunity to organize a genuine class of emancipated citizens" (Fanon, 1963, p. 58). Therefrom, this Fanonian idea can be discerned by Rao, who employs a decolonial reading of interconnecting "a diverse array of perspectives from the lived experiences of coloniality and decolonial thought/praxis..." (Walsh and Mignolo, 2018 p. 1), by employing multiple voices in the novel. The novel conflates miscellaneous voices into one protest against the Brahmin community and colonial Britain altogether. As it has been aforementioned, Fanon infers that citizens without a culture will never be able to cement their national existence within their nation's status quo. For this reason, liberation and resistance will materialize when a constructive cultural milieu is crystallized and leaves its traces in every nook and cranny of people's lives. Within this idea, the significance of assigning a grandmother, Achakka, to narrate and chronicle the story of resistance is considered vital not only because she represents a cornerstone of Indian culture and traditions but also as a countermeasure against the civilizing agenda that systematically imposed deceptive doctrines to supposedly "save" Indian women from societal victimization – one of many subterfuges used to conquer and solidify colonial control in India.

Furthermore, when contextualizing Gandhi's philosophical teachings alongside Fanon's and Cabral's ideas on national culture, one finds that Rao's novel grapples with the ideologies imposed by the white civilizing mission, which enforces mandatory acts of acculturation for the colonized to emulate.

As Fanon accentuates, "For the black man there is only one destiny, and it is white" (Fanon, 1994, p. 43). In this instance, with Gandhi's emphasis on empowering women within the socio-political and economic spheres, and Rao's choice of a grandmother as a narrator – since no one

understands Indian culture better than a grandmother and considering her unique position between the past and present for future generations, Rao attempts to delineate the ontological bedrock of Indian culture, history, and traditions in his novel. He does this through a spatial and temporal representation to unite the Indian people in resistance and to counteract the cultural hegemony of Western colonization.

In *Kanthapura*, the writer's national consciousness is designated when he reminisces about Gandhi's surge of nationalism, and the way he surmounts religious differences as a means to collectively revolutionize the villagers into freedom fighters against colonialism. Unquestionably, one can perceive from the title that Rao aims to construct a heroic history in which men and gods are intrinsically interconnected. In this instance, the legendary staple can be delineated as a nexus in the struggle for independence in various ways; the writer equates Gandhi's birth with the birth of God through a Harikatha[3]: "But he is an even grander Harikatha-man" (Rao, 2014, 42). Moreover, in the novel, Gandhi is contextualized not only as a political leader, but as a reincarnation of Hindu gods. Real life events parallel the fiction of its creator; with a constant appeal in the novel to implement religious principles and philosophical traditions in order to encourage the Indian people to engage in the freedom struggle. On this basis, Rao's national consciousness espouses Gandhian principles: "Intellectually and emotionally, he is deeply rooted in the Indian tradition, especially in the philosophical tradition of the Advaita ('monism') Vedanta of Sankara (eighth century)" (Parthasarathy, 2014, p. 11).

The crux of the novel's creativity also lies in the narration of the story and its content. Rao employs the old grandmother Achakka as the narrator, who chronicles the story of her village Kanthapura through the form of a *purana* and the "Harikatha" medium. Through the employment of both literary narrative traditions, Achakka reminisces about Gandhi's surge of nationalism. The narrative style of her storytelling is essential because it represents a means of cultural survival and the continuity of traditions, as the story "evokes the spirit and discourse of the traditional folk narratives..." (Parthasarathy, 2014, p. 9). The narration invariably elucidates the Fanonian notion of decolonization, as it tells the story of the people of Kanthapura, and their pivotal participation in the struggle towards independence. On this account, the style is a form of writing back and a form of decolonization, even though it was published in 1938 – before India's actual independence. However, the novel itself is a decolonizing work because it combats the colonization of India through national and cultural resistance. There are many recurring examples in the novel that instantiate the idea of resistance through a cultural appropriation of myths, religious principles, and traditional philosophies: "Kenchamma is our goddess. Great and bounteous is she… came from the Heavens" (Rao, 2014, p. 35).

Not only does the novel reflect the enslavement and subjugation of the Indian masses under British colonial rule, but it also highlights the issue of British colonialists collaborating with Brahmanism to sustain colonialism. It attests to how the British recruited Indian citizens and employed them in powerful positions to reinforce their colonial rule. This aptly illustrates a Machiavellian idea, where in the fifth chapter of *The Prince*, Machiavelli outlines three ways in which a colonial power can solidify its rule in a colonized state, mirroring British colonial policy. Machiavelli (1532) explicates that: "when states newly acquired as I said have been accustomed to living freely under their own laws, there are three ways to hold them securely; first, by devastating them; next, by going and living there in person; thirdly, by letting them keep their own laws, exacting tribute, and setting up an oligarchy which will keep the state friendly to you" (Machiavelli, 2003, p. 18). The third way indicated by Machiavelli is clearly delineated in the novel through a twofold subservient oligarchy established by British colonialists: one part consists of policemen who seize military control of the village folk, and the other comprises Brahmins, who perpetuate a cultural hierarchy that relegates the peasantry and all non-Brahmins to a status of permanent inferiority.

Since colonialism has further widened the gap between ethnic identities through class divisions, Rao portrays this reality in the novel. The village is divided into a number of quarters; the Brahmin quarter, potters' quarter, weavers' quarter and pariahs' quarter, which are solely based on caste and community. In the village of Kanthapura, the caste system is rigid and the village is primarily controlled by the high-caste Brahmins, whilst the lowest caste is known as the Pariahs. Through a closed interpretive reading, the reader can discern a Marxian reinterpretation of the elitist status of the Brahmins, who are positioned at the top of the caste hierarchy. This interpretation is supported by the belief that they are a privileged class entitled to perform the samskaras, the primary rituals of Hinduism. Considering the sociopolitical status quo in India, the inherent stratification of culture also entails a stratification of wealth and power. Approaching from this point, one can unquestionably notice that "In Kanthapura, under the influence of Gandhi, social protest becomes, on the one hand, a movement to reform the egalitarian Indian society and, on the other, a movement to end British colonialism" (Parthasarathy, 2014, p. 14).

Consistent with the principles of Gandhian national consciousness, Rao recontextualizes Gandhi's counter-discursive stance on the caste system by challenging Brahmin hegemonic beliefs and exposing the hierarchical systems that continue to oppress other castes. This recontextualization is illustrated through the protagonist Moorthy, who, although a Brahmin, repudiates his social class consciousness. As a result, he becomes an outcast within the Brahmin community for his efforts against untouchability, a situation that also mirrors Gandhi, who was himself a Brahmin. More importantly, this recontextualization of Moorthy reveals a conflict between Brahmanism and

nationalism. This conflict thematically underlies Fanon's countervailing against the concept of purity in race and religion. Emphasizing any kind of purity inevitably distorts the idea that certain people should be excluded, while others, due to a hierarchical structure, are unjustly included as part of the nation's core. Rao rightly observes the inclusion/exclusion dialectic that aligns with Fanon's emphasis on a national culture that fosters inclusion rather than exclusion.

Rao's praxis of national consciousness through his intellectual writing resonates as a focal point in complementing Fanon's intellectual resistance. Moorthy, the young Brahmin who leaves his village Kanthapura to study in the city and later becomes well-versed in Gandhi's philosophy, soon materializes his powers of transformation by becoming an activist and vocally opposing the caste system. He also asserts control over his national consciousness by spreading his influence unrestrictedly through the implementation of Gandhian principles of counter-colonial resistance, driven by his passion for combating casteism and his commitment to its eradication. Fanon corroborates that casteism is the underbelly of colonialism, leading to an incremental divide within the colonized population: "The new caste is an affront all the more disgusting in that the immense majority, nine-tenths of the population, continue to die of starvation" (1963, p. 165); this geopolitics of aggression, although threatening, catalyses in the oppressed masses an incendiary awakening: "The scandalous enrichment, speedy and pitiless, of this caste is accompanied by a decisive awakening on the part of the people, and a growing awareness that promises stormy days to come" (ibid.).

Rao substantiates in the novel that some members of the Brahmin community have experienced vicissitudes in their social class consciousness through the prototypical example of Moorthy. Moorthy is punitively castigated and ostracized by the Brahmins, becoming a social outcast. He eventually finds refuge with Rangamma, an educated and politically active widow, who introduces him to the Indian independence movement. Moorthy abandons English clothes and mannerisms in favour of a traditional Indian style. This choice represents a deliberate stance against the assimilation of colonial ideologies and helps to shape him into an influential figure embodying national consciousness. Another instance is when a number of village folks follow in Moorthy's footsteps: "Chandru and Ramu, and then came Pandit Venkateshia and Front-house Sami's son, Srinivas, and Kittu, and so Kittu and Srinivas and Puttu and Ramu and Chandru and Seenu, threw away their foreign clothes and became Gandhi's men" (Rao, 2014, p. 47). This hinges upon a Fanonian explication that "The native intellectual has clothed his aggressiveness in his barely veiled desire to assimilate himself to the colonial world. He has used his aggressiveness to serve his own individual interests" (Fanon, 1963, p. 58).

As a consequence, Moorthy adopts a dual approach that integrates both Fanonian and Gandhian principles of resistance. Initially, he embodies a Fanonian praxis when the British

government accuses him of instigating violence, leading to his arrest. In this phase, he uses physical resistance against the police as part of his struggle against colonialism. In the second phase, Moorthy adopts a Gandhian praxis. After being imprisoned for three months and refusing to let the committee volunteers pay his bail, he embraces Gandhi's teachings on non-violence. Moorthy stages a three-day fast to protest against India's colonial rulers, an experience that ultimately leaves him feeling liberated . When Moorthy is released from prison, he is greeted as a hero by the village. In conclusion, the novel presents struggle through a twofold lens, incorporating both Gandhian and Fanonian principles of resistance with some nuances. On one hand, it portrays a struggle against colonial Britain that aligns with Fanon's concept of resistance to a colonial power, even as it evolves into a non-violent approach. On the other hand, it depicts a social protest aimed at reforming Indian society, reflecting the Gandhian praxis outlined in *Hind Swaraj*.

This highlights the struggle against assimilation into an alien culture through British cultural subjugation. Paralleling Cabral's notion of culture as "an element of resistance to foreign domination..." (Cabral, 1974, p. 54), Rao's novel serves as a cultural tract that utilizes and promotes a cultural revival through the incorporation of indigenous themes and motifs. This revivalist model offers an authentic account of history in contrast to the distorted historical narratives crafted by European powers. Rao is aware that religion plays a crucial role in awakening people from passivity, motivating them to develop active political consciousness and, if necessary, sacrifice their lives. *Kanthapura*, therefore, evokes a sense of national community and a spirit of restless freedom, which is conceived as a spiritual quality that overcomes all obstacles and crosses all barriers.

As Moorthy leads the people of Kanthapura in playing an integral and active role in Gandhi's non-violent struggle towards attaining freedom, he duly recognizes that religion is a crucial factor in shaping their mindset. As a result, he integrates Gandhian principles of non-violence and satyagraha into the framework of national resistance. He believes that traditional Harikatha is an effective tool for spreading Gandhian ideology among orthodox communities. As a consequence, a Harikatha is performed, which dramatically enacts Mahatma's birth as a reincarnation of Krishna, the god of love and compassion. Moorthy illustrates the interrelationship between Gandhi and the gods by demonstrating that both resisted their enemies in parallel ways: "You remember how Krishna, when he was but a babe of four, had begun to fight against demons and had killed the serpent Kali. So too our Mohandas began to fight against the enemies of the country" (Rao, 2014, p. 22).

Gandhian spiritual humanism, when infused with nationalism, is exemplified by Moorthy's fasting in prison and the villagers' sacrifice of all their material possessions. This dedication sharpens their focus on the non-materialistic, spiritual outcomes of the national resistance movement. More essentially, Gandhi's contribution to the economic sphere through Swadeshi can be delineated in the

novel; Moorthy under the influence of Gandhian rudimentary principles, goes to the city and comes back with cotton and spinning wheels. In line with Cabral's national vision, achieving reformist discourses that promote indigenous consciousness requires that the people of the colonized nation become aware of imperialistic exploitation. According to Cabral, one way a colonial power exerts control over a nation is by dominating its economic situation. As a result, achieving economic transcendence requires not only controlling the means of production but also a fundamental shift in collective mentality. For example, the people of Kanthapura begin to recognize that they are being economically exploited due to Britain's imperialistic expansion into their country: "But they buy foreign yarn, and foreign yarn is bought with our money, and all this money goes across the oceans. Our gold should be in our country. And our cotton should be in our country "(Rao, 2014, p. 52). Thus, their movement towards freedom focuses on achieving economic transcendence within the village by producing Indian cotton and distributing it freely to the local villagers: "the cotton is given free" (Rao, 2014, p. 53), says Moorthy, and when asked about the reason for its non-profitable distribution, he says:

> 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. (Rao, 2014, p. 53)

By aligning with Cabral's idea that the colonized must reclaim their national productive forces and free themselves from all forms of foreign domination for national liberation to occur, Achakka illustrates through various circumstances how, following Gandhi's arrival, the primary occupations of the people of Kanthapura become agriculture and cotton spinning. Moorthy immediately frames resistance in his novel through a threefold lens of Fanonism, Cabralism, and Gandhism. Intellectual resistance is exemplified by Fanon when Moorthy returns to the village with books to be shared among the villagers. Economic resistance, as highlighted by Cabral and Gandhi's Swadeshi movement, involves controlling the means of production. This is demonstrated through the distribution of cotton-spinning wheels and the instruction for the people to produce khadi[4]: "Moorthy with a bundle of khadi on his back and a bundle of books in his arms" (Rao, 2014, p. 80). By promoting Gandhian pockets of resistance, he aims to empower the deprived class economically, helping them overcome their marginalized status. This effort to improve their working conditions

aligns with Gandhi's critiques of untouchability. To instantiate, Moorthy goes to the Skeffington coffee estate, where workers are exploited physically, mentally, and sexually: "Moorthy would go up to the Skeffington Coffee Estate, for there, too, were Pariahs and they, too, wanted to read and to write" (Rao, 2014, p. 85). Moorthy realizes that the workers are not receiving their proper wages and that the treatment of the coolies by the policeman, White Sahib, is exceedingly cruel and brutal. This situation leads Moorthy to a heated confrontation.

Pockets of Gandhian resistance of female empowerment in *Kanthapura*

Gandhi envisions India's transformation by advocating that women are essential to the country's evolution into a civilized nation. Gandhi's demand for the rights of the female sex is also interwoven into his *Hind Swaraj*. His contribution was far-reaching in bringing awareness to the masses about the need for improvement in the status of women. He declares:

> I am uncompromising in the matter of women's rights. I have always had a passion to serve the womankind. Ever since my arrival in India, the women have come to look upon me as one of themselves. I hold radical views about the emancipation of women from their fetters which they mistake for adornment. My experience has confirmed me in the view that the real advancement of women can only come by and through their own efforts. (Dalton, 1995, p. 33)

In the abovementioned quotation, Gandhi articulates his steadfast commitment to the cause of women's rights and emancipation, asserting a profound dedication to improving the status and condition of women altogether. His declaration of being "uncompromising" signifies a resolute stance against any forms of gender inequality or injustice, and his assertion of having "a passion to serve the womankind" reflects an enduring commitment to advancing women's rights, indicating that this advocacy is both a personal and a political conviction. Interestingly, Gandhi asserts a modern approach to feminism by stating that genuine progress for women will be achieved through their own proactive efforts. This perspective implies that women's empowerment is intrinsically connected to their self-initiated actions and self-determination, rather than being solely reliant on external support or changes imposed by others. In this context, *Kanthapura* reinterprets Gandhian principles by advocating for the active role of women in the socio-political, economic, and cultural spheres. It presents a new image of Indian women who are integral to the development of Indian national consciousness and indigenous identity. A case in point is "An Analysis of Kanthapura by Raja Rao: A Postcolonial Study" (2021), where the researchers explicate that "To understand the model of

cultural identity by Rao, it is essential to situate the women of the novel within the movement of freedom" (Butt et al., 2021, p. 4703). This approach is crucial because it challenges the traditional segregation that confines women to private spaces. Within this positionality, given that the novel focuses on Gandhi's nationalism, one can clearly dissect the important role of women shaped under the auspices of Gandhi within a nationalist scope.

Rao's *Kanthapura* is a distinct marker of contesting chauvinistic Brahmin culture, as it reflects Gandhi's opposition to it by advocating for women to join the independence movement. On this basis, women's involvement should not be confined to mere rhetoric but should be a concrete praxis. This is something Fanon infers when he states: "Women will have exactly the same place as men, not in the clauses of the constitution but in the life of every day: in the factory, at school, and in the parliament, prescribed and controlled by a dominant system of representation, is regarded as their struggle for interpretive power" (Fanon, 1963, p. 202). The postcolonial condition should not exclude women simply because of their biological sex. Thus, interpreting gender in this way often results in a negative bias that marginalizes women, particularly those from third-world colonized countries, within the praxis of re-existence. Indeed, critics like W. D. Ashcroft (1989) argue that "In patriarchal, eurocentric, phallogocentric culture the feminine and the post-colonial both exist in this dark chthonic region of otherness and non-being" (Ashcroft, 1989, p. 23).

Women's positionality in occupying peripheral territories within hegemonic discourses is central to Gandhi's philosophical and humanist credo. This is because it seeks to challenge the dominant cultural and traditional misogynistic systems that impose essentialist notions and ideological constraints on women based solely on their biological sex. By way of exploring this ontological inferiority, Spivak (1994) instantiates in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" a primeval patriarchal tradition called the Sati, which mainly encourages women to internalize a widow-burning tradition practised in many parts of India. This misogynistic practice proclaims that the widow prefers to be burned alive as a way to be reunited with her husband, which in turn would enable the widow to display her purity and preserve local traditions. Henceforth, this immediacy of sanctimonious female performativity demonstrates how Brahmin and other local traditions in India have silenced and muted women

Kanthapura serves as a rebuttal to the patriarchal vision endorsed by these local traditions. Rao incorporates Hindu philosophy by depicting women as different forms of Shakti, which represents a striking reversal of traditional dogmas that exclude women from influential roles. Emphasizing this point, Rao opens a pathway for women into a post-colonial positionality by re-contextualizing the traditional, patriarchal image of the submissive, inferior, delicate, and coy Indian woman. He replaces this stereotype with a philosophical and cultural depiction of women as strong

and resilient, enduring challenging and harsh situations. As Shakti[5] rises within them, the women of Kanthapura become symbolic icons of nationalism. They are not only physically prepared but also psychologically equipped for colonial resistance. As Parthasarathy notes "Voluble, with an infinite capacity for love and for malice, quick to spark into enthusiasm and into cynicism, the women of Kanthapura are more human than those created by Raja Rao elsewhere... One realizes that the immanent Shakti rises in every woman at certain pivotal points of life" (2014, p. 9). This observation underscores how the women's psychological and emotional readiness, inspired by these examples, aligns with the idea of Shakti emerging at crucial moments in their lives.

In "Contesting Identities: Involvement and resistance of women in the Indian National Movement" Rumina Sethi analyses *Kanthapura* as a blueprint for incorporating Indian women within "the process of building Indian national identity through literature and its writing by the Indian nationalist intelligentsia" (2010, p. 305). As previously mentioned, this process has established a recognizable pattern within *Kanthapura*, manifesting in various forms and discourses. It becomes clear that the postcolonial discourse on resistance serves not only as a malleable bulwark for positioning the male character in the novel but also for incorporating the female presence by shifting the focus to female engagement. This becomes evident through the intersection of Cabral's ideas with the female positionality in the novel. The first intersection is seen in Cabral's concept of the means of production, as illustrated by Moorthy's imprisonment. Later, the women of *Kanthapura* take charge, forming a volunteer corps under Rangamma's leadership. In this context, when meeting with the village women, Rangamma responds by bluntly saying, "All the heroic daughters who fight for the Mother—and we, we think of nothing but the blowpipe and the broomstick, and the milking of the many cows. We, too, should organize a Volunteer corps, and when Moorthy returns we shall go to meet him like they do in the city" (Rao, 2014, p. 161).

Another point of intersectionality is Cabral's idea of national consciousness, which is interrelated with culture. Rangamma and, subsequently, Ratna, motivate the women by stories of strong women from Indian history to instil in them a sense of resistance. As one of the few educated women in the village, Rangamma is imbued with modern views and is actively involved in the freedom struggle. More importantly, she becomes a great asset to Moorthy in organizing Congress work in the village. Rangamma is regarded as the village's pseudo-scholar, and her house becomes a hub that embodies Gandhian principles of intellectual and economic guidance: "They said Rangamma's house was now becoming something of a Congress House, and there they were always piling books and books, and they had even brought spinning wheels from the city" (Rao, 2014, p. 52). Ratna is also reciprocal to Rangamma; she is a 15-year-old child widow who is discerned throughout the novel to be vigorously influenced by modern ideas. She takes a keen interest in Gandhi's

principles and his freedom movement while rejecting the inviolable patriarchal dogmas of her society regarding her gender.

Ratna cultivates the *zeitgeist* of national culture; whilst constantly being criticized and ostracized by the village and treated as a pariah for her views and unconventional ways, she nevertheless does not care and, instead, chooses her own path and stands by it with resoluteness and determination. Ratna conducts the Harikathas, and after Rangamma's death and Moorthy's arrest, she continues their work by serving as a leader. Additionally, she upholds a Fanonian emphasis on resistance by displaying courage in the face of governmental repression and police brutality. More essentially, Fanon explores in his chapter "Case No. 1: Impotence in an Algerian following the rape of his wife" how sexual violence, specifically rape, is committed in colonial Algeria to subjugate women who resist the occupation by tabulating a number of cases of Algerian women raped by French soldiers. In a similar vein, Ratna is raped by a policeman and then brutally beaten. Following a Cabralian model, Ratna's indigenous consciousness is primarily fostered through uniting women towards a common goal of national resistance:

> Ratna would say, 'now, I'll tell you stories like Rangamma,' and she told us of the women of Bombay who were beaten and beaten, and yet would not move till their brothers were freed, and the flag that they hoisted and the carts and the cars and the trains they stopped, and the women of Sholapur who, hand in hand, had marched through the streets, for twenty-five of their men had been shot…, but the women said, 'We are behind our men,' and they cried, 'Vandè Mataram!' and they said, 'Give us back our men!' and not a tear they shed, for they worked for the Mahatma and the Mother. (Rao, 2014, p. 224)

This narrative exemplifies the revolutionary spirit and national consciousness that Ratna instils in the women of Kanthapura. Ultimately, this spirit is further developed during the final phase of peaceful yet tumultuous resistance orchestrated by Ratna at the end of the novel. The significance of the women of Kanthapura emerges as they unite across caste lines to resist the British colonial invaders. Despite facing severe oppression, including the destruction of their village by the police and British army, they continue their struggle and remain steadfast in their loyalty to Gandhi's nationalistic ideals.

Conclusion

As the 70-year reign of Queen Elizabeth II came to an end in 2022, India demanded that the United Kingdom return its jewel, the Koh-i-Noor, which was placed on her crown and is considered the

world's most expensive diamond. On this premise, *Kanthapura* traces a recurring pattern that still negotiates a counter-discursive staple, which grounds the discussion that India still suffers from the perils of imperialistic expansionism. In this regard, it is concluded that Gandhi's polemical praxis is an indispensable tool for the nexus of the novel. Throughout the span of his life, Gandhi struggled against the triadic forms of destructiveness and evil afflicting India. First, is British colonial rule, which he inherently believed impoverished the Indians as it destabilized their economic landscape through their cotton and cloth-making industries. The second was the years of religious tension that spilled over into cataclysmic violence, generated by Hindu-Muslim friction. In this turn, the perils of this disunity go co-extensively with the current events; this incessancy of religious friction can still be palpable in 2022, where India is still witnessing a spiralling new pattern of communal tension between Muslims and Hindus, with Muslim communities especially facing the harshest punishments. The last was the gratuitous rule-governed Hindu tradition of classifying an enormous number of Indians into the caste of "untouchables". It is valid to maintain that novels like *Kanthapura* can be said to subsist not only for Indians but for people with different ideologies and religions because unity is the essential element for achieving independence.

By highlighting cultural and civilizational diversity and memory, this study's findings reveal that the strength of such a hermeneutic reading lies in its portrayal of Kanthapura as a novel that borders on cultural nationalism. The research uncovers that the text is deeply local, politically motivated, and underpinned by the oppressive and resistant tensions of its era. Races and castes in *Kanthapura*, intertwined with the theoretical frameworks, bespeak the urgency of our contemporaneous time. This premise is a corollary to considering the writer Rao, along with Gandhi, Fanon, and Cabral, as the overtures to resistant praxis. To conclude, Gandhi, Rao, Fanon, and Cabral have prognosticated the future, as their insightful countenance on abrogating colonialism and imperialistic expansionism still bears resemblance to what is happening in our modern times. As you are reading along these lines, another soul, home, land, and city are being ravaged by a colonial power for imperialistic means.

Endnotes:

[1] Untouchability is a term for outcasts and a form that verifies institutionalized practices that legitimize exclusionist, discriminatory, and exploitative acts against people who belong to certain social groups. This term is also incorporated in Rao's novel to refer to Kanthapura's pariahs.

[2] One of the many movements towards attaining national independence in India advocated boycotting foreign manufactured goods and encouraging citizens instead to produce and use local products.

[3] Harikatha is a "South Indian genre of storytelling with religious themes that combines poetry, philosophy, song, dance and theatre" (LitCharts).

[4] Khadi is a hand-woven Indian cloth made by the indigenous Indian populace that Gandhi encouraged his people to wear and boycott British-made cloth.

[5] David R. Kinsley explains the concept of Shakti as follows: "Sakti [shakti] means 'power'; in Hindu philosophy and theology, sakti is understood to be the active dimension of the godhead, the divine power that underlies the godhead's ability to create the world and to display itself... It is quite common, furthermore, to identify sakti with a female being, a goddess, and to identify the other pole with her male consort." (1986, 133)

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