CHAPTER III

MYTHIC PERCEPTIONS THROUGH ARCHETYPES
The term ‘mythic’ is a positive epithet that excludes the everyday negative meaning that the term ‘mythical’ bears with it. Both Achebe and Raja Rao are mythic writers at the level of imagination and their creative energy can be seen in the mythic perceptions expressed through a certain structural principle. The archetypal patterns images and symbols that pervade the surface of the texts are embedded in the basic mythic perceptions.

Maud Bodkin in her introduction to Archetypal Patterns in Poetry describes archetype as “themes having a particular form or pattern which points, amid variation from age to age and which corresponds to a pattern or configuration of emotional tendencies in the minds of those who are stirred by them” (4).

Considered in this light, Raja Rao and Achebe are myth makers in literature as their works attain a dynamic quality, a structure and function applicable to myths as in the case of the more popular examples from the West like Borges, Faulkner or Kafka. It is not the presence of mythological material that creates a
mythic novel but the contrivance of the structural principle based on mythic perceptions. A mythic novel may or may not contain mythological theme or reference. E.W. Herd has even argued that in the work of Broch, Joyce and Mann “the creation of ‘new myth’ is frustrated . . . by the return to traditional myth material” (qtd. in White 8-9).

The matrix of these novels includes mythical references, symbolic characters, images, archetypal ideas, symbols denoting abstract ideas, mythic time, value schemes, the common cultural experience of the race, indigenous practice of naming and other linguistic devices. In Raja Rao’s Kanthapura, though the location is a remote South Indian village, the experience is that of the whole of India. In The Serpent and the Rope the matrix of the novel creates such vast interior space that it transcends the historical embedded in a mythic blueprint. Though there are repeated references to traditional myth material like the Satyavan-Savitri story or the Radha-Krishna myth, they are only interpretations of the various stages of Rama’s quest for self-knowledge. Rama-Savitri relationship centres round the idea of perceiving the eternal in the individual self. The underlying pattern of responses and behaviour can be considered universal.

On a different plane, the characters in Achebe’s novels Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God perform mythical imitation as they behave in imitation of certain models from Ibo cosmology like the title holding ancestors. The presence of the ancestral gods or spirits in the novels Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God
serves the purpose of setting a commentary on the characters and actions. There is an intrinsic motif of Bhakti towards one's Chi or towards the ancestral spirits which defines the personality and interpersonal relationships in both novels.

Thus the archetypal situation of cultural encounter in African and Asian traditional societies, along with implied suggestions for cultural renewal can be seen in these novels of Achebe and Raja Rao. The traditional modes of relationships between man and wife, leader and follower, god and man, individual and society are also presented in an archetypal vein. The ritualized modes of behaviour by the Chief Priest Ezeulu or the behaviour of the Masks in action in *Arrow of God*, the influence of the concept of Chi in every individual's mind are all elements that contribute to a mythic atmosphere.

Generally speaking, archetypal themes, images, situations and characters are common features in myth, and in fiction which contains mythical characteristics. In our investigation of the convergence and divergence of myth and fiction, the term archetype is of fundamental importance. All the four novels under discussion explore the archetypal sensibilities of the African and Indian communities which are even today influenced by the myths of the land in all aspects of life. Regis Boyer has an extensive classification of archetypes in any literary myth. He elaborates:

the archetype is atemporal in the sense that part of its nature not only to have existed first, but also to have given use to the temporality that explains its successors. Secondly he interprets the word
archetype as an ideal model. A hero in a work of fiction is an attempt to echo a mythical hero, or an ancestral spirit. Thirdly the word archetype is considered as “the supreme type the absolute the perfect image that transcends particular circumstances because it goes straight to the essential point wherever one chooses to tap it whether the context is religious, mythical or fictional. (110)

All these three connotations of the term ‘archetype’ are taken up for interpreting the function and context of archetypes in these novels. We can identify the fundamental fascination towards certain concepts that the African and Indian seem always to have cherished which can be read as archetypal. For Raja Rao, India is not a country, but an archetypal image with a particular cultural norm. An archetypal manifestation of Purusha and Prakriti, the fundamental concepts maintaining the universe is found in the human relationships in The Serpent and the Rope. With regard to the characters in Rao’s Kanthapura and The Serpent and the Rope, they move away from self to find the meaning of the Self. They appeal to us not for their psychological depth as individuals, but as archetypes common to the myths and folk traditions. The major conflict in Kanthapura is the conflict of two forces, the sattvic and the tamasic for which political and individual conflicts provide a background. The characters in Raja Rao’s novels represent the communal reality as both the Mahatma and Moorthy can be identified with the rising national consciousness in India during the freedom struggle. This goes well with what Carl Jung says about reality and archetypes:
All the most powerful ideas in history go back to archetypes. This is particularly true of religious ideas but the central concepts of science philosophy and ethics are no exception to this rule. In their present form they are variants of archetypal ideas, created by consciously applying and adapting these ideas to reality. For it is the function of consciousness not only to recognize and assimilate the external world through the gateway of the senses but also to translate into visible reality the world within.

(Collected Works 8.par.342)

According to him “endless repetition has engraved these experiences into our psychic constitution, not in the form of images filled with content, but at first only as forms without content, representing merely the possibility of a certain type of perception and action”. (Collected Works 8.par.99) The four novels Kanthapura, Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God and The Serpent and the Rope could be properly called archetypal for they provide situations images and patterns of behaviour that are embedded in the collective consciousness of the cultural traditions in India and Nigeria. These archetypal expressions in fiction bring out a fundamental fascination of man from the beginning of time. The reverence shown to Goddess Ani in Things Fall Apart or the worship of Goddess Kenchamma in Kanthapura are expressions of man’s relationship with the archetype of the Mother, the abode of strength, fruitfulness and protection. In fact, it is not merely a reference or analogy to the gods or mythological figures
that makes a novel mythic. The true atmosphere of myth is created in the text through the interweaving of recurrent patterns of human behaviour both universal and socio-cultural.

It is a fascinating endeavour to see how these two novelists widely separated in space, deal with the colonial experience in fictional terms. Raja Rao mythifies the modern Indian experience successively in the five novels and several short stories he has written to date. Among Indian writers in English, one sees this tendency in different degrees in the writings of Sudhin Ghose, Anathanarayan, Desani and Manohar Malgonkar. African mythical imagination is a significant force that expresses the universal archetypes and cultural experiences of the African people. There is ample evidence that the myths which carry a sense of ritual are used in the works of such African creative artists like Ayi Kwei Armah, Chinua Achebe, Mazisi Kunene, J.P. Clark, Bekederemo, Wole Soyinka, Tewfik Al-Hakim, Kofi Anyidoho, Niyi Osundare and Naguib Mahfouz to mention only a few. As Chinweizu et. al. say in *Toward the Decolonisation of African Fiction*:

> the universe of the African novel is broad enough to include encounters of humans and spirits, transformations of humans into animals, and vegetables, and of inorganic matter into organic matter and vice versa, as in Tutuola as well as in the more narrowly realistic portrayals in Achebe, Ngugi, Peter Abrahams, Mphahlele, Armah, Ouologuem, Beti, Oyono, Sembene, Camara Laye and others. It is a vast, almost limitless universe and African novelists therefore need
make no special effort to make believable to Eurocentric readers accounts involving the spirit realms which are a legitimate part of their African view of the universe. (23)

It can be seen that the archetypal situation of disintegration of the social structure as a consequence of the impact of colonialist forces is deftly handled in Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God as well as in Kanthapura. In Kanthapura, it was a case of direct political interference and in the case of Things Fall Apart, the situation is one of interference through Christian missionary work along with economic exploitation. The natural experience located and identified in these three novels, shares the larger phenomenon of colonialism. Both Charles R. Larson and David Cook identify the novel Things Fall Apart as archetypal. David Cook states that “it has become an early landmark . . . because it is a worthy archetype”(65). Larson considers Things Fall Apart as the “kind of novel that had to be written and has been continually rewritten in one form or another by later imitators of Achebe all over the African continent”. (Emergence 29) He also points out Achebe’s “reshaping of a traditional western literary genre into something distinctly African in form and pattern”. (Emergence 29) In Raja Rao’s Kanthapura too, we find that it is a Sthalapurana or legendary history, not merely the story of an individual protagonist Moorthy, but a representative socio-political situation, which is typical of the Afro-Asian reality. The distinctly African and Indian characteristics in these literary works, in form, language, content, function and context attribute to the novels Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God, Kanthapura, The Serpent and the Rope certain archetypal significance.
For example, a male dominated society such as that in Umofia or Umuaro with a disciplinarian father who considers it a weakness to show any kind of tender feelings is well represented in the portraits of both Okonkwo and Ezeulu. Beneath this apparent sternness Okonkwo shows his concern for them in a moving scene when he accompanies his wife and child to the forest as the priestess takes away their child at night. The traditional impulses are so strongly felt in the characterisation of both Okonkwo and Ezeulu that they could be termed archetypal heroes.

Again, in the characterisation of Moorthy and Okonkwo the psychological development of the individual is subordinated to a general concern for the ritualistic role of that individual in the community. The characters Moorthy in Kanthapura, Ramaswamy in The Serpent and the Rope, Ramakrishna Pai in The Cat and Shakespeare are specimens of the Indian aesthetic of personal identity or character who move away from the expression of individual consciousness to a timeless realm of self dissolution. The surrender of Ramaswamy at the feet of his guru in Travancore, or the decision of Ramakrishna Pai to follow the cat, in absolute surrender, are examples that suggest the heroic nature of these characters. The concept of the Jivan-Mukta is the Indian ideal of character towards which Moorthy and Ramaswamy move in the development of the story.

Besides this, the tendency to generalise is found in the naming of characters with a focus on their caste identity as evident in the numerous characters in Kanthapura. The depersonalised characters in Kanthapura serve to highlight the reality of village India while the impersonalised character of Moorthy represent
the mythic India. Characterisation in both ways is found to be in a different mode from the Western aesthetic of characterisation focussing on individual psychology.

Consequently, the protagonists Okonkwo and Moorthy rather than presenting themselves as individuals bearing private aspirations, act as heroes in the respective communities. Moorthy is the hero-saint while Okonkwo is the hero-prince. Neither is a flesh and blood character with ordinary motivations in life. Okonkwo's willfulness marks him as an assertive character among the Ibos while Moorthy is loved and respected by everyone in the village for his humble demeanour and education. Okonkwo is the titled man on whom people bestow great faith and reverence. The tragic flaw of the mythic hero is summed up here:

People said he had no respect for the gods. His enemies said his good fortune had gone into his head. They called him the little bird nza who so far forgot himself after a heavy meal that he challenged his Chi (AT 37, TFA ch.4).

In spite of this alleged drawback in character, Okonkwo attains a heroic stature in his fight against the whiteman. But his acts of violence, against the communal will-against his wife, against Ikemefuna, and finally against himself, are the results of his tragic flaw, his impatient obsession with success. But Moorthy’s acts are less motivated by ideals of personal achievements or success. His revolutionary acts rebound in the destruction of Kanthapura and he is imprisoned. But his fight is a struggle for self purification through nonviolent action. In spite of the large scale destruction of their houses in Kanthapura, the villagers...
still have faith in Moorthy, in Kanthapureshwari and in the Mahatma. Moorthy strives hard to transform history by serving eternity. His acts of sacrifice make him a ritual personage, using ritual weapons like prayer, and fasting. His revolutionary acts are motivated by a spiritual rigour, which transforms him into a mythical figure.

Consequently, there is no distinction between the real and the ideal in the life of Moorthy in Kanthapura. Likewise Okonkwo is intimately linked to the cultural tradition, and his sensibilities are conditioned by the mythical relationships with the priestess of Agbala. Okonkwo combines contrary qualities, subservience to tradition and the strong individualistic stance that prompts him to kill the kotma or court messenger. His aggressive masculinity, a result of his fear of failure, drives his son Nwoye away from his religion.

Though Ramaswamy in The Serpent and the Rope is not for unquestioned acceptance of all the traditional orthodox ways, he acts as an agent of all mythic inheritance. Ramaswamy is rapturous when referring to the Ganges and the Himalayas. A quest to resolve the problem of duality is the major preoccupation in his life. The contradictory nature of the world is seen in his affairs with Lakshmi and Savithri; one carnal and the other sublime. Ezeulu in Arrow of God combines in him both the strength and the weakness of the clan, like Okonkwo, who is also a victim of historical circumstances.

In a similar way, the society presented in Things Fall Apart is balanced between two sets of values, the Masculine and the Feminine, the Oracle of the Hills and Caves representing the former and the Earth Goddess standing for the
virtues of compromise, the latter. It is the Oracle that decides to kill Ikemefuna while the Earth Goddess protects the women and provides for the weak. The ceremony of taking a title by the heroic is a masculine virtue, for which Okonkwo tries hard. But titled people like Ezeudu and Obierika dissuade Okonkwo in taking part in the killing of Ikemefuna, for it is an offence against Earth Goddess to kill a boy who calls him father. These leaders stand for a balance of the masculine and feminine virtues operating in the individual and in the society.

On another level, in the spatial organisation of the novel, the operation of the feminine virtues of mercy and support is discernible in Mbanta, his mother’s village that supports him in trouble.

Likewise, the personality of the other mythic hero Ezeulu in Arrow of God combines both the strength and the weakness of the clan, a victim of historical circumstances like Okonkwo. He is also a symbolic character representing tradition and ritualised forms of behaviour. Arrow of God is spatially arranged into a world of traditional society and that of the colonisers. Ezeulu when he is near the whiteman, gets out temporarily from the traditional time, and so time stands still as he gets out of his conventional role as chief priest.

But generally speaking, Ezeulu is motivated by his priestly duties as well as his personal judgements. His enemies, Nwaka of Umunneora and the priest of Idemeli judge him as a power hungry priest. Here Ezeulu the individual and Ezeulu the priest are operating simultaneously in the novel, half of him being man and the other half spirit. This is symbolically represented when half his body is painted over with white chalk on ritual occasions. He falls victim to his
personal pride when he refuses to declare the commencement of the New Yam Festival. The emergence of his stubbornness and his faith in his personal power bring in his downfall and his final defeat. What ultimately triumphs in Arrow of God is the belief that no individual, however great, can transgress the will of his god. Ezeulu the man cannot be separated from his identity as the instrument of Ulu and the conflict in the story is the conflict between his personal pride and the dictates of his tradition and custom.

Similarly, Obeirika in Things Fall Apart can be taken as a culturally discrepant cultural avatar: Biodun Jeyifo calls Okonkwo “the culture hero who is doomed because of his rigid superficial understanding - really misrecognition - of his culture”. But he sees Obeirika as a sceptical, dissenting and prescient observer of the culture’s encounter with the self and the colonizing other . . .” (58). Thus it is Obeirika who registers the falling apart of things and records the collapse of the most vital identity-forming connections of the culture: kinship, community, ritual and ceremonial institutions. In the character Obeirika, one could perceive both cultural affirmation and cultural criticism. All the minor characters, in Things Fall Apart like Unoka, Chielo, Ogbuefi Ezeugo, Ikemefuna, Nwoye, Ekwefi and Ezinma, participate in the mythopoeic imagination of the community. Okonkwo’s uncle somehow or other projects the sacred in society. The fate and destiny of Okonkwo is not simply that of the individual, it was the destiny of a large section of African people who experienced the colonial aggression in the nineteenth century. This is in a sense the archetypal story of
every West African country, the thematic preoccupation being universal in significance, though the novel is set in a specific time and place.

Considering a culturally different context, the image of the guru is one instance of a significant archetypal behavioural pattern, which opens up a vast spiritual reservoir before Indians. The guru archetype is a very significant aspect that underlies the structure of Raja Rao’s novels _Kanthapura, The Serpent and the Rope, The Cat and Shakespeare_ and _The Chessmaster and His Move_. The archetype of _Purusha - Prakriti_ is another major characteristic pattern, which is expressed through various characters and images in the texts under study. It is interesting to note that Okoye’s commentary in _African Responses_. He says that the ancient philosophy of the Nigerian tribes “seems to be very parallel to the old Chinese concepts of the Yin and the Yang, the Male and Female principles, Light and Dark, Sun and Moon, Summer and Winter” (260).

It can also be seen that the archetypal disintegration of a social structure due to alien intervention is deftly presented in _Things Fall Apart_ and _Arrow of God_. In the case of India, the colonialist experience was the consequence of direct political interference and in the case of Nigerian society, it was the interference of Christian missionary work along with economic exploitation. The national experience located and identified in both writers, share the larger phenomenon of their world reality as an expression of the continued phenomenon of colonialism.

Naturally, the distinctly African and Indian traits in the narration as well as in the theme of these novels _Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God, Kanthapura_ attribute certain archetypal significance to them. Their characters carry in their
experience traditional wisdom, which makes these novels mythical in narration. Myth in Campbell’s opinion is “a powerful picture language for the communication of traditional wisdom”. (Hero 256) In Achebe, Okonkwo and Ezeulu go for unmitigated action that leads to their own tragic end. Time and place are suggested in both novels to comprehend a truth beyond both. Campbell says: “Myth is but the penultimate, the ultimate is openness . . . into which mind must plunge alone and be dissolved” (Hero 258). Therefore “God and the gods are only convenient means themselves of the nature of the world of names and forms, though eloquent of and ultimately conducive to the ineffable” (Hero 258). The deities, the masks, the goddess of plenty, the goddess of Earth and various other ancestral gods that involve themselves in the day to day life of the Igbo characters in Umofia and Mbanta . . . are the means or instruments of the operation of the mythopoeic consciousness in the Ibo context. The gods are convenient symbols for the characters to reach the realm of the spiritual.

In the case of Okonkwo, death is the means of expressing his disenchantment with the limitations of the world. Death is the hero that leads him to the end of his life. Like wise, Ezeulu acts as an instrument of god; he himself is the means of his own destruction, with a demented mind, the borderland of sanity. He is the mystery of the god crucified, the god offered as sacrifice. In the case of both heroes Okonkwo and Ezeulu there is destruction of the individuality of the heroes through the tragic end of death and insanity. But in Raja Rao the protagonists Moorthy and Rama reach the ineffable through the dissolution of individual consciousness without the destruction of the forms of
life. The gods and goddesses in Achebe and Raja Rao are images that posit a challenge to the temporal (linear) progression of events, in their novels. These images, to use the words of Campbell are to be “regarded as no more than shadows from the unattainable reach beyond, where the eye goeth not, speech goeth not . . .” (Hero 270).

In Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope*, Little Mother is a symbol of the Female Principle, the mother image, and the protector. Savithri too is a symbol of fruitfulness, which makes her an incarnation of the Feminine. She has an intuitive knowledge and wisdom and exercises an influence over those around her. Rama, while thinking of Savithri associates her with flowers and fruitfulness, the archetypal images of femininity. Likewise, the Ibo resort to the Ibo pantheon for guidance and help. The transcendental ideal or perfect image of a guru as seen in the end of *The Serpent and the Rope* and also in *The Cat and Shakespeare* and *The Chessmaster*, is characterised by the qualities and potentials of a realised soul, a *jivan-mukta*.

Thus, the Indian aesthetics of character finds natural fulfillment in the dissolution of the self rather than in the assertion of individuality. All protagonists of Raja Rao - Moorthy, Rama, Kirillov, Pai and Sastri ultimately reach a realm of self dissolution. On the other hand, the protagonists of Achebe - Okonkwo and Ezeulu - though representative of the communal ethos, act as agencies of their own individual consciousness. But the characters in *Kanthapura* are archetypes common to any village in India. Bhatta, the money lender, Ratna the young widow, Rangamma, Chinnna the prostitute, Moorthy and Seenu, are all archetypal figures in the novel. The naming of character relies on the general
characteristics of the individual with no emphasis on the individuality of the characters. The narration achieves the artistic expression of an internalised mythopoeic consciousness plunging deep into the collective unconscious, a term which is heard at least a little in critical parlance for the last few decades. Achebe emphasises the ritual element in myth with festivals and social functions involving the ancestral spirits. Raja Rao’s spiritual concerns are reflected in the mythic elements in the novels expressed through archetypal symbols, images, patterns and situations, and manifested in the quest of the protagonist at a metaphysical level. Raja Rao strikes the chord of the collective unconscious with the employment of repetitive images like that of Mother Ganga, a symbol of protective motherhood.

The images of the mother and the river are poetically fused in The Serpent and the Rope when Rama thinks: “Mother Ganga had her feet all yellowed with turmeric, and she carried the flowers of our evenings in her hair” (SR 42). Again the image of the Himalayas is a recurrent one that corresponds to the myth of Lord Siva, a mythic force that “made the peasant and the Brahmin feel big, not with any earthly ambition, but with the bigness the stature of the impersonal, the stature of one who knows the nature of his deepest sleep” (SR 42).

Interestingly, Meenakshi Mukherjee points out the archetypal image in the character of Little Mother in The Serpent and the Rope as the elemental earth mother, for ever giving without expectation of any return. The images of Ganges and Little Mother are presented with associations with sleep and silence. Ganges is described with its “waters made of sleep and each one of us a wave”
So rich and natural was Little mother’s silence that she often lay with her eyes closed almost motionless” (SR 34). Little mother is the mother principle whose various qualities are similar to that of the Ganges symbol. Both images exert the same kind of influence upon Rama’s character. Little Mother, always cool headed with a religious fervour sobbed when the train passed over the Ganges and Rama guessed the feeling.

Perhaps for the first time Little Mother realised that Father was really dead. Something in the big look of the child perhaps, or perhaps it was the Ganges with her sweet motherliness that one was unhappy to quit, who said it, for it was, from age to age, who had borne the sorrows of our sorrowful land. Like one of our own mother, Ganga, Mother Ganga, has sat by the ghat’s her handle beside her (SR 33).

Thus, Little Mother is in another sense a symbol of the ordinary Indian woman, the submissive widow, and a sufferer. Narsamma, Moorthy’s mother in Kanthapura is another picture of the ordinary woman who suffers due to pressures of excommunication due to her son’s “Pariah business”. Ultimately she dies a victim of a mortal shock. As Rama in The Serpent and the Rope says, “A bad son may sometimes be born, but a bad mother never” (SR 33). Saroja in The Serpent and the Rope, her unhappy acceptance of her marriage with a man she detests is another symbol of resignation and suffering in the traditional kinship structure.
As a result, Raja Rao’s Kanthapura and The Serpent and the Rope, “put man in touch with the total image of man of which the individual is necessarily only a fraction and a distortion”. (Campell, Hero 31) through the depiction of the quest of the respective protagonists. In the case of Moorthy’s principles of non-violence or Rama’s journey to solve the eternal puzzle of the duality of existence or in the case of Achebe’s characters, Okonkwo and Ezeulu who are fragmented individuals under strained conditions in approaching the meaning of their Chi, the operation of the divine is evident. The personal god of each individual is also part of the collective unconscious along with the communal gods or deities or ancestral gods.

Therefore though they act individualistically at the final phase of their lives, the same mythic thought and context as that of the community rule them at large. They are part of the traditional modes of worship, rituals, festivals and all other aspects of Ibo mythic consciousness. The respect shown to elders is one aspect of Ibo communal life, which is also found in the depiction of the character Moorthy in Kanthapura. Achebe says in an interview about the Ibo sensibility of respecting the elders. “The respect you give to age is very valuable to you because an old person has been around a long time and has encountered a whole lot of things you haven’t seen” (Achebe, Interview with Ogbaa 22). Both Okonkwo and Ezeulu are symbolic characters carrying with them the communal sensibilities revealing the nature of faith of the Ibo villages in the psychology of leadership emerging from the community’s mythic consciousness. If, in Rao’s Kanthapura, Moorthy’s consciousness is shaped by the mythical presence of
Goddess Kenchamma and the Mahatma, in Things Fall Apart, the overriding presence of Chi, along with the Goddess Ani with the various rituals form the consciousness of Okonkwo who is the central figure in the story of Umofia.

The myth of the Mahatma in Kanthapura is inseparable from the rising national consciousness; the Mahatma is a mythical character who represents the long dormant wishes of the people in the Indian subcontinent. R.K. Narayan in Waiting for the Mahatma and Mulk Raj Anand in The Sword and the Sickle treat Gandhi as a character in their novels. But in Kanthapura, the Mahatma never appears as a direct participant but his presence is all pervasive and vibrant. The characters that directly participate in the progress of the narrative in Kanthapura, The Serpent and the Rope are archetypal in the sense that they are showing fixed qualities rather than a realistic progression of the character. C.L. Innes says, “Achebe’s concern with community together with his experience of a culture whose story telling traditions are oral and communal goad him to radically reform the novel in such a way that the reader is provoked into thoughtful awareness of the problems his character face and evaluation of the responses made to these problems” (18)

Thus, Moorthy’s revolutionary activities are set in the traditional mould with bhajans in temples, fasting and observing several festivals to embark on a new awakening among the villagers. Like Okonkwo in Umofia, Ezeulu in Arrow of God Moorthy is also to represent the communal character, which renders them archetypal in significance in the respective communities. All the three characters are archetypal symbols revealing the nature of faith of the average
man in the respective community towards the forces of cultural tradition. These characters and their revolutionary actions further reveal the psychology of leadership in the colonial political set up. In *Kanthapura* the mythical appeal of Goddess Kenchamma and the Mahatma gets manifested in the behaviour of the local Mahatma, the villager’s ‘Moorthappa’. In *Things Fall Apart*, the operation of chi in one’s personal life and the protective acts of Goddess Ani behind every ritual, are all well documented in the characterisation of Okonkwo. The Mahatma in *Kanthapura* is identified as the spirit of rising national consciousness, an archetypal character who nourishes the long dormant wishes of the people in the Indian subcontinent.

Similarly, the character of Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* and Ezeulu in *Arrow of God*, set in the traditional mould are champions of tradition against the changes enunciated by colonial forces. They imbibe the spirit of Ibo mentality and culture but has a limited perception of the changes brought about by the inroads of colonial political forces. Both these characters are powerful in the traditional set up but they are defeated in their lives because of the impact of colonial aggression. These characters retain the conventional values including their relationships with the gods and fellow beings: Both of them are trying in their own way to defend the collective cultural ethos while attacking the forces of aggression.

These two heroes are archetypal characters in the sense that they undertake to represent and defend the Ibo heritage and therefore deal with the problems of common colonial experience of many of the Afro-Asian countries. Values such
as reverence shown to elders, the intimate tender care shown by parents towards their children are all well represented in these novels which make them truly representative of the communal ethos in the Ibo village. The story of Ezinma’s relationship with her mother is illustrated movingly in Things Fall Apart and the way she reciprocates her affection towards her mother is an example of the kind of domestic happiness in a traditional rural setting in West Africa.

Also, the influence of gods in the characterisation in Arrow of God can also be seen in Og huefi Nwaka of Umunneora who was supported by Idemili a kindred deity and its priest, Ezidemili. Nwaka was not a priest but a very important person in the community, a holder of titles and a favourite of the God of wealth, Eru, the Magnificent. In the character delineation of both Okonkwo and Ezeulu, the traditional culture is embodied in them especially the role of the gods and spirits in their lives.

Moreover, the heroes in Achebe’s later novels Obi Okonkwo in No Longer at Ease, Odili in A Man of the People, Chris in Anthills, in their attempt to grapple with a predominantly urban set up and values, are away from the Ibo practice of communal living in harmony with the world of gods. The true representatives of the cultural norms of the Ibo community are Okonkwo and Ezeulu. In the representation of the post independence Ibo society Achebe has made use of the myth of Idemili as in Anthills, in depicting the character of His Excellency and in the death of His Excellency the meaning of the myth of Idemili is affirmed as the belief is that he sits in authority on his fellows.
It can also be seen that in *Arrow of God*, as in *Things Fall Apart*, there is no return to the moral order at the end of the novel when Ezeulu is alienated from his people and his god. Ezeulu’s motives for power over his people and his god ultimately ends up in his defeat. He is accused of “wanting to be king, priest, diviner, all” His tragedy begins when he lost his son to the alien religion. As Obeichina says:

At best Ezeulu is attempting to force the village back to unquestioning belief in the god and the god’s priest. At worst he is indulging in his own ambition. Achebe allows the ambivalence to remain and does not in the end say whether Ezeulu convinces himself or is ordered by Ulu not to eat the yams of the moons which passed while he was in the white’s prison. (36)

Ezeulu’s predicament in failing to confront the challenges brought about by the imperial power, his alienation from the will of the community finally leaves a crack in his mind. This predicament is the tragic predicament of the colonized, split between two worlds, the traditional and the alien: The conflict between these two cultures, two sets of values is the concern of Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, Ezeulu in *Arrow of God* and to a lesser degree of Obi in *No Longer at Ease*. Obi though initially planning to reform his country, succumbs to the very same corruption to which he was so opposed. Each of these characters, Okonkwo, Ezeulu, Obi respectively represent the prevalent communal spirit of three different phases of Nigeria’s political and cultural history. Obi’s loss of faith in any traditional system of values represents the changes in cultural norms
in modern Nigeria. Yet Obi is not representative of the community’s struggle to maintain a balance between the old dispensation and the new one as he keeps himself aloof from both.

But the case of Okonkwo and Ezeulu are different. Their identities are not to be separated from the archetypal image of the Ibo communal character. Though as individuals they are defeated in their endeavours, the overall frame of reference in the delineation of their characters point out to the values that sustain the community in the historical context. The tragedy of Okonkwo and Ezeulu is not merely the tragedy of the individual as in *Hamlet* or *The Mayor of Casterbridge* where the individual’s defeat is destined. As Alastair Niven puts it “Achebe’s writing finds a way of re-balancing the tripartite partnership of individual, society and the divine which European obsession with the primacy of self has tilted too much in one direction” (44).

So these characters fail in Self knowledge, thereby acting as archetypal symbols of a community under the threat of cultural and political imperialism. It was the imperfect vision of these characters about their circumstances, the distancing from the heritage in a minor way that impel both Okonkwo and Ezeulu to face the troubles in their lives. In spite of the personal failures of the protagonists these novels contain an inbuilt system of moral order that partakes in the lives of all major and minor characters in the story. The mythopoeic stream of thought in the two novels provides cultural and human background to the events though the story implies the politically tragic nature of the history of Nigeria. Unlike in Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* or *The Serpent and the Rope*, the protagonists in
Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God fail to show the ability to sacrifice self interests and so they fail and end up in a situation of powerlessness. Moorthy in Kanthapura and Rama in The Serpent and the Rope evolve through a process of self abnegation and denial, thereby improving the cause of the mythological stream of cultural tradition. It is not conflict between two external historic forces that operate, but the inner struggle of the individual himself to transcend the duality within himself which ultimately provides redeeming qualities to the peculiar Third world experience.

In general, characterisation in Raja Rao’s novels Kanthapura and The Serpent and the Rope is based on the assumption that character is symbol and action is ritual. Moorthy in Kanthapura, Rama in The Serpent and the Rope, Sastri in The Chessmaster, are prince like in their surroundings but not without human foibles. Rama is a ‘young pipal tree’ tall and sacred but at the same time “the foolish school teacher, this miserable five foot eleven of Brahmin feebleness, this ungainly myopic over bent creature” (SR 209). Moorthy and Rama are archetypal characters symbolising certain collective notions about life. Rama is the time tested archetype of the disciple just as Moorthy was the disciple of the Mahatma. He is a modern Siddhartha who leaves his wife to seek realisation. The refrain in the novel, “Sivoham Sivoham” is an assertion of the motif of non-duality. Several such paradigms underlying the structure of the novel help to view the novel as myth. Moorthy is also a symbolic character representing the ethos of the South Indian village life during the early part of the twentieth century. The characters Moorthy and Rama move towards a final extinction of personalities
unlike Okonkwo and Ezeulu for whom the emergence of individual consciousness wrought peril to the entire clan.

Incidentally, Rama’s relationships with the women characters in the novel are not separate from his quest for Self knowledge. Hemenway rightly comments: particular women in *The Serpent and the Rope* ultimately become abstractions linked with such archetypal images as Mother Ganga, Mother Rhone, India, Notre Dame, Black Madonna and Queen.

Such a technique does not hinder narrator Rama from describing individual French and Indian women with skill, though it will probably disappoint those who want flesh-and-blood ‘appearances’ from start to finish. (91)

In line with this, Little mother in the novel with her long silences is a spiritual figure who is symbolic of Mother India. Savithri is a combination of the practical wisdom of Ramaswamy’s sister Saroja, the spirituality of his mother, the intellect of his wife Madeleine that transforms her into the Feminine Principle. The character Savithri in *The Mahabharata* wins back her husband Satyvan from Yama, God of Death. Savithri is also Radha, who says: “I have known my Lord for a thousand lives, from Janam to Janam (sic) have I known my krishna” (SR 212).

On the other hand, Stephen Hemenway analyses the character of Rama as a very complex Indian individual. The complexity is due to the projection of the mythical and historical paradigms for Rama and also his quest for Self knowledge. At the final stage of his search he realises that he should reach the level of the extinction of the individual ego in order to escape the serpent-rope illusion.
Similarly, Moorthy in Kanthapura is deferential to elders “a noble cow quiet, generous, serene, deferent and brahmanic, a very prince” (K 5). And Rama in The Serpent and the Rope is described as “eldest born, tall, slim, deep voiced, deferential and beautiful” (SR 10). Both characters participate in the Indian mythology so absorbingly that a proper understanding of these characters is possible only through an understanding of associated images and mythic echoes. The myth of the Mahatma, in Kanthapura and the myth of the timeless and spaceless India in The Serpent and the Rope dominate the thoughts and actions of these two heroes. In Rao’s aesthetic, the individual is less important than the myths of the land.

Thus, a character like Rama is an archetype in the sense that he is a literary symbol. The Rama of the epic is the archetypal Rama whose image repeats itself in the text. Water is an archetypal symbol of the unconscious that links itself to the Ganges and the Siva myth in The Serpent and the Rope. The Ganga and The Himalayas are images that participate in the quest in The Serpent and the Rope. The stone is Siva’s Nandi, thus even inanimate objects participate in the central quest myth that ultimately reaches unity. Rama’s pilgrimage to India includes many ritualistic events involving the gods and an obsession to reach god and go beyond, is a universal archetypal concern of all time and of all places.

Similarly in Things Fall Apart the deity Ani, is an archetype of the mother image. Ezeulu the priest in Arrow of God is an archetype representing the Ibo conventional ethos. The ‘Chi’ in every man is the archetype of the ‘spirit’ nature in man. Umofia is an archetypal Ibo village with all associated conventional
ideas of man and god surrounding to influence the lives of the people. The
deities play a significant role as they get manifested in the enactment of the
story. The priestess of Agbala carries the energy associations of the Ibo spirit
world.

Thus the hidden archetypal cultural patterns in the structure of these four
novels contribute substantially to the mythic nature of these works. It may be
said that there are as many archetypes as there are typical situations in a particular
community whether it is an Ibo village or a South Indian village like Kanthapura
in Mysore.

So an extensive analysis of the guru archetype, which is a very significant
structural pattern in Raja Rao’s works from the short stories like the
Policeman and the Rose to the last novel The Chessmaster and His Moves can
be of great help in comprehending the metaphysical substratum contained in the
structure. The guru image remains an inspiration and source of strength for Raja
Rao’s creative life. In The Serpent and the Rope, Chessmaster and Comrade Kirillov
the guru principle is present as a pattern that influences the conduct of the
characters without an actual character playing the role of a perfect image. The
references to a Great Sage, both in The Serpent and the Rope and in
The Chessmaster are rather symbolic of the Absolute, towards which the
protagonists try to reach. The references to the Sage in Travancore in
The Serpent and the Rope is rather outside the general current or the flow of
events; but this is not the case with The Cat and Shakespeare where Govindan
Nair is the guru figure whose metaphysical explanations provide the outline for this “tale of modern India”.

Arthur Koestler says that though in Europe the gurus have died out, in India the tradition is still alive. He argues that the secret of India’s greatness lies in this. Raja Rao, himself a disciple of Sri Atmananda Guru from Trivandrum, is a living example of the tremendous possibilities of this tradition. His aesthetics is grounded on this firm faith in the spiritual strength that could be drawn by a Sadhaka from his Guru. Rao’s faith in the guru principle is clearly seen in the statement about Mahatma Gandhi. “Gandhi never met his guru. So he failed himself” (Meaning 90).

Consequently, in Rao’s assessment of the personality of the Mahatma, he assumes that the Mahatma wanted to be a sage but ended up as a saint and a politician. The concept of the sage or the guru is the most powerful inherited memory shaping the philosophy of life of Rao’s fictional characters, Moorthy in Kanthapura, Rama in The Serpent and the Rope Ramakrishna Pai in The Cat and Shakespeare Kirillov in Comrade Kirillov and Sastri in The Chessmaster. The guru image in Indian mythical imagination is associated with pure knowledge. Rao in his article “Wisdom and Power” defined the Raja Guru, the wise man who helped the ruler in ancient times as “the sage who is beyond the impersonal and the personal, but as a working statement we could define him as the impersonal being. I say impersonal advisedly for the impersonal can never be an entity, though it may or may not appear to be so” (Meaning 97).
So it is very clear that Rao's concept of the guru is a philosophical truth that demands serious metaphysical reflection and that he differs drastically from the popular image of the guru as a superior personaility. The guru figure, is an archetypal symbol of the fundamental fascination towards pure knowledge that arouses devotion and deference. This relationship is part of a pervasive pattern of behaviour in all walks of life in the Indian cultural milieu. The leader-follower, whether in religion or politics, the teacher and the taught, the elder and the younger, all these relationships are modifications of the guru-disciple pattern of behaviour embedded in the collective unconscious of the race.

Raja Rao's preoccupation with the guru figure can be seen in the structure of his early short stories like "The Cow of the Barricades" (1947) and *The Policeman and the Rose* (1973). The story "The Cow of the Barricades" is about political subjugation under the British Empire during the 1920's. The cow is a symbol of the true spirit of India, ambling round the Master, the guru figure in the story. The Master in the story evokes the guru image, which was an early preoccupation with young Raja Rao whose long search for a guru ended when he met Sri Atmananda Guru in 1943. Gauri the vehicle and disciple of the Master in this story, is to be born a sage in the next life. The guru-disciple relationship as a pattern of behaviour that repeats itself in the racial memory can be seen in this story which is further developed later in the short story *The Policeman and The Rose*.

Uma Parameswaran in her article "Siva and Sakti in Raja Rao's novels" brings out the operation of the masculine and the feminine principles and the
ultimate dissolution of the two into one unified experience. It can happen through sexual union, through personal relationships, as in the case of Ramaswamy-Madeleine relationship. The dissolution of the sense of duality can also happen through surrender to a realised Sage. Uma Parameswaran rightly remarks:

The guru plays an important part in personal redemption. In Kanthapura Gandhi is such a guru; Rama hears the call clearly at the end of The Serpent and the Rope and breaks into rhapsody; the cat is the mysterious guru in The Cat and Shakespeare; in The Chessmaster and His Moves there are numerous references to the guru in metaphors related to mathematics and Chess and perhaps the novel should be read mainly in that light rather than in the light of Sivarama’s love relationships. (574)

Perhaps the most significant achievement of Raja Rao as a master of Indian English fiction is in his keen perception and intense awareness of the guru-principle operating in Indian social psyche. The lineage of gurus and disciples like Krishna - Arjuna, Ramakrishna - Vivekananda marked an indelible impression on the collective consciousness. The guru-disciple pattern is recurrent in the epics and it helps society to transmit traditional wisdom to posterity. Identifying the guru-disciple paradigm in Raja Rao’s fictional world serves as a symbol in the form of pattern or theme evoking the values of the cultural tradition. The guru-disciple paradigm can be seen woven into the structure of all the novels of Rao from Kanthapura to The Chessmaster. In his fiction the guru image remains
a source of immense spiritual strength and a pervasive influence though the guru figure as such does not directly appear as a character partaking in the progress of events.

The guru figures in Raja Rao’s fictional world can be classified into three scales. The highest in the scale is the Sage who is capable of transporting the disciple from the unreal to the Real. Secondly there is the ideal political model, like the Mahatma in Kanthapura or Marx in Comrade Kirillov. Thirdly the ordinary man with a metaphysical bias, the seeker, playing the role of a guru or guide to the fellow beings who are less equipped to reach the Absolute. Thus Rama, himself a seeker, helps Madeleine and Savithri in their quest for happiness and thus serving as a guide in their search for happiness which is inseparable from their philosophical quest. In a very broad sense of the term, India corresponds to the guru image where the protagonists in exile like Rama, look for sustenance and strength.

In his first novel Kanthapura, the Mahatma is the image of a political and moral ideal corresponding to a guru image in the hereditary disposition of the people at large. Reminding us of the mythic association between Rama and Hanuman, Moorthy is a worshipful disciple, a follower in a religious sense, of the Mahatma. Moorthy is only an unknown disciple, a symbol of the innumerable ‘local Gandhis’ who were inspired by the spirit of the Mahatma who is a mythical figure among the villagers, serving as a source of spiritual sustenance and strength along with the village Goddess, Kenchamma. The Mahatma is the imperceptible guru figure who is ever present in helping to confront the ordeals of the village.
Moorthy, the revolutionary in Kanthapura is trying to assume the archetypal standards of behaviour set by the guru figure, the Mahatma.

Impelled by the revolutionary spirit of the ‘Gandhi affair’ of non-violent resistance and other reformatory actions, Moorthy could win the support of the women and men in the village. But still, he is a Brahmin - who swears by the holy thread and says the Gayatri Mantra thrice a thousand and eight times. In spite of his commitment to remove untouchability in the village, he finds himself confronted with his own brahminical complexes. Moorthy’s brahminical preoccupation with purity is not left out in his attempt to reach Truth through a revolutionary path of Ahimsa, meditation, and fasting that lead him to the ‘City of Love’ though ‘it is hard to walk along it’ (K 92). The whole revolutionary endeavour of Moorthy is not separate from his spiritual needs as Gandhiji exhorted him to seek Truth, nothing but the Truth. His exaltation in controlling himself when some women in the village laugh at him for his ‘pariah’ business is presented in glowing terms “Singing this his exaltation grows and grows and tears come to his eyes. And when he opens them to look round, a great blue radiance seems to fill the whole earth, and dazzled, he rises up and falls prostrate before the god, Chanting Sankara’s ‘Sivoham, Sivoham’. I am Siva. I am Siva. Siva am I” (K 92).

But Moorthy is not merely the ideal hero for the political interests of India during the 1930’s. Those sections of the novel which relate to his meeting with the Mahatma or the occasions when he could meditate so deeply that he merged deeper into his self and “radiance poured out of his body” (K 92) prove that he was not merely a revolutionary in the political sense of the term. One
could perceive in him the inherent spiritual urge in Rao’s later characters like Rama or Sastri. Therefore Moorthy could easily be identified as a character that suits the common paradigm of Guru disciple with Moorthy acting as a seeker, a disciple of the Mahatma who seemed “mighty and God-beaming” (K 52). The following dialogue reveals the archetypal constitution of the villagers to look for an *avatar*, an ideal figure whom they can trust and worship. Their trust for Moorthy, though young, borders on deference. Sankar said, “I love him like a brother, and I have found no better Gandhist and Rangamma said ‘Why, he is the saint of our village’ and Sankar said, “Some day he will do holy deeds…” (K 135) The Mahatma “seemed to send out a mellowed force and love whose only command to Moorthy was to seek Truth and to help the country by working among the dumb millions of the villages. Meenakshi Mukherjee comments on the character of Moorthy in *Kanthapura* and Govindan Nair in *The Cat and Shakespeare* thus:

Moorthy in *Kanthapura* corresponds to the ideal of a saint figure. He is not the ideal but he attempts to conquer the senses following the non-violent path of the Mahatma. But Govindan Nair in *The Cat and Shakespeare* has already attained the ideal.

Moorthy in *Kanthapura* is the disciple figure, who could be grouped along with the other characters like Rama in *The Serpent and the Rope*, Pai in *The Cat and Shakespeare*, Sastri in *The Chessmaster*, all of them reminding us of the archetypal symbol from *The Mahabharata*, Arjuna who is portrayed as the symbol of the struggling human soul. Like Arjuna, they are all egoistic but *Satwic*, imperfect seekers, struggling hard to reach a realm beyond doubts. In
The Serpent and the Rope as well as in The Chessmaster the guru figure does not manifest as a character directly involved in the story. But the guru-disciple paradigm is woven into the matrix of these novels. The relationship between the disciple and the guru is the relationship between man and God, as in the case of Arjuna and Krishna in the mythological story. The relationship between the Gopis and Sreekrishna in the myth is again a conceptualisation of the seeker seeking God. It is the very same role, the role of the guru that Ramaswamy plays when he acts as lover to Savithri. Sivarama Sastri in The Chessmaster also plays the same role as guide and lover in his unique spiritual companionship with Jayalakshmy as they try to solve the riddle of life.

Interestingly, the character Rama in The Serpent and the Rope like Pai in The Cat and Shakespeare, or Siva in The Chessmaster, plays the role of a seeker, who strives for guidance from a perfect image, a guru figure. Both in The Serpent and the Rope and in The Chessmaster, the Sage the perfect embodiment of the Absolute is referred to in the end of the novel. Rama's meeting with the Guru in Travancore is the culminations of a long ardent metaphysical search for Truth. The relationship between the individual soul and the cosmic reality is what is expressed in this guru-disciple relationships. The disciple in his attempt to imitate the archetypal guru figure, in turn acts as guru figures to their fellow human beings. The relationship between Moorthy-Seenu, Rama-Savithri, Pai-Santha, Siva-Jayalakshmy are unconscious extensions of the original guru-disciple paradigm operating at the centre of the structure of these novels:
Thus the entire fictional world in these novels could be seen as moving within the implied frame of the guru-disciple paradigm.

In analysing the behavioural pattern of Raja Rao’s protagonists Moorthy and Rama one could identify deference as a marked quality that forms interpersonal relationships of the protagonists and other characters. C.D. Narasimhaiah demonstrates this pattern of behaviour in Indian social life:

For all their trenchant logic and high cerebration, the sages of the Upanishads, in their wisdom, must have inspired deference in the pupil, who sat close to them in a spirit of inquiry... Now it is in the nature of inquiry to induce introspection and inspire deference for the other, especially since the older man continually lived in the spirit. The pupil entered into a dialogue with his teacher with deference, sought his answers with deference, argued with deference and disagreed with deference until deference must have become a way of life. (Bhakti 3)

This feeling of deference is a typical trait of all the disciples in the Indian mythological stories. It is this very same quality in Moorthy’s character that transmutes the young revolutionary into their “dear Moorthappa”. Deference is a way of life for Moorthy in Kanthapura. He is variously described as “quiet generous, serene, deferent and Brahmanic (K. 12), Deference bordering on the spiritual is a way of life for Raja Rao’s character Moorthy. In Rama-Savithri relationship in The Serpent and the Rope and Pai-Santha relationship in The Cat and Shakespeare also one could perceive this quality prevailing in their
mutual trust and relationship. Moorthy in his revolutionary fervour never hurts the feelings of his mother Narsamma or any other elderly person in the village. Moorthy’s attempt to transform the orthodox members of his community is not through conflict but through love and the power of self sacrifice.

The difference between the attitudes of Madeleine and Savithri explains the failure of Madeleine to be wife to Rama, because this feeling of deference has not entered into their relationship as in the case of Savithri-Rama relationship. This archetypal behavioural pattern that evolved from the man-god relationship, can very well be seen internalised into the experience of Savithri. But Madeleine suffers from cross cultural conflicts and writes to Ramaswamy: “I wonder whether I could really love you, whether anyone could really love a thing as abstract as you” (SR 40). “With Madeleine everything was explanation and with Savithri it was recognition” (SR 46). Savithri on the other hand, though Cambridge educated and modern, enacts a ritual worship of Rama as seen here:

She took flower and kumkum and mumbling some song to herself, anointed my feet with them. Now she let a camphor and placing the censer in the middle of the kumkum water she waved the flame before my face... kneeling again placing her head on my feet, she stayed there long... breaking into sobs. (SR 211)

The devotion in the relationship is mutual as Rama was well aware that a woman needs man’s worship for her fulfillment. He says:

For in worshipping her we know the world and annihilate it, absorbing it into ourselves. We should be Siva that woman be
dissolved and with her the world. For the world is meant not for
denial but for dissolution. (SR 172)

The Krishna-Radha myth and the Yagnavalkya-Maitreyi story is implied
in the mutual devotion of Rama and Savithri. The Yagnavalkya-Maitreyi story
is mentioned in several instances in the novel suggesting a pattern of perfect
man-woman relationship. Ramaswamy quotes Yagnavalkya’s proclamation to
his wife about man-woman relationship: “The husband does not love the wife
for the wife’s sake, the husband loves the wife for the sake of the self in her”
(SR 171). This statement is sufficient proof for defending Raja Rao against any
allegations of anti-feminist stance due to the references to Sati in the novel.
The charge of misogyny is unfounded as his woman is Prakriti the archetypal
manifestation of the active principle in life. Woman plays an active role in
Ramaswamy’s existence, woman as mother, sister, wife, and lover. [Little Mother,
Saroja, Madeleine, Savithri] Rama’s relationship with Madeleine failed because
she failed to become Maitreyi in playing her role as wife. Savithri’s love towards
Rama is softened and purified by a feeling of deference, which could be termed
as Bhakti. Savithri is Rama’s love, spouse, disciple for whom the toe-ring that
was left for his bride by his mother was of the precise size.

Besides, Rama has the same kind of devotion and respect for Little Mother
and for all his ancestors, the descendants of the great sage Yagnavalkya. His
reverential feeling towards the sweet motherliness of the Ganges is repeated on
several occasions in the novel.
True to the spirit of the myth of the Ganges, Rama is devotional towards Mother Ganga, which flows to purify mankind. For Rama’s mythic consciousness even the cow inside the temple inspires reverence. “What wonderful animals these be in our sacred land - such maternal and ancient looks they have. One can understand why we worship them”. (SR 25)

The Himalayas, again, inspire grave, deep deference in Rama when Little Mother and himself visited Mussoorie. He explains the meaning of the myth of the Himalayas:

The Himalaya made the peasant and the Brahmin feel big, not with any earthly ambition but with the bigness, the stature of the impersonal, the stature of one who knows the nature of his deepest sleep. For in the deepest sleep, as every pilgrim knows, one is wide awake, awake to oneself. And the Himalaya was that sleep made knowledge. (SR 42)

The Himalaya remains a mythic source, a symbol that inspires awe for the ancient sage as well as for the modern pilgrim. In France, he recovers an oval round stone from the banks of the Seine and anoints it as Siva Linga and a flat stone at the edge of the garden is Nandi, Siva’s vehicle for him. Inanimate objects suddenly light up with holy sacred associations as you make it so. The flowing waters of Ganges signify the origin support and sustenance of life in the world, the image of the mother principle. The image of Little Mother goes well with this symbol. Little mother is simultaneously Prakriti or the womb of the
feminine, the centre of Rama’s ancestral family, the personification of the power of fertility. Rama explains it to Madeleine saying that the gods are creations of your mind and so they believed as you made them. So there is Nandi in his garden for which Madeleine offers flowers everytime she passes by it. The bull or Nandi is always a vibrant happy presence for Rama as he looks out through the window.

On another occasion Rama quips about holiness of objects. “The sacred is nothing but the symbol seen as the “I” (SR 60). Therefore in the mythic consciousness of Rama or for that matter anybody from India, the Ganges, the Himalayas, the Coconut, the bull, the cow, the monkey, or even a sari becomes auspicious and sacred appropriate to the occasion. Therefore Rama could worship or treat with deference anything and everything that is part of Nature river or mountain with the same minuteness. In The Cat and Shakespeare, Ramakrishna Pai tells us: “The world has to be worshipped. Santha worships me and has herself” (22) and in The Chessmaster Sastri says, “For Jaya . . . all was worship whereas for Uma worship was one thing and life another . . . Jaya and I were alike for us all was so dreadfully serious, everything a ritual, a grave play.” (Chessmaster 485).

Likewise, the protagonists in The Cat and Shakespeare and Comrade Kirillov, Govindan Nair and Comrade Kirillov inspire unconditional deference towards them. Janet Powers comparing these characters says:

Inhabiting both fictional worlds are guru figures that fascinate their respective narrators [Pai, ‘R’] and attempt to initiate them into new
world views. Pai in *The Cat and Shakespeare* and R in Comrade Kirillov are disciple followers of two extraordinary figures Govindan Nair and Comrade Kirillov (611).

In both cases these figures themselves are presented as disciples of greater forces, Marx in *Comrade Kirillov* and the cat in *The Cat and Shakespeare*, which is a symbol of divine wisdom or the guru in the feminine aspect. The cat is present on an eternal plane serving as a guiding force to Govindan Nair who is also at the highest scale in spiritual stature among all the characters of Rao. The cat is the symbol of the real guru, to whom the seeker surrenders like kitten. Pai is an ordinary seeker, a disciple who is ‘unready’. He is the initiate and Govindan Nair shows him the path of the cat. Sivarama Sastri in *The Chessmaster*, like Pai, is a suffering human soul who describes himself as lecherous, ‘corrupt’ and ‘an unvirtuous Sadhu’ who surrenders himself to the Great Sage in Travancore. Parthasarathy comments: “In the Indian tradition the function of literature was to enlighten, to open men’s eyes to who he really is. It is this metaphysical bias that distinguishes Indian literature from all others” (561). Rao’s novels *Kanthapura*, *The Serpent and the Rope*, *The Cat and Shakespeare* and *The Chessmaster* along with *Comrade Kirillov* which apparently opens up an intellectual discourse on Marxism, are all works with a guru figure in them, directly or indirectly present, promising to enlighten a reader who is invited to enter into the experience of discipleship.

In fact, *The Serpent and the Rope* ends with an affirmation of the archetypal position of the guru parampara or lineage of gurus in the Indian cultural tradition.
Rama's meeting with his Guru in Travancore is described thus:

Do you my brother, my friend, need a candle to show the light of the sun? Such a sun I have seen! It is more splendid than a million suns. It sits on a river bank, it sits as the formless form of Truth: It walks without walking... reveals what is known. To such a Truth was I taken, and I became its servant, I kissed the perfume of its Holy Feet... and called myself a disciple... Ever since being has known itself as being I have known it. It is the gift that Yagnavalkya made to Maitreyi, it is the gift Govinda made to Sankara. (SR 403)

Ramaswamy's metaphysical journey comes to an end only when he meets the guru who is the inexpressible absolute finding expression in the personal. The concept of the guru principle in Indian mythical tradition has to be elaborated for an in-depth analysis of the meaning of this archetypal pattern expressed in fictional terms. The entire spiritual wisdom is accessible to the people through the guru, the enlightened one and they spontaneously act as disciples of these great souls.

Even in Comrade Kirillov where Kirillov's attempts to initiate 'R' into dialectical materialism does not succeed. The prevalent attitude in the work is one of glorifying the mythic consciousness. Kirillov alias Padmanabha Iyer is an Indian Marxist whose ideology is in conflict with his own mythic self. Kirillov is symbolic of the Indian intellectual's ideological confusion. Like his appearance, he is at odds with his own self and at last he succumbs to the mythic pattern of
behaviour. Padmanabha lyer was interested in Krishnamurti and theosophical society and later he turned to Marx when Krishnamurti rejected his role as a messiah.

The initiatory process in *The Serpent and the Rope* at the end of the novel is the perfection of a long journey of archetypal quest, which has a universal significance. The Sage in Travancore in *The Serpent and the Rope* and the Great Sage in *The Chessmaster* are archetypal ideals of the Jivan Mukta. The sage figure is woven into the structure of the novel, playing an active direct part in the progress of events in *The Cat and Shakespeare* through Govindan Nair who shows us how somebody who has already attained the *Jivan Mukta* state would live in the world. He involves in all kinds of actions but remains unaffected, maintaining a Shakespearean detachment. He appears an ordinary happy man. The mythic image of Siva comes alive in the understanding of this complex character. Henrich Zimmer comments on the mythic Siva:

Siva is apparently thus two opposite things: archetypal ascetic and archetypal dancer. On the one hand he is Total Tranquility - Inward calm absorbed in itself, absorbed the void of the Absolute where all destruction merge and dissolve, and all tensions are at rest. But on the other hand, he is Total Activity, life's energy, frantic, aimless and playful. These aspects are the dual manifestations of an absolutely non-dual, ultimate reality. (167)

Siva is here both the active principle and the passive principle. In the novel Govindan Nair is both a guru and a friend in the role of a fellow seeker to
Ramakrishna Pai. Raja Rao himself says, “For me it is poor Pai who is only an Arjuna and Govindan Nair is Sreekrishna. One is the man-man and the other is man beyond man” (Interview with Panikkar).

The relationship between Rama and Savithri is archetypal in the sense that Rama initiates Savithri into the metaphysical world, when she devotes herself to him. This relationship is grounded on the spiritual rather than the sensual level as a manifestation of the dichotomy between Prakriti and Purusha. Echoes of such a paradigm can be found in the repeated references to Siva-Parvati, Krishna-Radha, Tristran - Isolt and so on. It is this implied archetypal parallel in the man-woman relationship that provides a ground for accepting the socially unacceptable love relationship between Rama and Savithri.

The characters of the two women in Rama’s life, Madeleine and Savithri, are juxtaposed in such a way that both characters assume symbolic associations of certain expected qualities in women. The estrangement between Rama and Madeline is accentuated with the arrival of Savithri, the Indian girl from a royal family. Madeleine says at one point, “I want to run away from you, and one day, I shall run away” (SR 137). For Rama Savithri is a woman for whom everything is “an instant, an illumination a symbol of archetypal feminine beauty, an embodiment of Prakriti. For Madeleine” geography was very real almost solid. She smelled the things of the earth, as though sound, form, touch taste smell were such realities that you could not go beyond them even if you tried” (SR 20). Rama wants to establish a relationship with Madeleine on a metaphysical plane so that her individuality is dissolved in the concept of the Male Principle. But she is the...
one who resists self dissolution. The psychological states of Rama and Madeleine, in other words, represent two archetypal characters, the archetype of the East and the West.

Therefore, the images and symbols associated with the life of Rama get us to the mythopoeic world of Siva and Parvati. They have a flat stone in their garden, which is Nandi, Siva’s vehicle, which they worship in a bid to solve their problems. The death of his only son Pierre further alienates each of them from the other as it indicates the failure of Madeleine to be mother to a boy named Pierre Krishna. She turns to Buddhism and leads an ascetic life with vigorous practices of worship. She applies for a divorce. Savithri on the other hand never asserted her individuality in her relationship with Rama, which prompts Rama to idealise her as Radha, the archetype of romantic love in the Indian imagination.

The images associated with Savithri are of beauty, passion and enjoyment. Rama is passionately in love with Savithri but at the same time earnest in his pursuit of Truth, which puts him in a dichotomous state. The need for Savithri and the need to go beyond Savithri constitute the motif of the story itself. The Siva-Parvati myth is appropriately exploited to describe this complex relationship between Rama and Savithri. Rama says, “We should be Siva that women be dissolved and with her the world. For the world is meant not for denial but for dissolution” (SR 172). In the myth of Siva and Parvati, Parvati is necessary to rouse Siva from deep meditation for the existence of the world. For this Parvati herself undergoes vigorous penance. Savithri too has to undergo a process of
self purification for the fulfillment of their relationship. Like Parvati, the ascetic, she is destined to be a true bride to Rama, in a final dissolution of the feminine in the masculine. She becomes indistinguishable from Purusha, the passive principle operating through Rama.

Ramaswamy's mythic consciousness integrates the myths of Indian and European civilizations into one experience. The Ganges and the Seine, George VI and King Bharata are manifestations of the same impersonal principle. Even in the enactment of the British Queen's coronation Rama finds the enactment of the Feminine Principle or Prakriti. Chitra Sankaran explains the terms Purusha and Prakriti denoted in the Samkhya system of philosophy:

According to the Sankhya system, the central paradox of the human condition is that misery is only inherent in Prakriti which by its nature is even the object and therefore unconscious of its misery but Purusha occupying the subject position suffers misery because of a lack of knowledge of its distinction from Prakriti. Prakriti is that which evolves but is not evolved whereas Purusha neither evolves nor is evolved. This means that Prakriti evolves itself in order to enable Purusha to recognise its own difference from Prakriti.

(91)

Prakriti is the active principle, the feminine and the creative. Purusha is the masculine, the passive principle abstaining from the play of human tendencies like Sattvic, Rajas and Tamasik gunas. But the passive principle is that which stands for pure consciousness from where all creation starts. The operation of
these two archetypal concepts constitutes the structural peculiarities of the novels The Serpent and the Rope, The Cat and Shakespeare and The Chessmaster with associated mythic images and echoes.

While Rama in The Serpent and the Rope enacts the role of Purusha, Little mother acts as the mother archetype (with associated images of Mother Ganges). Savithri as the archetypal symbol of the Feminine principle, acts as part of Prakriti, helping him in his quest for the Absolute. Saroja, his sister, Madeleine, his wife, or the concubines of Benares are all part of the same mythic concept of Prakriti providing men with natural energy. Speaking of Saroja, Rama says, “What a deep and deferential mystery womanhood is. I could bow before Saroja and call her queen” (SR 50). It was not Saroja “I felt and smelt but something of the Ganges and the Jumna that rose into my very being. Benares was indeed but inside oneself” (SR 50). Saroja’s marriage is occasioned by the singing of hymns signifying the union of Purusha and Prakriti.

I am He
Thou art She
I am the Harmony
Thou the words
I am the sky
Thou art Earth
Let us twain become one
Let us bring forth offspring. (SR 272)
With all the intensity of mutual devotion between Rama and Savithri they have not reached the heights of the romantic relationship between Radha and Krishna because the problem of Savithri with Pratap as her husband and Rama as her idol of worship has to be resolved. She can identify herself with Krishna when Rama is not Rama’s mind or body. Rama also did not develop into the ideal of love like Krishna. Therefore Savithri had to go back to Pratap as it is her dharma to do so and she rejoices in the “rejoicement of others” (SR 364). The spiritual heights towards which both Rama and Savithri aspire to reach through love are explained when he speaks of the love of Krishna and Radha. “And when he is Krishna, there is no Radha as Radha but Radha is himself. That is the paradox, Savithri, the mortal paradox of man” (SR 363). So the culmination of love in spiritual terms ends up in self dissolution. Savithri was a companion in Rama’s quest who helps him understand the meaning of womanhood. Savithri’s conversation with Rama explains her intuition.

“Woman is co-eval with death”

“Which means?”

“Woman is the meaning of death”

“I don’t understand”

“You said: The woman is the world. The truth of the world is dissolution. Or rather Truth can only be because death is. If the world were the world, there would be no Truth”.

“Woman is the disease, the historical lineage of man”
“And man”? 

“The Truth” She said, “the supreme light. We are the fakers, the makers. We make the falsehood that is like the trinkets. That is why man has such contempt for us”. (SR 359-60)

The dichotomy between Purusha and Prakriti can be resolved only when Savithri becomes Satyavan, the Self, the Truth. The nature of Prakriti is elaborately described in a poetic language in the following paragraph.

Woman is the earth, air, ether, sound; woman is the microcosm of the mind, the articulations of space, the knowing in knowledge; the woman is fire, movement, clear and rapid as the mountain stream; the woman is that which seeks against that which is sought. 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 her through him of that which she is. 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. (SR 352-53)

Like the concepts of Prakriti and Purusha acting as central motifs in The Serpent and the Rope, the struggle between the masculine and feminine principles can be seen operating also through Okonkwo on the one hand and Nwoye on the other in Things Fall Apart. Nwoye’s conversion to Christianity is an escape from the violent and primitive ways of Umofia. Nwoye prefers the
feminine as seen in his preference for his mother’s story about culture instead of Okonkwo’s version of the story. Nwoye loves his mother’s version of the story of vulture that was sent to placate the sky by singing. The rather masculine ending of his father’s version of the story ends in violence and bloodshed which young Nwoye abhors. In order to please his father, Nwoye feigned that he no longer cared for foolish women and children” (AT 53; TFA ch.7).

This story told by his father and mother denotes two opposing concepts, the male and the female, two patterns operating through the characters of father and son. This story is the story of the quarrel between earth and sky. Sky withheld rain for seven years. At last vulture was sent to sing for mercy and sky gave vulture rain wrapped in leaves of cocoyam. The structural importance of this tale is that it explains “why” there is drought and how rain returned to earth providing a mythopoetic quality to the narrative. Nwoye listens to the masculine stories told by Okonkwo in a deliberate bid to please his father. The male and the female can be seen in the description of yam as the king of crops and co-coyam as a “feminine crop”. Okonkwo, reluctant in showing affection is a paradigm for the sky in the story that withholds rain and releases it reluctantly.

Furthermore, characters in Rao’s The Cat and Shakespeare, Pai for instance, is the archetypal seeker who would not have gone beyond the “Malayalarajyam” and the government secretariat without Govindan Nair. Shantha is Prakriti, an archetypal manifestation of womanhood. According to Pai, without her, he is unable to discover himself. Govindan Nair is the Truth, which explains her beauty. Pai is the modern man, interested in the materialistic
hedonism but suffers from epistemological dilemma unable to understand fully what Govindan Nair says. Pai is the helpless witness of history, who identifies himself with the boils, with the pus, symptomatic of the Indian colonial subject passively participating in the colonial history.

Chitra Sankaran in her article on The Chessmaster comments:

According to the Samkhya system, the central paradox of the human condition is that misery is only inherent. Prakriti which by its nature is ever the object and therefore unconscious of its misery but Purusha occupying the subject position, suffer misery because of a lack of knowledge of its distinction from Prakriti. Prakriti is that which evolves but is not evolved. Whereas Purusha neither evolves nor is evolved. This means that Prakriti evolves itself in order to enable Purusha to recognise its own difference from Prakriti . . . (91)

Traditionally, Prakriti is occupying the object position as designated by the pronoun ‘She’ and Purusha occupying the subject position by the pronoun ‘He’.

The Samkhya system is built on the Upanishads just like the Vedanta of Sankara or the Vedanta of Badarayana.

Just as the guru - disciple paradigm operating in the consciousness of Raja Rao’s characters, the immanence of the principle associated with Chi in Ibo life, forms an integral part of Achebe’s fictional world. The archetype of Chi, like the concept of the guru, represents spiritual forces fully respected but not fully defined. In Achebe’s novels one could also see another pattern emerging— one of paired oppositions like good and evil, male and female as seen in the
mutually complimentary patterns created by the Ibo tradition such as god-priestess or goddess - priest. The sense of duality is not confined to the colonial dichotomy alone. Both protagonists of Achebe, fail because they could not combine the competing claims of the masculine and the feminine polarities. Okonkwo for instance obeyed the commands of the Oracle of the Hills and Caves and violated the peace of Earth Goddess on many occasions including at the time of his act of self sacrifice. But in the final act of suicide by Okonkwo, one could perceive the potential for change. While in the case of Ramaswamy in The Serpent and the Rope, one sees the actual change when he meets his guru in Travancore. Perhaps the possibilities of the reconciliation of the masculine and the feminine could be perceived in Things Fall Apart in the friendship between Nwoye and Ikemefuna. The archetypal patterns, which appear through Oracles, spirits, masks encourage hopes for a possible experience of atemporality in the fictional world of Achebe.

The Ibo man is caught between two opposite gods, a schism which is the universal symptom of myth. Duality is an essential part of Ibo world view which places the man in a unique position. He is one or the other when he prefers one god to the other, and he falls short of the sympathies of the other. The virtual impossibility of making a merger of the two in Okonkwo and Ezeulu make them failures in Self knowledge. But Raja Rao’s characters are better equipped to reach a final resolution of this conflict. In Achebe’s society where the guru-disciple tradition is absent, the mythical dualism has its manifestation in a pair
of gods or in other paired forms. In this light, the behaviour of the protagonists who oppose the British or those who support them err equally. One choice at the expense of the other is non-mythical and hence anti-traditional. This explains the failure in both novels. Compared to them Raja Rao’s protagonists are examples of apparent success, as they strive consciously to resolve the duality, at least occasionally when they get in contact with the divine. For Rama, the mythical schism, presented through the metaphor of the serpent and the rope, is accepted but at the same time the oneness is acknowledged as there is no serpent in reality.

Another major pattern present is one of conflict and change leading to social disintegration and disillusionment. The inability of the people to support Okonkwo in his act of killing the Kotna is described thus

Okonkwo stood looking at the dead man. He knew that Umofia would not go to war. He knew because they had let the other messengers escape. They had broken into tumult instead of action.

He discerned fright in that tumult. He heard voices asking “Why did he do it?” (AT 165; TFA ch. 165)

Kanthapura too betrays the archetypal situation of confusion and defeat in the wake of the British military action in Kanthapura. But there is a difference in the defeat in Kanthapura and Things Fall Apart. Again, Ezeulu in Arrow of God fails to get rid of the individual consciousness and consequently fails to get dissolved in the metaphysical realm. But this failure of Ezeulu does not exclude him from the class of mythological heroes as he is otherwise a symbol of the unconscious urge for fulfillment in the Ibo scheme of things.
The fact that all myths can be read in terms of such antithetical pairs evinces the existential burden. Such contrast is seen as a pattern within the psyche of individual characters in both Rao and Achebe. Their literary narratives acquire the qualities of mythical narratives through the operation of this pattern in narration. Colette Alstier in his article “Literary and Mythological Narratives” comments:

Myth, however is defined not solely in terms of the intensity of scenes it evokes, but also by the organization it imposes on them and one of the laws governing the privileged structuring of mythology is that of contrast . . . . Napolean’s story is conjured up but with it his love affairs and St. Helena. When we talk of Joan of Arc both her weakness and her strength are stressed along with her belligerence and the stake. (727)

We find these contrasting traits in the character of Krishna in Indian mythology, who is a combination of the Sage and the lover, the warrior and the detached being. The protagonists in the four novels under consideration Okonkwo, Ezeulu Moorthy and Rama carry with them these contrasting traits. Okonkwo’s high stature in Umofia crumbles in the end and the whole community disapproving his individualistic act of resistance. He has been the ideal Ibo man but at the same time violates the sacred code of the community by polluting Goddess Arii by his act of suicide. Raja Rao’s Moorthy has staunch faith in the invincibility of the Mahatma who takes him to the guiding strength of his action plan. But Kanthapura is in shambles at the end with governmental oppression.
resulting in large scale eviction of men and women from the village. Rama continues his quest for the Absolute but fails in maintaining his relationship with Madeleine. Death of their only child is indication of the limitations, the sorrow of human existence from which he has no escape.

The contrastive claims of loyalties - personal and religious - takes Ezeulu in Arrow of God to a tragic crisis in his life and his community's social life. The egwugwu in Things Fall Apart, symbolises the two orders of allegiance, representing simultaneously the villagers and the ancestral spirits. Achebe's world articulates the destructive forces of the Ibo social system as well as the validity of many positive values in the traditional cultural context. The contrastive values of the individual heroes and that of the gods and the community, sustained in the fictional world of Achebe create a balancing in the pattern of the narratives.

There has never been a sense of failure in these four novels as the telling has been in a mythic mode with the collectivity assuming the role of a character. Though Okonkwo and Ezeulu as individuals are defeated in the novels, the predominant mood is one of the successes of an imperceptible mythic power as the Whiteman's arrogant attitude regarding native culture is expressed in ironical terms at the end of Things Fall Apart. Though the protagonists suffer from a cultural crisis in Achebe's novels, both Moorthy and Ramaswamy in Raja Rao's novels provide an opportunity to rediscover the potentials of a mythic stream of thought in the traditional cultural context. The death of Okonkwo and the mental derangement of Ezeulu are suggestive of the failure of individualistic perspectives in a society influenced and sustained by the communal sense of identity. But
Moorthy and Ramaswamy in Raja Rao’s novel end up in discovering certain redeeming features in tradition which reinforces their faith in traditional values.

One of the major concerns of the two novelists analysed here seems to be to present the relevance of a mythic perspective in dealing with socio-political problems during the time of colonisation. The Serpent and the Rope is an exception wherein one finds a modern intellectual in search of the ultimate Truth. All these novels help the man in the Third World to rise to an awareness of his own self, with all its complex traditions and provokes the reader, especially the people of the respective cultural backgrounds, to redeem the native tools for an imaginative understanding of their own reality.