Chapter-One

Introduction

Raja Rao’s writings have a spiritual quality. In his endeavour to discern the otherwise inscrutable Absolute and to realize himself, Raja Rao strives to transmute his spiritual concerns into an art-form. The reader’s attention is arrested by the author’s profound concerns which are at once timeless and temporal, eastern and western, metaphysical and social at the same time. His writings delve deep into the profound philosophical principles of the *Vedas* and *Upanisads*. Raja Rao’s uniqueness lies in the fact that he presents these philosophical theories to a lay man in the form of a simple narrative in his novels. As Ragini Ramachandra observes, “His books do not amount to mere interminable odysseys of their inward-looking protagonists, for they invariably sharpen and enrich our consciousness” (11-12).

The leitmotif of his novels is metaphysical such that it not only enhances the reader’s knowledge about the myth and reality but also ‘enriches’ the ‘consciousness’. His ‘metaphysical explorations’ help the readers to review their lives objectively as one starts pondering about the ultimate reality of *Brahman* ‘the holy power’. In the fictional world of Raja Rao, myth and reality mingle in a dramatic manner. Myths enliven his narrative and bring reality into sharper focus. The blending of myth and reality is perfect and meticulous. Raja Rao is one writer who has mythologised the contemporary reality in his fictional world. In depicting the interaction of myth and reality, Raja Rao exhibits significant maturity in all his novels. Myth and reality are the mirrors that reflect man’s inner self thereby discovering the depths of the various levels of consciousness. In this journey of self realization or of knowing the unconscious, one has to cross the hurdles of
many myths. Once these hurdles are crossed, then with the help of a Guru, the ultimate reality can be achieved. Myth and reality are like the tricks of magic. Whatever we see with our senses is not real, it is a myth or illusion, but what we can’t see due to the influence of avidya ‘ignorance’, is actually real. The world of eye and ear as the romantics put it make one feel that the world is real. The mind is under the influence of the working of the five senses and accepts everything as real without questioning. When we see with our eyes, hear sounds, smell or when we feel heat or cold, we accept these impressions as real as we perceive them through our senses organs. It seems that there is nothing mythical about it. Our perception is empirical about this world. Every bit of it appears real. In this context Remez Sasson makes an interesting analysis in, Reality Versus Imagination and Illusion:

The world exists for us only when the senses and mind are directed towards it, and cease to exist for us the moment we silence the senses and mind. During deep sleep we do not experience the world because the senses are not active. Can you prove the reality of the world while you are deeply asleep? When you wake up from sleep other people may tell you the world existed but can you prove that these people existed while you were asleep?

When we are sleeping or in deep meditation, we tend to loose touch with the world. At this time the world ‘ceases to exist’ as our mind and senses are silenced. In this state the world becomes a myth and the inner world of our dreams becomes the reality. The very world which appears so real when we are awake, becomes nonexistent or mythical during sleep or meditation. No one can ‘prove the reality of the world’ while one is in deep sleep. During sleep dreams seem very real, but upon awakening we realize that everything was unreal just our imagination. A mirage is not real but we see it. A dream or a mirage is the creation of the mind which seems very real at that time.
but in actuality is a myth. There is no element of reality in it. Raja Rao himself discusses these aspects in his novels.

And the history of philosophy—-is nothing but a search for a clue to this problem: If I am real, then the world is me. It also means you are not what you think and feel you are, that is, a person. But if the world is real, then you are real in terms of objects, and that is a tenable proposition. The first is the Vedantin’s position— the second is the Marxist’s—and they are irreconcilable. (SR 333)

Our mind registers a concept and we take it as the reality at that point of time. As soon as the new reality emerges we get disillusioned of previous reality and thus the previous reality becomes a myth. In the novels of Raja Rao, the characters keep changing their realities and get disillusioned from their previous experience like Moorthy, who is overwhelmed with the Gandhian philosophy in the novel Kanthapura. For him, only Gandhi is real everything else is myth. Slowly, he gets disillusioned from him and moves towards new reality of Nehru to get disillusioned from it again. Moorthy says, “The youths here say they will change it. Jawaharlal will change it... .And he calls himself an ‘equal-distributionist’, and I am with him and his men”(K 183).

The world we experience and the lives we live are the reflections of our thoughts. The mind creates a world of illusion. By changing our thoughts, we change the illusion and experience a different reality. We do not create the world but our mind creates the illusion which looks real. We all are living in a world of myth. Mythological elements are part and parcel of his novels and have moulded and transformed Raja Rao’s style of narration. The protagonists of Raja Rao also get entangled in the complexities of myth and reality. So, before dealing with myth and reality in the novels of Raja Rao, it would be pertinent to get familiar with the concepts of myth and reality.
(A) Concept of Myth

The word myth has been interpreted in different ways in different branches of knowledge. The concept of myth interests not only the literary critics but also the Sociologist, the Psychologist, and the Philosopher. The term is used in a variety of meanings, each field of study investing it with a different connotation. According to A Dictionary of Philosophy, myth is “fable, fantasy, fiction, story or theory that is taken to explain something, if only metaphorically but in fact involves assumptions of things that do not exist”. The most fundamental problem in philosophy is related to myth and reality especially in the context of advaita ‘non-dualism’. Raja Rao examines this problem in The Serpent and the Rope where the title itself makes one think whether the serpent is the reality or the rope is? “The world is either unreal or real- the serpent or the rope. There is no in-between-the two-and all that’s in-between is poetry, is sainthood.”(SR 335). That which is mere appearance or a façade is regarded as temporary, internal and subjective. Something which is real is regarded as eternal, external and objective. ‘Assumption of things that do not exist’ is the key to the definition of myth.

Myth is always unreal, untrue and can be called imaginary. Myth is basically the condition of being deceived by a false perception or belief. Human mind through the various experiences forms a belief system. The mind strongly adheres to this belief system. In the course of time, this belief system proves false and thus it becomes a myth. An interesting connotation of myth is present in the Vedantic ‘related to Vedanta’ philosophy, which is one of the dominant schools of philosophy. Although myth is defined as a mythological story which may or may not be true, yet Vedantic ‘related to Vedanta’ philosophy relates it with the world of illusion or what is called maya ‘illusion’. Samkaracharya, the great propounder of advaita ‘non-dual’ philosophy says that the whole world is a myth or illusion and Brahman is the only reality. Here the connotation of
myth is close to fantasy or false belief. In Vedanta this logic is employed to illustrate the absolute reality of Brahman as against the illusion or myth of the universe called maya ‘illusion’. There is a famous conclusion of Samkaracharya in “Vivekcudamani”,

ब्रह्म सत्यं जगतमिथ्योत्तेऽवरूपं विनि चयः (20)

Bramhsatyam jagat mithya implies that ‘Brahman is the only reality and the world in an ultimate analysis is false or not real’ (trans mine).

Most of the protagonists in Raja Rao’s novels oscillate between myth and reality of their world and by the end of each novel they start their journey in search of reality, be it Moorthy in Kanthapura or Ramaswamy in The Serpent and the Rope, Padmanab Iyer in Comrade Kirillov, Sivarama Sastri in The Chessmaster and His Moves and others.

In various other subjects different terms are used which have the same meaning as false belief as in Psychology the terms illusion and hallucination are used which refer to the word myth. Technically speaking both illusion and hallucination have slightly different meanings. In the books of Psychology, illusion is defined as the cognitive mental process through which we have the false knowledge of the present stimulus. It is basically the false perception of an object. For example in the darkness rope is often mistaken for a snake. When the train is moving the trees appear to be running along with it. All these are examples of illusion. Hallucination is described as perception of an object which does not exist. Perception in absence of stimulus is hallucination. According to Norman L. Munn:

Illusions are ‘false’ perceptions. When we experience an illusion, we experience certain things which fail to correspond with the situation as objectively measured. Illusions should not, however be confused with hallucinations. . . .In
the second place, illusions always have a clearly apparent external stimulus.

Hallucinations sometimes occur when there is no apparent objective stimulus. .

. .On the other hand everybody who has a hallucination under particular circumstances has a different hallucination. (411)

Different people may have different hallucinations under the same circumstances. Some people might see red dragon, some might see a ghost and some other a bird flying at a same place in darkness. In illusion, all the people see the same things in the same condition. All will see a ghost or a bird in the darkness at a given point of time. Hallucination ‘occurs when there is no apparent object’, like the son of a barren woman. Experiencing mirage in desert is hallucination. It can be stated that where there is wrong perception of an object or where there is perception of a nonexistent object in both the cases there is myth and no reality. Therefore in psychological terms myth has two meanings, illusion and hallucination.

In the novels of Raja Rao both illusions and hallucinations are present. In The Serpent and the Rope, Ramaswamy is looking for an ideal mate. First he thinks Madeleine is his perfect mate and he gets deeply involved in the relationship. After sometime he realizes that Savithri is his ideal mate. Towards the end both the relations appear to be myths to him. These relations are all illusions for him as he perceives the relations to be ultimate and long lasting. The reality is that none of the human relations can be ultimate as there is only one reality of the Absolute that is Brahman. These very relations can also be described in terms of hallucinations of ideal love and bliss. Hallucination is described as the perception of non-existent objects of what Munn calls ‘false perception’. Ramaswamy is looking for true love and complete satisfaction in his relationships and these cannot be found in relations as they are governed by human limitations and therefore they become non-existent objects.
All the protagonists in Raja Rao’s novels are looking for the gratification which cannot be found in the materialistic world. Perfectness is a hallucination in this imperfect world. In *The Serpent and the Rope*, Ramaswamy and Madeleine have a perfect relation in the beginning and both are devoted to each other. Madeleine writes in one of her letters, “I could not visit the church without you; I almost felt you by my side and often turned back to see if by chance you had not suddenly come back, . . . And therefore I await you, you my young love” (SR 39-40). Both of them think that they have found their soul mates and are completely satisfied with each other. Slowly as time goes by, they both start drifting away from each other and get disillusioned from the relation. Madeleine loses her faith and love for Ramaswamy and in frustration moves towards Buddhism. The same Madeleine who expresses her love for Ramaswamy towards the end of novel says, “I am sure it would also be wise to give Rama his freedom. He must marry someone younger from his own country . . . I have no doubt” (SR 394). Madeleine has no doubt that she wants to leave Ramaswamy. Their search for perfectness and idealism in a relation turns out to be a fiasco. In any human relationship perfectness and ideal love are non-existent objects and therefore they are hallucinations.

In Social Science myth has a slightly different connotation. The *Online Dictionary of Social Sciences* defines myth as:

Myth refers to a narrative account or story which contains collection of wisdom of a society and articulates beliefs concerning key aspects of individual identity or collective life. All societies for example have myth about the origins of human life, some have myths about their origin as a society, others have myths about the shaping of national identity or the evolution of love, social scientists are
interested in the role, these myths play in society and what they might say about the nature of human mind.

The stories of the origin of mankind and the origin of culture are also related to the word myth. These stories of the origin have no authentic record or proof. They may or may not be considered true by the present generations. But these myths about the origin, do help the social scientists to evaluate the present status of culture and tradition in the society and also ‘the nature of human mind’. Myths provide an aesthetic channel to ventilate, explore and recreate the experience of the self in relation to the past, a mode of expression of the labyrinthine interaction of the self and the society. The stories about the origin of society and its culture serve as an example of another interpretation of the word myth.

Societies function and behave according to the ancient myths carried forward by generations. These myths decide the traditions, culture and living style of people. In the novels of Raja Rao, the different societies that he depicts, behave differently according to their social norms and myths. In Kanthapura, the people of the village live their lives based on the social myths of the village like following caste distinction, performing different religious rituals etc. In The Serpent and the Rope and The Chessmaster and his Moves the characters live in the western countries. They follow the social myths of the western society like disregard of family values and non commitment in relationships. Influenced by the myth of communism, Padmanabh Iyer in Comrade Kirillov rejects his brahminical origin and even assumes a false name of Comrade Kirillov. “He is a Brahmin. His weakness is too many words. But such evident sincerity-such childlike, hopeless dependence upon the abstract. There the two meet. I agree with R., P. is an inverted Brahmin . . .” (CK 118-119). Kirillov is called ‘an inverted Brahmin’ as on one side he is an Indian Brahmin and on the other side he is a European.
The term myth is also used in mythology. Bernard Doyle defines myth in an article in *Encyclopedia Mythica*

Myth comes from the Greek word mythos which originally meant speech or discourse but which later came to mean fable or legend. It is basically defined as a story of forgotten or vague origin, basically religious or supernatural in nature, which seeks to explain or rationalize one or more aspects of the world or a society. A myth is also distinctly different from an allegory or parable which is a story deliberately made up to illustrate some moral point but which has never been assumed to be true by anyone ("Mythology").

Mythology clearly interprets the word myth as religious stories related to Gods and Goddesses. It is not interpreted in any way that these stories are false. Therefore the mythological interpretation cannot be related to the general use of myth which means untrue or unreal. Mythological stories of Gods and goddesses or of the origin of the world are considered completely true and real. In the field of mythology the word myth has only one interpretation that of being a true story about the supernatural. These stories are part and parcel of the belief system of the people and are considered completely real.

In Raja Rao’s novels the mythological anecdotes are very much part of the narrative. In *The Serpent and the Rope*, Ramaswamy and Savithri relate their love with the love of Radha and Krishna. Savithri says, “Yes”, she said . . . I’ve known my Lord for a thousand lives, from *Janam* to *Janam* have I known my Krishna... The Jumna flows and peacock feathers are on his diadem, because Radha’s smiles enchant the creepers and the birds” (SR 212).

In the field of literature myth is interpreted in both ways first as mythological story and secondly as false belief. According to *Collins English Dictionary* myth is “a theme or character type
embodying an idea.” Literature does not pass any judgement on the truth or falsehood of either the ‘theme or the character type embodying an idea’ of the myths. Literature just uses the myths in various ways without caring for its validity. In fact some writers create their own myths to make their narrative more powerful. Plato in Book X of *The Republic* in fourth century B.C. used such myths in order to project philosophical speculations. Some writers use the same old myths like T. S. Eliot in *The Wasteland*, Eugene O Neil in *Mourning Becomes Electra*. In these books the already established myths are used to present a viewpoint.

Indo-Anglian writers also have a unique vision that colours their attitude towards myth. These writers use the myth as leitmotif and not just ‘an idea’ in their novels. For Sudhin Ghosh the myths are so real that line between mythical time and historical time is blurred. Mulk Raj Anand follows the mythical design to a certain point and then changes it totally. Raja Rao’s novels are completely wrapped in the fabric of myth. He uses mythical parallel to understand a situation. The style of narration, technique, characters all seem to be inspired from mythology. In *Kanthapura*, the old woman is the narrator of the story which is very much like the mythical traditions of the *Puranas*. Raja Rao’s novels echo the high majesty and grand dignity of the *Vedanta* ‘end of Vedas’ and Upanisad. Myths and symbols occur as an artistic and a creative mode of conveying a world view of human realities.

Thus we can find that the word myth, ultimately has broadly two connotations. Firstly, it is believed to be a story of supernatural beings or Gods which have great impact on the culture and religion followed by the people. It is directly related to religion. The second interpretation is that myth is basically non-realism, falsehood and fiction or what Samkaracharya calls working of *maya* ‘illusion’ in his analysis of the material world. It is no way related to truth or facts. Both these interpretations are independent and cannot be linked to each other.
A story of God related to religion cannot be taken as false as it is associated with the religious belief system of people at large. Therefore both the connotations of the same word are different and independent of each other. M.H. Abraham therefore warns: “A reader needs to be alert to the bewildering variety of applications of the term ‘myth’ in contemporary criticism. In addition to those already described, its uses range all the way from signifying any widely held fallacy (“the myth of progress” “the American success myth”) to denoting the solidly imagined realm within which a fictional narrative is enacted” (171-172)

There are certain common beliefs which initially are considered true but in course of time are proven false. These ‘widely held fallacies’ are not only used in our mundane life but also in literature to drive a point home. For example the most common myths prevalent in society are women are weaker than men, Brahmins are the most superior in terms of knowledge and marriages are made in heaven and so on. In the novel Kanthapura, Raja Rao has broken the myth that women are weak. Initially in the novel women are depicted to be a submissive lot involved in household chores and religious rituals. But later they emerge as a strong force against the Britishers. They organize agitations more successfully than men, “Well, we shall fight the police for Kenchamma’s sake, and if the rapture of devotion is in you, the lathi will grow as soft as butter and as supple as a silken thread . . .”(K 112). Apart from its usage as false belief myth is also used as a part of narrative in literature.

The short anecdotes of mythology are also interestingly used by writers. These stories provide a ‘solidly imagined realm’ within which the stories are told. They basically provide a frame work for story telling. Once the frame work is fixed then the author weaves the story of his imagination. The structure of the frame work seems to be inspired from mythical background of the culture of any society. Writers are attracted to this ‘imagined realm’ which is not purely their imagination
but inspiration from the mythical past. This attraction is due to the facts that the mythical story is also part of literature. A creative writer writing in any language on any topic will in all ways be inspired from the complexities of feelings and activities from the mythical world. These writers, sometimes, use the archetype heroes of mythology as inspiration and model their protagonists on them. The figure of Mahatma Gandhi becomes a part of many mythical stories during the developing stage of Indian writing in English. Raja Rao in his first famous novel *Kanthapura* exploits this myth in full. Gandhi is projected as reincarnation of Gods like Lord Rama and Krsna and who is born to free our motherland from the clutches of the demons, the Britishers. *Kanthapura’s* story is very much inspired by the mythologies and Gandhi has been raised to the level of a mythological hero and even God.

The timelessness and agelessness of the mythology helps the novelist to delve deep into our past experiences and discover a link between it and our existence. As Laxminarayana Bhat P. says in the article ‘The Variegated Fabric’, “Each one of us is part of the cosmos, the inexplicable and the eternal. The essential religious spirit of man must have invented and projected myths that have sustained whole civilizations, interpreted the significance of life, connecting it with the unknown. The present has meaning only in relation to the past in manner that the past was not aware of itself ” (116). Myths are the potent symbols of man’s dreams and aspirations which provide him with ideals that help him set high goals and interpret the ‘significance of life’.

The present day writers can hope to make their aesthetic creations ‘only in relation to the past’. Without the roots in history and mythology no writer can hopefully use his creativity in literature. Myths as legends also provide the so called religious and psychological support to mankind that’s why they have ‘sustained whole civilizations’. Struggle for survival consumes man’s life energies and he needs fresh impetus to go on facing and tackling the new obstacles which arise in front of
him. Myths help him discriminate between good and evil judiciously and stir his soul in his life’s journey.

Quite a few modern writers have made a deft integration of myths into the thematic fabric of their works. They have emphasized the efficacy of the integrative mythology. Writers like Thomas Mann, Kafka, James Joyce, Yeats and Eliot are some of the major writers who have deployed mythical modes of expression. In Indian writing in English, myths did not have much importance among earlier novelists. It is only later that Indo English novelists like Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and B. Rajan used myth as an integral part of their writings. The ancient culture of India has provided the mythic backdrop to these writers’ literary explorations and discoveries. The Indian English novelists have nourished their moorings on their own Indian past. They have dovetailed their mythic experiences with the experience of the immediate present. They have harked back to the mythology of their own culture to carve out significant patterns of fiction. The Indian people are very close to their mythology as compared to the West.

“The people in India still listen to the Ramayana and other recitals with zeal and eagerness. The Indian psyche is moulded and transformed by our mythological and legendary tales. It is conditioned by the stories from the Panchatantra, the Ramayana and Mahabharata” (S.P. Swain 69). The mythological books cast a great influence on ‘the Indian psyche’. Raja Rao has himself admitted to have been influenced by Ramayana and Mahabharata. His pattern of writing novels is based on these epics. The style of narration and the thematic patterns seem to be directly inspired by the mythological books. In fact with Raja Rao it is claimed that he has revived our mythical values and tradition through his works. He is more a philosopher who uses the novel as a vehicle to explore profound themes and to illuminate his vision of the mind.
The Indian English novelists have used myths in two ways namely structural and digressional. In the structural pattern, the mythological story is the backdrop of the novel and a parallel is drawn between the contemporary and mythical world. Writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Girish Karnad use the structural pattern where they recreate the myths for themselves and make an imaginative and fictional use of them by embodying them with new meanings and values. In the structural pattern the writers re-mould and recreate the myths and legends to fit them into the frame of contemporaneity. An example of myth being used as structural parallel is Mulk Raj Anand’s *The Old Woman and the Cow*. In this novel the heroine’s character is inspired from Sita of the Ramayana. The storyline is also similar to that of Ramayana but the ending is different from the mythological story. The story changes according to the contemporary reality. However the main plot offers a kind of loose analogy to the mythical world.

Writers like Sudhin N.Ghosh and Raja Rao use myth in a digressional way. The digressional technique is akin to the ancient Indian technique of narration. As Meenakshi Mukerjee says, “The digressional method of story telling is perhaps the oldest device in narrative literature. Weaving in stories within a story, or pausing to narrate a parable to drive home a point, these are characteristic devices of the *Panchtantra*, the *Vishnu Purana* and other Sanskrit narrative treatises, and of the Mahabharata and Ramayana as well”(133). In Greek mythologies as well as in The Bible the style of telling a tale is similar to an epic where episodes follow episodes and there is ‘weaving in stories within a story’. This digressional pattern makes the style of story telling more like an oral tradition. In digressional technique there is diversion from the main story. This diversion helps the narrator to explain a situation or character. For example in *Kanthapura* there are episodes of local deity Kenchamma, there is story of Rani Laxmi Bai and also the birth of Gandhi. All these episodes serve as digressions to the main story line. In the novel *The Serpent and the Rope* there are is a story of *Budumekaye*. 
And in the cool of the dusk, as the birds awakened to the waters, and the animals led out the little ones to their grazings and feasting, just as the night fell the round vegetable hit against a huge rock, big as a mansion, and burst apart. And from inside this _budumekaye_ rose a young and auspicious Princess whose beauty could blind the eye, and illuminate the night. Oh! said the prince in wonder. (SR 120)

Ramaswamy, the protagonist, is reminded of the story when he first casts his eyes on Savithri who came in front of him very much like the princess who appeared from inside of _budumekaye_, in front of the prince. This episode actually digresses the reader from the main plot but helps in understanding the character and his thinking. For digression Raja Rao uses three types of myths - _puranic_ myths, localized myths, and myths in the form of rites and rituals. _Puranic_ ‘related to _Puranas_’ myths refer to the myths taken up from Ramayana, Mahabharata, _Vedas_ and _Puranas_. These myths usually elucidate a point of view and glorify or degrade the character or situations in the novel. As mentioned earlier the myth of _budumekaye_ is an example of _Puranic_ myth used in the novel.

The second use of myth in Raja Rao’s novels is myth as _Sthala-Purana_ ‘localised myth’. These are mythical stories associated with the place where the action of the story is taking place. In _Kanthapura_ there are stories of local deity Kenchamma and the river Himavathy. “Sometimes people say to themselves, the Goddess of the River plays through the night with the Goddess of the Hill. Kenchamma is the mother of Himavathy. May the goddess bless us!” (K 8) Another aspect related to the use of myth in Raja Rao’s novels is of providing the ambience which is mythical and religious. This ambience is created by the observance of rituals and rites by the characters in the novel. As Meenakshi Mukherjee says, “Thirdly there are rites and rituals which strictly speaking do
not form part of myth but provide a frame of reference; for example, . . . the ritual of arthi with *kumkum* and camphor censer or the offering of coconut and betel nut that one frequently finds in Raja Rao’s work”(135).

Raja Rao’s works are full of rites and rituals which not only glorify our culture and tradition but also help in establishing the mythological background of the novel. The description of these rituals has its birth in the sentimental longing of the writer himself who sees all traditionally Indian actions enveloped in a mist of nostalgia. The whole atmosphere in his novels appears religious and mythical with the description of rituals, “And when Moorthappa comes . . . we shall go out, horn and trumpet and gong before us, and break coconuts at his feet. O Moorthappa, Kenchamma will protect us all. . .”(K 117).

Raja Rao’s plots are built around such ‘frame of reference’ around which stories are woven. The life of an ordinary Indian is incomplete without the rituals related to religion. Thus they are bound to appear in the stories of the Indian writers. Raja Rao’s novels are replete with these customs and traditions as followed in Indian society. In all his novels the characters whether living in India or abroad observe these customs and rituals frequently. In Raja Rao’s novels another very conspicuous use of myth is observed. Myth is also interpreted as false belief. This concept of false belief on the part of the characters is evident in his novels. Raja Rao’s protagonists are trapped in this complex web of myth or false belief. Every aspect of their belief appears to be myth or illusion. There are various kinds of such beliefs or myths present in his novels such as political myths, social myths, relationship myths and myth of casteism.

**(B) Myth of Ideologies**

Myth of ideologies is basically the myth of the political world. Countries are governed by governments and governments are formed by political parties. These parties or groups are formed
on the basis of certain ideologies, like Marxism, secularism, Hinduism and others. In the novels of Raja Rao these ideologies are shown to be myths. In Kanthapura, Moorthy believes in Gandhism. He gets disillusioned and moves towards socialism. Kirillov can be called an extension of Moorthy’s personality. In Comrade Kirillov, he seeks solution to all his problems through the political ideology of communism. This very ideology appears to be a big myth towards the end.

“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. . .”(CK 73).

The protagonist in Comrade Kirillov realizes that his inner thirst can be quenched only through Indian philosophies and theories like that of Vedanta ‘end of Vedas’ Western theories cannot answer all his queries. Therefore his belief in political ideology of communism turns mythical when the reality of Vedanta emerges in front of him. Similarly there is a relationship myth present in most of his novels.

(C) Non Reality of Man-Woman Relationship

Relationship can be defined as a bond between two individuals. The foundation of civilization has always been constructed with the establishment of human relationships. These relations are loaded with expectations and are believed to be permanent and fulfilling. This very belief is a big myth. Relations are governed with human weaknesses and they can never be completely fulfilling and permanent. Even a mother’s love which is pure and unconditional becomes demanding in old age. None of the relationship is immaculate and this is the relationship myth. In Raja Rao’s novels man-woman relationship is explored in depth. The treatment of man-woman relationship is rooted in the Indian ethos and there is a quest for the wholeness in its final result.
Narsingh Srivastav says in his article “Ramaswamy and his Rope”, “Encounters with these women of different mental make-up... work as impediments in the way of final deliverance if they are not surmounted. The woman without whom a man’s worldly life is incomplete and who is an impediment in the path of self-realization, can also prove to be assistance in that goal” (66). The protagonists form a deep bond with the respective women in their lives. This bond is of marriage like the one which exists between Ramaswamy and Madeliene in *The Serpent and the Rope*. In some cases this bond is not of marriage like that of Pai and Shantha in *The Cat and Shakespeare*, and of Sastri and Jaya in *The Chessmaster and His Moves*. In all these relations the women are loved and respected to a great extent. Their position is quite exalted as they are compared with *prakriti* ‘nature’ and the feminine principle mentioned in the Samkhya school of Indian philosophy.

It is quite conspicuous in his novels that the hero gets disillusioned and disappointed from these bonds in spite of the great intensity in the relationship. The protagonists try to use the relation in order to get a glimpse of the Absolute yet they fail in achieving that as women prove to be ‘impediment in the path of self realisation’. These relations appear incomplete to them as they could not experience fullness and gratification. The thirst of the pining soul does not get quenched from these bonds. True bonding gives one freedom and assists a man in his quest for self realization. The protagonists want to seek the ultimate reality, *Brahman*, through these relations. Thus all the relationships in this mundane world ultimately prove to be myths in Raja Rao’s novels.

**D) Fallacy of Caste Distinction**

Caste distinction is an important concept in Hinduism. In Vedic age caste distinction was called *varnasram*. It is the Vedic system of division of labour that divides society into four groups
depending on individual characterizations and dispositions. Those who prefer to serve the society through physical labour are Shudras; those who serve through agriculture or commerce are Vaishyas; those who have talent of leadership and are warriors are Kshatriyas; and those who are by nature intellectuals and have acquired spiritual knowledge are Brahmins. In that age, caste had no connection with the birth or ancestry of individuals. This Vedic concept got degraded and became hereditary later on. Myth of caste distinction emerges when a person belonging to a particular caste gets disillusioned from his caste and does not follow the principles of that caste.

In Raja Rao’s novels all the protagonists on one hand boast of being knowledgeable Brahmins and on the other hand they break the rules of Brahm inhood and indulge in malpractices themselves or are silent spectators to the malpractices in the society. The irony of being a Brahmin is the highlight of all his novels. Ramaswamy says, “You never know where reality starts and where illusion ends; whether the Brahmins of Benaras are like the crows asking for funeral rice balls, saying “Caw-caw”; or like the Sadhus by their fires, lost in such beautiful magnanimity, as though love were not something one gave to another, but what one gave to oneself” (SR 11-12).

The characters like Moorthy, Sivarama and Ramaswamy boast of being a Brahmin in the Hindu social set up but they never really follow the ideals of their caste. Their claims of belonging to the upper caste, appear mythical or false. They never raise their voices against the malpractices existing in their caste. Sivarama Sastri indulges in smoking where as Ramaswamy keeps silent on the ill practices of Brahmins at the Benaras ghat ‘bank of river’ where he goes in order to observe obsequies of his father. Even Moorthy gets so involved in Gandhian movement that he breaks all norms of his caste and mingles with the untouchables as a result he is excommunicated from the society. “And we shall stand none of this pariah affair. If he wants to go and sleep with those
pariah whores, he can do so by all means. But let him not call himself a brahmin, do you hear? And
tell him, the next time I see him in the Brahmin Street, he will get a jolly fine marriage-welcome
with my broom stick” (K 43).

Moorthy breaks all rules of his caste and so has to face the wrath of his community. He is so
influenced by Gandhian principles that he completely ignores his caste and even the feelings of his
mother. Thus two more myths that surface in the novel are the myth of a mother son relation and
secondly the Gandhian myth. The mother’s dreams are shattered and she realizes the mythical
aspect of the relationship. Moorthy breaks his mother’s trust and adopts Gandhian philosophy
from which he ultimately gets disillusioned and moves towards Nehru’s ideology

Many established beliefs in an ultimate analysis turn mythical in the lives of Raja Rao’s
characters. These characters believe in something firmly and take it to be real but ultimately it
turns to be a myth. This process of going through several myths in order to achieve the reality of
Brahman is described as neti-neti ‘not this not this’ in Vedantic ‘related to Vedanta’ philosophy.
Everything which seems real in one’s life is actually a myth. Even this is not real even that is not
real. One has to go through this hit and trial method of experimentation in their lives. Ultimately
what Raja Rao’s characters are looking for is eternal peace and happiness. This can only be
achieved by realizing the ultimate reality Brahman. According to advaita ‘non-dualism’, Brahman
‘holy power’ is the only reality rest everything is myth. As Ragini Ramchandra says,

At the outset what one notices in Raja Rao’s writing is a certain meditative
quality which distinguishes him considerably from most other Indian English
writers. This meditative quality unfolds itself in his deeper concern’s for man’s
spiritual existence on earth and sets his character on a metaphysical quest for
the absolute. The author submits himself quite like a worshipper, to the pursuit
of the ultimate word - the word as Mantra-in his endeavour to discern the otherwise inscrutable Absolute and to realize himself. (11)

In Raja Rao’s novels all the characters appear to have a restless soul and they are pining for self realization. Raja Rao’s own restlessness is depicted through his characters. The ‘metaphysical quest for the Absolute’ seems to be the main theme of his novels. For the people living in this world the knowledge of the ultimate reality of Brahman ‘holy power’ seems mythical. Once self realization is achieved this world becomes a myth. ‘To discern the otherwise inscrutable absolute and to realize himself’ is the motto of Raja Rao and his characters.

(E) Tryst with Reality

The concept of reality is again difficult to understand. Reality that we understand in our mundane existence is different from the reality that Vedanta points out. Many scholars have given different interpretations of the same word in their respective fields. According to The New International Webster’s Comprehensive Dictionary of the English language, reality is “the fact state, condition or quality of being real or genuine’. In terms of philosophy it says that reality is ‘the absolute that which is self existent, the ultimate as contrasted with phenomena or the apparent’.

The Dictionary of Philosophy says that reality is, “anything that exists independent of one’s perception of it.” The philosophical meaning of reality is close to Raja Rao’s interpretation of it in his novels. The most fundamental question raised in his novels is that of myth and reality. That which is real is regarded as eternal, external and objective. Objective refers to the fact that it is not dependent on the subject or the mind of the being, it is independent of mind body and soul. The self realization which Raja Rao’s protagonists are seeking can be achieved with the help of a Guru.
Raja Rao’s characters are misled by life’s various myths and they move from one path to another only to get disillusioned at the end. The lasting peace, bliss and satisfaction of a pining soul can be achieved by realizing Brahman. As Vedanta philosophy holds Bramhvid brahmav bhavati ‘the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman’. This term of ultimate reality Brahman cannot be defined. As mentioned in Vedanta, Brahman has no qualities, no attributes, no shape or size. It has nothing similar to it and nothing different from it and there is no first or last in it. It does not uphold expand, develop, manifest, grow and change, for it is self identical throughout. It is the highest truth, perfect being and the fullest freedom. As Radhakrishnan says:

When the absolute is said to be nirguna, this only means that it is trans-empirical, since gunas are products of Prakriti and the absolute is superior to it. The guna is the quality of an object as such and God is not an object. The object come and go, but the real persists as the permanent in the midst of all changes. So it transcends the gunas or phenomenal being.(Indian Philosophy by S Radhakrishnan 2: 536)

Radhakrishnan calls Brahman as ‘trans-empirical’, that is beyond one’s observation and experience. Our mind or our senses do not have the capacity to experience Brahman. Therefore it is called as independent of senses. It is attributeless, as gunas ‘attributes’ or characteristics are belonging to the universe or prakriti ‘nature’. Everything in the universe is temporary. All the living and nonliving things are prone to being perished. They are mortal but Brahman is beyond mortality. It is infinite, immortal and permanent. Therefore it cannot be defined in terms of worldly wisdom.

Brahman cannot be compared or associated with anything. Thus it transcends the attributes which our senses identify. It can be said in this context that for Brahman ‘all determination is
negation'. Advaita 'non-dualism' claims that Brahman is without sides, without forms and without any elements of duality or gunas 'attributes'. These characters of form and personality have meaning in the world of vidya 'knowledge'. The phenomenal world is unreal it has no real existence apart from Brahman.

The various paths shown by seers like that of karma 'action', jnana 'knowledge' and bhakti 'devotion' are not completely isolated from each other. One has to take an amalgamation of all in order to reach the desired goal. Swami Vivekananda makes a very apt remark in his book Thoughts on the Gita:

Though before its advent, Yoga, Jnana, Bhakti etc had each its strong adherents, they all quarreled among themselves, each claiming superiority for his own chosen path; no one ever tried to seek for reconciliation among these different paths. It was the author of the Gita who for the first time tried to harmonize these. He took the best from what all the sects then existed had to offer and threaded them in the Gita. (6-7)

It is expressed by Lord Krsna in Bhagavada-Gita that a harmony of all the paths of jnana 'knowledge', bhakti 'devotion' and Karma is needed to achieve the destination of Brahman. It is shown in Raja Rao’s novels that by moving ahead on one particular path the protagonists remain directionless and confused. The protagonists of the novels are seen craving for spiritual satisfaction but could not find a way out of this mythical world. It appears that Raja Rao’s life itself is a journey for the quest of the ultimate. He has knowledge of the Vedas but is in search of a Guru. His pining soul finds expression through the restlessness present among his protagonists. Raja Rao’s life is an embodiment of the restless soul of an expatriate Indian. His novels are full of
characters, who experience emotional pulls towards their roots, and are, therefore different from
the rest of the novels in Indian fiction in English.

(F) Indian Fiction in English: An Overview

India was a legend, a land of snake charmers for the rest of the world. The consolidation of the
power of East India Company affected India in two ways. Firstly, the effect was negative because
they ruthlessly exploited Indians. Secondly, the effect was in a positive way because the Britishers
introduced new concepts of governance, judiciary and also the English language. The seeds of the
English language flourished and today India not only exists as a member of the English speaking
world, but has also contributed to a distinct genre of English literature called ‘Indo-Anglian
Literature’ or Indian writing in English.

The term ‘Indo-Anglian’ was first used in 1883, when a book published in Calcutta bore the title
‘Indo-Anglian Literature’, which contained specimen compositions from native students. Later on,
K.R. Srinivas Iyengar adopted it as the title of his first book on this subject, Indo-Anglian literature,
published in 1943. The Britishers introduced English education in India in order to produce a class
of clerk and sycophants to run their government smoothly. This education gave birth to English
literate people and it encouraged the cultivation and mastery of English as a language. Universities
were established at the Presidency towns of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. As per lord Macauly’s
instruction English became the medium of instruction in schools colleges and the universities.

The western education turned the minds of Indians inside out, removed many mental cobwebs
and promoted in them a new integral outlook. Before being recognized as a distinct genre, Indo-
Anglian literature had to pass through developmental stages. With the new awakening the Indians
tried to imitate the western concepts. The Indo- Anglian literature was born out of the instinct of
imitation. Therefore the first phase of Indo-Anglian literature is called the “Phase of Imitation".
With the introduction of English in India, a number of English classics were soon translated into Indian languages. The English classics were the models for the Indians writing in English. The second stage was the stage of “Indianisation”. In this stage the imitation became less and Indians started coming up with their own original ideas. The third phase may be called the “Phase of increasing Indianisation”. In this phase the Indian writing acquired a national consciousness where the writers interpreted the mind and heart of India to the West. Fourth phase was the “Phase of Experimentation and Individual Talent”. In this era writers came up with new ideas, themes and techniques. They were bold and confident and were able to carve a niche for themselves in the international scenario. In these phases all forms of literature were attempted like prose, poetry, drama and fiction. But in the limited space of the present study it is neither possible nor desirable to cover the entire history of Indo-Anglian literature. Since the topic is on an Indo-Anglian novelist therefore it is pertinent to concentrate upon the fictional form of literature.

Fiction was practically non-existent from the scene before nineteenth century. Bankim Chandra Chaterjee was the pioneer in the field of fiction in English and his *Raj Mohan’s Wife* heralded the beginning of Indo-Anglian novel. The word novel was derived from Italian word *Novelle* which meant ‘a fresh story’. It signified a story in prose which gave in detail the actions of the fictitious people. S.K. Ghosh, S.B. Banerjee and Ramesh Chandra Dutt were some of the writers of the phase of imitation in Indo-Anglian literature. Rabindranath Tagore also wrote novels which were translated in English. *Gora, The Home and the World, Binodini, Four Chapters* and *The Wreck* are some of his major works.

Literature is described as a mirror of life therefore the themes around which Indo-Anglian novels were woven are very much in tune with the Indian society and culture. Novels and short stories were written based on problems faced by the common man during pre independence
days. Till 1930 themes were predominantly nationalistic. Gandhiji featured in the themes of many writers. In the pre-independent era, novels in India had socio-political themes and some novels dealt with the freedom movement and Gandhian revolution. The ideals of Indian freedom were reflected in such novels as K.S. Venkatramani’s *Murugan*, *The Tiller and Kandan*, *The Patriot*, Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* and Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura*.

Novels were also written related to the social problems existing in the society like child marriage, dowry, untouchability and others. The Indian writing in English began to get noticed and seriously discussed only with the arrival of a number of novelists in the 1930s. This period witnessed the emergence of three writers who gave a substantial contribution to the novel form in English. These three writers were R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand. They defined the area in which the Indian novel was to operate. The trio of these writers established the suppositions, the manner, the idiom and the concept character which gave the Indian novel its particular distinctiveness.

D.S. Mishra describes the Indian literary scene during the days of freedom struggle as:

Towards the 1930s the Indo–Anglian novel was in a chaotic state and for its revival, emergence of a few talented writers of Indo-Anglian fiction became vital. Luckily, that is what exactly happened, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao appeared on the literary scene of Indo-Anglian novel. They were the ones who gave new life to the Indo-Anglian fiction and were able to lift it to international status and universal recognition. (32)

The trio of these writers unleashed a new era of Indo-Anglian writings. English literature gained more popularity and respect as they wrote about the typical Indian psyche in a very simple language. Indians were able to relate and identify themselves with the characters of their novels.
Mulk Raj Anand wrote *Untouchables* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), *The Old Woman and the Cow* (1960). Anand wrote about the waifs, the disinherited and the lowly. His novels highlighted the need for restoration of compassion in the world lost in industrialism, capitalism and communalism. Anand also used myths in his novels as structural parallel. The mythical elements were used but with the colour of contemporary society in it. In a way he twisted the myth as per the requirement and presented the contemporary situation in an effective way.

R.K. Narayan was a writer who wrote with the motive of giving his readers the delight and joy of creative art. His treatment of problems was incidental, mild and casual. Mulk Raj Anand presented the full magnitude of the tragedy and the poignancy of the situation where as Narayan treated the human problems in mild and comic way. Narayan was satisfied with depicting the contours of Malgudi, a town which provided the background of all his fourteen novels. He had the power of keeping the readers in suspense and playing on their curiosity. Narayan’s exemplary pieces of writing were *Malgudi Days, Lawly Raod, An Astrologer’s Day* and the novel *The Guide*.

Raja Rao, the third luminary of this brilliant trio in the firmament of Indo-Anglian fiction, came from South India. He was endowed with a broad vision of human civilization which enabled him to focus a synthetic view of various cultures of the world. Narsingh Srivastav comments, “One of the greatest Indo-Anglian novelists, Raja Rao is a genius who can talk of *Nirvana-Astakm* of Sankara, *Dakshinamurti Stotram*; Pascal, Albigensian heresy and civilization of the Cathars, and of *Advaita, Buddhism and Christianity* in the same breath.”(2). His artistic genius could be explained from the fact that he had gathered in him the traditional wisdom of the *Vedas* and *Puranas* and had combined it with his knowledge of the Western religion and philosophy. As the trio of Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan had set a pattern in novel writing, there were many others who followed them.
After independence writers started making experiments and explored the depths of relationship and human predicament. Thus instead of presenting the social, political and such other external facts, the presentation of personal, private and inner realities became more important. These writers were bold and innovative who were ready to experiment in technique and theme. The 1980s witnessed another remarkable upsurge in Indian writing in English especially in fiction with Salman Rushdie’s landmark *Midnight Children*. Thus followed a stream of writers Vikram Seth, Shashi Tharoor, Namita Gokhale, Anitha Desai, Amitav Ghosh and so on. Among the latest writers the one who has grabbed the media attention is Chetan Bhagat whose novels are best sellers. The artistic genius of Indo-Anglian writers gets expressed not just in novel form but also in short stories.

An important form of fiction is the short story. Though a late-corner on the literary scene, Indo-Anglian short-story exhibits an astonishing range of subject matter and a wide variety of techniques. The literature traces the genesis of Indo-Anglian short story in ancient Indian classics like *Panchatantra*, the fables of *Brihatkatha* and so on. In the initial stages the writers are mainly inspired by a zeal for reform, trying to focus the attention of the educated class on social evils. K.S. Venkatramani’s *The Bride Waits and Collision*, Mohammed Habib’s *Desecrated Bones* and Shankar Ram’s *Children of the Kaveri* are some of the examples of short stories of the initial phase. Forties and the period that followed showed rapid progress in the field of Indo-Anglian short story writing. Mulk Raj Anand with *The Rumour, The Hiccup*, Nagarjan with *Cold Rice* made significant contribution in the field of short story. R. K. Narayan and Khushwant Singh were also some of the prominent writers of the short stories. R. K. Narayan with his *Malgudi Days* and Khushwant Singh with *The Mark of Vishnu* and *The Voice of God* left an indelible mark in the world of short stories in Indo-Anglian literature. In the present day scenario Arun Joshi, Ashok Srinivasan and G.D. Khosla are some of the prominent writers of short stories who are writing on innovative themes.
Raja Rao with *The Cow of the Barricades* and *The Policeman and the Rose* gave a major boost to the development of short stories. Raja Rao was endowed with a perfectly balanced attitude of a highly enlightened intellectual who could arrange the sequence of events in the right place and link it with metaphysical truths. His literary creations were full of words of wisdom. The style of narration was such that the emphasis was more on the philosophy of life rather than the plot and storyline. Raja Rao, himself like his protagonists was on a quest for the Absolute which got reflected in his works and which was attributed to his South Indian family background.

**(G) Life and Work of Raja Rao**

Raja Rao expressed his feelings in an interview with Shiva Nirajan, “The ultimate aim of man is spiritual or metaphysical, I would say. . . Kalidas wrote for a few readers. The aim of an Indian writer is to write for that level of *Purnadhikara*. I don’t want the popularity. I have no desire to be a popular writer”(21). For Raja Rao, writing was a means to do *Sadhna* ‘penance’ and liberate himself by the expression of the inner feelings. He never wrote for readers or to earn money but only to move closer to divinity.

Raja Rao was of ancient Brahmin descent. An illustrious ancestor of his was Vidyaranya Swami, the great teacher of *advaita* ‘non-dualism’ after Samkara. Raja Rao’s grandfather was also a spiritually inclined person. As a small child he was greatly influenced by his grandfather who taught him to love Sanskrit and kindled his interest in Indian philosophy. The fact that Raja Rao passed part of his childhood with his grandfather at Hassan becomes significant when one considers the deep concern with the spiritual values that has characterized both his life and his writings.

Raja Rao was born in Hassan, a small town in the state of Mysore (now called Karnataka) on 5 November 1908. There is an interesting story of his birth. He was born at the same time when his
father was receiving the Maharaja, Krishna Raja Wadayar of Mysore so the new born child was called Raja. He was the eldest of nine siblings, two brothers and seven sisters. The death of his mother, when he was four, left lasting impression on the novelist, the absence of a mother and motherhood are recurring themes in his works. His father worked in Hyderabad as a teacher, so he got his early education there in a Madrassa-aliya, a school meant for Muslim boys. Annual holidays were spent in the mountain region of Mysore state under the protection of Goddess Kenchamma at Hassan.

Raja Rao was sent to Aligarh Muslim university for further education. Here he studied French. He got his B.A degree in 1928 after studying at the Nizam’s college, Hyderabad. After this, he won the Asiatic society scholarship for studying abroad. He went to newly established university at Montpellier in France. He was greatly influenced by France and its culture which got reflected in his novels especially *The Serpent and the Rope and The Chessmaster and His Moves*. He was impressed with the works of French writers like Andre Gide, Roman Rolland and Fydor Dostoevsky. But ultimately he got disillusioned from French culture as he realized the superiority of Indian culture. He himself admitted in an interview to Ratna Rao Shekhar: “Indian culture is superior to the Western, which is at present in its decaying stage”(30). France and its culture turned mythical for him and India and its culture became the reality. Raja Rao’s life has been full of myths and realities. His restless soul experimented with various diverse things only to get disillusioned from them in the end.

In the case of relation with women he was similar to his heroes Ramaswamy and Sivarama Sastri. Raja Rao tried to seek the ultimate bliss in his relations and got disillusioned. It was at Montpellier that he met his future wife, Camille Mouly, a professor of French. She had translated the *Bhagavad Gita* and was very interested in India and its spirituality. In 1931 he married
Camilley Mouly and started writing in English, French and Kannada after marriage. She played a pivotal role encouraging the writing skills in him. His wife was his literary critic and his collection of short stories, *The Cow of the Barricades* was dedicated to her. During 1931-32, he contributed articles like *Pilgrimage to Europe, Europe and Ourselves* and so on in Kannada for *Jaya Karnataka*. He wrote short stories like *Javni and Akkayya* (1933), *Khandesh* (1934), *Narsiga and Companions* in early forties. His *A Client* originates from a Kannada version. Although he lived in France, yet he was an Indian by heart. He was deeply influenced by the freedom struggle and the persona of Gandhi. The state of mind of the Indians during the freedom struggle was aesthetically presented in his first novel *Kanthapura* published in 1938.

Raja Rao’s restlessness for the ultimate reality was evident not only in his personal life but also in professional life. He got disillusioned from one thing and moved on to the next experiment in his life. Raja Rao was basically following the principle of neti-neti ‘not this not this’ in his life. By negating every experience he attempted to achieve the ultimate bliss. He did a little bit of research in Christian theology and history. Raja Rao aspired to do research in English literature but was unsuccessful. For sometime he had also studied at Sorborne but soon gave up formal academic pursuits.

Raja Rao’s state of bliss and the little success he tasted with *Kanthapura*, came to a standstill in 1939 as his marriage to his French wife was dissolved. Raja Rao was utterly disillusioned from life at this juncture. His idea of making a global family real turned out to be a myth. His restless soul was pining for some peace and so he travelled India widely and lived in many *ashramas* ‘residential place’ like the Sabarmati Ashram and Raman Maharishi *ashrama* ‘residential place’. Raja Rao’s restless soul got some peace when he met his Guru Sri Krishna Menon (Guru Atmanand) at Trivandram in 1942. He thought of settling down in Trivandram near his Guru’s *ashrama*
‘residential place’ but returned to France after his Guru’s death. His novels showed the
importance of Guru and self realization. His soul, his thinking was completely Indian and spiritual.
During this period of forties, he co-edited with Ahmed Ali the literary magazine Tommorrow. He
also edited with Iqbal Singh, Changing India an anthology of Modern Indian thought from Raja
Ram Mohan Roy to Jawahar Lal Nehru. The Cow of the Barricades, his first collection of short
stories, was published in 1947. It was based on the village life reflecting Raja Rao’s humble
upbringing. Gandhi was again at the background. In 1942 Raja Rao was active in an underground
movement against colonial rule in India. He was deeply influenced by Gandhian philosophy such
that not just Kanthapura and The Cow of the Barricades reveal Gandhian influence, but Raja Rao
also wrote a biography on Gandhi, The Great Indian Way : A Life of Mahatma Gandhi. He also
wrote an article The Gandhian Way published in Illustrated Weekly of India in 1962.

There was a long silence of more than a decade after Kanthapura in the field of novels. After his
marriage was dissolved, he was disturbed mentally. Modern man’s unending and unceasing
dilemma was Raja Rao’s ultimate concern- the relation of self and the world, of mind and the
matter. Raja Rao broke his silence with the publication of The Serpent and the Rope (1960), his
magnum opus. One gets the feeling that the plot of the novel might have been inspired from the
personal life of Raja Rao as the novel deals with the marital problems of an Indian man and French
woman. In 1964 he got the prestigious Sahitya ‘literature’ Academy Award from the government
of India for The Serpent and the Rope.

In 1965, Raja Rao again tried his luck in marriage and got married to an actress Katherine Jones.
They had a son Christopher Rama. He appeared happy in his life again and published a light comic
novel The Cat and Shakespeare, an earlier version of which had already appeared under the title
The Cat in Chelsea Review, New York. Raja Rao’s French influence was strong. In France, he had
come in contact with trade union leaders and communists. His novel *Comrade Kiriillov* is based on these experiences. Originally written in English, it was first published in French and the English version came in 1976. *The Policeman and the Rose and Other Stories* was published in 1978. One of the finest stories in this collection was *India: A Fable*.

In 1965, he shifted from France to the University of Texas, America, to lecture on philosophy. Raja Rao experienced disappointment again as he parted ways with his second wife in 1985. The second time also marriage proved to be a myth. His soul was still yearning for a “Benaras born bride” in his life. The term “Benaras born bride” was used by Raja Rao in his novels and it referred to the spiritually inclined wife. He married for the third time a university of Texas student Susan, in 1986. His third marriage brought him peace and happiness and both his personal and professional life bloomed after this. He had two sons born in Austin but now living in St Louis and India. From 1965 to 1983 Raja Rao lectured on Indian philosophy at University of Texas on subjects like *Vedanta*, Upanisads, Jainism and Buddhism. He had an in depth knowledge of philosophy such that his next two novels were loaded with Indian philosophy. Published in 1988, *The Chessmaster and His Moves* got him the prestigious $25000 Neustadt International Prize for literature. The very next year in 1989, he published *On the Ganga Ghat*. In 1988 he also published two short stories, *Creatures of Benaras I* and *Creatures of Benaras II*.

Raja Rao was passionate about Indian culture and religion. Sometimes it appeared from his writings that he was desperate for Indian culture and his Hindu religion. C. D. Narasimhaiah observes in his book, *Raja Rao*, “While Raja Rao recaptures the magnificent mythical imagination of Indian antiquity successively in the... novels and short stories he has written to date he has at the same time, to use T. S. Eliot words, ‘altered’ the ‘expression’ to accommodate a distinct, profoundly Indian ‘sensibility’”(12). Raja Rao’s thought process and consciousness were deeply
embedded in the Hindu philosophy and the Indian ‘sensibility’ was evident in his novels when the protagonists always came back to their Indian roots to find solutions to the problems. His love for Indian culture and philosophy got reflected in many of his essays and articles, apart from novels, like *Jawaharlal Nehru: Recollections and Reflection*, *The Climate of Indian Literature Today*, *Varansi, Trivandrum, The Caste of English, Jupiter and Mars, The Cave and the Conch, The Writer and the Word, The Caste of English, Irish Interlude* and so on. Most of these were published in English Journals and magazines and newspapers like *Illustrated Weekly of India*. He also published some nonfiction books on India like *Wither India?, Changing India: An Anthology, The Meaning of India* and a short story *India – A Story.*

A close analysis of Raja Rao’s work reveals that he has introduced metaphysical themes to Indian English fiction. He wrote mainly about the philosophy of the *Vedas* and Upanisads. He was a philosopher first and then a writer. However Raja Rao’s inherent endemic leanings towards eastern philosophy and metaphysical dimensions rendered him into a quaint humanist aspiring for a liberation or redemption from the trivialities of mundane life. In spite of the fact that there was a typical secular existential verve in his writings, in the sense of encompassing almost all the practical human predicament in the fictional parameters of his novels, he progressively appeared to evolve a sort of unconcern for the mundane world as he got convinced that almost all the materialistic paths towards progress were invariably fated to failures at the end. All turned out to be myths as there was only one reality of *Brahman*. This realization is the ultimate aim of man.

Raja Rao died of heart failure on 8 July 2006 at his home in Austin Texas. He was 97. With him died not only a great novelist but a true Indian who inspired Indians to believe in their culture and philosophy. Obliged by the circumstances in his life Raja Rao had to move away from the Indian culture, but the Indian soul inside him strived for India and his desperation for India and its culture
got expressed in his writings. This gave rise to psychological themes like homelessness, depression, isolation, frustration, alienation and such others. He was the quintessential writer of Great Indian Diaspora, a harbinger for the likes of Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Bharati Mukerjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai and so on. Long before Rushdie made its trends, Raja Rao was infusing unique Indian literary genres, including interior monologue, retrospective narrative and symbolism into the narrative of English fiction. But the busting of myths in an ordinary man’s life with the emergence of new realities, remained the leitmotif of his works.

For a deeper probe into Raja Rao’s handling of myth and reality his novels Kanthapura (1938), The Serpent and the Rope (1960), The Cat and Shakespeare (1965), Comrade Kirillov (1976), The Chessmaster and His Moves (1988) and On the Ganga Ghat (1989) are chosen. In subsequent chapters the various myths encountered by the characters and how they get broken is dealt with in detail. The following chapter describes the myths of the novel Kanthapura. In Kanthapura, Raja Rao deals with the Gandhian myth to probe the reality of the pre-independent era of our country.

Chapter - Two

Gandhian Myth in Kanthapura