CHAPTER VII
TECHNIQUE - I
Raja Rao besides creating characters is an innovator in the field of technique too. Like Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan, he too is a constant experimenter and his contribution is substantial in the field of novel writing. E. M. Forster reviewing Tagore's *Home and the World* says in 1919 that, just as science brings about various changes so also the younger writers should reject the experiment of *Home and the World* and choose a freer form.

This is a cue to Raja Rao to escape from the cliches of the Victorian novelists form and adapt a new form to suit the medium of the Indians. He is profoundly influenced by the French, Russian and Italian novels which initiated him to find a new pattern altogether.

Raja Rao is essentially Indian in regard to the form of his novels. He adapts the age old Indian art of story telling, the Puranas, a traditional form of folk epic, which makes up *Kanthapura*. *Kanthapura* is a sthala-purana or the local legend, while *The Serpent and the Rope* a Mahapurana, also termed as a major epic legend. His third novel *The Cat and Shakesperare* is undoubtedly a metaphysical comedy and *Comrade Kirillov* a philosophical tragi-comedy.

Raja Rao explains the reason behind the daring experiment with form which is more spontaneous than artificial:
In such a world of linguistic ferment, at that time there were also going on experiments with form. Kafka had broken the crust of realism and given fabled meanings to man's fears. The Surrealists having abolished the natural as the concrete gave earth wings upwards, and even more, bore blindfold downwards into subterranean fires. And suddenly Malraux burst in on the scene, upsetting all intellectual stratagems, and giving the world an international dialect of, as it were, pure gesture and metaphysic meaning. For an Indian therefore who wanted to forget Tagore (but not Gandhi) to integrate the Sanscrit tradition with contemporary intellectual heroism seemed a noble experiment to undertake.

Thus both in terms of language and of structure, I had to find my way, whatever the results.

Raja Rao chooses the traditional folk epic form in Kanthapura to depict the life of the peasants and the rustics. The topography, customs, beliefs, superstitions and local imagery combine to form what we call as a 'Sthala Purana' or local legend. The garrulity of speech corresponds with an old South Indian peasant whose native tongue is Kannada. The story of Kanthapura, a

village in the State of Karnataka, is mainly based on the impact of Gandhian philosophy on the unsophisticated peasants who participate in the Freedom Struggle. Since the entire novel vibrates in praise of the actions of the Mahatma, it is also termed as the 'Gandhi-Purana' by C. D. Narasimhaiah for it concerns Gandhiji's principles of non-violence, non-co-operation and Hindu-Muslim Unity. It is the old widow Rangamma (Achakka) who relates the whole tale in a chatty language and it is through the film of her memory, temperament and sensibility that we visualise the happenings of the freedom struggle. As a witness it gives her a sort of restricted omnipresence which makes the narration vivid and convincing. Rangamma who is a grandmother now when the novel begins, narrates the actual events that take place in her village a long time ago in which she herself participates. The art of story telling is one of the arts an Indian grandmother possesses. Her narration of the whole story is characteristically feminine and Indian which she expresses in a vivid and garrulous language of native vigour, punctuated with humour and lyricism. The uniqueness of Raja Rao's "I" as witness point of view, which is well known as the first person singular or autobiographical mode of narration, is noticeable in all the novels he published till now.

The Serpent and the Rope in form is epical, where episode follows episode and all the odds and ends of
culture are introduced. To give this novel a new form Raja Rao draws inspiration from our Indian classics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. The result is his widely acclaimed novel *The Serpent and the Rope* which wins him the Sahitya Akademi Award. In form this novel is altogether different. The scene shifts from a rural world of rustics of *Kanthapura* to an urban civilised world where the narrator is an educated Westernised Indian scholar. Here Raja Rao employs the narrative method of "I" as protagonist. The role of protagonist -narrator is well enacted by Ramaswamy, a highly intellectual young man who deals with a philosophical subject matter. *The Serpent and the Rope* is a highly complex novel with a complicated structure and it suggests the richness of the Sanskrit language. The novelty of the subject matter of this novel presents events in the manner of picaresque novel with the central character moving from episode to episode. At times the argument makes a series of quick leaps which only surprise and confuse the reader. But , in spite of all the hindrances the reader peruses the work with a greater avidity to know the ultimate end. Never before is the cultivated Indian been caught in the ambiguous agonising present - the junction of the old and the new, the East and the West - being presented in such an exciting manner in a work of fiction. Since the thoughts and reactions of the hero regarding the major events in his life are presented , the novel is
also called a "spiritual autobiography". He reveals his innermost mind and thought through his letters, introspective diary entries etc. This novel deals deeply in the Sanskritic learnings mainly due to the subject the author undertakes.

The Cat and Shakespeare is a metaphysical comedy. It shows Raja Rao's mastery in the use of first-person singular point of view. The technique of the protagonist narrator-cum-witness narrator is successfully presented through the character Ramakrishna Pai, in this novel. He narrates not only events in his personal life but also those of his neighbour and friend Govindan Nair. Since the story of Ramakrishna Pai and Govindan Nair merge into a single story:

the narrative device does not impede the smooth movement of the narrative and does not adversely affect its cohesiveness; on the contrary, it contributes to the compactness and unity of the book.

The novel The Cat and Shakespeare "seems to have grown out of the short story, "The Cat", which

appeared in the Chelsea Review of New York in 1959." 3

'The Cat' is very much of a character or rather she is almost the character in the novel as well as symbol too. 'The Shakespeare' of the title is a later addition. It is said that Shakespearean ambivalence interpenetrates through the warp and woof of the novel and this is evident in its language, Catholicity and poetry. In spite of the incoherence and obscurity of meaning and style everything in the book has its own importance. The vagaries at times may seem unnecessary and exaggerated but all the same they help in building up the form of the novel which is an epic in prose.

Like Raja Rao's other novels, *Comrade Kirillov* too, is autobiographical. Here the narrator is R. and the protagonist Comrade Kirillov reflects the ideas of the novelist. Like his previous two novels, the novel *Comrade Kirillov* too discusses the philosophical issues. The philosophical thoughts are Indian as well as Western, for example, Theosophy, Gandhism, Communism, Vedantism etc. Kirillov is attracted more towards Marxism than Vedantism. In his aspirations for higher truths, the hero, Kirillov, dissatisfied with Theosophy in India leaves for

California. He peruses different kinds of books on Kant and Hegel, Darwinian evolution, Albigensian heresy, Gandhism, Marxism even Hinduism in the quest of Truth. Being a Brahmin from South India he speaks with authority on the Hindu philosophy. He is totally a confused man within and without, though a scholar. He writes a book on Gandhism namely Mahatma Gandhi - A Marxist Interpretation. Kirillov speaks out venom in the name of Gandhi but cannot withstand a word said against Gandhi and India.

This book is a slender novel but in spite of its size various subjects and philosophies are discussed with ease. The story is simple but is developed with various digressions like, discussions with S regarding politics, Irene regarding Indian tradition and culture, Kirillov and Irene regarding Indian culture etc. Irene, his wife, is a Czech. She in return to identify herself with her husband learns Sanskrit. Kamal Dev, their son, too learns Sanskrit and the Indian Classics. Towards the end the happy union takes a bitter turn when Irene develops a sense of insecurity and loss of identity in an alien land like India. She hates India bitterly and her husband is too Indian to accept her in an Indian soil. She dies in the process of childbirth, Kamal Dev is sent to his grandfather in India and Kirillov moves to Peking and remains as an Indian expatriate though India is ever waiting to receive her lost sons.
We notice that the structure of *Comrade Kirillov* is not as sound as *The Serpent and the Rope*. The transition of Kirillov from one philosophy to another is chronologically drawn and a single thread that unifies the entire narrative of the novel is the personality of the protagonist. The novelist himself appears as a narrator to expose the confusing state of mind of the Vedantin Brahmin turned Communist who goes in quest of Truth. Irene's diary is vital as it records the hidden character and gives authentic description of Kirillov as seen through Irene's understanding. From time and again the mention of R too is mentioned. It is in her diary she confides unhesitatingly and expresses her true feelings towards India and her husband. Kirillov leaves his motherland in search of Truth but traces it back to India as the West tells more woeful tales.

Another problem arising after form is the adaptation of style. The essential aspect of Raja Rao in his narrative technique is the art of employing a narrator to tell the story. This method he employs uniformly in all his novels. The narrators in fact represent the different aspects of the novelist's personality. Speaking in an interview he says:

"Well, Ramaswamy is myself; Rama Moorthy is myself; Ramakrishna Pai is myself. The author, some authors, I would say, write autobiography-
graphically. So each one is an aspect of myself. I don’t think you can say—this is me, this is not me”.

Raja Rao chooses a style to suit the Indians with their quick thought, quick talk and also quick movement. He chooses the ordinary style of story telling where one episode follows another and, "when our thoughts stop our breath stops and we move on to another thought". He employs many Kannada phrases, idioms and words to suit the peasant sensibility.

Speaking about the overall impression narrative technique produces in The Serpent and the Rope, that the reader does not move in space, he moves in time. The narrator makes an effort to carry the reader from time to timelessness. The action depends on either the experience or the belief in the process of the quest for Truth. In this novel Raja Rao’s English is embedded in Sanskrit and the Kannada idiom and phraseology, moreover proverbs, metaphors and similes are widely scattered and helps him to create a piece of art. His style is unique as


5. Raja Rao, Kanthapura, (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1984), Foreword, p. VI
he remains true to what he intends to convey. In fact, the narrator is made to participate in the dialogues or some metaphysical discourse on the metaphysical or spiritual heritage of India. He goes a step further to explain the ideas related to the ultimate reality of being and non-being. In order to explain the action or time in the novel he harnesses pithy sayings of philosophical value to make his statement explicit. A dialogue between Savithri and Sister Jean about the difference in the suffering of a woman and a man, the latter says:

\[
\text{Woman seem to think that once the body is all right, everything is perfect [Whereas] Everyman is like a Christ on the Cross.}\]

On another occasion we see Ramaswamy ruminating:

\[
\text{Objects are articulated in space, so go right, go left, go north, go east, you cannot go beyond yourself. Love, my love, is the self. Love is the loving of love.}\]

Such pithy sayings are scattered all over the novel. This technique unfolds the hidden significance of Vedanta, Buddhist philosophy and Upanishad through the questing hero.


Ramaswamy. Raja Rao quotes from history, legends, folk tales, Sanskrit poetry as well as French to stimulate the free flow of thoughts and feelings born out of a highly charged mind. The style Raja Rao adapts is a novel experiment he undertakes and is rewarded suitably.

In *The Cat and Shakespeare* the novelist chooses a style born of a happy combination of simple narratives, homely conversations and humorous dialogues as much as a light tone. The narrator records the strange play of the cat in a ration shop. Sometimes it seems comic and at times there are moments when it conveys the metaphysical truth of life. That is why this novel is termed as metaphysical comedy. Along with the humorous touches he adapts myths, images, symbols, characters and events which make a suitable matrix in composing a novel unique in its meaning and form.

Raja Rao's *Comrade Kirillov* is a novel where the author himself, appears as a narrator in order to state the hero's confused state of mind. To study the protagonist's character, "Irony is perhaps most suited to expose the dichotomy of the confused Indian shuttling between the Vedanta and the principles of Marx". 8

The introduction of a diary too is a unique

style Raja Rao adopts. Irene records the descriptions of her husband's private life. R. finds Irene's diary and adds the information in his narrative. Raja Rao works again and again to give his novel a definite shape as he adopts a very complicated style. A close friend of Kirillov R. is the witness narrator who gives a detailed account of his friend from the start and towards the end it is Irene who is a witness - narrator. The characters are not many like in Kanthapura and Raja Rao admits that, "no character in the novel is living person, but I hope all are nevertheless, real". A striking difference between Raja Rao's Comrade Kirillov with the others is that he makes use of stream of consciousness technique. At times the thought - content shifts so fast that the reader is baffled and finds it difficult to keep track of the thought or the idea discussed currently. A similarity between The Serpent and the Rope and Comrade Kirillov is the employment of myths, legends and symbols. Through this technique Raja Rao not only opens new visions of life but also encompasses and accommodates his encyclopaedic knowledge in microcosm in such a novelette as this is what is praiseworthy.

After discussing the form and style we now move on to discuss the narratives, dialogues and

descriptions that Raja Rao employs in all his novels. The narrative pattern of Kanthapura rests chiefly on spoken words with little attempt on formal organisation. It is largely a series of sentences; in some cases a single sentence runs into a paragraph by violent yoking of several principal verbs. Here is an example:

And this time it was from the brahmin quarter that the shouts came, and policemen rushed towards the brahmins and beat them, and old Ramanna and Dore came forward and said, 'We too are Gandhi's men, beat us as much as you like,' and the policemen beat them till they were flat on the floor, mud in their mouths and mist in their eyes, and as the dawn was rising over the Kenchamma Hill, faces could be seen, and men became silent and women became sobless, and with ropes round their arms seventeen men were marched through the streets to the Santur Police Station, by the Karwar Road and round the Skeffington Coffee Estate and down the Tippur Valley and up the Santur Mound, and as the morning cattle were going out to the fields, and the women were adorning the thresholds for a Kartik morning, brahmins and pariahs and potters and weavers were marched into the Police Station—seventeen men of Kanthapura were named and locked behind the bars.

10. Kanthapura, p. 122
The entire scene of the atrocities of the policeman on the villagers comes like a film and the action passes on non-stop. Rangamma, the narrator continues breathlessly to relate the actual event with all its naturalness. The pattern of speech and the rhythm in it are mainly born out of the plot, characters and the situations creating a sense of verisimilitude. Syntactical variation makes the sound effect more pleasing to the ear. Hence there is a rhythmical tone to the prose which cannot be introduced under the limitations of verse. The reader is never tired, of anything that is well-written and pleasing to his thoughts, as style is the life blood of expression of thoughts that arise in the mind of the writer.

Another unique feature noticeable in Raja Rao's narrative is that he succeeds in creating an engrossing atmosphere by frequently repeating the names of characters involved. A series of names follow with an effect that of chanting mantras. Example:

He went to Dore and Sastri's son Puttu, and Dore and Sastri's son Puttu went to postmaster Suryanarayana's sons 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. 11

Kanthapura overflows with examples of long paragraphs which give a very scenic touch and put the reader in a sort of trance, deporting him to the village to witness the happenings taking place presently. The long sentences are used so that there is no disconnection by intermittent commas and full stops and the whole scene is enacted naturally before the eyes of the reader. Paragraph long sentence is a common feature but in contrast Raja Rao uses short, cryptic sentences where one sentence chases the other to show the quickness of action. An example of such a device:

First he goes to see Range Gowda. Nothing can be done without Range Gowda. When Range Gowda says ‘Yes,’ you will have elephants and howdahs and music processions. If Range Gowda says ‘No,’ you can eat the bitter neem leaves and lie by the city gates, licked by the curs. 12

Raja Rao’s descriptions deal not only with human life but also with the agrarian economy in which the Kanthapurians live. His eye catches nature’s beauty which he presents with inimitable accuracy and vividness just as

11. Ibid., p. 18
12. Ibid., p. 97
David Cecil says about Hardy's descriptions, that:

he [Hardy] could realise the different noises made by the wind when it blows through a hollow a heather and bare stones and he could discriminate equally [precisely the ] feel to the foot of path, of fern of heather.

Raja Rao too is unique in his mastery of his 'poetic' description of the outdoor life. An example of the scenic beauty as well as topography is given below:

High on the Ghats is it, high up the steep mountains that face the cool Arabian seas, up the Malabar coast is it, up Mangalore and Puttur and many a centre of cardamon and coffee, rice and sugarcane. Roads, narrow, dusty, rut-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 valleys, they turn now to the left and now to the right and bring you through the Alambe and Champa and Mena and Kola passes into the great granaries of trade.

It is through this route we hear the grinding and rumbling of carts reaching Kanthapura village. Raja Rao

14. Kanthapura, p.1
makes the reader actually travel through the roads and passes in order to reach the sleepy village.

In contrast to this quietness of nature we see an action-packed scene where the British soldiers lathi-charge the villagers:

the white man shouts a command and all the soldiers open fire and all the soldiers charge—they come rushing towards us, their turbans trembling and their bayonets shining under the bright moon, and our men lie flat on the fields, the city boys and the women, and the soldiers dash upon us and trample over us, and bang their rifle-butts against our heads. There are cries and shrieks and moans and groans, and men fly to the left and to the right, and they howl and they yell and they fall and they rise and we rise, too, to fly... We are felled and twisted, we are felled and we are kicked...

Vaisakh, the Second Hindu month, is welcomed by the villagers with joy and gaiety. Ploughing begins and barren land tilled to make it fertile. The first rain arrives and it is a happy occasion for the rejoicing villagers. Raja Rao paints the picture in a lyrical tone, thus:

The rains have come, the fine, first-footing rains that skip

15. Ibid., p. 246
over the bronze mountains, tiptoe the crags, and leaping into the valleys, go splashing and wind-swept, a winnowed pour, and the coconuts and the betel nuts and the cardamom plants choke with it and hiss back. And there, there it comes over the Bebbur Hill and the Kanthur Hill and begins to paw upon the tiles, and the cattle come running home, their ears stretched back, and the drover lurches behind some bel-tree or pipal - tree, and people leave their querns and rush to the courtyard, and turning towards the Kenchamma Temple, send forth a prayer, saying, 'There, there the rains have come, Kenchamma; may our houses be white as silver,' and the lightning flashes and the thunder stirs the tiles, and children rush to the gutter-slabs to sail paper boats down to Kashi.

A presentation of scenes of contrast like the atrocities on villagers and of the onset of Vaisakh is indeed an incredible gift to the story teller of dramatising such situations. By using all his resources, and his own keen observation, Raja Rao creates not only aesthetic sense in his novels, but also induces a vibrant tension to his narrative language. Reading such scenes is a unique experience in the sense that the reader momentarily forgets his own consciousness and experiences the artificially

16. Ibid., p. 156
created sensibility of the novelist.

Dialogues too, play an important role to give it the authenticity of the language used by the rustics. Raja Rao in keeping with the peasants sensibility writes dialogues as such:

Rachanna cries out "Who's there?"

"Why, your wife's lover, you son of my woman," spits back Bade Khan. 17

The dialogues are simple but contain the abusive language of the uneducated villagers.

Raja Rao's novel The Serpent and the Rope is termed as an autobiographical and philosophical novel. Most discussions of this novel assume that the views of the protagonist (Ramaswamy) is Raja Rao's own views. It is quite possible that Raja Rao in his private life, holds some of the views that the main character of the novel expresses. In support of the above discussion an interview of Raja Rao by Asha Kaushik explains the point explicitly given by the former. On enquiry whether the The Serpent and the Rope is autobiographical, Raja Rao says:

"Partly yes, partly no. True, I was in France for a long time - almost for two decades. Many of the incidents you find in The

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17. *Ibid.*, p. 84
Serpent and the Rope are what I actually experienced. But when I wrote the novel I was 52, but 32—the age of Ramaswamy." 18

Raja Rao admits, that his novel Kanthapura is 'concrete' whereas The Serpent and the Rope is 'abstract'. He says

In Kanthapura the concrete was visible. It was the British. When the British were gone, I went back to what was my ownself—philosophical. The philosophical was with me, always. Only it had not surfaced distinctively. I had not found my Guru till then. 19

Raja Rao invents a new form and style to suit his needs in writing The Serpent and the Rope. A special quality noticed in his narrative technique, is that of his use of poetic economy, instead of verbatim of dialogues or garrulousness. In the passage cited below the mythical technique seems to work at its best and the poetic pattern he adopts in converting persons and objects into a media to delve deeper into the subject he wishes to discuss. The poetic genius of the author is noticed in the passage given

Night has a great, a tender innocence. No one harms another in the night but with the convictions and irritations of the day. Those who speak of the dark night think of the dark day which precedes it. The night of Cambridge had and absolute silence, as though paths and roads had stopped suddenly, and time had passed by them, and into Hertfordshire. The trees, though, made time, for winter had covered the earth with a grey, remembered existence. Man has a fire within, a substance, a light, and he illumines his night not with the stuff electric, with a touch that is no touch, a lip that is no lip, but a smell, a curve of breath and silence, as if truth were a presence, an instant, an eye. Words are made of such stuff as breath is made on. 20

The above experience of the protagonist is a visionary apprehension rather than an attempt made for a philosophical diversion. A drastic change is noticed between the narrative of Kanthapura and The Serpent and the Rope. The former presents the rural unsophisticated rantings of the village folks and the latter is urbanised and sophisticated as the situation demands. Just as in Kanthapura, Raja Rao gives a detailed description of the various roads of Paris which he traverses, in his novel The

20. The Serpent and the Rope, p. 168
Serpent and the Rope. An example:

In the evenings I often went after dinner to Georges and Catherine. I used to go up the Boulevard Saint-Michel and take the 83 at the Gare Montparnasse, which would take me through Avenue Bosquet, and behind Les Invalides to Place d'Alma. I would linger a while by the river and then take the 63 straight to La Muette. From there I walked down to the Rue Michel-Ange.

A description of Benares too is very aptly given by Raja Rao. As evening falls:

All the lights in Benares were by now lit, and even the funeral pyres on the ghats seemed like some natural illumination. The monkeys must have gone to the treetops, and the Sadhus must be at their meals. Evening drums were beating from every temple, and one heard in the midst of it a train rumble over the Daulatpore Bridge...

The novelist does full justice in projecting India's beauty and also its culture through his work. Here is a passage to indicate the genuine Indianness of Raja Rao's use of English for creating a truly Indian scene and the

21. Ibid., p. 370
22. Ibid., p. 21
Indian mood.

Little Mother was very sad, but she left us. She could not understand this new, university-created world, as she called it. To learn English is easy, it may take only a few years. But to say 'Rama-Sita Krishna-Govinda' it takes many lives. The young will never understand. 23

In a few words Raja Rao is able to give an ocean of meanings. The above passage describes the gulf between the older generation and the Western educated young people. Moreover, the writer with a few select words is able to convey to the reader the reaction of the older generation to the present carefree and careless youngsters. A similar type of dialogue takes place between Ramaswamy and Madeleine. To release the pressure of the musings of the philosophy, Raja Rao introduces simple and fluent sentences. Rama is curious to know the reason for their separation but Madeleine seems to have divined the question and said: "What is it separated us, Rama?"

"India."

"India? But I am a Buddhist."

"That is why Buddhism left India. India is impitoyable."

23. Ibid., p. 268
"But one can become a Buddhist?"

"Yes, and a Christian and a Muslim as well."

"Then?"

"One can never be converted to Hinduism."

You mean one can only be born a Brahmin?"

"That is an Indian." 24

The most remarkable dialogues are those in which characters talk in monosyllable like, "I", "India", "Myself", "Who" and so on. Another example of such a dialogue is between Savitri and Rama it goes thus:

"Is-ness is the Truth," she answered.

"And is -ness is what?"

"Who asks that question?"

"Myself."

"Who?"

"I"

"Of whom?"

"No one."

"Then ' I am ' is."

"Rather, I am am."

24. Ibid., p. 331
"Tautology!" she laughed.

Dialogues of this nature are in abundance in this novel. The answers are short and crisp and no time is lost in pondering over or long catechism. The brisk answering keeps the reader alert and unnecessary verbosity is done away with unless the situation demands it.

The Cat and Shakespeare is termed as a metaphysical comedy, a novel of slender bulk, following The Serpent and the Rope.

'The reader has to infer a great deal between the lines, he has to weep and laugh at once and all the time; and he has to lose himself in prayer, he has to learn to cease to be himself and become what he sees he sees.'

says K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar about the technique used by Raja Rao in his novel. Much is left to the reader to infer the hidden meanings as there are about 300 blank pages at the end. The novel provides entertainment and excitement to the reader though much is to be read beneath the superficial tones. This novel cannot be adjudged as a mere fantasy for it is based on actual events. 'The Cat' is

25. Ibid., p. 130

viewed as Raja Rao's quest, a step towards realism. Ayyappa Panikkar states that the problem of Raja Rao in :

'The Cat and Shakespeare' his problem is not how to subject fiction to the conventionalism of realism, but how to trap Reality as it were within the invented fable."

Panikkar further adds that the novel is actually meant to project a non-dimensional awareness of life.

The narrative technique is entirely different from one novel to another. Raja Rao depends much on fast narration of events and ideas in his first two novels, Kanthapura and The Serpent and the Rope. In the first novel the speedy narrative gathers force in order to suit the sweep of action and event, just as it suits the momentum of ideas in the second novel. Whereas in his later novels The Cat and Shakespeare and Comrade Kirillov he evolves a new style of a slower rhythm and pace to suit, "a comic fantasy of deep philosophical import and the ironic

portrayal of an ambivalent character".28

'Indianness' is shown by the use of symbols, ideas and myths besides the Indian philosophy of the Epics and classics which form the backbone of all his novels.

In The Cat and Shakespeare Raja Rao employs shorter and terse sentences to suit the domestic life as well as the situation of the routine work at the ration office. This world of our natural existence and day to day routine is compared with a ration shop in the novel.

"Life is a ration shop 29 says the narrator, moreover, the ration office is mismanaged where files are allegedly eaten away by the rats. It is stated that, "Shakespeare knew every mystery of the shop." 30 Thus in the narrative, we notice, the sentences to be superfluously simple but have a deep meaning within. The two worlds of the ideal and the real of the Cat and Shakespeare - are linked together for portraying ordinary man's involvement in the world of Shakespeare and also give a solution to come out of a clumsy and a tense situation.

30. Ibid., p. 83
The dialogues by the principal characters are usually aphoristic statements of metaphysical significance. The monosyllable dialogues are abundant in The Cat and Shakespeare just as in The Serpent and the Rope. The dialogues with a lighter tone have a touch of seriousness of meaning. An example of such a sentence:

The definition of truth is simple - you wake up and you are in front of truth.  

There’s only one depth and one extensivity and that’s [in] oneself.  

Besides these Upanishadic statements there is a narrative style which includes sense and nonsense too. The narrator’s statement about Govindan Nair that:

You may say he is talking nonsense. No, Sir, he is talking sense. You never saw a man talk more sense than Govindan Nair. 

At another place Govindan Nair says:

When truth becomes visible, it is a lie. So the world is a

31. Ibid., p. 18
32. Ibid., p. 62
33. Ibid., p. 99
lie, etc. etc. 34

The novelist succeeds in creating an logical out of illogical puzzling narrative which conceals the philosophical truth covered by a paradox. As the name of the novel implies, Shakespearean touches too earn a predominant place in the narration as well as dialogues of the novel. Prof. C. D. Narasimhaiah remarks that:

Now here is an Indian who adapts Shakespeare to his needs, his spiritual needs. 35

Raja Rao's originality can be judged when with a minimal changes in Shakespearean vocabulary, he can infuse an Indian sensibility and lift them to a spiritual plane. 36

Possibly it may be to justify the title and show that only Shakespearean style can be the most effective in presenting a serious theme with such a light and comic tone. Thus with the triumph of the language, Raja Rao succeeds in the triumph of technical innovation too. There are sentences imbued with Upanishadic flavour and they give the sensations of Sanskrit mantras and slokas. An example:

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34. Ibid., p. 33


36. Ibid.
Birth is instantaneous with time. Who is born where. Time is born in time.⁷

and yet another ,

When one is curious one can know anything. It's like the kitten seeking the cat. ³⁸

Raja Rao employs expressions that have a tendency to turn from the abstract to the mystical:

Life is a ridicule that can be solved with a riddle. You can remove one thorn with another thorn, you solve one problem through another problem. Thus the world is connected. ³⁹

The above sentences convey a whole world of meaning. At times there are sentences which lack decorum and show a glaring inadequacy of the verbal medium. One such sentence is quoted below:

On each grain of rice is writ the name of the who'll eat it.
The ration card is the proof.⁴⁰

Ruminations such as:

37. The Cat and Shakespeare, op. cit., p. 32
38. Ibid., p. 43
39. Ibid., p. 37
40. Ibid., p. 43
To speak the truth, nobody can give only the mother cat can give. 41

contribute significantly in making up the novel's texture. Very little action is seen in this novel but a stream of thoughts are contemplated either by Ramakrishna Pai or Govindan Nair. Raja Rao's contemplative technique employed in The Serpent and the Rope is also noticed in this novel. The trivialities of life accounted for in this novel often lead to truths of great philosophical importance. Govindan Nair's thoughts are born out of his own perception.

The narrator states that:

Govindan Nair talks of only what he sees. That means he does not talk. And this is the secret of his state. 42

Thoughts of such nature arise from the truth, the truth that is perceived and realised within. The novel is overladen with such philosophic thoughts and the theory of the kitten-like surrender to God is only an extension of the wisdom achieved to perceive God in The Serpent and the Rope.

Comrade Kirillov is subtitled as 'A New Novel'. It is new mainly in its employment of the

41. Ibid., p. 51
42. Ibid., p. 99
structural device of irony which adds force and fullness to its narrative. Irony is being made use of on a large scale, this in fact saves the novel from being merely a book of catalogue of weaknesses and strength of communism and the hero too is saved from just becoming a symbol of laughter. The ironic structure is devised in this novel as Raja Rao seems to have divined that neither a plain and fast moving narrative of Kanthapura nor the aphoristic musings and riddling used in The Serpent and the Rope and The Cat and Shakespeare respectively could be in any way effective to pave the way to reveal the duality of the protagonist. Irony plays a double role in the narrative. It explicitly gives the logic formulated in communism as well as its limitations through an implicit criticism of its tenets:

The Russian Revolution was a remarkable experiment - it was the only historic revelation of the modern world. The Messiah was not only born - he worked, and his land was called the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic, and may be a new Ganges flowed there, and man there had all the prismatic colours of the prophetic world. Besides, it was built on reason and the steam - engine. 

The plot in this novel is compact and barely covers one hundred and thirty two pages inclusive of notes

43. Comrade Kirillov, op. cit., p.15
and Postface. The story is simple and straightforward, unlike his earlier novel *The Cat and Shakespeare* which is overladen with symbols and dialogues and is to be read in a slower pace, though it is a comedy, or else the underlying hidden meaning will go unnoticed. Raja Rao in his novelette employs fewer descriptions as the main focus is on the mind and character of Kirillov around whom the story revolves. It is solely due to the plot that the novelist gets an opportunity to use large chunks of political observations. The casual observation and leisurely narration states the confusion in the mind of Kirillov. Irony prevents the dramatisation of the tension in Kirillov’s mind. It is employed mainly to convey and give vent to the anguished feelings and thoughts of Kirillov.

A narrative in *Comrade Kirillov* shows the mental tension of the central character who tries to pursue truth. Here is an example:

The humiliation of man is awful, especially if you have seen the way an untouchable has to leap the fence to let your brahminic presence pass by, or the niggardly twist of dhoti on a ploughing peasant, or the brutal bamboo of ancestral masters. No, for Kirillov’s elders owned big bits of royal grants of land, and the rice that came to his twelve-pillared house, the nine musics at the marriages, the bendings and bowings to Barrah Sahibs—all this... added chilli and
salt to his small, squat, unelegant self. The world has no use for intelligence.

Raja Rao, somehow, did not give much importance to descriptions as most of the time the main character philosophises or speaks on communism or politics. But the economical living of the protagonist is described beautifully by Raja Rao. He says Kirillov:

was an Indian, his pants too dissimilar for his limbs, his coat flapping a little too fatherly on his small, rounded muscles of seating, his lips tender, slow and segregate-out of which eked true words and numbers, which his narrow, dun eyes gave an added touch of humanity to his ancient and enigmatic face.

The novelist indeed gives a very apt description of the man, Kirillov, and by so doing shows a creative writer's critical faculty brilliantly at work.

The dialogues that the character speaks are either of India, and its leaders or politics or even the philosophies of Truth. Kirillov in the core of his heart loves India but when he speaks about it it is just the obverse. He abuses in the name of the Mahatma. For

44. Ibid., p. 11

45. Ibid., p. 7
example a dialogue between Irene, Kirillov and the narrator is cited below:

... India is the sinner if modern love is sin. Tell Mahatma Gandhi that.

"As you know, he is dead," protested Irene.

"Tell that to all the smaller Mahatma Gandhis," he retorted.

"What took you to India?" I asked. [ narrator ]

"Work," he said, cryptically.

"What work?" I persisted.

"Political work, of course," he explained.

"And what is Indian politics today?"

"A good Masala," he laughed. "You have ginger and cinnamon, coriander and chilli, and if your taste be too elegant, you can have what we call Marathabuds and mountain cardamom. You have every opinion you want."

Irony is at work throughout the novel and we find Kirillov's answer always curt with no sweet coatings. The protagonist from time to time is seen discussing Indian culture and thought, and speaks about India with great ease but on the contrary he strongly rejects what he finds

46. Ibid., p. 81
irrelevant and obsolete. This is a unique feature of Kirillov's character. This chapter shows the form and style adopted by Raja Rao along with the dialogues, narratives and descriptions which form the broader aspects of his technique. The following chapter will deal with the use of other languages and various devices such as words, phrases, idioms as well as the use of myths, symbols, legends which help in building up each novel.