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The Impact of Indian Independence Movement on the select Novels of Raja Rao

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Biography

Indian Writing in English is influenced by Gandhian ideology. Gandhi emphasized more on social, political, and religious problems of the oppressed and down trodden lower castes in Hindu society. His aim was to abolish poverty, caste system and untouchability from society. The present study reveals prominently the influence of Mahatma Gandhi on the village of Kanthapura. 'Kanthapura' is the microcosm of the Indian traditional society and what happened in Kanthapura was also happened in India during 1919-1930. It is not only a political novel, but also a novel which concerns with socio-religious and economic transformation during the struggle for independence. 'Kanthapura' follows Gandhi's doctrine and ideology of non-violence, Satyagraha, their views on untouchability and casteism etc. The novel can be considered Gandhi-epic. Gandhi aroused national awakening in Indians with his non-violent struggle for freedom movement which was strengthened by noncooperation and civil disobedience movement in Kanthapura village. Gandhi's influential personality and his ideology is felt everywhere in the novel. Indeed, Gandhi doesn't appear in this novel personally, but the plot of the novel revolves around his ideology. This research article, 'Gandhi's Ideology: A Study of Raja Rao's Kanthapura' aims at how the Gandhi's ideology influenced Raja Rao which resulted in the creation of the character of Moorthy. It also focuses on how Moorthy, under the influence of Gandhi, tries to inspire the people towards the freedom struggle.

Raja Rao (8 November 1908 – 8 July 2006) was an Indian writer of English-language novels and short stories, whose works are deeply rooted in Metaphysics. Raja Rao was born on November 8, 1908 in Hassan, in the princely state of Mysore (now in Karnataka in South India), into a Smartha Brahmin family of the Hoysala Karnataka caste. He was the eldest of 9 siblings, having seven sisters and a brother named Yogeshwara Ananda. His father, H.V. Krishnaswamy, taught Kannada, the native language of Karnataka, at Nizam College in Hyderabad. His mother, Gauramma, was a homemaker who died when Raja Rao was 4 years old.

Raja Rao the name of a maestro who fought for the Indian caste system and other social issues which was deeply predicted in 'Kanthapura' and 'The Serpent of the Rope'. Raja Rao's style and language has the image of the Indian Philosophical view of 'The Serpent and the Rope' (1960), a semi-autobiographical novel recounting a search for spiritual truth in Europe and India, established him as one of the finest Indian prose stylists. Rao's wide-ranging body of work, spanning a number of genres, is seen as a varied and significant contribution to Indian English literature, as well as World literature, as a whole.

The death of his mother, when he was four, left a lasting impression on the novelist – the absence of a mother and orphan-hood are recurring themes in his work.

Rao moved to the University of Montpellier in France. He studied French language and literature, and later at the Sorbonne in Paris, he explored the Indian influence on Irish literature. He married Camille Mouly, who taught French at Montpellier, in 1931. The marriage lasted until 1939. Later he depicted the breakdown of their marriage in 'The Serpent and the Rope'. Later, he gave speech about Gandhian Ideology and philosophical view and the existence of philosophy was clearly shown in his novels. Rao died of heart failure on 8 July 2006, at his home in Austin, Texas, at the age of 97.

Gandhi was the first Indian national leader to realize that it was not possible to revolutionize people without drawing upon the resources of their religion. He was the leader of India and abroad, not only for his struggle for Indian independence, but also for his immaculate character. Raja Rao's confidence in Gandhian thought



led him to idealize Mahatma Gandhi as a true saint. In this novel, Rao depicts Mahatma Gandhi as an emblem of divine power. Gandhi is presented as an incarnation of Krishna who will assuage the distress of the Indians. Gandhi would kill the snake of foreign rule as Krishna had killed the snake Kalia. The novelist elevates the Gandhian movement to a mythological plan. Rao illustrates a fine analogy of Ram and Ravana - Ram for Mahatma Gandhi and Ravana for the British Government. In this novel, Mother India or freedom is compared with Sita, Gandhi is presented as Ram and Jawaharlal Nehru is considered to his brother Bharat. Rao's faith in Gandhian thought led him to idealize Gandhi as a true God. In Kanthapura Mahatma Gandhi is depicted as an emblem of divine power as well as great reality. The theme of the novel, "Gandhi and Our Village" has a mythical significance in that the past blends with the present. The age old faith of the villagers that gods walk by lighted streets of Kanthapura during the month of Kartik indicates that the myth co-exists with the contemporary reality.

Thus, Raja Rao's maiden novel Kanthapura presents the Gandhian ideology of non-violence and the abolition of untouchability. The great importance given to caste, the mythical presentation of Gandhi and mother India and the spiritualization of the freedom movement within the parameters of Indian cultural convention imply the tremendous impact of Gandhian ideology in 'Kanthapura'.

Raja Rao's language is such that it undoubtedly evokes an Indian atmosphere and an authentically Indian reaction in the west. His language has shaken "all traces of foreign acquisition and begun to assert its inalienable rights as an independent idiom. The word has become the perception". The words in his novels assume the significance of Mantra in so many places and no other novelist has been able to come nearer his innovative technique, rich and distinctive handling of the English language. No doubt, Raja Rao has earned the reputation of an innovator in the field of fiction. The range of life and the levels of consciousness which he deals with in his fiction are, indeed, remarkable, besides, he has created an adequate, so suitable, medium for the expression of his temporal and timeless, metaphysical and social, immediately local as well as international thoughts. Raja Rao is rather undoubtedly the first major Indian novelist writing in English that the 'Indianness of this writing should make for not only a typically Indian content but a characteristically Indian form as well. As a true representative of the modern Indian ethos which combines the ancient Indian tradition and modern western attitudes, Raja Rao presents a remarkable combination of narrative style and techniques of modern western fiction and age-old Hindu methods of literary expression. The style, use of language and narrative technique deserve true recognition from all literary circles and he is out and out an innovator in the use of language, style and technique. "One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word 'Alien' yet English is not really an Alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make up - like Sanskrit or Persian was before - but not of our emotional make up. We are all indistinctively bilingual many of us writing in our own language and in English. 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. After language, the next problem is that of style. The tempo of Indian life must be infused into our English expression as the tempo of American or Irish life has gone into the making of theirs.

Theme

Raja Rao's (2001) 'Kanthapura' is an early post-colonial novel that successfully experiments the potential of language and literature to decolonize the minds. Rao has whetted the colonizing master's own tools such as the English language to dismantle the master's "euro-centric" house and to renovate it so as to have space for the "natives" who are "othered" to the margins of the mainstream world-consciousness. Rao has asserted the Indianness in English not only through an acculturation in language but also through fusing the native



techniques and styles in the English form of novel. He takes the novel form from the Western tradition and at the same time refuses such a categorization by making Kanthapura a Puranic text. Originally a sort of Hindu genesis, purana has been adopted for secular documents of several types. The very nature of purana permits Rao to write a sectarian narrative with an ancient flavour, enabling Kanthapura to achieve the dimensions of a typical Indian narrative. The narration, description, philosophical reflection, religious teachings, digression in time, exaggeration of events, etc. in Kanthapura corresponds to the puranas. The very opening description of the village is in the spirit of a sthala-purana that gives a divine dimension to the topography: the Kenchamma hill, the Skeffington Coffee Estate, the temple of Kanthapurishwari, and the river Himavathy, all become “at once landscape, life, history, people, ideas and ideals” (RAO, 1980, p. 50). Kanthapura, a bold attempt at the assimilation of contemporary history into freedom, treats the impact of Gandhi on the people. Through Moorthy, the novel introduces almost all the major events of the Indian struggle for freedom in which Gandhi was the leading voice. Actually Gandhi’s character was not introduced; only his voice leads the plot. The novel depicts a strong bounded theme, renders Gandhi’s influence on the people with skill and understanding. ‘Kanthapura’ is in India, in microcosm and the narrative is the story of rural India responding to the call of Mahatma Gandhi for freedom. Rao has also made a conscious use of myth as a part of his narrative technique to delineate the impact of Mahatma Gandhi on the unlettered villagers in an obscure village. By virtue of his legend-oriented genius, Rao’s treatment of the freedom struggle is “neither anachronistic nor over-indulgent but satisfying aesthetic instinct and demand of relevance” (Chakravorthy 4). The immediate concern of the novelist is Gandhian struggle for freedom. Moorthy, a fearless Brahmin boy, is studying in a college in the city. He listens to Gandhi’s address and is totally changed. He gives up his college education because it is rooted in foreign culture, burns his books as well as Western clothes, becomes a ‘Gandhi man’ and returns to Kanthapura. There are two men in Kanthapura who obstruct Moorthy’s reformist zeal – Bhatta, a Brahmin astrologer-turned-moneylender and the police constable, Bade Khan who has been sent by the Government to spy on and sabotage Moorthy’s Gandhian activities. As a legendary history of a small village caught in the maelstrom of the freedom struggle of the 1930s, Kanthapura is firmly rooted in the soil. Kanthapura is not simply a political novel just as Gandhian struggle was not exclusively a political movement. Gandhi spiritualized politics and Kanthapura portrays the story of the resurgence of India under Gandhi’s leadership through the intermingling of myths and facts, legends and history. Kanthapura is a Gandhi Purana and the central character Moorthy, is a ‘Gandhiman.’ A mere vision has changed the course of his life, and since then he has found the mission of his being. How Moorthy has been impressed by Gandhi forms an interesting part of the novel. Moorthy abandons his scholastic pursuits, and becomes a ‘Gandhiman.’ This is a concrete illustration of mythicizing Gandhian impact on the people. In ‘The Serpent and the Rope’ is so adroitly assimilated into the text that it spontaneously unfolds the theme of eternal love. The mythicizing of Mahatma Gandhi as Rama and Krishna in Kanthapura makes him an eternal hero. Raja Rao’s mythic design is more effective than that of several other Indian novelists writing in English such as. R. K. Narayan’s ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’.

Thus the two narrative structures, mythical and realistic, are constantly in conflict with each other, one trying to negate the other. In this chapter we have discussed the struggle for freedom in Kanthapura. The struggle in Kanthapura initiated the freedom struggle of Gandhi. Moorthy acted as the representative of Gandhi in Kanthapura village. Like Gandhi, here Moorthy faced a lot of problems like untouchability and social discrimination but finally Moorthy unites the Kanthapura village. Though he was excommunicated, he worked for the village and finally succeeds. We have also analyzed the myths in Kanthapura and seen Gandhi achieving national freedom. In the following chapter we will discuss the National freedom as found in The Serpent and the Rope and The Cat and Shakespeare. The major theme of the novel, Moorthy, the Gandhian spokesman, does not protest against the economic exploitation of the country. “Our gold should



be in our country. And our cotton should be in our country”, he tells the Kanthapurians (RAO, 2001, p. 24). He educates the women-folk on how they are made to buy their own rice at high rates, and suggest them to do husking at home rather than selling their grains to the mill-agents. The style, language and theme are the main narrative part of every novel. Raja Rao’s ‘Kanthapura’ and ‘The Serpent of the Rope’ both are the portraiture of the socio political utterance of so called society and the characters sketch has beautifully crafted by Raja Rao is versatile and unique. The mythological language of Purana, depiction of Gandhian Ideology and ‘Moorthy’ the small boy how he followed Gandhi and became Gandhi man, is inexplicable in this novel.

Major Influences

Though Raja Rao started his writing career in Kannada he has proved himself to be a great writer in English. He has many novels to his credit and to quote a few ‘Kanthapura’, The Serpent and the Rope, The Cat and Shakespeare, Comred Kirillov, The Chess Master and His Moves. He has not only written novels but also short stories. Raja Rao proved himself to be a unique stylist because of his first novel’s (Kanthapura) puranic quality. “The project on Raja Rao was undertaken during the seventies when the major works of all the Indian writers in English born in the first quarter of this century had already been written, appreciated and tabled as incontrovertible evidence of ‘Indianness’ from its modest beginning in the preceding century, the subcontinent’s creative effort in English has been for quite some time deeply involved in the question of national identity seeking expression in an alien medium. Taken together Raja Rao’s writings present a rich experience of Indian life at many levels and he is certainly a major Indo-Anglican novelist. All of Raja Rao’s novels explore philosophical concepts.

- I. Kanthapura- ‘Kanthapura’ is the first novel of Raja Rao. The impact of Gandhi and freedom movement on a remote village is depicted in this novel. It is a narrative novel. The narrator of this novel is an elderly woman, widow, who narrates the story in an Indian style. Like his short stories we can find blending of truth and imagination, poetry and strangeness, history and legend in Kanthapura. ‘Kanthapura’ is remarkable in many ways; the narrator is a grandmother (usually Grandmothers are well known for telling stories in India). She tells the story of Indian freedom movement in which she had taken part. The spontaneity and Indianness and feminine tone can be noticed in her story. She is typical Indian Grandmother. While reading the novel we come across many humorous statements also. No village in India is free from superstitions. Even Kanthapura is not an exception. She uses the names of many Gods and Goddesses. Here Gandhi is compared to Rama and the British particularly the (Police Inspector) is compared to a soldier in Ravan’s army. Satyagrah is divine and ironically Krishna himself is in Kamsa's prison! In this novel even the trivial things gain importance because they are glorified. We can find racism in this novel. By this we come to know about caste consciousness among the Indians. The political revolution is also portrayed in this novel very well.

Kanthapura, a bold attempt at the assimilation of contemporary history into freedom, treats the impact of Gandhi on the people. Through Moorthy, the novel introduces almost all the major events of the Indian struggle for freedom in which Gandhi was the leading voice. Actually Gandhi’s character was not introduced; only his voice leads the plot. Civil Disobedience Movement including the Dandi March, Satyagraha, Non-cooperation with the alien government, the crusade against untouchability, spinning chakhra and wearing khadi find vivid mention in the narrative. The novelist renders Gandhi’s influence on the people with skill and understanding. Kanthapura is in India, in microcosm and the narrative is the story of rural India responding to the call of Mahatma Gandhi for



freedom. Rao has also made a conscious use of myth as a part of his narrative technique to delineate the impact of Mahatma Gandhi on the unlettered villagers in an obscure village. By virtue of his legend-oriented genius, Rao's treatment of the freedom struggle is "neither anachronistic nor over-indulgent but satisfying aesthetic instinct and demand of relevance" (Chakravorthy 4). The immediate concern of the novelist is Gandhian struggle for freedom.

Rao has displayed his individual talent in harmonizing Puranic myths, localized myths or the Sthala Purana (the legendary history of a place or village) and the popular rites and rituals to transform a local legend into a fine artistic creation. As a legendary history of a small village caught in the maelstrom of the freedom struggle of the 1930s, Kanthapura is firmly rooted in the soil. Kanthapura is not simply a political novel just as Gandhian struggle was not exclusively a political movement. Gandhi spiritualized politics and Kanthapura portrays the story of the resurgence of India under Gandhi's leadership through the intermingling of myths and facts, legends and history. Though the Mahatma is not directly presented as one of the characters in the novel, the entire action is sustained by the spirit of Gandhi. "Kanthapura" is "a Veritable Grammar of the Gandhian myth, the myth that is but a poetic translation of the reality. Kanthapura is a Gandhi Purana and the central character Moorthy, is a 'Gandhiman.' A mere vision has changed the course of his life, and since then he has found the mission of his being. How Moorthy has been impressed by Gandhi forms an interesting part of the novel. 'Kanthapura' is the story of an entire village community caught in the maelstrom of Gandhian politics. If a novel is marked by growth and development. In 'Kanthapura' he has used peasants' speech. Whenever they get angry peasants use abusive and vulgar language. So, Rao has used it more judiciously than Mulk Raj Anand. Rao has used peasants' speech because he wanted to express peasants' sensibility. Rao has used Indian imagery, proverbs and idioms. In his similes he has used the names of familiar animals. Sometimes he has used Indian words directly in English. He has used English as if it is his mother tongue so it speaks of his mastery over English.

II. The Serpent of the Rope- The Serpent and the Rope is an autobiographical-style novel by Raja Rao, first published in 1960 and the recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1964. The book explores themes of reality, existence, and self-realization. Throughout the novel, protagonist Ramaswamy's thought process develops in line with Vedantic philosophy.

Every incident or conversation that takes place in the life of the narrator is presented in the context of furthering or hindering his progress on his quest for truth and knowledge. The way the narrative is presented is as timeless as India itself, with the familiar blend of fact and fable. The novel tells the story of Rama and particularly his marriage while reflecting on the flavor and tradition of India. The novel also ruminates on themes of East meets west as Rama leaves his native India and moves to Europe.

Rama is described as a kind young man who is somewhat frail because of his tubercular lungs. He has been living and studying in France and has married a French woman, Madeleine. Rama plans to finish his thesis on the Albigensian heresy and then to move back to India, bringing Madeleine with him. Early on in the novel, from the moment Rama first references his wife, the reader gets a sense that something is not right in their marriage.

Rama has a hard time coming to terms with his feelings for Savithri, especially considering that he is married to someone else. At the same time, he feels that his love for Savithri is bringing him closer to understanding his own truth and following a path of integrity. In a climactic symbolic gesture, Rama gives the toe rings from Little Mother to Savithri. Considered an important marriage ritual in India, this bears great significance for the relationship between Rama and Savithri.



Rama goes back to France where Madeleine is pregnant. He once again leaves her for India and his sister's wedding. Rama needs to make an emergency visit to Bangalore for health reasons, and while he is there, he learns that Madeleine gave birth prematurely to a second son who has died. Soon afterward, he learns that Savithri has gotten married. He returns to France to be with Madeleine who has become deeply ingrained in her own Buddhist practice, withdrawing further from Rama.

It may be said that Raja Rao has created a style which reflects the rhythm and sensibilities of the Indian psyche and "Since it is Sanskrit that the Indian mind has found its most consummate linguistic expression, he has tried to adapt his English to the movement of Sanskrit sentences. Raja Rao is a cultural ambassador of India abroad. He has honoured not only India but England also by giving her a new variety of English. Lawrence Durrell writes that he has honoured English literature by writing *The Serpent and the Rope* in our language a truly contemporary work an age can measure itself its values". Despite his small output, Raja Rao is indisputably "the most 'Indian' of Indian English novelists, as probably the finest painter of the East – West confrontation, as symbolist, stylist and philosophical novelist, and as an original voice in modern fiction, undoubted remains secure" (Naik 173).

To sum up, Raja Rao's language is such that it undoubtedly evokes an Indian atmosphere and an authentically Indian reaction in the west. His language has shaken "all traces of foreign acquisition and begun to assert its inalienable rights as an independent idiom. The word has become the perception". The words in his novels assume the significance of Mantra in so many places and no other novelist has been able to come nearer his innovative technique, rich and distinctive handling of the English language. No doubt, Raja Rao has earned the reputation of an innovator in the field of fiction. The range of life and the levels of consciousness which he deals with in his fiction are, indeed, remarkable, besides, he has created an adequate, so suitable, medium for the expression of his temporal and timeless, metaphysical and social, immediately local as well as international thoughts. Raja Rao is rather undoubtedly the first major Indian novelist writing in English that the 'Indianness of this writing should make for not only a typically Indian content but a characteristically Indian form as well. As a true representative of the modern Indian ethos which combines the ancient Indian tradition and modern western attitudes, Raja Rao presents a remarkable combination of narrative style and techniques of modern western fiction and age-old Hindu methods of literary expression. Raja Rao is one of the versatile writers whose Indian colour of patriotism and protest both have been found in his writing.

Raja Rao emerged as a major writer of fiction after publishing his second novel 'The Serpent and the Rope' 'The Times Literary Supplement' called him India's greatest novelist. Since Raja Rao lived in Europe an outsider may think that he was an English writer but he was born in Karnataka, so, his roots are in Karnataka. He used to write prose and verse in his student days when he was in Hyderabad. Some of his writings are in Kannada. So his two versatile writing gave him the power of Indianness and the colour of freedom.

Early Literary Endeavor

Raja Rao presents a fictional world where man is constantly self-abnegating and self-alienating from the life giving traditional institutions of life. The process of this self-alienation has its initial start in the personal aversion towards materialistic complexities in the modern world. Dwivedi maintains: "He [Raja Rao] is a novelist who specializes in the handling of abstract themes and tense situations" (37). While the 'abstract themes' centre rounds the very mystery of life, the 'tense situations' are the result of self-emanating alienation syndrome in his novels.

In almost all his novels and short stories, Raja Rao presents the inordinate human crisis of Being-in-the-



world. His themes are metaphysical, his treatment is poetic, and his world of people is intensely tragic. Such tragedy presents the alienated state of man and unfolds itself within the bounds of cross pollinated philosophical systems. Sharma, commenting upon this tragic and philosophic nature of Raja Rao's novels, writes; "Kanthapura is a Puranic tale and is commonly regarded as a Gandhi Purana" (xii). He calls *The Serpent and the Rope* "a metaphysical tragedy," *The Cat and Shakespeare* "a metaphysical comedy," and *Comrade Kirillov* "a philosophical tragi-comedy" (xii).

Tragedy, as presented in the novels of Raja Rao, emerges out of the self-alienating conditions of civilized modern life. This condition is solely described the search for identity and the metaphysical colours of Rao. Thus, Raja Rao, through his fancy, takes us to the metaphysical facts and forces us to introspectively communicate with our own existence both inward and outward. In this regard *The Serpent and the Rope* is Raja Rao's most elaborate philosophical novel. Regarding 'The Serpent and the Rope' Raghavacharyulu observes: "Into its complex universe of discourse also enter themes and motifs such as the fact of human isolation, the ambivalent nature of human selfhood, the mysterious power of the abstracting intellect, the quest for identity and meaning, the whole struggle to discover or retrieve an existentialistic validity of the human personality in action" (34).

'Kanthapura', the first novel of Raja Rao, primarily deals with the Quit India phase of Indian freedom movement. But into its basic theme, Raja Rao has woven other themes also like the theme of conflict between moral and social commitments of man towards nature, society and himself. Raja Rao in his *Kanthapura* makes a unique formalistic experiment. Dey links it to "a stylized skaz" (58). The narrator of the story assumes upon herself the characteristic dispositions of the persons involved in the story retold. It is typically a dramatic demonstrative mode of storytelling. Raja Rao's story telling is exactly a model demonstration of granny telling the story, with the feel and fervour of the dramatic characters involved in the story. Later he depicted the breakdown of their marriage in *The Serpent and the Rope*. Rao published his first stories in French and English. During 1931–32 he contributed four articles written in Kannada for *Jaya Karnataka*, an influential journal.

The novel 'Kanthapura' (1938) was an account of the impact of Gandhi's teaching on nonviolent resistance against the British. The story is seen from the perspective of a small Mysore village in South India. Rao borrows the style and structure from Indian vernacular tales and folk-epic. Rao returned to the theme of Gandhism in the short story collection.

The Cow of the Barricades (1947). *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) was written after a long silence during which Rao returned to India. The work dramatized the relationships between Indian and Western culture. The serpent in the title refers to illusion and the rope to reality. *Cat and Shakespeare* (1965) was a metaphysical comedy that answered philosophical questions posed in the earlier novels.

Raja Rao is not a professional writer. He writes slowly; revises meditatively. Naturally there are long intervals between his works. Raja Rao's earliest novel was *Kanthapura* (1938) an Indian epic or "Purana" in English language. The novel echoes the spirit of Gandhi's impact on a remote south Indian village and is recorded in the chatty language of a village grandmother. For her, Gandhi is Rama, the red foreigners or the brown inspector Police is soldier in ten-headed Ravana's army. The novel has often been called "Gandhipurana" because of its avowal of Gandhian politics.

'Kanthapura' was followed by twenty years of prolonged silence after which came Raja Roy's second novel *The Serpent and the Rope*. It has been called the 'spiritual autobiography' of the novelist. It appeared in 1960 and critics who called *Kanthapura* as Raja Rao's *Ramayana* called this book as



Mahabharata. The novel records the journey of an Indian Lord Ramaswamy through the trouble of life both in India and abroad and culminates in his search for the "Guru. He travels to France and married Medeleine, has a child who dies within one year of birth, separated from his wife and returns to India. He realizes that "the serpent" is "Maya", the reality is the "rope" but the "Guru" with lantern is required to reveal this.

Raja Rao was a writer with a metaphysical bent who imbibed into English language the idiom, the rhythm and love of his vernacular (i.e. Kannada). He was a great spiritual thinker and his work depicts a unique blending of the spiritual, the regional and political ideals. He was also a worshipper of the 'feminine principle'. Santa Rama Rao considered Raja Rao as "perhaps the most brilliant and certainly the most interesting writer of modern India".

Later Literary Contribution

Kanthapura was followed by twenty years of prolonged silence after which came Raja Roy's second novel The Serpent and the Rope. It has been called the 'spiritual autobiography' of the novelist. It appeared in 1960 and critics who called Kanthapura as Raja Rao's Ramayana called this book as Mahabarata. The novel records the journey of an Indian Lord Ramaswamy through the trouble of life both in India and abroad and culminates in his search for the "Guru. He travels to France and married Medeleine, has a child who dies within one year of birth, separated from his wife and returns to India. He realizes that "the serpent" is "Maya", the reality is the "rope"-but the "Guru" with lantern is required to reveal this.

Next came The Cat and Shakespeare in 1965 which is best being called a 'philosophical comedy'. The sub-title of the novel is 'A Tale of Modern India'. The background of the novel is provided by the famine of 1942. The narration is a curious mixture of fantasy and realism. This was followed by Comrade Kirilliov (1976), a spiritual autobiography. Rao's most recent novel is The Chase master and His Moves (1988). The novel deals with a tale of doomed love between Shibaram Shastri an Indian mathematician and a married woman.

Raja Rao's credit also rest in his collection of short stories. He wrote three short stories collections - The Cow and The Barricades (1947), The Policeman and the Rose and Other Stories (1978) and On The Ganga Ghat (1993). These stories 20 Rajadealt with the same theme as his novels and have received a high critical acclaim. Besides, Raja Rao also wrote some non-fictional prose such as The Meaning of India, a collection of seventeen essays and a biography of Mahatma Gandhi entitled The Grater Indian Way (1998). In almost all his novels and short stories, Raja Rao presents the inordinate human crisis of Being-in-the-world. His themes are metaphysical, his treatment is poetic, and his world of people is intensely tragic. Such tragedy presents the alienated state of man and unfolds itself within the bounds of cross pollinated philosophical systems. Sharma, commenting upon this tragic and philosophic nature of Raja Rao's novels, writes; "Kanthapura is a Puranic tale and is commonly regarded as a Gandhi Purana" (xii). He calls The Serpent and the Rope "a metaphysical tragedy," The Cat and Shakespeare "a metaphysical comedy," and Comrade Kirillov "a philosophical tragi-comedy" (xii). Tragedy, as presented in the novels of Raja Rao, emerges out of the self-alienating conditions of civilized modern life. These conditions) though are able to uphold individuality) ultimately succeed in dehumanizing it. The individual's search for himself and his attempts to find the meaning and purpose of life give a metaphysical colour to the works of Raja Rao. It is in this context that he primarily attempts to present the quest of alienated modern man for truth, self, and his own identity in this complex world.

Rao relocated to the United States and was Professor of Philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin from 1966 to 1986, when he retired as Emeritus Professor. Courses he taught included Marxism to



Gandhism, Mahayana Buddhism, and Indian philosophy: The Upanishads, Indian philosophy: The Metaphysical Basis of the Male and Female Principle, and Razor's Edge.

A 'The Serpent and The Rope'

If 'Kanthapura' of Raja Rao is compared to the Ramayana, 'The Serpent and the Rope' should be compared to the Mahabharat. If the storyteller in Kanthapura is a Brahmin widow who is a minor character Rama (Ramaswamy) is the storyteller in 'The Serpent and The Rope' who is highly educated and a central character of the novel. Even Rama is a south Indian Brahmin the eldest son of the professor of mathematics at Hyderabad: he can proudly trace his lineage back to Madhwacharya (Vidyaranya) and far back indeed to sage Yagnavalkya of the Upanishad Age. It is an autobiographical novel. In this novel Ramaswamy who is a postgraduate in history and also the narrator of the story goes to France on a government scholarship to pursue a course of research in European history. In France, he falls in love with a history teacher who was a year senior to him. Her name is Madeleine. In the novel he describes her beauty:

"Her hair was gold, and her skin for an Indian was like the unearthed marble with which we built our winter palaces. Cool, with which lake about one, and the peacock stunting in the garden below.

'The Serpent and The Rope' is Raja Rao's most elaborate and most philosophical work. It has a strikingly individual tone a curious mixture of 'Indian tenderness and French clarity'.

B. The Cat and Shakespeare:

This is the third novel of Raja Rao and the novelist has subtitled it as "A philosophical comedy". It is marked by much crudity and absurdity. It is the tale of two friends Govindan Nair and Rama Krishna Pai. There are numerous digressions and much that is entirely superfluous.

C. Comrade Kirillov:

Raja Rao's most recent novel has a curious publishing history. Originally written in English - (perhaps a rather early work) it was first published in French in 1965 and the English version represents the revised text. A long short story rather than a novel the book reads like an extended character sketch.

D. The Chess Master and His Moves

It is not different from other novels. It is also a Vedantic novel like other novels. As for as technique and characters are concerned it is similar to 'the Serpent and the Rope'. The criticism of 'the Serpent and the Rope' can be applied to this novel also. The novel is a linear progression of the plot and there is a lot of repetition of the same idea. In this regard the novel is similar to T.S. Eliot's Waste Land.

The major topics of discussion among the characters are significance of life, communism, as a metaphysical entity, the meaning of being Indian, Gandhian ideas, Nehru's India, identity of a Brahmin in the modern world male female sensibilities true marriage, the limitation of language etc.

Some short stories of Raja Rao has been portrayed in 'Javni', 'Akkayya', 'The Little Gram Shop', 'Narsiga', and 'The Cow of the Barricades', 'Nimka', 'The Policeman and the Rose' and so on.

To sum up, Raja Rao gave birth to the novel which contains precise ideological reconstruction of India and



philosophical and cultural aspect. C.D. Narasimhaiah finds India in microcosm. Raja Rao is a classical, religious and philosophical novelist. Raja Rao is a metaphysical poet and novelist whereas Narayan is only a novelist. His novel 'Kanthapura' depicts complex culture and Indian portrayal of pre-independent village.

Indian English writers obviously work under a kind of creative tension with which writers writing in their native languages are not confronted". Besides the tight rope walking on the linguistic front, Indian English writers have to content with another difficult choice: writing for a foreign as well as native Indian clientele, the former requiring them to explain uniquely Indian thoughts and situations, the latter treating such explanation of the obvious as inartistic and an excrescence, placing the writer on the horns of a uniquely situational dilemma. The Indian English-writer has to choose his own blend of tradition - both Indian and English - and individual talent, the capability to synthesize them and forge his experience into a unique artistic amalgam meeting the dual requirements - an unenviable and exacting requirement incontrovertibly.

Raja Rao has used English in such a way that westerners can understand how Indians think, feel and speak. Prof. V Y Katak has written that Raja Rao's use of English "has made us regain our faith in the Indians' creative use of English. His English seems to spring from the Indian scene, the Indian manner of gesture and speech, absorbs it, and yet suffers no distortion. Word, phrase or sentence structure, the shifts and the modulations - all grow from that root. And it is English, Chaste English, not borrowed or applied but taking the shape of new material. The fluent, simple prose has a harmony which is the fruit of complete interpretation of matter and manner.

In Kanthapura he has used peasants' speech. Whenever they get angry peasants use abusive and vulgar language. So, Rao has used it more judiciously than Mulk Raj Anand. Rao has used peasants' speech because he wanted to express peasants' sensibility. Rao has used Indian imagery, proverbs and idioms. In his similes he has used the names of familiar animals. Sometimes he has used Indian words directly in English. He has used English as if it is his mother tongue so it speaks of his mastery over English.

Overtly tenets of Independence

A. 'Kanthapura'

In almost all his novels and short stories, Raja Rao presents the inordinate human crisis of Being-in-the-world. His themes are metaphysical, his treatment is poetic, and his world of people is intensely tragic. Such tragedy presents the alienated state of man and unfolds itself within the bounds of cross pollinated philosophical systems. Literature is a documentation of life seen, known and recorded in an artistic way. Permanence is the essence of literature. Literature is the broader outlook of the literary language, it is the mixed up thoughts and feelings to express the longevity of the authors masterpiece creations based on the experience of the subject matter expert. Literature is the sum total of achievements of man in the field of letters, recorded and documented over the centuries of human experiences. Raja Rao's first novel, Kanthapura, is a major breakthrough both for Indian English literature as a narrative with specifically Indian idiom and for the writer also because it established him as a promising novelist with keen eye for Indian sensibility. It was published in 1938, and it deals with the India's struggle for independence under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Even though it is explicitly political as it describes many scenes of encounters between Indians and British yet it showcases diversity and peculiarity of Indian culture, Indian way of life and Indian philosophy. Beneath its political overtone and anti-imperialistic agenda, the novel very subtly and succinctly describes Indian culture and world view. In the ambit of its political orientation, it depicts Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophy as the centralized theme which in turn best and most simplistically reveals the Indian culture and philosophy. So the novel both in its non-political, rural



depiction and political depiction illustrates several important aspects of Indian culture and philosophy. Like many other Indian writers of his time, Raja Rao was deeply under the impression of Gandhi's practice and precepts. He was surprised by the force of sheer non-violent resistance and uncompromising concern for truth that Gandhi exemplified. Being himself genuinely motivated by the spirit of freedom, Gandhi set ablaze the quest for freedom in the millions of Indians. Quite naturally writers like Raja Rao were overwhelmed by Gandhi's views. It was both witnessing the history of human beings marching towards salvation and being the part of this history that Gandhi so radiantly reflected. Moorthy brings the force of Gandhi's thoughts in Kanthapura. Gandhi's movement was not merely for political liberty: he aimed at total social and spiritual revival. And the novel is a proof of all these elements of Gandhian thinking, an evidence of the historical impact of Gandhi in theory and practice.

The novel reveals how the spirit of Gandhi made a way into every little village in India through the local Gandhians. Even in this distant Southern village, Mahatma's existence is felt everywhere and he is characterized through Moorthy. Like a distinctive Indian village, in Kanthapura different parts of the village are engaged by different communities. In the village, we have Brahmin Street, Potter's Street, Sudra's quarters etc. Nevertheless, these narrow divisions of caste, religion and creed wither away in the presence of this young man, Moorthy, who has devoted his life to the principles of Gandhi. At the clarion call from Gandhi, different dissimilarities of the society melt away. And there are only two groups: the government and her supporters pitted against Gandhians. The whole village is animated with the Gandhian spirit. Besides, in his handling of the Gandhian principles, Raja Rao has taken shelter in the antique Indian religious customs. In the novel, Raja Rao discovers parallels for present-day world in the ancient Puranic literature. That is why Gandhi is hailed almost as an embodiment of the three-eyed Shiva, representing the three fundamental values of life: Self-Purification, Hindu-Muslim harmony and Khadi spinning. The daily news about Gandhi became a part of everyday rite. Gandhi's voyage to England for the Round Table Conference becomes for the ordinary people Ram's epic journey to Lanka for the release of India (Sita) from the demonic control of the British (Ravana). The myth is carried further; the British in India become the army of Asuras to carry out oppression. The only optimism lies in the coming of Ram (the Mahatma) to liberate into a sort of legendary war between Suras and Asuras, with the final victory of the former.

Social and Political Background of the Novel

In the novel, Raja Rao is recounting well-known history: history of the Indian struggle for liberty. But, he is narrating it from a new point of view that of an illiterate village woman. She tells the story of the village from within in an informal conversant and chatty tone. The portrayal of the village Kanthapura is very realistic. The brilliant account of the village lends hold to the describing of the work of fiction. Rao shows a thorough knowledge of this tiny village in the previous Mysore State. The novel investigates both the magnitude of the freedom struggle and Raja Rao's philosophical concerns with the Gandhian belief — non-violence, untouchability, truth — and his interest in Vedanta. His search for a proper narrative method appropriate for fine depiction of Indian life, Indian sensibilities and his theoretical concerns commences with his first novel Kanthapura. India's Freedom Movement achieved its true force under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi in 1920's. The solitary aim was to free India from the imperialistic reign of The British. The novel 'Kanthapura' is the microcosm of the Indian subcontinent of the British time. This little village, snoozing for centuries, unexpectedly comes to life, due to the non-violent, non-cooperation movement of Gandhi in 1920's and 1930's. The portrayal of Kanthapura is based on Raja Rao's own village Harihalli or Hariharapura. It is a village in the territory of Kara, situated high on the ghats and the steep peaks of mountains in front of the Arabian Sea. In his unique garrulous style the storyteller describes Kanthapura and its neighboring:



“Roads narrow, dusty, dust-covered roads, wind through the forests of teak and of jack, of sandal and of sal and hanging over bellowing gorges, and leaping over elephant haunted villages they turn now to the left and now to the south and bring you through Alambe and Champa and Mena and cola passes into the great granaries of trade. There on the blue waters, so they say, our carted Cardamoms and coffee get into the ships and no Red-men bring and, so they say, they go across the seventh oceans into the countries where our rulers lived.” (P.7)

In order to arrive at the village, one has to pass through roads which are barren and filthy. Like, Kanthapura, thousands of villages of India had woken up to battle with the foreign rulers. It was because of Gandhi's prominence and motivation that thousands of little Gandhis had sprung up all through the nation. To be young was very heaven in those days. This remote village is wedged in the maelstrom of the freedom movement of the 1930's and is changed into living icon of Gandhism. The whole village and its residents come under the magic charm of this movement. The corner-House Moorthy, the central character of the novel was a young student from drowsy village of Kanthapura. He was in college when he felt an immense influence of Gandhi, and walked out of it, becomes a Gandhi man. He did not have any direct knowledge of Gandhi. He had just a visualization of Gandhi addressing a public meeting. In a reverie of sort he felt as if Gandhi had patted and blessed him. It was sufficient for him to say good bye to his college and thrust into the Gandhian movement. Poverty makes them anxious and enforces them to endure all kinds of insults and physical agony. Guns and pistol were in fashion to manage and threaten these poor peoples of the village. Their whole earning is spent on toddy. The officers of the estate had the impudence to order any girl or woman for their sexual satisfaction and the coolies for the fear of losing their jobs mostly obliged their masters. But in the wake of growing consciousness of their servility and the probable escape from that life, with the help of Gandhi-men, they become a little bold. They ponder together:

“Why should not Pariah, Ranchamma and Sampanna learn to read and write? They shall, And Bade Khan can wave his beard and twist his moustache. What is a policeman before Gandhi's man? Does a boar stand before a lion or a jackal before an elephant?” (P.37)

The novel depicts the national uproar and disturbance of that age. There are dharnas, satyagrahs and protests. Moorthy is detained. His place is replaced by Ratna, Shouts of "Gandhi Ji Ki Jai," "Inquilab Zindabad" (P.243) echoed in the air. Women, men and children are beaten up and desecrated. After that comes the Irwin-Gandhi agreement. The Satyagrahis are set free. The narrator of Kanthapura is an old woman, who has been an observer to turbulent upheaval of 'Kanthapura' and is gifted with highly sensitive imagination. In order to intensify the level of truth, she continually inter-mingles poetry and politics. Raja Rao's choice of the narrator is prudent and sensible.

The story of Kanthapura is one of action of organized national struggle for independence in Gandhian method. It is a political narrative with a difference. The political and spiritual strands are inextricably entangled here. Moorthy, the central character in the novel sums up the strength of Indian freedom struggle as follows:

“And remember always, the path we follow is the path of spirit, and with truth and non-violence and love shall we add to the harmony of the world. For brothers, we are not soldiers at arms, say I; we seek to be soldier saints”. (P.181)

Villagers of Kanthapura believe that Gandhian movement as sacred and religious work as the building of a temple. The struggle for freedom in India is paralleled by a movement for the liberation of socially disadvantaged. The class Hindus and Paraiyahs met on equivalent foothold in the Indian Liberation



Movement. The idea of free economic self-reliance is developed through the notion of charaka, and manufacture of Khadi yarn. Equality and financial liberty are necessary requisites for the achievement of freedom. Murthy draws the support of the whole village breaking the obstacles of caste as follows:

“Moorthy, in lit and bright, says softly, you are all with us? and we cry out 'All !All!' and You shall harm no one? — 'None! None!' You shall go to the end fearlessly? "All! All!'- 'And there shall be neither Brahmin, nor Pariah?' and Paraihs shout out 'Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai'.” (P. 181)

Mahatma Gandhi is a legendary figure to the peoples of Kanthapura. He is the topic of bhajans and harikathas Jayaramachar, the harikatha man combines religion and politics, myth and history, "Siva is the three eyed," he says, and Swaraj too is three eyed; self-purification, Hindu-Muslim unity, Khaddar”. (P.20)

This combination of religion and politics, secular and holy, myth and history makes the Gandhian movement a truth to the villagers and he effectively enlists a total participation of all segments of rural people in these conditions. The newspaper reading is as serious a proposal as reading of the Gita. Hand spinning is promoted into an everyday rite like puja

Bade Khan is the symbol of wicked subjugation by British agents. The villagers are not scared of weapons since they draw abhaya, 'fearlessness' from the Gandhian movement. The narrator questions, “What is a police man before a Gandhi's man? Tell me, does a boar stand before a lion or jackal before an elephant?” (P.84)

The slogans of 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai', echoed in the hills reaching river Himavathi. The villagers uphold stoic patience in the face of oppression and torment meted out to them by the cruel force. They stand steadfast by Murthy and the Gandhian movement as: “and the police frightened, caned and caned the coolies till they pushed themselves over us; and they put their feet here and they put their hands there, but Rangamma shouted Vande Mataram!" Lie down brothers and sisters, "...and the crowd shouted 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai....". (P.198)

There is sufficient proof of political awareness among the poor masses of Kanthapura. A parallel development all over India is not to talk of. The dedication to the cause of Independence is coordinated with their affirmed concern for the enlargement of democratic organizations. The unanimous selection to Congress Panchayat Committee bears sufficient proof to it. The whole procedure sets the tone of Indian politics of Grama Raj or Rama Raj as envisaged by the father of nation, Mahatma Gandhi Indian sociological thought as reflected in caste system and the power sharing approaches in a peaceful way are very much illustrative in character. Raja Rao exhibits the Gandhian principles of Satyagraha and non-violence in the teeth of brutalities sustained by the Redman and his representative Bade Khan. The brutalities and dishonor imposed on naive, hardworking labour challenge human understanding.

The village Kanthapura exhibits a methodical going spiritualized political awareness in a singular fashion on Gandhian lines. The national disturbance finds fullest expression in it. The Dandi March of Mahatma, the detentions, imprisonments, dishonoring of young women like Ratna, the physical torment unleashed on coolies of Skeffington coffee estate etc. do not in the least reduce the courage of the people. The shouts of 'Mahtama Gandhi ki Jai' and 'Inquilab Zindabad' rend the air.

The novel 'Kanthapura' is Indian both in subject and action. Raja Rao has shown how best Indian writers in English can articulate in a foreign art form a sensibility which is basically Indian. The novel is a precious social document of enduring interest and plentiful importance. It is a plain political novel, but one concerned



with the total renewal and revival of the masses of India. As M.K Naik comments:

“Raja Rao goes to the very roots of transformation, by demonstrating how the nationalistic fervour in rural India in the 1930's blended completely with the age-old, deep-rooted spiritual faith and thus revitalized the spiritual springs within and helped rediscover the Indian soul”. (Naik, 1977: 378)

B. ‘The Serpent and the Rope’

A Rao in one of the most prominent novelists of Indian writing in English. Raja Rao has successfully achieved the feat of using an alien language. Rao’s ‘The Serpant and the Rope’ has own prestigious Sahitya Academy Award in 1964. The novelist has used English for expression of complex emotion, ideas and sentiments. Raja Rao is fully aware of the artistic possibilities of his linguistic medium and takes painstaking task to enrich the same. The language and style of The Serpent and the Rope gives the impression of spontaneity. Another device which provides the novel its unique identity is the use of a very large number of quotations.

The Serpent and the Rope is undoubtedly one of the finest novels written in English during pre-independence days. It attempts to concretize the metaphysical structure of thought. It is a novel of ideas and, at the same time, a symbolic novel and yet it defies those categories as they are known in English literature. It is an excellent blend of those two modes into a unique and satisfying artistic whole. The novel has complex structure and contains a number of themes of central concern to the East and West. The author goes deep into the surface and is unlike Kipling who is not able to penetrate into the catchy and colourful surface of the East. The style adopted by Raja Rao resembles that of Salman Rushdie, who too uses the style of story concept. Raja Rao’s story takes place in the post Second World War Europe and India but he transcends the local and his characters and themes achieve Universality. Some of the themes which give universal value to ‘The Serpant and the Rope’ are exploration of reality, quest of identity, marriage, confrontation of the East and the West, the mystery of death and continuation of human existence, futility and men’s desire to achieve significance. The characters emerge out of their local contexts, become symbolic and echo in the passage of time. The novel, like a symphony having unique structure of a large number of notes, resembles an Indian classical song which manages to achieve variation on a theme although it does not present animated pictures of outer reality which abound in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand and Nayantara Sehgal. It aims at different kinds of grandeur and achieves it. These themes are armed with great resource of language and technique. Raja Rao uses these literary resources to give consummate expression to his design and creative urge. He uses unique linguistic medium which creates sound and sense thereby makes vocal different areas of the narrative skill. Raja Rao lays emphasis on the universality of themes by presenting the contemporary and remotely historical or mythological events together. The contemporary scenes presented by him are vivid and characters are like real one. The following lines show a vivid picture:

“I saw the yellow and white of the kite and shake like tail that the windswept, curling, whirling on itself and leaping up back against the sun. The wind blew cool and fresh. I laughed as child laughs, playing with the subtleties of the breeze. I was happy. The world is happy place for everyone to live in: look at the arts in the Lal Bagh,”[4] (P.207)

In another paragraph, Raja Rao begins with the contemporary and ends with the remotely historical and, thus, weaves the past and present together in one meaningful whole. Raja Rao writes:

“The wind rose over the asoka tress I read it (Savitri’s letter) a send time, at the Lal Bagh. On the other side of the lake, five or six men were taking both. It was just before dusk; they must have come after some cremation. Beyond the crematorium was the mad house; Dr. Appaswamy, who was a friend of mine, once



told me that some of the inmates were quite extraordinary in moments of lucidity; there was one, professor of Mathematics, who solved many problems there that he could not in his native town of Trichnapoly. Death, madness; pratap marriage haemoglobules. Telegraph wires above and stars beyond. Benares is everywhere you are; says a vedantic text; kapilvastu is the true some of mankind; each one of us has a Kanthaka at his door.” (P. 289)

Another significant linguistic device which is exploited meaningfully by Raja Rao is the use of recurrent words. Some words like Haemoglobules and eighteen aggregates” occur again and again and they are close to becoming symbols. Such use of device is found in Shakespeare, where the recurrent words and details get symbolic significance, and in Dickens, where they become part of the frameworks of rhetoric; and in Raj Rao they usually become echoes which give an impression of continuity. It is one of the novels with superb presentation of the events connected with a typical Indian wedding. The narrative is presented in a language which has a quickened rhythm. It is in fact one the major variations on the major theme which is marriage. Rama’s marriage with Madeline is barren because both the song of the couple died; it is also a failure because it does not give the couple “happiness”, temporal or spiritual. The marriage between Saroja and the ugly, big lieutenant-looking Subramanya has many details but the most significant is as below:

“Saroja was like a filly dancing about the mother elephant. “Brother, what shall I do, what shall I do?” Do about what Saroja ?” oh brother, I want to run away, run away anywhere. “I cannot marry him, I must marry him. It is selfish of me marry a man whom I detest.” I look down upon. I think I only like his car, his position, and the feeling that is like father.” (P.264-265)

Another device which provides the novel its unique identity is the use of a very large number of quotations. Ram Charita or the life of Rama is the story of bliss, battle, separation and reveals the pattern of life itself. As most people know, there are thousands of versions of Rama’s story and in almost everyone there is the interpenetration of the divine and the human. In some versions occupies the centre of the stage. Bhavabhuti Uttara Ram Charita is a moving human document and the The Serpent and the Rope which tells the story of a marriage or rather so many marriages and their failure it is the modern version of that ancient story. Madeleine goes on a fast for 41 days, performs Buddhist Tantrik writes for the health and well-being of her husband, Rama. But has reputed the world and also Rama is aware of these fact and chart verses from Uttara Ram Charita to Madeleine.

The use of large chunks of philosophical observations is another device of Raja Rao. They occur after every four or five pages except in the portion devoted to Saroja’s marriage where they are very short often sentences or two. As already stated earlier the episode connected with Saroja’s marriage enacts the central theme of the novel in more intimate and down to earth terms, the place of the philosophical observation is taken by the word haemoglobules which occurs again and again. On other portions, the philosophical observation about truth, life, significance, identity, time, existence, religion, the unconscious and the occult give the novel a metaphysical dimension. However, these observations are not dry and monotonous like the language of most philosophical discourse. They are characterized by the unconventionality of observation. For example:-

“The God that resides in us is of an ancient making; ages after our ancestors have coupted, and a bit more of each god grew in us as we grew up. Like someone in rance saying; I”m a Montmorency makes you think at once of St. Louis and Templers of Melta. He was taking of the great tracts of the unknown in the recesses of our being, postures of the invisible in which we the familiar, the sons of the family go driving our cattle”. (P.92)



If 'Kanthapura' of Raja Rao is compared to the Ramayana, 'The Serpent and The Rope' should be compared to the Mahabharat. If the storyteller in Kanthapura is a Brahmin widow who is a minor character, Rama (Ramaswamy) is the storyteller in 'The Serpent and The Rope' who is highly educated and a central character of the novel. Even Rama is a south Indian Brahmin the eldest son of the professor of mathematics at Hyderabad: he can proudly trace his lineage back to Madhwacharya (Vidyaranya) and far back indeed to sage Yagnavalkya of the Upanishad Age. It is an autobiographical novel. In this novel Ramaswamy who is a postgraduate in history and also the narrator of the story goes to France on a government scholarship to pursue a course of research in European history. In France, he falls in love with a history teacher who was a year senior to him. Her name is Madeleine. In the novel he describes her beauty: "Her hair was gold, and her skin for an Indian was like the unearthed marble with which we built our winter palaces. Cool, with which lake about one, and the peacock stunting in the garden below. The seventh hour of music would come, and the entire palace would see itself lit---"9 Madeleine was like the palace of Amber seen in moonlight. Then Rama goes back to France to complete his work. George is a frequent visitor to his house and similarly Catherine Madeleine's sister. George falls in love with her (Catherine) and marries her. Rama visits Cambridge in connection with his research work and comes in close contact with Savitri. After his work at Cambridge is over he comes to London and stays there for some time to study in the London Museum and other libraries, Savitri visits him in his apartment and one morning she comes with coconut and kumkum (vermilion) performs aarti, touches his feet and thus takes him to be her lord and master with god as their witness. Rama gives her the toe ring, which little mother had given to him for Madeleine but which were still in his possession. Savitri is ready to elope with him but he advises her to the contrary. Like a dutiful 'Hindu girl' she must go back to her home and marry the person destined for her. Savitri eventually marries Pratap Singh and it is hoped she was a good wife to him.

However they continue to live together for some time more. Then he goes to London. He falls ill there and is hospitalized and one of his lungs has to be taken out. Savitri, who was in London, visits him often. After sometime he divorces Madeleine. 25 Even after the divorce Rama keeps on visiting George Catherine. He had great love for their child Vera. He visits them occasionally. However, ambiguity marks the end of the novel, for, it is not clear whether he actually returns to India or his attachment to Vera keeps him back in Paris. 'The Serpent and The Rope' is Raja Rao's most elaborate and most philosophical work. It has a strikingly individual tone a curious mixture of 'Indian tenderness and French clarity'.

Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* is based on its protagonist's reminiscences of his life-journey from India to Europe and back to India. It has got a circular structure. Its first section comes chronologically after its final one. In the first section Ramaswamy, the protagonist, shows an obsession with mystery, religious orthodoxies and rituals asking serious questions concerning the reality of existence: "was I really called Ramaswamy, or was Madeline called Madeline?"1 In the early stages of his life he reveals distrust in the social and religious rituals of his Brahmin tradition of marriage and death:

"Whenever I stand in a river I remember how when young, on the day the monster at the moon and the day fell into an eclipse, I used with tile and kusha grass to offer the manes my filial devotion...because my mother was dead and I had to perform her funeral ceremonies, year after year - my father having married again - so with wet cloth and an empty stomach, with devotion, and sandal paste on my forehead, I fell before the rice-balls of my mother and I sobbed". (p.7)

But India is the country of contradictions. The hero says: "We give holy names to our cows and we starve them". (p.318) India is in the grip of metaphysical continuity whereas modernization is penetrating to its core. Ramaswamy rejects the present India believing in the future one: "I hated this moral India. True, Indian morality was based on an ultimate physics. Nonviolence, said Gandhiji, is active, heroic. We must



always conquer some land, some country. Ignorance, pusillanimity, ostrich-virtue is the land we should liberate". (p.354)

The major concern of the novel is that of marriage and love with the hero's dream of coming back home as a university professor and of living peacefully with his French wife. But his contact with the European tradition originates in him an awareness that is to look for his guru, in other words to search the roots of his cultural identity. India "is not a country like France or like England; India is an idea, a metaphysic." (p.380) In India, the past and the present are forever knit into one whole experience. The hero's grandfather rejects the idea that his son-in-law travels abroad. The hero revolts against the ancient traditions that the mind questions. The contrast between India and France is not limited to the land; it extends to include people; their religion and their attitudes towards different social issues. The most prominent contrast is that between Ramaswamy and his wife Madeleine. They are both sensitive intellectuals who could be taken as representatives of the cultures of their countries. The failure of their marriage and their suffering come as a consequence of the clash between their countries' cultural attitudes. Here is Ramaswamy's account of the way his French wife looks at their relationship:

"I knew she would be unhappy first, then angry knowing that Indians are so undependable. If a European says he comes by such and such a plane he would come by it; if he missed his connection he would sleep in a hotel, and come by the next. But this Indian haphazardness, like the towels in the bathroom that lay everywhere about, was exasperating to Madeleine". (p.60)

The serpent as an illusion presupposes the existence of the rope and illusion will be there till the rope is thoroughly recognized. The serpent stands for the world and the rope for the Brahmin. It is through knowledge that he realizes that the world is not but a manifestation of the Brahmin.²³ Ramaswamy's position is similar to that of the Vedantin which Swami Prabhavananda states as follows: The world, according to Sankara, is and is not. Its fundamental unreality can be understood only in relation to the ultimate metaphysical experience, the experience of an illumined soul. When the illumined soul passes into transcendental consciousness he realizes the self...They are no longer deluded by the appearance – the Shakespeare's vanishes into Brahmin. ²⁴ Then the self-shines forth in the One, the Truth, the Brahmin... When the truth is known we are no longer deluded by the appearance vanishes into Brahmin.

Rao's choice of his title from the Indian philosophical heritage marks his emphasis of the Indian tradition in opposition to that of the western tradition. In the western tradition the emphasis is primarily on the material aspects of the world. Illusion is often used in reference to deception and the material is always the remedy, while in the tradition of the Vedantin the world is looked at as an illusion which is the outcome of ignorance, and knowledge is the only cure. Rao takes Ramaswamy's story to be the journey through this illusory world toward realizing the truth with the help of the guru's light. Ramaswamy's devotion to advanta helps him to transcend all the contradictions and affinities of the East and the West, blending them into a complete unity, whereas he chooses a place under the feet of his spiritual guru, as a European Brahmin who drank from the deep waters of both rivers, the Ganges and the Seine, and where all illusions of life and death are removed out. Thus he comes back home to find comfort in the vast and tranquil metaphysics of India.

Thus Raja Rao's these two novels have the ultimate tranquilities of the Movement of Independence whereas he portrayed many characters, language, style and theme presented the unique versatility and the smell of search for identity of so-called contemporary society. The socio political crisis depicted the victim of society and Gandhiji's role played an important protagonist whose speech present uniqueness and masterpieces of English Literature.



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