Raja Rao is a spiritually inclined author. Attaining a spiritual level is simply recognizing the inner self which is pure bliss. This recognition of the true self seems to be the objective of Raja Rao and his protagonists. Raja Rao is committed to the application of a certain traditional philosophical idea as a way of man’s liberation from the complex tangles of life. Raja Rao maintains that man is a metaphysical entity whose only aim in life is self realisation. As Narsingh Shrivastav remarks, “We notice that a metaphysical approach to the problems of life, political, moral or spiritual is the key note of his novel and it is this special approach that enables him to view things in their temporal and eternal frame of reference simultaneously”(9).

Metaphysics is the crux of all the novels of Raja Rao. The problems of life are analysed in the light of metaphysics and this lends his novels a uniqueness and novelty. Raja Rao stands apart from the rest of the novelists in his ‘special approach’ to present the complexities of myths and reality in a ‘temporal’ as well as ‘an eternal frame of reference’. This unique feature enables the reader to understand the importance of rope and snake at the same time. Like the other great writers Raja Rao has the power of creating revelatory utterances of universal truth and combining the descriptive and the interpretative with the intuitive vision of things. The Serpent and the Rope is based on the advaita ‘non-dual’ philosophy of Samkaracharya which stresses on the need of a Guru to seek salvation but the search of the Guru remains incomplete in the novel. The Cat and Shakespeare is considered to be a sequel of it. It takes up the theme of metaphysical quest from the point at which Ramaswamy’s story ended as it shows how one functions after one has found
the Guru. It carries the theme of metaphysical quest and combines it with satire and fun about the complexities of life. The novel is described as a metaphysical comedy. It is a queer work, a tale of modern India. According to Kaushal Sharma:

*The Cat and Shakespeare* carries the theme of the quest for reality in a manner which is different from the other novels as it carries the theme of metaphysical quest, a step forward in a new direction. The novel is stuffed with real life situations, metaphysics, irony fantasy and fact, digression, tragic and comic situations. There is haphazardness and the narrative mode is in consonance with the life and characters of the story (49).

In the novel there is a unique blend of tragedy and comedy. The practical problems of life are juxtaposed with the mythical symbols. The story moves in a haphazard manner as there are not much exciting events or twists and turns in the story. The novel basically states the cat kitten theory with the actual implementation of it in the plot as the cat plays a major role. *The Cat and Shakespeare* can be described as an Upanisadic lore due to the metaphysical aspects.

(A)An Upanisadic Lore

*The Cat and Shakespeare* is intended to be a mere piece of entertaining fiction. The reader is enticed to ponder on some metaphysical truths and some Shakespearean parallel or contrasts in situations. The title is very interesting where the cat represents the metaphysical reality of life and Shakespeare represents the practical world which is full of myths and illusions. Instead of a well developed plot in the traditional sense, *The Cat and Shakespeare* appears to be a novel of philosophy and metaphysics, chiseled with encyclopedic knowledge. The novel is based on the Upanisadic philosophy of the cat and kitten and so the novel can be described as an Upanisadic lore.
According to *Compact Oxford Reference Dictionary*, a lore is “a body of traditions and knowledge on a subject”. The knowledge in this case is on the subject of Upanisads. The Sanskrit word Upanisad is derived from *upa* ‘nearby’, *ni* ‘at proper place’, *sad* ‘to sit’. ‘Sitting down near’ implies sitting near a teacher to receive instructions. Upanisads are basically encyclopedia of transcendental knowledge. They are tantamount to *Vedantic jnana* ‘knowledge’. Hiriyanna emphasizing the importance of Upanisads states:

> They represent the earliest efforts of man at giving a philosophical explanation of the world, and are as such invaluable in the history of human thought. Their importance is much more than historical, for their unique spiritual power and the elements of universal appeal which they contain may exercise a considerable influence on the re-construction of thought and realignment of life in the future (52).

The Upanisads are supposed to be written in the pre-Buddhistic period, still they hold appeal to the masses even today. Their universal appeal is due to the fact that they state the highest philosophy about the mysteries of life and death, which helps in the ‘realignment of life’ for an ordinary man even today. In the Upanisads, one finds the fundamental teachings that are central to Hinduism like the concepts of karma, *samsara* ‘world’ *moksha* ‘salvation’, *atman* ‘soul’ and *Brahman*. They also set forth the prime Vedic doctrines of self realization. The Upanisads are the summits of thought on mankind and the universe designed to push human idea to the limit and beyond. They give us both the spiritual vision and the philosophical argument. There are about two hundred Upanisads but the oldest twelve are known as *mukhya* ‘major’ Upanisads but their authors are unknown.
The central theme of the Upanisads is monotheism or the delineation of a supreme being as the cardinal principle of the universe. This is described as Brahman, atman ‘soul’, Prana ‘life force’ and so forth. The Upanisads teach the truth—unknown to the sense organs—regarding jivas ‘sentient beings’, jagat ‘world’ and iswara ‘God’. Swami Nikhilananda explains the leitmotif of Upanisads through the words of Samkaracharya,

According to Samkaracharya, the sole purpose of the Upanisads is to prove the reality of Brahman and the phenomenality or unreality of the universe of names and forms, and to establish the absolute oneness of the embodied soul and the Brahman. This Vedic truth is not a product of the human mind and cannot be comprehended by the unaided human intellect. Only a competent teacher, through direct experience, can reveal to the qualified student the true significance of the Vedas and the fullness of their absolutely consistent truth.(14)

The ‘absolute consistent truth’ cannot be understood by an ‘unaided human intellect’. One needs to equip oneself and train one’s mind by the disciplines of asceticism and then under the guidance of a Guru, one can comprehend the mysteries of the world and the ‘oneness’ of atman ‘soul’ and Brahman. The Upanisads have some unique features, their exposition is done in four main ways. Firstly, Upanisads take the form of question and answers discoursing on a metaphysical theme. Secondly there is the use of similes, metaphors and symbols in order to elucidate a point. Thirdly concepts are elucidated though the narration of the story.

*The Cat and Shakespeare* has characteristics of an Upanisadic lore. Like any other novel of Raja Rao, in this novel too emphasis is more on metaphysical thoughts rather than on the plot of the story. The central theme is from the major school of Vedanta the philosophy of *visistadvaita*
‘qualified non-dualism’. The crux of the novel is this philosophy such that the other aspects get overshadowed by it. The novel has many similarities with the Upanisads that’s why it may be as called an Upanisadic lore. As in the Upanisads, the discourses are in the form of questions and answers similarly in *The Cat and Shakespeare* there is a discourse between a lady and Govindan Nair. The discourse is meant to explain the Vedantic ‘related to Vedanta’ reality that *atman* ‘soul’ and *Brahman* are one through the symbol of water. Water is the same whether it is in ocean or in the tap of the house. In *The Serpent and the Rope*, Raja Rao expresses his Guru’s words in the epilogue,

“Waves are nothing but water

So is the sea”.

Similarly in this novel, through the analogy of water, in the manner of an Upanisad, the principle is established through questions and answers between the lady and Nair,

“Where does the water come from?”

“From the tap?”

“And the water in the tap?”

“From the lake?”

“And the water in the lake?”

“From the sky”

“And the water in the sky?”

“From the ocean?”
“And the water in the ocean?”

“From the rivers.”

“And the river waters?”

“They make the lakes.”

“And the tap water?”

“Is river water.”

“And so?

“Water comes from water”,

she said. (CS 46)

Water is the same everywhere, as *Brahman* is the same in every living or non-living entity. It is one’s ego that brings about the differentiation otherwise the universe is one. This kind of discourse is found in the Upanisads in order to elucidate a point.

The second important similarity of *The Cat and Shakespeare* with Upanisad is the use of metaphors and similes which is incorporated to explain a situation or character. In the novel Nair’s physique is compared with that of Lord Siva and Pai is compared with the hunter dropping *bilva* leaves on the hunter. The metaphor and simile both are used effectively as they are used in the Upanisads. Pai says, “I have hardly formulated . . . I am just like that hunter carelessly dropping *bilva* leaves on some Shiva as yet unknown- when this big creature Govindan Nair leaps across the wall. That he is round and tall makes no difference to his movements” (CS 11-12).
The Upanisadic and *Vedantic* ‘related to *Vedanta*’ thoughts are all pervasive in the novel. The central theme of the novel is taken from one of the schools of *Vedanta*. *Vedanta* comprises of *Bhagavad-Gita*, *Upanisad* and *Brahma Sutras*. The literal meaning of *Vedanta* is the end of *Vedas*. It also implies the principles laid down in the closing chapters of the *Vedas*. The Upanisads are the doctrines which give the essence of the *Vedas*. There are three major schools of philosophy with regard to the system of the *Vedanta* - the *advaita* ‘non-dualism’ expounded by *Samkara* (788-820) the *visistadvaita* ‘qualified non-dualism’ upheld by *Ramanuja* (1067-1137) and *dvaita* ‘dualism’ propounded by *Madhava* (1197-1276).

The three philosophies give different interpretations to the relation between *Iswara* ‘God’, *atman* ‘soul’ and the universe. The *visistadvaita* ‘qualified non-dualism’ believes in *sagun Brahman* ‘God with attributes’ and *advaita* ‘non-dualism’ believes in *nirgun Brahman* ‘God with no attributes’. According to *Ramanuja*, *iswara* ‘God’ with attributes is none other than *Visnu*. *Brahman* is Visnu the supreme one and all others are subordinate to him. He is merciful and does justice with all as per the individual’s karma. As per *visistadvaita* ‘qualified non-dualism’ theory all beings have the single aim to surrender themselves to *Visnu* in order to attain *mukti* ‘liberation’. All these theories prescribe different paths for man’s spiritual elevation. *Vedanta* in generals prescribes surrender of the self, devotion, meditation, ascetic rigor, annihilation of the ego and non-attachment to worldly possessions. All this is to be done for man’s *mukti* ‘liberation’ from the cycle of birth and death.

*Ramanuja* preached the doctrine of *Prapatti* or ‘self surrender’ of the being to God. After *Ramanuja*’s death, two separate interpretations of the nature of man’s dependence on God gave rise to two antagonistic school’s viz, the Vadagalai or vadakalai school also called the northern school and the Tenglai or tenkalai school which was the southern school. The basic philosophy of
Ramanuja is the doctrine of self surrender which implies the extinction of the self and the final merger of the will of man with that of God. The Northern school or Vadagalai propounded the doctrine of free will of the human spirit. Its theory is called the *markata nyaya* ‘monkey theory’. It believes in man’s endeavour to realize the supreme reality in the manner of a young monkey clinging to its mother by its own free will. The monkey jumps from place to place irrespective of the young monkey who clings to the mother tightly out of its own free will and is thus saved. Similarly the living beings if they cling to the almighty and surrender themselves to him they can achieve salvation. The young monkey is just the symbol of surrender. The view of the Tenglais is a counter part of the above theory.

Tenglais view is technically styled as *marjara kishore nyaya* ‘cat kitten theory’. The theory states that the kitten is held by the cat by the scruff of the neck and the kitten surrenders to the mother cat, and she in turn takes care of the kitten. The kitten does not cling to it like the little monkey in the *markata nyaya* ‘monkey theory’. Similarly the living beings if they surrender themselves completely to the divine grace unconditionally with full faith then the divine will take care of them and drive them to salvation.

Living beings do not have to make any effort. They just have to surrender to the ultimate and those who completely surrender to *Brahman* are always protected and preserved by him. As Nair says in the novel- “Have you ever seen a kitten fall? You could fall. I could fall. But the kittens walk on the wall. They are so deft . . . .The mother cat watches them. And when they are about to fall, there she is, her head in the air, and she picks you up by the scruff of your neck” (*CS* 61). The cat kitten relationship unfolds a dual response one from the side of the kitten in the form of total surrender to the mother cat and the other from the side of mother cat which takes upon itself the responsibility of carrying the kitten softly in its mouth from place to place, wherever it goes. The
right devotion is a two way traffic the mother cat always remaining attentive to the needs of the kitten and the kitten ever dependent upon the former for its life and movements. Then and there alone is the circuit of devotion and surrender complete.

It is intriguing why Raja Rao uses Ramanuja’s philosophy of bhakti ‘devotion’ yoga when The Serpent and the Rope is quite obviously based on Samkara’s jnana ‘knowledge’ yoga which does not allow the infiltration of devotion in its intellectual approach towards Brahman. It has been argued that the two philosophers opposed each other’s theory. Ramanuja did not believe in maya ‘illusion’ and thereby respected human faculties more than Samkara could permit in his assertion of human susceptibility to illusion. Ramanuja also argued that Samkara was not a reliable interpreter of the Upanisads. It seems that Raja Rao does not completely believe in Samkara’s interpretations of myth and the reality. In The Serpent and the Rope there is a lot of focus on the world as illusion. The practicalities of life are not emphasized whereas in The Cat and Shakespeare there is a totally different approach. The practicalities of mundane life are dealt with emphatically and the world is not considered as maya ‘illusion’ and the way to live in the practical world is taught through the cat kitten theory.

The cat is omnipresent in the novel. Not only is it referred to again and again but it also plays a major and unusual role in the development of the story. The marjara kishore nyaya ‘cat kitten theory’ is actually implemented in the story and thus the cat plays the same role as mentioned in the philosophy.

(B) Myth of the Cat

The cat is the most important character in The Cat and Shakespeare as it has a symbolic significance. A symbol is the use of a concrete object to represent an abstract idea. In literature symbol is used as a figure of speech in which a person or situation represents something in
addition to its literal meaning. In India the cat is used as a symbol of cunningness forethought and ingenuity. The cat as a symbol as well as a character is used by many writers like Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Black Cat*, Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* and Dr. Seuss’s *The Cat in the Hat* to name a few. To emphasise the *marjara kishore nyaya* ‘cat kitten theory’ of the Indian philosophy the story is woven around a cat in this particular novel. As Gandhi’s spirit was all pervasive in *Kanthapura*, the cat’s presence is all pervasive in *The Cat and Shakespeare*, the only difference being that the cat is also a character in this novel and Gandhi is not a character in *Kanthapura*. The symbol of the cat and its reference again and again by Nair acts like a guiding force to the protagonist Pai. It shows the path to lead a life which ultimately takes him towards the enlightened state. The kitten is the symbol of the ignorant common man deeply involved in practicalities of the life and who strongly needs a guiding force.

According to Shiva Niranjan, “As stated earlier, the cat thus symbolizes the Ultimate and to Raja Rao it is the symbol of the guru who is the lord Incarnate. By extension of meaning it also stands for divine love as also the willingness of the guru to carry his disciple to the state of enlightenment or at least illumination. The kitten symbolizes the common man”(132). The novel is a story of two friends Pai and Nair where Nair acts like a Guru to Pai guiding him in all his problems. Nair is not only the guiding force but also the symbol for the cat of *marjara kishore nyaya* ‘cat kitten theory’ who tries to ‘carry his disciple to the state of enlightenment’. Pai represents the ordinary man in the grip of the problems of life. He is like a kitten who holds on to Nair with complete faith following the theory of *marjara kishore nyaya* ‘cat kitten theory’

It may also be suggested that the cat represents the feminine principle with the unqualified affection of the mother and her anxiety to carry the kitten to safety that may lead to illumination. The cat is given so much importance in the novel that the main characters appear feeble in front
of it. It is not only referred to again and again but also plays a role in the protagonist’s life. Nair is implicated in a false case and in the court room he is saved by the cat. The act of the cat is admitted as a witness and the judgement is given in the favour of Nair with the help of the cat’s peculiar behaviour. “The cat suddenly jumped onto the shoulder of the clerk and started licking his neck. He felt such sweetness in this, he opened file after file. The cat now jumped over to the table and sat. Usha came from the back, led by an attendant, and took the cat in her arms. The clerk had indeed found the paper” (CS 93).

It is with the help of a cat that the real paper can be found which proves Nair’s innocence. Thus cat plays a significant part in saving the protagonist. It seems like the story of Panchatantra where animals play important roles with humans. As in marjara kishore nyaya ‘cat kitten theory’ the kitten is saved by the cat in the same way in the novel, Nair being the kitten, shows faith in the Lord, and is saved by the cat.

The implementation of the theory in the practical life of characters appears completely unreal and mythical. A cat cannot be accepted in the court of law as a witness. It is a sheer imagination of the novelist. Pai himself questions, “But is life normal? Is the cat in the court normal?” (CS 96). In any judicial system of the world, an animal could never act as a witness. At the same time the high court judgements cannot be pronounced on the basis of a mute animal’s accentric activity as this appears highly preposterous. The cat is just a tool or symbol to explain a particular philosophy. The theory of marjara kishore nyaya ‘cat kitten theory’ appears to be authentic and believable and it is a highly philosophical concept. The tool or the object taken to explain the concept is not as important as the theory itself. If white colour stands for purity or the rose acts as a symbol of beauty then the concept of purity or the concept of beauty is important and not the white colour.
or the rose, as they are mere symbols. The idea behind them is relevant and important. Therefore the cat being given importance in the plot of the story appears highly mythical and unreal.

In the stories of *Panchtantra* animals are the main characters. In those stories too, the message hidden in the story is important and not the animals representing those stories. The cat as such in our society is considered an inauspicious animal. In Christianity, cat is considered an instrument of devil herself. In Islam the cat does not have much of importance as it is actually the symbol of viciousness. Nair speaking to Syed in his office says, “No, man, I know your theology better. The cat is not sacred in Islam” (*CS* 78). The cat is not the vehicle of any God or goddess in mythology. A rat is a vehicle of the Lord Ganesha and a bull is of Lord Siva and lion of Goddess Durga and these animals are worshipped as they are associated with some or the other God. But as Bhoothalinga says, “But the cat, which god ever rode a cat? Nobody did-so it was improper, unholy, beyond thought” (*CS* 67). A cat is never given prominence in any mythological story or legend. It is a symbol of hatred, viciousness and manipulation. The common belief of people about the cat is expressed through the feeling of the character called Bhoothalinga Iyer. “Bhoothalinga Iyer was a Brahmin. For him a cat, a *marjaram*, was a pariah animal. It was sly, unclean, unfaithful. It was evil to see a cat first thing in the morning. . . .Also, cats’ hair, if it fell into your milk, was worse than gall. It made you vomit blood. So altogether the cat was not a creature to be thought about” (*CS* 67).

The cat being pictured as a hero and the cause of everything in the novel seems very unreal and preposterous. At one stage Raja Rao is elevating the status of the cat as it is saving the protagonist Nair, parallel to this the same cat is shown to be the cause of demise of one of the characters Bhoothalinga Iyer. At some or the other point of time Raja Rao himself realizes that cat could be inauspicious. Nair says in the novel,” ‘Once upon a time’, he began, and before he could go on, the
cat jumped onto Bhoothalinga Iyer’s head. Bhoothalinga Iyer opened his eyes wide and said, “Shiva, Shiva”, and he was dead. He actually sat in his chair as if he could not be moved”(CS 79). Bhoothalinga Iyer died as his heart was weak and he couldn’t bear the shock of cat jumping on him.

The point suggested here is that the cat is just a tool or a symbol used to illustrate a theory or a principle of Vedanta. In itself the cat is not an auspicious and important animal. Raja Rao’s portrayal of the cat as the saviour a Guru or a mother principle appears to be unreal or mythical. The marjar kishore nyaya ‘cat kitten theory’ is an important theory of Vedanta. It emphasizes on Bhakti marg ‘path of devotion’ to reach the ultimate. But the tool used to explain this theory is not as much significant as shown in the novel. Apart from the myth of the cat, there are many other myths which are busted in the novel. One of such myths is the myth of conventional marriage. The conventional marriages are shown in a poor light in Raja Rao’s novels.

(C) Illusion of the Conventional Marriage

The conventional relationship between a man and a woman is that of husband and wife. In Raja Rao’s novels the role of marriage and wife is always undermined and the unconventional man-woman relation is given importance. In every society marriage is regarded as the most important relation as it is responsible for raising the basic unit of the society the family. A wife plays a pivotal role in the institution of marriage. Marriage is an important institution essential for a civil society as it not only prevents malpractices like polygamy but also helps in establishing the perfect order in the society. A very famous Psychologist Floyd L. Ruch says,

Marriage is one of the most fundamental institutions in our culture. It gives the individual an opportunity for the satisfaction of his needs for companionship, affection, and sexual expression. Marriage and the home provide an ideal
situation for procreation and the rearing of children. The family is also the basic economic unit in our civilization. Maladjustment in marriage is a serious social problem.(463)

Marriage involves coming together of two individuals from two different worlds. It involves a continuous dynamic adjustment, an acclimatization occurring on many planes physical, psychological moral emotional and even philosophical. Man, woman relationship is complicated and has many facets. It could be the most beautiful bond enhancing personal development or it could be the worst bond leading to the degradation of the individuals involved. ‘Maladjustment in marriage’ leads to complications in one’s life.

The female characters have a very strong role in moulding and influencing the life of the hero of Raja Rao’s novels. For Raja Rao the feminine principle is very important as he believes that, “Woman is the microcosm of the mind, . . . Woman is kingdom, solitude, time; woman is growth, the gods, inherence; the woman is death, for it is through woman that one is born; woman rules, for it is she, the universe. She is the daughter of the earth, . . .”(SR 352). She is the very essence of his being and becomes absolutely inseparable from him. In loving her, he as a matter of fact loves and knows himself. The Cat and Shakespeare is a modern hymn in praise of the feminine principle in its various embodiments as mother cat, Shantha, Laxmi and Usha in whom women appears as mother, lady love, sister and daughter respectively. Pai expresses, “Man is protected. You could not be without a mother. You are always a child. The wife is she who makes you the child. That is why our children resemble us men”(CS 33).

In all the novels of Raja Rao, the feminine principle is represented and glorified in the form of mother, friend and mistress. In The Serpent and the Rope Raja Rao expresses, “To Mitra she is Varuna, to Indra she is Agni, to Rama she is Sita, to Krishna she is Radha. Woman is the meaning of
the word, the breath, touch, act; woman, that which reminds man of that which he is, and reminds herself through him of that which she is" (SR 352). Raja Rao has maintained in his novels that with the help of a woman a man can reach the advaitic ‘non-dualistic’ state where they can realize Brahman together. But this woman has to be the feminine principle or the Benaras born bride, an epitome of perfect Indian woman with a metaphysical bent of mind. This feminine principle can be or cannot be a wife. In Raja Rao’s novels this Benaras born bride is never the wife. She is always the other woman apart from the wife.

The legally wedded wife is always shown in a poor light. The conventional husband and wife relation is not depicted as the ultimate in Raja Rao’s novels. The feminine principle of Vedanta states that the Prakriti ‘nature’ of the Purusa ‘man’ is the wife and not the mother or the mistress. Lakshmi is the wife of Visnu whom we worship and Parvati is the wife of Siva who is a Goddess. It is the wife who is legally wedded and who is called the ardhangini ‘husband’s half’ is given importance in Vedanta and Upanisads. This aspect of femininity is completely undermined by Raja Rao. In fact the wives are shown in a very poor light. In most of Raja Rao’s novels the love between man and woman flourishes in extramarital relationships alone. Ramaswamy in The Serpent and the Rope and Pai in The Cat and Shakespeare develop extra marital relationship with Savithri and Shantha respectively. As K. K. Sharma expresses:

Like D. H. Lawrence Raja Rao is deeply concerned with one of the fundamental realities of human life viz the man woman relationship. His novels especially The Serpent and the Rope and The Cat and Shakespeare probe the mysteries of the feminine principle revealing its basic nature and its various facets. His hero discovers in the women of his choice a chemical mixture of mistress, whore,
child and mother, he finds her sensual strong compassionate sensitive intelligent and mysterious (86).

In Raja Rao’s novels the feminine principle is the bold and daring woman who is ‘sensitive intelligent and mysterious’. She is spiritually inclined and ready to take any risk without any fear of the society. Her ideals in love are not Rama and Sita but Radha and Krsna.

The delineation of illicit love in Raja Rao’s novels has tantric connotations. In the postulates of Tantra, love is called upon to assume the leading role and it is chiefly an adulterous love. It is regarded as an exemplary love as is reminiscent of the love of Radha Krsna. The woman behaves like Radha and worships her Lord and the man behaves like Krsna. Although Krsna, is not married when he is with Radha and after he gets married he never has any extramarital relations. Pai, the protagonist justifies his relation by comparing it with the relation of Krsna and Radha. Many critics have also compared Shantha’s love with Radha, as Dayal says, “Shantha is so exquisite in her love play and she is not ashamed to be a woman. Shantha is no doubt a surrendering Radha while Pai is still not Krishna, for he is scared stiff of his illicit relationship with her and asks if his life with his mistress is normal” (69).

Pai’s character is not completely unblemished. He indulges in extramarital relation and moreover he himself is not clear about what he wants from his life and whether he is doing right or wrong. Pai’s love has a negative side it is not ethereal but is rooted in body and emotions. “I now understand. Yes, I love Shantha because she has my child in her. That is the secret. She has myself in her” (CS 82). In the novel not much importance is given to the wives of Nair and Pai. The views that the protagonist holds about a wife is also contrary to the ideals of the Hindu religion. According to him, a wife is the one who worships the feet of a man and remains devoted to him. Pai says, “If she became my mistress it was because she felt wife. She remained a wife. My feet
were there for her to worship."(CS 23). Pai gets attracted to Shantha and as she serves him and worships him like God and so he treats her like a wife. For Pai bearing one’s child is enough for a woman to be a wife. But when that woman becomes a wife she has to worship the man and care for him. “Devotion to me was proof of her truth. The child was meaning. The woman is always right”(CS 23).

The belief of the visistadvaita ‘qualified non-dualism’ on which the novel is based also proves to be a myth in the novel. The feminine principle is not worshipped and respected but on the contrary the woman is expected to worship her man like God and be devoted to him. If a woman follows this rule then only she gets the acceptability in the relationship, if she thinks about herself and less about her man like Pai’s wife Saroja then she is ignored and disrespected in the relation. Pai also feels that a man can be violent with his wife whenever he wants. Pai and his wife have scant respect and they indulge in quarrels and Pai even beats her twice and leaves marks on her face and also on her soul of which he is unaware of. “In Chidamabaram Temple, Shankar Iyer says, the image of Shiva occupies the place of the heart. Then what is the place Parvathi occupies? I sometimes wonder whether I have a heart as I wonder in summer whether the rains will ever come. In heat I strike. I struck my wife only twice and have left marks on her face” (CS 10).

This kind of behaviour shown by Pai of beating his wife is highly disgraceful. A Brahmin like Pai who is spiritually inclined shows total disrespect for the mother of his two kids. He leaves his wife alone to fate or destiny and moves to another place. Swami Vivekananda says, “No man should scold his wife, and he must always maintain her as if she were his own mother. And even when he is in the greatest difficulties and troubles, he must not show anger to his wife. He who thinks of another woman beside his wife, . . . that man goes to dark hell” (CW 1: 43).
Pai shows complete contempt of the marital bond by his misbehavior towards his wife. The principle which underlies the importance of monogamy and of a legally wedded wife is underrated in the novel. Even in *The Serpent and the Rope* the mistress Savithri worships the feet of Ramaswamy the hero. Similarly for Pai, the feminine principle is the other woman, the mistress and not the wedded wife.

The system of conventional marriage is disregarded completely. Brahmins like Pai and Nair are the devotees of the Hindu religion and they worship Lord Shiva and Rama but in their practical lives their conduct is contrary to their idols. They do not follow the conventional norms of the marital bond. As Dayal states: “Raja Rao’s characters criticize conventional marriages. They probably think that such marriages are loveless as they merely cater to the carnal needs of a man and woman who offer lack of understanding of each other and are unhappy” (67). The point mentioned by Dayal is actually true for Pai. Pai believed that a man and woman when beget a child, then they are truly married. Consummation of the relationship is important between a man and a woman to be called a true husband and wife and they need not be legally wedded for that matter. In *The Cat and Shakespeare*, Pai and his wife lack the love and compatibility between them. They have children but there is no emotional bonding between them. The carnal needs of a man have been met but the emotional needs are left unattended.

Pai never fulfils the duties of a good husband. Even when he is planning to build a house, he plans to build it for Shantha and their child. Pai exhibits disgraceful behaviour towards his wife and establishes relations with Shantha without following the traditional social code of marriage. Neither Pai nor Shatha have any twinges of conscience or heart on the marriage issue. Shantha acts in a manner of Radha as she is not ashamed of her illegitimate relation with Pai. Shantha belonging to the Nair *Samaj* ‘society’ has no fear or inhibitions about relations with a married
man. In the Nair society, there is matriarchy and women have more power than men to take independent decisions. As Esha Dey comments: “The social context of Kerala’s unique Brahman Nair relation renders to the unconventional man woman situation a semblance of verisimilitude which would have been difficult to effect in any other Hindu community of the Indian subcontinent where a similar union would have created a great deal of social and psychological problems”(147).

It is rightly pointed out that the relation is uncommon and creates ‘social’ and ‘psychological’ problems. This is the reason why in the feminine principle of the Indian mythology and religion, the man woman relation is always referred to as husband and wife relation. The institution of marriage is respected by one and all. Not following this institution causes lot of chaos and confusion in the society. Without the institution of marriage the world of humans will be like the world of animals where any man can satisfy the carnal needs of any woman. There will be no order in the society and therefore it is absolutely essential to respect the institution of marriage and follow it in our lives. The characters of *The Cat and Shakespeare* totally disregard it and don’t even have any guilt about it.

Emphasis is given more to the unconventional relationships rather than the conventional socially accepted relation between a man and a woman. Raja Rao’s attempt of glorifying an unconventional relationship can be considered bold and daring which in the present day times is slowly gaining acceptability. Shantha represents the modern Indian woman fiercely independent and strong who lives life on her own terms disregarding social norms and carving a niche for herself.

The Hindu religion and its followers worship devi ‘goddess’ for nine consecutive days in Navaratra. All their deities, whom they worship like the deity of wealth and knowledge, are all
feminine. There is a great value of feminine principle in our lives. Raja Rao has also emphasized that women are the vital force in a man’s life and they have the power to guide him to the path of realisation and a wife acts like a Guru in a man’s life. The characters in *The Cat and Shakespeare* follow the *visistadvaita* ‘qualified non-dualism’ theory but it appears that they misinterpret it. There are many misconceptions of the theory evident in the novel.

**(D) Misconceptions of the *Visistadvaita* ‘Qualified Non-Dualism’**

Nair, who is a Guru to Pai is a spiritually elevated soul and he refers to the *visistadvaita* ‘qualified non-dualism’ theory again and again. He speaks and behaves at times like the kitten but for his friend Pai he is like the Mother Cat. The *marjara kishore nyaya* ‘cat kitten theory’ is an important aspect of the *visistadvaita* ‘qualified non-dualism’ theory. Shri Ramanujacharya has propounded a school of *bhakti* ‘devotion’ yoga where the devotee surrenders completely to the almighty and the Lord takes care of his life and ultimately the devotee becomes one with the Lord. For this *bhakti* ‘devotion’ yoga *bheda* ‘difference’ is very much essential between the *jiva* ‘sentient being’ and the Lord. Therefore Ramanuja has mixed philosophy with the practice of religion. The result is midway between *dvaita* ‘dualism’ and *advaita* ‘non-dualism’ and that is called *visistadvaita* ‘qualified non-dualism’. All these three schools of *Vedanta* have a strong logical basis. They give strong reasons for their theory and arguments of each are simply wonderful.

The *dvaita* ‘dualist’ philosophy was propounded by Madhavacharya. His view is that *jivatama* ‘soul of living being’ and *paramatma* ‘divine soul’ are different and never the same. *Jiva* ‘sentient being’ can never become one with the supreme consciousness and this difference is eternally maintained such that *jiva* ‘sentient being’ and *Iswara* ‘God’ are two different entities therefore the theory is called the *dvaita* ‘dualism’. *Advaita* ‘non-dual’ philosophy was explained by Shri AdiSamkaracharya. According to him, differences between the *jiva* ‘sentient being’ and the Lord
can be resolved and this difference is just illusion and temporary. Ultimate reality is Brahman and it is neither one nor two but not two and therefore the theory is called advaita ‘non-dualism’.

Visistadvaita ‘qualified non-dualism’ is a kind of middle between advaita ‘non-dualism’ and dvaita ‘dualism’ and was propounded by Ramanujacharya. He believed that reality is one but there are still differences in it and these differences cannot be resolved further. For example mango is same but taste of mango is different from the smell of it. Ultimately they merge into the mango yet they have different identities. Similarly iswara ‘God’ is a substantive part of Brahman. Jiva ‘sentient being’ and jagat ‘universe’ are its modes (attributes), they are like body parts of iswara ‘God’. Soul and matter are distinct but not separate from him. This triad of Iswara ‘God’ along with jagat ‘universe’ and the jiva ‘sentient beings’ together form Brahman which signifies completeness of existence.

In The Serpent and the Rope the advaita ‘non-dual’ philosophy is emphasized again and again by the protagonist Ramaswamy. In The Cat and Shakespeare the bhakti ‘devotion’ yoga of visistadvaita ‘qualified non-dualism’ theory is emphasized again and again by the protagonist Nair. In the course of the study of the novel it seems that the interpretations of visistadvaita ‘qualified non-dualism’ theory is not clear to the characters. They do not completely follow it in their lives. Their actions are contrary to their words and their behaviour seems contrary to the philosophy.

There are many tenets of Ramanuja’s theory that Govindan Nair does not appear to believe. Visistadvaita ‘qualified non-dualism’ philosophy says that the jagat ‘universe’ and jiva ‘sentient being’ have an identity and are not illusion. Nair believes that the world is just one consciousness Brahman. “For him the whole world was one living organism” (CS 17-18). He often reads out from Astavakra Samhita a text of advaita ‘non-dualism’ which does not consider the world real. “First tell me what two is and I shall answer the rest, he said, and laughed. “You is one. I is one. Where is
the two?” he asked” (CS 84). The oneness or non-duality is emphasized repeatedly by the characters. Pai also expresses his feelings which appear advaitic ‘non-dualistic’ “In life we search for truth but live in the illusion of permanence” (CS 29).

All these lines suggest that Nair and Pai have misconceptions about the visistadvaita ‘qualified non-dualism’ philosophy. Their views are mainly advaitic ‘non-dualistic’. Although Nair preaches and practices marjar kishore nyaya ‘cat kitten theory’ in his life, yet at the same time he believes in the principles of advaita ‘non-dualism’. Raja Rao also mainly believes in those principles. Ramanuja, the founder of the visistadvaita ‘qualified non-dualism believed in the existence of Iswara ‘God’, soul and the universe. The Iswara ‘God’ is Lord Visnu. The followers of Ramanuja are called Vaishnavas. They give importance to worship of Visnu. The total surrender in marjar kishore nyaya ‘cat kitten theory’ refers to the surrender to Lord Visnu and goddess Lakshmi, the consort of Visnu who is the ultimate feminine principle. The Shri of Shri Visnu is Goddess Laxmi. Contrary to this theory of the worship of Visnu, Pai and Nair keep referring to Lord Siva. Pai even attempts to please Lord Siva by observing bilva leaves over the lord. Pai says, “So when I look from my window eastward, just by the garden wall, I see this stump of bilva tree, thorns visible in the morning sun. And I wonder if God will ever bless me, just like that” (CS 10-11).

There is no mention of Lord Visnu and devotion towards him. This is contradictory to the philosophy of Ramanuja. Nair, the mentor of Pai does not worship any God nor discusses about bhakti ‘devotion’ and prappati ‘self surrender’. An advaitist ‘non-dualist’ does not accept any God or their avatars. He believes in only one reality Brahman and rest is all a myth. God is an illusion as advaita ‘non-dualism’ identifies the absolute as nirguna ‘without any qualities’ and without any deity. Therefore Nair’s behavior is like an advaitist ‘non-dualist’.
Raja Rao has tried to base the story and its philosophy on the *marjar kishore nyaya* 'cat kitten theory' of *visistadvaita* qualified non-dualism' philosophy but ended up emphasizing more on the postulates of *advaita* 'non-dualism. The *advaitist* 'non-dualist' in him surfaces again and again. There is lot of bribery and corruption happening in the ration shop. Nair himself is arrested in charges of bribery but he ignores all these malpractices as he considers it all an illusion and temporary. “His people said they have been getting the right rations, but when asked about the card, they said they never received it. Inquiries brought forward four or five such cases. Govindan Nair just joked”'(CS 39). Nair remains unaffected in every situation as everything is temporary and false for him. Even his imprisonment is all *maya* 'illusion' for him and this is the *advaita* 'non-dual' philosophy. Nair and Pai take these unethical practices very calmly and do not oppose or react to it strongly. According to Sunaina Singh- “Govindan Nair, however, does not take a positive stance against the corruption rampant in the Ration Office and protest against the palpable misdemeanors of the boss. . . .That ration shop serve as a metaphor of the world”'(104).

The ration shop is the representative of the world. It represents the malpractices and mishaps of the world. Being the follower of *visistadvaita* 'qualified non-dualism’ they should have been involved in the problems of the world and like true Brahmins they should have stood up for truth and justice. But Nair and Pai ignore the malpractices of the society and never stand up for the truth as they take the world for an illusion. *Advaita* ‘non-dualism’ considers the world an illusion therefore the reactions of Nair and Pai of ignoring the corruption seem *advaitic* ‘non-dualistic’.

The most shocking thing about Nair which proves that he has misinterpreted the *visistadvaita* ‘qualified non-dualism’ theory, is his reactions to his son’s death. According to *marjara kishore nyaya* ‘cat kitten theory’ the mother cat being the parent of kitten takes care of the kitten completely. Nair who is always speaking of the cat and kitten is very less bothered about his son’s
health. Nair, like an *advaitist* ‘non-dualist’, considers death to be an illusion. “Death is natural. To die rightly is to wake and find one has ever been being” (CS 21). Nair is himself a parent on whom his child is dependent completely like the kitten. But he seems to be very less bothered about his illness. He does not behave like the cat of the marjara kishore nyaya and never bears the responsibility of his son like a good father. “To die is fanciful. Reality is when you die really. Shridhar’s death is my joke” (CS 21). The fact that a son’s death could be a joke for his father, shows the intensity of detachment of Nair towards the world. He does not go for a proper treatment of his son and his reaction is also very casual at the time of his son’s death as if he is not much affected by it. His reactions are same as Ramaswamy’s reaction to his son’s death in *The Serpent and the Rope*. When Ramaswamy’s son Pierre dies he expresses his feelings as, “I knew I could not love: that I did not even love Pierre” (SR 24). Ramaswamy was an *advaitist* ‘non-dualist’ and so is Nair. Nair also appears unaffected and detached as if death is just an illusion. Nair states, “The bamboos were already in the courtyard. Death had come. It spoiled the nice courtyard, with flower beds of roses. . . .I could hear Tangamma weep, then Govindan Nair said something Dr. N. O. Pillai is such an able man” (CS 61).

A man speaking of the cat and the kitten does not take care of his son and save him. All his claims of knowing the *visistadvaita* ‘qualified non-dualism’ theory and *bhakti* ‘devotion’ yoga, appear irrational and unbelievable. He is living in the myth of knowing Hindu philosophy but at the same time he proves that father son relation is also a big myth. Ultimately a person like Nair is selfish and is only bothered about his own spiritual development and self realization. He proves that his relation with his devoted son is a myth and there is not much practical implementation of the cat kitten theory in his life. He is more of an *advaitist* ‘non-dualist’ who believes that everything in this world even his relation is a big illusion and the reality is only *Brahman* and therefore he ignores his wife and even his ailing son.
The *visistadvaita* ‘qualified non-dualism’ theory states that *atman* ‘soul’ is different from *Brahman* and the atman of all individuals is different. Explaining the postulates of *visistadvaita* ‘qualified non-dualism’ RadhaKrishnan says, “Ramanuja concentrates his attention on the relation of the world to God, and argues that God is indeed real and independent; but the souls of the world are real also, though their reality is utterly dependent on that of God” (660). The soul in every individual is ‘real and independent’ and this *atman* ‘soul’ has to be respected.

On the other hand *advaita* ‘non-dualism’ emphasizes on oneness of *atman* and *Brahman*. The self or the atman in every individual is same there is no difference between two *jivas* ‘sentient being’. As RadhaKrishnan says about *advaita* ‘non-dualism’, “The proof of the reality of *Brahman* is that it is the ground of the self of everyone” (477). In *The Cat and Shakespeare* the oneness of the self of all the jivas is emphasized. Shantha explains to Pai the Upanasadic concept of sage Yajnavalkya of loving the self in one’s wife. He says, “Then what is it you want to say, you my Hindu wife?” “I say, to say I love you is to say I love myself.” “Who said so, Shantha?” “Sage Yagnayavalkya said so.” (CS 82). The concept of loving the self is an *advaitic* ‘non-dualistic’ concept as *atman* ‘soul’ in all is the same. Pai expresses this oneness of the self for his neighbour Nair. He says, “After all, one’s big neighbour is oneself. The neighbour’s neighbour is always the Self” (CS 85). It appears from the above examples that the characters have misconceptions of *visistadvaita* ‘qualified non-dualism’ theory and their inclination is more towards the *advaita* ‘non-dualism’.

The reality is that whether one is a *dvaitic* ‘dualist’ or *advaitic* ‘non-dualist’ or *visistadvaitic* ‘modified non-dualist’ one cannot ignore one’s worldly duties and dharma. A *grhastha’s* ‘householder’ first duty is towards his family. One should perform the duty selflessly and then think of spirituality and *Vedanta*. *Brahman* cannot be achieved if one ignores one’s social responsibility. Without going through *grhastha ashrama* ‘stage of householdership’ one cannot
enter vanprastha ashrama ‘stage of departure to forest’. Swami Vivekananda says, “The householder should be devoted to God; . . . Yet he must work constantly, perform all his duties; he must give up the fruits of his actions to God” (CW 1:42). Duty has to be performed without fail towards family and society then only one can move towards self realization. Result of the work should be surrendered and not the work itself. One should try to analyse the reality of being a kitten, who surrenders to his mother cat.

(E) Reality of Being a Kitten

It is stated in marjara kishore nyaya ‘cat kitten theory’ that one should surrender oneself to the Lord as the kitten does to mother cat. An ordinary person should have complete faith like the kitten. The question here arises that keeping in mind this theory should one avoid social responsibility and moral behavior? The behavior of Nair and Pai appears strange for ordinary people who are struggling hard performing their duties for the family in order to lead a good life.

Nair’s attitude towards his son’s death seems conspicuous and raises many questions in the minds of the followers of Hindu philosophy. Sometimes the Vedantists ‘followers of Vedanta’ are so busy with the significance of the oneness of the soul with Brahman that they ignore everything except spirituality. Morality has no significance in their eyes. At times this is the view that Raja Rao seems to be propounding in The Serpent and the Rope through the conduct of Ramaswamy and also through the behaviour of Pai in The Cat and Shakespeare. Esha Dey comments rightly on the issue of morality.

Even Dostoevstey’s historiosophy had an intensely ethical aspect which has no relevance for Rao since advaita is supra Ethical. His characters therefore are propelled by private code of conduct close to the one preached by Andhre Gide
which sanctions a life free from all commitments except to oneself. Discovery of the true self is the goal of all Rao’s heroes if not of Rao himself. (22)

Esha Dey rightly comments that Raja Rao’s characters believe in only one commitment that is self realization and spiritual elevation and mostly they are ‘propelled by private code of conduct’. They believe that the world and their personal relationships are all temporary and therefore his characters indulge in unethical practices like extramarital relations and incestuous feelings according to their own convenience. They live in the myth that a Vedantist ‘follower of Vedanta’ is above all the relations and the person following it need not to worry about morality and ethics but this in itself is a big myth. The reality is that the person living in a civilized society has to follow certain code of conduct otherwise there will be no difference between him and animal. Reality is that nothing is above moral consideration and it would be wrong to think that advaita ‘non-dualism’ is ‘supraethical’. Long ago Sarvapali Radhakrishnan produced a thesis on the ethical side of advaita ‘non-dualism’. He opines,

Even so, though all things are Brahman ultimately, there are certain things to be avoided and others to be desired. . . .The discipline of moral life includes the suppression of selfish activity, the development of true desires and the overcoming of empirical individualism. Until the last happens, we are not perfected in nature. . . .It is said that it is a weakness of Samkara’s system that he does not regard moral values as ultimately real. (622-624-625)

RadhaKrishnan points to the ‘weakness of ‘Samkara system’. The reality is that Samkara gives less importance to the morality as moral distinctions have a meaning only as long as our ego is sharply marked off from whatever lies outside its body in space. In Samkara’s theory for an advaitist ‘follower of non-dualism’, the ego vanishes completely and there is oneness among the jivas
‘sentient beings’ therefore there is no need of morality. Morality is needed when a jiva ‘sentient being’ is struggling towards self realization and has not conquered his ego. Morality is needed for the protagonists of Raja Rao as they are still in the preliminary stage of their struggle to reach Brahman.

In The Cat and Shakespeare, Govindan Nair is honest and sticks to his family loyalty and to his wife. The other characters are at liberty in matters of sex and the code of conduct as they are shown, freely accepting bribes. Even Pai a Vedantist ‘follower of Vedanta’ takes a mistress and ignores his wife completely. Bhoothlinga Iyer earns illicit money and womanizes. Those individuals who live an immoral life and do not follow the code of conduct cannot claim to be a true Vedantist ‘follower of Vedanta’.

If a person needs to evolve himself spiritually and move towards self realization then there are certain qualifications which he needs to possess. If a person does not have these qualifications then he is not entitled for Vedantic ‘related to Vedanta’ knowledge. In the olden days Gurus made the students practice asceticism for a year before imparting Vedantic ‘related to Vedanta’ knowledge. Swami Nikhilananda categorically states in his work The Upanishads, “The later Vedanta teachers formulated the qualifications of the pupil entitled to study Vedanta. He must know, in a general way, the Vedas and their auxiliaries; must have attained purity of heart by freeing himself from sin, through an avoidance of selfish and forbidden actions as well as by the practice of daily devotions and obligatory duties” (12).

Therefore it is a myth that a true Vedantist ‘follower of Vedanta’ can ignore morals and ethics and live life according to his convenience. Reality is that one has to follow certain norms to be called a true Vedantist ‘follower of Vedanta’. The mind and heart can be purged of the vices and impurities of ego by the ‘avoidance of selfish and forbidden actions’. These ‘forbidden actions’ are
the immoralities adopted by Pai and other characters. If a person is a true *Vedantist* ‘follower of *Vedanta*’ and he genuinely aims for *Brahman* then he should completely follow the moral code of conduct.

Another important aspect pointed out by Nikhilananda as a prerequisite for a *Vedantist* ‘follower of *Vedanta*’ is the observance of obligatory duties. An individual has to perform the basic duties for the family and the society in general. It is observed that both Pai and Nair believe in surrendering to God but this very theory makes them passive and indolent. Both Pai and Nair specifically Pai, seems to be shirking their responsibilities. They seem to be driven by circumstances rather than controlling them. They live in the myth that by abiding by the *marjara kishore nyaya* ‘cat kitten theory’ one needs to be passive and God will take care of everything. Following the *marjara kishore nyaya* ‘cat kitten theory’ does not mean shirking of the responsibility. Pai seems to be a very passive man as he dreams of owning a house but never makes any effort in that direction. He is not able to carry the responsibility of a good husband to his legally wedded wife. In fact he forges adultery and keeps a mistress. He does not try to save his friend from jail, rather blames it on Nair and destiny for the whole episode. Pai comments in the novel “Whether you sold a calf . . . you must play fair. If you trick destiny, destiny tricks you. If you say: I am all right; I am almighty. I am Govindan Nair. I can weigh children in scales, make wayward women fall at my feet-Destiny chooses the exact fact for your redemption. Rama Iyer comes and takes you away to police custody” (CS 64).

One has to pay the price of bad deeds and enjoy the fruits of good deeds and this is also a law of nature. Even a spiritually inclined person like Nair suffers due to untimely death of his son, undeserved arrest and imprisonment. But one can’t be passive and blame the destiny for everything. One has to be strong and take control of one’s life.
Nair also seems to shirk his responsibility. Nair does not take a positive stance against the corruption rampant in the ration office. Both the characters seem to be carried over by circumstances in their life. By enacting a kind of surrender to destiny, the characters relinquish duty and commitment. Raja Rao’s characters are so much involved in spirituality and Vendatic ‘related to Vedanta’ theories that they seem to ignore the commitments and duties of the mundane life. Hiriyanna categorically states while explaining visistadvaita ‘qualified non-dualism’,

Man should never abandon karma of the nitya variety or unconditional duties, for he will then become sinful and miss salvation on account of neglecting what is enjoined in the Veda. Adherence to Karma in this stage is not therefore for subjective purification as in the earlier one, but for advancing further and further in the life of the spirit. And Karma, with its purpose thus transformed, will continue till the very end (411).

It is a big myth that by behaving like kitten and getting carried by the circumstances one can achieve self realization. The marjara kishore nyaya ‘cat kitten theory’ does not advice mankind to be fatalist and inactive. The reality is that Bhagavad-Gita has asked people to indulge in Karma and then surrender it to God. This means karma should be performed and its result be left onto God. Even God helps those who help themselves.

\textit{Tasmad asaktah satatam}

\textit{Karyam karma samacara}

\textit{Asakto hy acaran karma}

\textit{Param apnoti purusah}(BG 3.19)
Therefore, without being attached to the fruits of activities, one should act a matter of duty, for by working without attachment one attains the Supreme.(trans.Prabhupad 184)

Reality is that Karma yoga is related with bhakti ‘devotion’ yoga and without each either is incomplete. Therefore both Nair and Pai live in the myth of ignoring duties and commitment. Bhakti ‘devotion’ yoga is the basis of liberation in visistadvaita ‘qualified non-dualism’. But karma yoga and jnana ‘knowledge’ yoga are the natural outcome of bhakti ‘devotion’. When a devotee surrenders himself to the feet of God in bhakti ‘devotion’ he has to have jnana ‘knowledge’ and one needs do the right karma leading a life as an instrument of the lore. Thus we find that karma yoga and jnana ‘knowledge’ yoga are related to bhakti ‘devotion’ yoga. Apart from various myths and misconceptions, there are some mythical symbols also conspicuous in the novel. Like an Upanisadic lore, Raja Rao has made use of symbols which represent deep philosophical concepts.

(F) Mythical Symbols

Myths and legends, as conceived by Raja Rao, appear absolutely tangible and real. Myths strengthen the power of tradition and appeal to the common feelings of mankind. Through them Raja Rao suggests that people all over the world share the same feelings, that various experiences of life appear similar for everybody and finally that sorrow is the same everywhere. The fictional mode of Raja Rao undergoes thorough change in The Cat and Shakseaspeare. In this novel myth is not the dominant creative mode as it gives way to symbolism. According to Compact Oxford Reference Dictionary, “Symbol is a mark or character used as a standard representation of something” A symbol is an object who’s real meaning is different from the implied meaning as it represents something abstract like rose is a symbol of beauty. Any object could be used as a symbol depending purely on the writer’s imagination. Symbolism has been used in literature since time immemorial. It started in France where the high priest of symbolism was Stephane Mallarme.
The movement had marked influence on the writers of many countries. W.B. Yeats, Shelley, Blake are some of the chief representative of the symbolist movement in literature. W. B. Yeats is famous for symbolism in his poetry. The rose is the main object of symbolism in Yeats’ poetry. In *The Rose of Peace*, rose is a symbol of earthly love. In *The Rose of Battle*, the rose is a symbol of refuge from earthly love. Raja Rao has also used symbols in his novels to convey certain metaphysical ideas. *The Cat and Shakespeare* is an important novel of Raja Rao in terms of symbolism.

Shiva Niranjan comments, “In *The Cat and Shakespeare* Raja Rao leans on symbolic interpretations. Written in the manner of a religious parable, it glorifies traditional metaphysical symbols which assume fresh meanings.”(131). As the critic pointed out the novel is a religious parable. There are various objects which have symbolic significance. The usual symbols have fresh meanings of such simple and household words as cat, kitten, three storey house, sea and ration shop. Ordinary objects assume metaphysical significance. The novel is an interesting specimen of extended symbolism. Myth is significant as it helps perceive the human predicament of the modern man in the larger perspective of time. Raja Rao’s novels and mythical symbols in it are inspired from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the *Panchatantra*. In his novels, Raja Rao himself admits that the past mingles with the present and Gods mingle with men. His use of myth is like weaving a story within the story. One has to have a little knowledge of the *Vedanta* and Upanisad in order to understand Raja Rao’s myths and symbols. If one does not have the knowledge of these books then it is rather difficult to understand the novels of Raja Rao.

*The Cat and Shakespeare* is full of symbols. The main character, the cat, around which the story revolves, is also used as symbol. The cat is the symbol of feminine principle. Letizia Alterno comments, "*The Cat and Shakespeare* could be ignored as a tribute to the feminine principle. The
central image of the novel the mother cat is nothing but an apotheosis of the feminine principle”(61). In the novel Pai’s sluggish and submissive spirit is able to go across the wall of *maya* ‘illusion’ only when he totally abandons himself to the feminine principle of the Mother Cat, to her care and love. The cat can be viewed as the Guru in the feminine aspect representing divine wisdom and love. The kitten symbolizes the common man uninitiated to the principle of faith and self surrender but willing to seek the grace of the Guru. Nair says in the novel, “Have you ever seen a kitten fall? You could fall. I could fall. But the kittens walk on the wall. . . .The mother cat watches them. And when they are about to fall, . . . she picks you up by the scruff of your neck. . . .Mother, I worship you” (*CS* 61).

The house in which Pai lives and attains final wisdom is symbolic of the abode of Guru and hence its colour is white as white stands for purity. “Yes, at last I had a house. It was new and it was white”(*CS* 7). The sound of the sea stands for the vast knowledge of the Guru. Pai has a dream to own a house of three stories. The three stories of the house refer to the three *gunas* ‘attributes’ *tamas* ‘mode of crudeness’ *rajas* ‘mode of passion’ and *sattva* ‘mode of purity’. *Sattva* ‘mode of purity’ is suggestive of flawless purity that helps man achieve self identification, real happiness and wisdom. *Rajas* ‘mode of passion’ is suggestive of cupidity and attachment whereas *tamas* ‘mode of crudeness’ is suggestive of ignorance, error, sloth, inactivity and sleep. They may also symbolize the three stages of the human mind-the unconscious *susupta* ‘the unconscious’ *ardh susupta* ‘subconscious’ and the *jagrita* ‘conscious’.

The ration shop is another pervasive and controlling symbol which occurs in the novel with so much irregularity and chronicity that it emerges as the leitmotif. It is the symbol of the world. However, Nair describes it as a symbol of *Kamadhenu* ‘wish fulfilling cow’. Nair describing the symbolic significance of ration shop to his boss says, “Sir, it is holy because we feed the starving. . .
That which feeds the thirsty is sacred. That is why we worship the cow. This shop, this office is a very Kamadhenu” (CS 70).

The wall that separates Pai and Nair’s house which Pai crosses only towards the end of the novel is symbolic of the wall of mithya ‘illusion’. It stands as an impediment to one’s perception of reality. Nair jumps on the wall effortlessly as he had crossed the world of maya ‘illusion’. Pai had to wait till the end when the cat takes him and leaves him to the garden. On the other side of maya ‘illusion’ is the ultimate reality Brahman which is the eternal bliss and so a beautiful garden is described as the symbol of reality. “That was the first time I went across the wall. I found a garden all rosy and gentle. There were bowers and many sweet-smelling herbs, there were pools and many orchids that smelled from distance” (CS 100).

Pai and Nair symbolize the polarity in the human predicament. Pai is a man of this world. Being enmeshed in the material drives of life, he lacks the spiritual strength and self awareness to free him from the tyranny of his swindling falsehood. Therefore he indulges in hedonistic pursuits and lives with Shantha out of wedlock and is obsessed with owing a house. Pai is like a hunter on the bilva tree in the fable, waiting for Lord Siva to bless him “I have hardly formulated this in my slow mind-for as you can see, I am just like the hunter carelessly dropping bilva leaves on some Shiva as yet unknown- when this big creature Nair leaps across the wall” (CS 11).

If Pai is like the hunter then Nair is like Lord Siva. Many of the terms that are used to describe Lord Siva can be applied to Nair within this tradition without incongruity. “Govindan Nair is a terrible man: huge in his sinews but important in his thought, . . .” (CS 14). Shakespeare is also a symbol like the cat. Shakespeare represents a sage and the whole world is the world of his novels with its complexities. His characters and situations are somewhere symbolic of this world. Therefore he is the symbol of a sage who knows everything and still plays with his characters like
puppets. Shakespeare himself expressed his feelings about the world in As You Like It: “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players: They have their exits and entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts, His acts being seven ages” (2.7.138-142).

Raja Rao also presents the world as a game controlled by the Chessmaster. The people are mere puppets in his hands. In The Cat and Shakespeare there is an ambience of Shakespearean world as Nair speaks in Shakespearean language. “In the kingdom of Denmark there’s one blessed thing. Whatever they are they are not mad. . . . The kingdom of Denmark is just like a ration office. . . . Shakespeare knew every mystery of the ration shop. . . . We live in continual mystery” (CS 74).

The three storey house which Pai ultimately wishes to build represents the three states of being called Jagriti ‘waking’ swapna ‘dreaming’ and sushupti ‘deep sleep’ and Turiya ‘the fourth state of silence’ being the one in which the soul becomes one with Brahman. Hence Nair says, the day Pai builds the three stories he will die. “So what shall I see when I build a house three stories high?” I said. He said: “The day that it is finished you will die” (CS 99). According to the Upanisads there are four portions of the self. These four together comprise the totality of the manifestation of Brahman. The self in the realm of sounds is the syllable OM, the four portions of the self are identical with the components of the syllable. A represents the first state the jagrit ‘waking’, U represents the swapna ‘dream’ M represents the sushupti ‘deep sleep’. The fourth state is of silence called Turiya ‘the fourth state of silence’. Zimmer states: “Just as the sound OM manifests itself, grows, becomes transformed in its vocal quality, and finally subsides into the silence that follows, so likewise the four “states”, or components, of being. They are transformations of the one existence which taken together, constitute the totality of its modes” (377-378). Thus the mythical symbols contain the Upanisadic lore and are powerful manifestations of the deep philosophy of Vedanta.
One can conclude that *The Cat and Shakespeare* has its unique moments of brilliance when the cat in flesh and blood actually takes the centre stage and the *marjara kishore nyaya* ‘cat kitten theory’ is actually implemented as the mother cat saves Nair from the trouble. Raja Rao endeavours to project the theory of *Vedantic* ‘related to *Vedanta*’ philosophy to the masses with the help of a flimsy plot. The novel is written in simple and direct style and noticeably lacks the garrulity of earlier novels. The journey of the protagonist illustrates the reality that all the paths adopted for self realization are related to each other. One cannot be involved in *bhakti* ‘devotion’ yoga leaving out the karma yoga. The amalgamation of all the yogas can help a sentient being achieve *Brahman*. *The Cat and Shakespeare* evinces Raja Rao’s masterly use of the protagonist narrator cum witness technique. To substantiate the metaphysical content of the novel or one can say that to infuse *Vedantic* ‘related to *Vedanta*’ effect in the novel, Raja Rao has artistically woven myths legends and symbols in the narrative. K. R. Rao comments, “With the Cat and Shakespeare Rao’s metaphysical quest seems to have come full circle. He has moved from the *puranic* to the *itihasic* and then to the Upanisadic discourse. This reflects a corresponding movement in his spiritual progression from Karma in *Kanthapura* to *Jnana* yoga in *The Serpent and the Rope* and to *Bhakti* ‘devotion’ yoga in *The Cat and Shakespeare*” (108).

*The Cat and Shakespeare* shows that the fulfillment comes through the path of devotion and complete surrender. Thus the three novels, *Kanthapura* with *karma marga* ‘path of action’, The *Serpent and the Rope* with *jnana marga* ‘path of knowledge’ and *The Cat and Shakespeare* with *bhakti marga* ‘path of devotion’, can be considered as the stages in the spiritual development of the novelist. *The Cat and Shakespeare* marks the completion of Raja Rao’s literary odyssey. In his spiritual journey, Raja Rao’s pining soul was struggling in all directions. He even ventured into the western theories to satisfy his quest for the Absolute. In his novel *Comrade Kirillov*, he focuses on the myths of the western philosophies.
Comrade Kirillov: Myth of Marxism

Raja Rao is a novelist, deeply committed to an intellectual perspective revealing the varied impacts of the contacts between the east and the west. He has tried to bring about an amalgamation of the eastern and the western philosophies. In the novel *The Serpent and the Rope*, this fusion is brought about at the personal level and in *Comrade Kirillov*, it is at the political level. In all the novels of Raja Rao there is a south Indian Brahmin the protagonist, who is on a quest of self realization and enlightenment. There is a restlessness of the soul to reach the supreme consciousness and in this process the protagonist of his novels undergoes various experiences through the realms of different eastern and western philosophies. As Narsingh Shrivastav puts it: “A complex of ideas generated by protagonist’s conscious intellectual conviction and commitment on the one hand and his subconscious attitude about his emotional leanings on the other constitute the fabric of thematic development of the novel” (92).

*Comrade Kirillov* represents the dilemma of a divided consciousness. As suggested by Srivastav the ‘intellectual conviction and commitment’ of Kirillov is towards the western ideology of communism. On the other hand from his heart he is an Indian so his emotional bent of mind is towards the Indian philosophy and ideologies. He is a man of double commitment or rather torn between the two commitments. His mind follows the western ideologies but his heart follows the Indian theories. *Comrade Kirillov*, gives the clear impression of being a nouvella on a political tract suggesting a deliberate departure from the earlier themes characteristics of Raja Rao’s philosophic vision. The novel was first published in French and the English version was completed much before *The Serpent and the Rope*. Raja Rao’s entire fiction is soaked with Indianess. He is mainly Indian in sensibility and values and not in the subject matter alone.
Raja Rao thoroughly examines the mystery, complexity, philosophy and magnitude of India, bringing out fully the Indian sensibility and values. From *Kanthapura* to *Comrade Kirillov* his basic concern is with philosophy especially some religio philosophical doctrines. The philosophy of Christianity, Islam and Hinduism are all compared and the supremacy of Hinduism is insinuated. *Comrade Kirillov* is saturated with philosophy as it examines some of the basic philosophical thoughts Indian as well as western viz theosophy, Gandhism, *Vedantism*, communism etc. It mainly concentrates upon Marxism and shows the superiority of *Vedantism* over it.

*Comrade Kirillov* is a slim novelette shorter than *The Cat and Shakeapeare*. It is an ironical sketch of an Indian communist whose real name is Padmanab Iyer. When very young, he is chosen by Annie Beasant and the theosophists and sent to California to be groomed as a companion for J. Krishnamurthi. He becomes a theosophist and later gets converted to communism and is called *Comrade Kirillov*. Kirillov marries a Czech woman Irene. The first part of the novel is ninety pages followed by excerpts from Irene’s diary. The important thing in the novelette is not the story but the myths in which the central character lives. He starts his political life with the belief in theosophy which proves to be a myth, then the reality of Marxism strikes him and he moves madly towards it. This Marxism again proves to be a myth as he is not able to adhere and adopt its theory. Kirillov’s life is full of myths leading to dilemmas, like a frog he jumps from one philosophy to another but his restless soul which is in search of reality never finds peace.

(G) *Mahatma to Marx: Myth of Political Ideologies*

The present day political scenario is corrupted as political parties are ruled by hunger for power, sycophancy, nepotism and so forth. But ideally, politics is governed by ideologies. In the olden times all political parties were formed on the basis of an ideology like secularism of
Congress, Hinduism of Bharatiya Janata party and so on. An ideology is a set of ideas that constitutes one’s goals, expectations and actions. It can be thought of as a comprehensive vision. According to *Compact Oxford Reference Dictionary*, an ideology is “a system of ideas and principles forming the basis of an economic or political theory”. The main purpose behind an ideology is to offer either change in society or adherence to a set of ideals where conformity exists. There are many ideologies on which societies and political parties are functioning for example feminism, liberalism, Hinduism, Marxism and so forth. Unlike *Kanthapura* where Gandhian ideology is emphasized and the struggle is with external forces, in *Comrade Kirillov* the ideological conflict gets internalized in the consciousness of Kirillov.

The ambivalence of ideology is a byproduct of long drawn colonial experience of Indians. Coming out of centuries of alien domination, Indians were attracted to Gandhian ideology of *ahimsa* ‘non-violence’ and *satyagraha* ‘hold on to truth’. Raja Rao was disillusioned from it soon as it did not solve the basic problems of mankind. The disillusionment from Gandhian ideology was noticeable towards the end in *Kanthapura* and it came in full force in *Comrade Kirillov*. Raja Rao voices his opinions through Kirillov who feels that he is finished with Gandhi because he does not agree with his insistence on celibacy. He finds insistence on austere living as humbug because it only gives a feeling of elevated self to the one who practices it and makes him condescending in his attitude. “Kirillov, however, knew one thing—he was finished with Gandhi and all that. The celibate processes of severe living give a martyr’s feeling to one’s illumining self. The other is always a sinner, and should, above all, be protected” (*CK* 22). Kirillov disagrees with all the principles of Gandhi and especially he is against *ahimsa* ‘non-violence’. Kirillov opines, “Non-violence was a biological lie. Man was born to fight-fighting is an instrument of Darwinian evolution, which made dialectics possible . . . Mahatma Gandhi is the one enemy of this new dispensation” (*CK* 34-35).
This disillusionment from Gandhi as well as the spiritual yearnings of his soul takes him towards the magical spell of theosophy. Theosophical society was formed by Mrs Annie Beasant and she wished India to emerge out of Anglo Saxon delivery. Kirillov started believing that the regeneration of India depends on the outcome of theosophy. According to *Compact Oxford Reference Dictionary*, “Theosophy is a philosophy which believes that the knowledge of God may be achieved through meditation and prayer”. Therefore the fact of the matter is that theosophy is basically a spiritual society. Its objective is to promote universal brotherhood and to investigate unexplained laws of nature and power like life after death, karma yoga etc. Theosophists originally from America tried to infuse Indian philosophy into the western world to bring about logical answers to their questions of metaphysics. “In Adyar they spoke, did they not, that some magnificent feminine presence had indeed twisted his young heart, and the theories of reincarnation and of Karma, and the seven stages of evolution . . . And so came Kirillov (at that time with a more enchanting Indian name) to the California coastline . . .”(CK 8-9). Kirillov being a south Indian Brahmin who is spiritually inclined is pining like the thirsty soul to know the realities of God and the universe.

The Theosophical movement is combined with the freedom struggle by Mrs. Annie Beasant. She launched the home rule league to campaign for democracy in India. Kirillov also goes to America to spread the movement there and train and motivate people to join it. He believes that the western thought mixed with the eastern philosophy can change the picture of the world and improve the condition of Indians. He himself says : “The destiny of India was deeply bound with the outcome of theosophy, and Mrs Annie Beasant was the great Indian patriot, whose peregrinations across the thundering world would cause India to emerge out of the mess of Anglo-Saxon devilry and create a double movement of freedom and of prophetic dominion”(CK 9-10).
Kirillov is convinced that this movement will not only help Indians get freedom from slavery but also help him achieve his spiritual objective. He has a strong belief that theosophy will show him the right path but this belief of his proves to be a myth. His faith in theosophy is eventually shattered. The reality dawns upon Kirillov, when he realizes that its principles cannot solve the problem of people at large. He starts developing interest in labour party laws and even participates in its meetings. All these events disillusion him and break his faith in theosophy. All his beliefs that theosophy will revolutionise the world and bring self realization to him proves to be a myth.

The reality was that through the theosophical society he could not bring about a change in the order of the world. There was colonial rule in India, England and America which kindled a great amount of racial discrimination in these countries. Kirillov could not establish a Benaras in America. At the same time he went into deep meditations and read a lot of books. His thirsty soul could not find peace in the galleries of Theosophy. Moreover, Mrs. Annie Beasant’s home rule league in India was also not successful. Her declared Messiah Krishnamurty who was supposed to revolutionise the world rejected his role to live like an ordinary man. Kirillov says, “The working classes have a bright messianic future, and now that Krishnamurti had turned the tables, the only hope for humanity was better living wages, more muscular ways of thought”(CK 13-14). All these events shook the faith of Kirillov in Theosophy. Therefore his political ideology changed and he moved from Theosophy to Marxism- from one myth to another.

Kirillov comes in contact with likeminded people and learns German and French. He reads books on Karl Marx and is greatly influenced by him. The racial discrimination, and economic disparity greatly disturbs Kirillov. Kirillov says in the novel, “This colour problem in England is terrible-you always know what you are through others’ eyes. . . .But if you chanced on a negro in the parks, he
told you more woeful tales than any heard in New York, and you took a superior sympathy on his
darkened skin”(CK 19). The idea of equality is dominant in his mind and so he finds the theory of
Karl Marx very appealing.

As A. N. Gupta comments: “He was turning away from theosophy and Gandhism and found in
communism a retreat where he could receive his heart’s desire...Kirillov might kill himself of hard
labour and starvation, but the new communist state would rise.(122). The enigma and charm of
theosophy proves to be a myth and Kirillov moves towards communism. He might kill himself of
hard labour and starvation refers to the fact that he is getting absorbed in reading the books on
Marx and so he eats very less. His intellectual thirst is satisfied by communism and its theories. He
never cares about his emotional and spiritual craving when he is in Marxism. Kirillov is so smitten
by Karl Marx and Stalin’s theories of Marxism that he ignores his Indian values and spiritual goals.

Kirillov’s intellectual, calculative mind is depressed with the discrimination and disparities
existing in the world which leads to misery and pain. The society in India as well as in all other
countries is divided into two classes rich and poor, the working class and the rich class. The poor
are downtrodden and exploited by the rich class. During this time the world war breaks out and
the Russian revolution also takes place. Stalin emerges as a hero and the union of Soviet Socialist
Republic is formed which is on line of communism. After facing discrimination and observing class
differences, Kirillov is influenced by Marxism. Marxism is summed up as a theory in which class
struggle is a central element in the analysis of social change in western societies. It is antithesis of
capitalism. Karl Marx and Friedrich Eagles are its pioneers. Marxism is basically the policy of
working class seizing the political power through a social revolution such that the productive
power through a social revolution comes into a collective ownership.
This philosophy of Marxism appeals to Kirillov a lot. He reads a lot of books on Marxism and imbibes its theories in him. He is impressed by the Russian revolution and his faith in Marxism increases and he even writes books on it. He is recognized as Padmanabh Kirillov. He thinks that this concept of classless society is a dream which should be realized in India as well. “I know only one worship and that is the Party meeting. I know only one morality, and that is a classless society. It will come to India” (CK 39). Indians can have an ideal society free from the colonial rule as well as free from social evils of caste and class and therefore his faith in Marxism becomes strong. He is now invited by the British council to varied assemblies and Kirillov develops astonishing labour theories on the people’s war before his receptive audiences. The narrator says, “The American papers (liberal ones) asked for Kirillov’s contributions, and little by little Kirillov became an authority on India’s place in the war effort” (CK 62). His manuscript on India called ‘India and our struggle’ is at last completed and accepted by a progressive struggle.

One finds that the myth of theosophy breaks and the reality of Marxism emerges for Kirillov and he is smitten by this reality of Marxism. He ignores his spiritualism and the Indian values in him as he gets completely immersed in Marxism. Although his patron Mrs. Beasant has moved from Marxism to theosophy but Kirillov does the opposite. His belief in the theosophy proves a myth and Marxism appears to be real. Kirillov lives in ambivalence. His thirsty soul is torn between various ideologies. His intellect appeals to the western theories whereas his heart is Indian. He tops from one ideology to another in order to find peace within himself as well as the development of the society around him. In the heart of heart, he wants India to become a classless society. Through the Marxism philosophy he thinks that he can achieve his spiritual goals.

Kirillov has high hopes from Marxism. As Narsingh Shrivastav observes, “Kirillov believed that communism would usher in a state of society where no man would be master of another and
where a man like him would sit on some hilltop and write beautiful books”(94 ). Kirillov thinks that his search will come to an end in the ideology of Marxism and he will relax ‘on some hilltop’. He hopes that neither Gandhian ideology nor theosophy but Marxism will turn his dream into reality. But he gets disillusioned from it too. He realizes that an individual in a communist society is just a biological number an anonymous entity. The caste and class are given priority but not the individual’s basic needs. Ultimately Kirillov’s thirsty soul finds respite in Vedanta. His Indian heart can only be convinced by the age old Upanisadic principles. Kirillov realises, “Vedanta alone has the courage of the ultimate-it lovingly uncovers the limits to your own ignorant authority and asks for more inquiry into your biological, psychological, and psychic self, delimiting you bit by bit into acute dissolution, when, intensified in your desperate anonymity, you surrender yourself to that which is ever your “I” ” (CK 73).

It seems that Kirillov actually follows the Vedantic ‘related to Vedanta’ principle of neti-neti ‘not this-not this’. While negating every ideology he finally finds solutions to all his problems in the postulates of Vedanta. The knowledge about the ultimate reality Brahman gives peace to his ever pining soul. The ambivalence of the eastern and the occidental ideologies remains the crux of his divided consciousness. The conflict between the East and the West is eternal. But this conflict is also a myth as the reality is of oneness of the universe.

(H) Synergy between East and West: A Deception

Rudyard Kipling very aptly describes the east west encounters in his poem, The Ballad of East and West. He says, “Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet” (1). The oriental and occidental theories, ideologies and living style are in contrast with each other. Both can extract goodness of each other but never mingle. Raja Rao has expressed this thought through his novels, both the cultures of the east and the west are like red and white corpuscles in human
mind. They are antagonistic yet they are essential components of the flow of life. One cannot avoid the traditions of the ancient cultures and one can also not survive by neglecting the modern social patterns of the West. One has to collect the flowers of both cultures to make a beautiful garland of one’s choice. Owing to India’s close contacts with the western countries for centuries a potent feature of Indian English literature is the treatment of the East-West encounter. Most of the celebrated novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, Arun Joshi and R. K. Narayan have explored the varied aspects of east-west theme in their writings. People around the world live in the myth that an Indo-Anglian writer cannot write effectively in a foreign language which is English.

The question is often raised here that can an Indian writer whose mother tongue is Hindi or any other vernacular language, write in English to shape a literary form like a novel? The answer to this question is that language can never be a barrier in presenting the emotions and feelings, myth and realities that are universal and human. Many Indo-Anglian writers like Aurobindo, Toru Dutt, R.K.Narayan have broken this myth by their body of work in English. Critics all around the globe have appreciated the ventures of Indo-Anglian writer for their competent use of English. Raja Rao expresses his feelings in the ‘Foreword’ of Kanthapura

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 instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. . . .Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American.

Time alone will justify it.(5)

The reality is that even if Indian writers write in English, they write on Indian themes and value system. The style is also Indian therefore the synergy is possible between oriental and occidental
styles only with the domination of the oriental style. The oriental writing will carve a niche for itself as ‘distinctive and colourful’ as that of any other nation. Therefore in literature the east-west encounter is positive bringing about the best of both worlds.

In almost all the novels of Raja Rao the East-West encounter is depicted with a great impact. In Kanthapura the clash of the East with the West is in the form of struggle of Indians against the Britishers. In The Serpent and the Rope the marriage of an Indian with a French woman is a symbol of east-west encounter. In The Cat and Shakespeare the conflict is between the real world of the cat and the illusory world of Shakespeare. In Comrade Kirillov a synthesis between the East and the West is shown in two ways. Firstly there is fusion of the two in Comrade Kirillov himself as he is a fine blend of Indian philosophy and Marxism. Secondly there is a true and lasting marriage between Irene and Kirillov bearing a sweet fruit in the form of a son. Kirillov seems to be happy with this East-West fusion as he ultimately decides to settle in Moscow and not in India.

The reality is that both the above mentioned fusions of the East and the West in Kirillov’s life are actually myths. In Kirillov’s personality the synthesis of Marxism and Vedantism is not a fine blending but a divided consciousness. The ambivalence of the mind of a spirited convert is ironically reflected in the necktie. The narrator says, “Kirillov’s real name was Padmanabh Iyer, but his necktie had such a praterplusparenthetical curve, as though much concrete philosophy had gone into its making, and it revealed a soul so ambivalent that I could not gaze on its self-aware turpitudes without human compassion” (CK 25).

Kirillov is devoted to Marxism but inwardly his Indian soul is suffering. According to Narsingh Shrivastav, “What probably is hinted at the fact that communism- an ideology of occidental origin can win the mind of an oriental traditionalist but not his heart, producing inevitably a dilemma of divided mind . . .” (92). The protagonist is an inverted Brahmin who remains a simple complexity
of his character. His intellectual curiosity and concern for the mankind makes him a follower of western ideologies. But the Indian spirit in him is always alive. He cannot think of a communist domination of India. The narrator states, "I told you Kirillov was an Indian- and his Indianhood would break through every communists chain"(CK 91). India is in his mind and he could not alienate himself from his birth place. Kirillov’s friend, the narrator of the story exposes the reality of the divided consciousness of Kirillov. The reality is that Kirillov is not able to bring a balance between the eastern and the western world. No matter how much he tries to be a Marxist but in his heart he is an Indian and he can never become a true Marxist. The narrator calls him a hypocrite and states, "You brag about progress and remain a vegetarian. You brag about Islam and Communism and call your son Kamal Dev instead of calling him Stephanovich . . . And when you wake up in the morning in your bed, I am sure you remember your mother’s instructions: Open your hands, and say the verse, hasta-kamale, etc. You are an old hypocrite, . . . “(CK 85-86).

In reality an Indian can never remain aloof and away from his motherland for a long time. Kirillov, in spite of his adherence to Marxism and his deep contact with the western thought and life is almost like a child, noble, delicate and loving his country India with a deep unreasoned love and harshly criticizing all that does not stand the touch stone of reason even in India.

Another major aspect of East-West synthesis is the marriage of Irene, a Czech woman with Kirillov. Kirillov’s attitude in marrying Irene appears to be a natural outcome of his cosmopolitan consciousness. Irene is drawn to Kirillov for his roots and Marxist ideals. She herself has a Marxist bent of mind and regards her associations with Kirillov as the outcome of the love of Marxism. She idealises Sita and actually behaves like Sita as a wife totally devoted to her husband and his culture. She tries hard to build a synergy between her western ideals and her husband’s eastern values. “She made Kirillov nice, rich spiced tea, . . . and when evening came, she returned always at five from her classes(at the London School of Economics) so that Kirillov should not miss a warm meal.”(CK 55).
Irene has knowledge of the Sanskrit language. She even reads the *Vedas* and the holy books like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and her children had Indian names. Shyamla Narayana rightly says, “Irene is a complex character, but there is no scope of her full delineation in this slim book. Her diary reveals her as a suggestive woman who loves P and wants to communicate with him at the deepest level”(103).

The reality is that although Irene never asserts herself as Madeleine does in *The Serpent and the Rope* yet she is the one who suffers adversely from cross cultural impacts. Kirillov is busy in the world of communism, it is Irene who develops psychological barriers. She expresses her dissatisfaction and anxiety in her diary. “She alone understood me, bizarre though she was. P. has such infinite love, but he completely lacks understanding. Is it the difference of race? Will I never understand Kamal wholly? . . . ”(*CK* 112). She has a fear that Indian culture will obliterate her identity and that she will lose herself in the powerful assimilating flux of cultural tradition. She never wants to lose her identity and is apprehensive about going to India. She states in her diary, “I hope I shall never have to settle in India. I have grown afraid of India . . . I am such a bourgeois-I want the approval of my father-in-law and mother-in-law. No, no I will not go to India. I almost begin to hate it”(*CK* 112). Irene has the fear that in India she will lose Kirillov. He is obsessed with India to such an extent that on touching his soil his occidental veneer scuttles into European hatred and he forgets her. Irene suffers from cross cultural turmoils.

Therefore one finds that synergy between the East and the West cannot be built successfully. The turmoil always remains as in the case of Kirillov and Irene. The character of Kirillov embodies a contradiction between orthodox nationalism and Marxism and he remains a soul forever held between the cleft of the East and West. Kirillov’s son Kamal returns to India signifying the fact that fusion of the East and West is possible only through the submersion of personal in the impersonal
which is the essence of Indian way of life. The individual’s ego creates the divide and annihilation of ego and the self creates union. The narrator expresses this thought in the novel, “Later, . . . was I to realize that all sacrifice is an act of dissolution, and reduction of the ego investiture of true beauty. Beauty is only of the Absolute-the impersonal, the inevitable sustenance of every splendor created. The Communist and the Sadhu have spiritual equivalences . . .”(CK 72). The communist in Kirillov and the Sadhu in him, both are merged in one personality. The occidental and oriental, if annihilate themselves and merge into oneness then the conflict will vanish. Myths will be broken and reality shall emerge only then the vast gulf of the two philosophies of the East and the West will be bridged bringing about the beautiful union which is not completely impossible as pointed by Kipling in the above mentioned line.

Summing up one can say that the archetypal impersonal and abstract qualities of Raja Rao’s artistic configuration of the quest for reality, is unmistakably present in Comrade Kirillov. He symbolizes his quest for reality and identity in the predicament of the individual in a changing complex of society. Kirillov searches for solutions of spirituality in the western world philosophy. The reality is that the answer to his quests lies in his motherland and not anywhere else. All his answers lie in Vedanta and he is searching for them in theosophy and Marxism. The fact that Kamal his son, immerses his mother’s ashes in the holy Indian river and devoutly listens to the tale of Siva and Parvathi indicates that the aspirations for spirituality lies in the core of Indian psyche. As Dayal says-“The mockery of Kirillov’s protestations of communism in this novel affirms Raja Rao’s message that Marxism offers no solution to the agony and anguish of Indians who oscillate between their deep rooted spiritual mooring and their self evolved communist ideologies” (89).

As Dayal points out Raja Rao is trying to show in Comrade Kirillov that Marxism or any other western philosophy does not work for Indian mind set. An Indian soul can never quench his thirst through western theories. It is a fact that not the material prosperity but spiritual enrichment can
only grant happiness to mankind. This spiritual enrichment cannot be achieved outside or in western theories. It can only be achieved in India and its philosophy. An Indian can find peace of heart and quench his thirst of spirituality only in his roots and thus he has to find solutions to his mental block.

(I) Summing Up

The in-depth analysis of The Cat and Shakespeare and Comrade Kirillov reveals the inward odysseys of the protagonists. They have a spiritual yearning to experience Satchitananda ‘Truth consciousness and bliss’ which is Brahman. But they lack proper direction in their lives, while Pai has a Guru in the form of Nair, Kirillov is struggling all alone. They are misled in all different directions thus drift away from reality. Kirillov in his search drifts towards western ideologies and Pai moves towards complacence and passiveness.

Towards the end all myths are broken, and the reality emerges - to find solutions to all the problems one has to look within the self, one has to return to one’s roots and one’s culture in order to comprehend the solutions. Vedanta and Upanisad contain the ultimate knowledge which is part of our culture and tradition. Secondly the path to reach the ultimate is the amalgamation of jnana ‘knowledge’, bhakti ‘devotion’ and karma yoga. The marjara kishore nyaya ‘cat kitten theory’ teaches us to do karma and surrender the result to God. This surrender is bhakti ‘devotion’ and doing karma with detachment is karma and knowledge of the two yogas is jnan yoga. All three yogas take one towards the ultimate reality Brahman. Probing deeper in the aspects of jnana ‘knowledge’ and bhakti ‘devotion’ is the next chapter which shows God as the Chessmaster.