Chapter Four

Realization : Displacement and Self Realization

"all roads, as The Gita says, lead but to the absolute". - Raja Rao SR 90.

The traditionalist epistemologies, relate thought knowledge and the world in their theory of enquire. The immediate awareness of the world is a cause of a responding self-acting upon the world around. Modern empiricists, beginning with Locke have come up with introspective methodologies and for their representational theory of ideas. The most pertinent question is with regard to the relevance of knowledge to the existence of self in the world. It is quiet well known that many saw thought as one from which knowledge is composed. The famous philosopher Dewey, in his analysis of the process of enquiry, begins with the problematic situation,

“A situation where instinctive or habitual responses of the human organism of the environment are inadequate for the continuation of on going activity in pursuit of the fulfillment of needs and desire”. (Dewey)

The problematic situations thus related to the needs and desires in human life. The religious positions hence address the problem of our coming needs and desires. This resulted in the emphasis given to overcoming or sub doing the human desires and marginalizing or simplifying the human needs. This resulted in the emphasis given to aestheticism and renunciation. Focusing on aestheticism and renunciation, many religious like Buddhism are constructed. Rationalist position however considers this as
manipulative and unhuman strategies. The Hindu religious texts have addressed this issue of self and its needs vice verse the world and the problematic situations, and have thus arrived at a schema of different stations possible in a single life.

The Advaita Vedanta is a sophisticated attempt to enquire into human ego and the world that surrounds it and acts upon it. Adi Shankara propounded a preparatory course for human beings to enhance the strength of mind and body so that the self can overcome the invading illusions and in an intense realization of self understand the true meaning of “tathavamasi”. Advaita hence recommends intense sadhana, which will remove from the mind the traces of ego and all ideas of duality and illusions. This is possible through a course on bakhthi yoga and karma. These exercises enable atman to receive the awareness of the Brahma. This is not possible unless the atman receives the spirit of the divine by reaching out towards the divine as well as dispelling the illusions that intruding the process. For this the atman needs assistance or divine blessings. Adi Shankara recommended the company of the wise and the good -- the involvement of ‘Satsanga’, as a step in sadhana.

According to Sivanandha the word Satsanga is the combination of the two words ‘sat’ and ‘sanga’. ‘Sat’ is essential nature of Brahma, which is permanent in things, that change, which is the only reality that upholds the world of appearance. The same ‘Sat’, with the accidental attributes of omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence is called Isvara or Paramatma. In brief, ‘Sat’ refers to Isvara as well as Brahma both ultimately being the one and the same reality. ‘Sanga’ literally means company or union. To be always in the ‘Company of The Lord’ or to be established in
Brahman is the literal meaning of the word, ‘Satsanga’. However, as long as ignorance or avidya remains, the direct realization of Brahman is impossible. When wisdom destroys ignorance, the real nature reveals itself. This is the highest ‘Satsanga’. This will develop “detachment and love of silence and solitude”. “Tat-tvam” is then possible. The reality of this and that, the identity of this with that and the recognition of that identity is attainment of moksha. Hence, Adi Shankara proclaimed the supremacy or the path of knowledge, in the company of ‘Satsanga’ or with the help of a guru, for the realization of the self. In his Anandha Lahari, Adi Shankara says, “Anandha, that is bliss, is man’s goal and it can be secured only by god’s grace”(Dewey). He asserted Brahman alone is real and there is no second. Atman should attain this knowledge and the atma jnana, “ekatma sarvebhoota antratma” (the one atman is present in all beings) is nothing but Advaita Darshana, the vision of non-duality. From this one understands that Hinduism has entertained a larger understanding of human life as different stations of life in spatial-temporal terms. It also emphasis especially Advaita Vedanta asserts that the growth of the self lies in the vision of non-duality. It is reading of one atman in all being grants a kind of universal metaphysical equality and unity to human life. The most important point however is the fact that such a vision is not easy and readily forthcoming. It is by reading the strength of human mind in its ability to challenge the illusions around; Adi Shankara asserts the significance of ‘Satsanga’ and gurus. A soul’s attempt to discipline and strengthen it asks for a mobility, traversing through different stations of life, acquiring experience in the process, accumulating knowledge during travels and meetings and reaching the finality of the quest in the illuminative self realization. Both Raja Rao and Jayakanthan, have understood this
salient message of Hindu religion and subject their characters to pass through different stations of life. The characters are displaced by journeys that help them with experience and knowledge.

This chapter highlights two principle aspects in the quest for self-realization; displacement and travel, and the significance of guru. In this chapter the researcher highlights the significance of vantage stations of life, which may be called as madams or Ashrams where in one gets into ‘Satsanga’ guided by a guru and the prospect of Advaita Darshana is enhanced. While Jayakanthan makes a plain call for the institution of ‘madams’ or ‘ashrams’, Raja Rao highlights the significance of Satsanga, which enables sadhana for Ramaswamy. The important point is that Ramaswamy’s Satsanga includes mostly women of different stations in life who drive him to the doors of a guru. In Jayakanthan the novel itself is a discussion on madams or in other words ashrams and the need for instituting such holy places near the temple, while elaborating his points that all great ideals and the institution built on such ideals deserve to be considered as temples and madams respectively. Jayakanthan enables his characters caught in different stations of life to receive message through gurus not only religious gurus but also secular gurus. The first section of this chapter elaborates on the traditional notes on different stations of human life. The second section of this chapter details the quest of Ramaswamy, the Protagonist of The Serpent and the Rope. It details his journeys and contacts with fellow human beings who could be considered as the members of the “Satsanga”. It also highlights intense feelings of a need to reach a guru for help. His Satsanga provides him the Vidhya and Sadhana so that he feels the
compulsive need for the Atma Jnana. The third section of this chapter elaborates Jayakanthan’s notes on different madams or ashrams in his novel Jaya Jaya Shankara that could provide salvation for modern citizens. He reveals his point through a construction of problematic situations for his characters like Adi, Mahalingam, the Sanskrit Pandit, Uma, Sathyamoorthy and Moorthy, the Jailer. Each individual attains the spiritual experiences in different stages of life.

This chapter attempts to study the importance of human experience in one’s life, which is facilitated by travel or displacement a kind of physical mobility. It may be willed as in the case of a quest, or it may happen by chance conditioned by destiny. Whatever may be the type each enterprise of leaving the home provides an experience that educates and illuminates. For the spiritually inclined, this kind of experience becomes a ladder to reach the stage of self-realization, or in other words, these are sighted as illusions and the Brahman or realization becomes available. This chapter details the displacements, experiences and enlightenment undergone by the characters of Jayakanthan and Raja Rao towards attaining the perfect knowledge - the Brahman. Life is a continuous process of experiences that lead to enlightenment. The supreme enlightenment is the knowledge of the self, which makes one to respect and accept the other. Any one who is unable to accept the self in the other is likely to miss the sight of Brahman in one’s self. It is to be noted that the possibilities of experiences, in terms of the space, are available to any person on this earth. It may be the limited space of a home surrounded by the near and the dear, or the vast space of the universe wherein all
living beings are found to co-exist. Detailed discussions on this aspect with respect to the characters of the two novelists are taken up in the following paragraphs.

In Hindu way of life, one becomes Brahmin only after undergoing the process of various experiences or after many gradual sessions of enlightenment. This results in the consciousness of the divinity within. This is the stage of realization which the two novels, Jaya Jaya Shankara and The Serpent and The Rope aim at. Moreover, this consciousness is facilitated either by a guru or with the support of religious human figures. What is important is attaining the divine consciousness or the readiness to undergo the process of experience and enlightenment. Each individual attains the spiritual experiences in different stages of life, which are brahmachariam, grhastham, vanappirastham and Sannyasam, which may be considered in detail in the following paragraphs. For a Hindu, there are four stages of human life. Annie Besant calls it ‘The Four Asramas’

"the life was divided into four stages, or asramas: that of the brahmacharin, the student, bound to celibacy; that of the grhastha, the house holder; that of the vanaprastha, the forest dweller; that of the sannyasin, the ascetic, called also the yati, controlled, or the endeavourer” (Annie Besant 137)

They are brahmachariam (bachelorhood), which is consider a learning stage, grhastham or family life, vanappirastham or the life of vanavasi [a forest dweller] and finally, sannyasam or the spiritual life devoid of all worldly pleasures. Each stage demands discharge of certain duties that enable man to reach particular height in life.
These four stages, referred to as ‘Four Ashrams’, lead step-by-step man to attain self-realization. The practices chosen during each of these stages bestow on man the true value or the meaning of life. The bachelor and family lives lead to praviruthi margam, the path of service. The final two stages vanappirastham and sannyasam teach man to renounce all worldly pleasures. These experiences consolidate one’s spiritual life, which in turn shows the path of God. In sanatana dharma, the concept of living is given systematically. Opportunity for the development is given for every one on various fields. Certain work and the method of practice are stipulated at every stage.

Life here is composed as a noble institution, which envisages the growth of man’s power, leading to the growth of his eligibility and talents. Each person has to choose his own ashram accordingly and march forward. At the same time, it is stressed that one has to fulfill every duty of his and then move on to the next stage. According to Manu, one can follow the family discipline, after a proper exposure to the Vedas, any two or at least one. Without breaking the brahmacharism, the family man or the illararavasi on attaining the old age and after his fatherhood witnessing a son and a grandson can go to vanavasam. After spending his third part of life in the forest and giving up his worldly joys and pleasures, he can go to the next stage of sannyasam or sainthood. A sannyasin totally gives up his wealth, property, luxury, wife, children, custom and tradition of any particular religion or caste and his religion and nation. His life is separated from worldly life. He engages himself in meditation and lives on meager food. During such a life, he transcends the desire for sensual pleasures. He frees himself from his likes and dislikes, desires, ego, lust, anger and time and attains a state of transcendence. He is kind to everybody and during the stage; he tries to spread his spiritual experiences. He
denounces pride and prestige and balances his successes and failures more bound to the usual customs and traditions of the society. The fourth station a *sannyasin* is a noble and holy man. He can reach the state of self-realization. He is considered as a “Brahman”. In Hindu religion, a *sannyasin* is accepted as a guru who shows the divine path and one who teaches the laws, truth, and reality and guides one to reach the state of transcendence thereby finally reaching god. As Lakshmana Murthy states,

> “Philosophical knowledge in India is considered as a means to liberation (*moksha*). It was not an intellectual clarification. The enquiry was into the presence in life of evil, both physical and moral followed by an intense struggle to transcend it...Knowledge for its own sake, in a spirit of endless curiosity, was not favoured (Lakshmana Murthy 99).

All the Upanisads affirm that the divinity is close to the philosophical knowledge of truth and free from material involvement on worldly interests.

> “When every desire that finds lodging in the heart of man has been loosened from its moorings, then this mortal puts on immortality: even here he tastes God. In this human body this is the highest state of enlightenment.” (Laxmana Moorthy 99)

There is a way of life to realize this state of enlightenment. A procedure of discipline is laid down in every school. This is at the root of the principle of detachment culminating in disinterested action. The spirit of renunciation implicit in this principle defines the Indian attitude to morality. The ultimate state of renunciation is complete
and is the cessation of personal interest realized through performance of social obligations with no thought of one’s rights, going beyond the conflict of rights and duties that one transcends common morality; one reaches the stage that resolves all conflicts. The Upanisad part I state: “Verily to him cometh not remorse and her torment saying, why have I left undone the good and why have I done that which was evil.” (Lakshman Moorthy 99). He will regard everything as equally sacred – “whether it be a learned and humble Brahmin, a cow, an elephant or even a dog or an outcast.” (SR 181). Indian philosophy is considered as a logical one, because of the concept of moksha. The attainment of true freedom (moksha) like any other ideal is possible with the realization of the absolute unity of all reality. The disciplined seeker is advised to go to a preceptor (Guru) in order to dispel ignorance (avidya) by knowledge (vidya). In Shankara’s commentary on Mundakopanishad it is given:

“He [the quester] must necessarily approach a guru who is characterized by composure of mind, self-control, love, etc. Even one that is well-versed in various branches of learning should not seek ultimate knowledge on his own.” (Adi Shankara 12 294.53 on 55 2B).

The quester is granted the experience of truth during such a course, when a guru guides him the experience of ultimate truth (Brahma anubhava) is attained. Ramaswamy of Raja Rao is shown as a wise traveler willing to journey towards vidhya. Raja Rao also highlights conversely that the attainment of knowledge enables one to understand the false and unreal attachment on the trivial during the course of one’s life. This sense, such an understanding provides the moment of vidhya. In an ideal state of
illumination of the *Brahman*, the very consciousness causes the extinction of the ego.

Raja Rao quotes a verse from *The Kasipanchaka*:

“This body is the holy place of Benares; (and here flows) the all-pervasive Ganges of wisdom, the mother of three worlds; this devotion and this faith are Gaya; the contemplation of the feet of my own preceptor is Prayaga; this inner-self, the *Brahman*, the witness of the mind of all people, is the God, the lord of the universe.” (SR 239-245).

Jayakanthan too has great faith in the influence of gurus and disciples. He especially gives great emphasis on the experiences of meeting a religious guru for the true experience of teaching stems from such meetings. Raja Rao brings out the concept of guru and god. Guru, a promoter, helps each soul. He helps others to reach the divine light truth. Ramaswamy considers him as god, knowing god is a process of experience for which one needs a guru for initiation. It is not a question of simply the concept of an ashram or a guru but realizing the school of learning or the art of experiencing god. Emotional crisis is something connected with the society. Therefore, for both Adi and Ramaswamy the help of a guru can only lead them to truth.

Hinduism has one important message to convey to this world: treat all living beings with love, truth, ahimsa, more than that it conveys a valuable message that all are one and equal in birth, of status before god. The Hindu religious gurus also convey this. Hindu religion grants guru an eminent place, as could be seen in the famous saying in Tamil, “*matha, pitha, guru, theivam*” where guru is considered next only to god. From ancient days, gurus or teachers are considered as god’s messengers sent to spread
a divine message. Jayakanthan places great emphasis on a religious guru, for the true experience of teaching stems from such meetings with a guru. In fact one of the prominent characters in *Jaya Jaya Shankara*, Shankaran is a guru. Raja Rao conceives a role for a guru, a promoter, the one who helps each soul, to achieve the divine light-the Absolute truth. According to Raja Rao knowing god itself is a process of experience, for which one needs a guru. When life is torn by conflicts and tragedies, the *ashram*, a school of learning or the guru provides the art of experiencing god. Both Jayakanthan’s Adi and Raja Rao’s Ramaswamy seek the help of a guru at one time or the other. Raja Rao’s protagonist Ramaswamy is an *Advaitist* and believes in the impersonal nature of reality.

“For Advaita, the world and individual selves have only an illusory existence; they are not real in an ultimate sense, as they are not permanent, and are only temporary manifestations due to ignorant misperception. Even the Gods are regarded temporary manifestations due to ignorance. With the attainment of knowledge of reality, that is, knowledge of *Brahman* and or the self, the knowledge that *Brahman* and the self are one, illusion ceases to have power to bind one and one is free from *samsara*, the cycle of rebirth and suffering. After death, one who has experienced *Brahman* is not reborn and instead experiences union with *Brahman* eternally, described as unlimited being, consciousness and bliss”. (Sullivan 21).
When seized by an intense though indefinable longing Ramaswamy asks himself, “Do I long for God?” He himself replies, “God is an object and I cannot long for him. I cannot long for a round red thing, that one calls God . . .” (SR 402). Impelled by the longings he seeks a guru. Ramaswamy’s description of the vision of his guru approximates to that of a personal god revealed on the Puranas, the Epics and the Upanisads. In the Indian religious tradition guru is divine force who assumes a human form to import spiritual truth to man. Raja Rao’s Ramaswamy accepts his guru as god. He feels blessed to follow his guru who can lead him to truth.

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The Serpent and the Rope is the story of Ramaswamy’s quest to reach self-realization, through and by renunciation. His quest is very much part of his mental and spiritual makeup. He embarks on a journey which is not easy, but full of ordeals. Raja Rao prepares his protagonist for renunciation and ordeals by introducing the elements of death. He is confronted by the death of his father, his son and his aunt. Recalling the death of aunt Lakshamma, he remarks, in the opening section of the novel “we never wept when she died. For I can not understand what death means” (SR 6) the same thought comes to him when his father dies. “For I must first believe there is death. That is the central fact – I do not believe that death is” (SR 7) these early encounters make him philosophic. He is very violently shaken at the death of his own son. However, he overcomes the tremor when he understands the basic Vedantic conception of the unreality of death. In the beginning, Ramaswamy’s ideals are worldly enough. He falls in love, marries and hopes to settle down to the comfortable life.
"Once my doctorate was over, I would take Madeleine home, and she would settle with me – somehow I always thought of a house white, single-storied on a hill and by a lake – and I would go day after day to the university and preach to them the magnificence of European civilization" (SR 15).

His spatial mobility across time throws before him various facts about life so that he understands the fact about Brahman. His return to India after the death of his firstborn is a turning point in his life. When he undertakes his pilgrimage to the holy places along with his Little Mother, the questions on the meaning of life engage him.

"For I had serious questions of my own and I could not name them. Something had just missed me in life, some deep absence grew in me, like a coconut on a young tree, that no love or learning could fulfill. And sitting sometimes, my hand against my face, I wondered where all this wandering would lead to. Life is a pilgrimage I know, but a pilgrimage to where – and to what?" (SR 26) (Emphasis added by the researcher).

Raja Rao believed, "All the roads as the Gita says, lead but to the Absolute". (SR 19) Hence, Raja Rao is of the opinion that different system of beliefs should be inevitable and take the one road Vedanta. For him, "Even communism is a spiritual movement for it moves in the direction of life". (SR 188) However, it is also true that the materialism of the world cannot go with idealism of a Vedantin.
“There can be only attitudes to life. Either you believe the world exists and so- you. Or you believe that you exist and so the world. There is no compromise possible…. If I am real then the world is me ….. But if the world is real, then you are real in terms of objects, and that is a tenable position. The first is *Vedanta*’s position – the second is the Marxist’s - and they are irreconcilable”. (SR - 333)

Raja Rao has very pointedly drawn attention to this aspect of the novel through the epigraph “Waves are nothing but water. So is the sea.” The waves make the sea, and yet water not waves, is the reality of the sea. Life is to be read in terms of reality with in and the mind has to transcend the emotional conflicts and material interests. Life mundane makes the self to target the reality. During the sessions of emotional crisis, man seeks the reality. The beginnings are caused by a desire to depart a kind of displacements a travel or a pilgrimage to seek the truth. Ramaswamy thus begins his journey not only as a Brahmin, but also as an upholder of tradition, he was also a pilgrim devoted to Truth and seeking *Brahman*. He starts his quest from Benares, which is in itself the vast world in a capsule. Here life and death, the living and the dead, are in closest proximity. Laughter of the concubine, meditation of the *sadhus*, tears of the mourners, belching of the well-fed Brahmins, caw-caws of the crows, the call of the pandas, the shouts of the firewood sellers, hymns of the devotees, cracklings of the funeral pyres, the calls of the shop-keepers-all are mixed. They lose their separate meanings and become one sound proclaiming that this holiest of the holy places is of this earth and yet not of this earth. The sublime and the absurd, the
beautiful and the ugly, the most ascetic and the most sensual exist side by side, each
unmindful of the other, each following its own course unmindful of the course of the
opposite. Moreover, through this apparent confusion move, the marked bulls, truly
detached, sometimes worshipped sometimes beaten, but always sure plenty of food and
protection against any real harm. Defying ordinary logic, Benares is a surrealist city,
and a sensitive man like Ramaswamy would there become either a cynic or a cenobite.
When Ramaswamy returned to Europe after visiting India, he was not quite a new man,
but certainly a man with a new awareness and a different viewpoint. This becomes
clear from his comments on Marseilles and Bombay:

“Marseilles is certainly horrible, with its wide dark windows and its
sing-song tramways, its underground world of ruffians, quémandeurs,
bicots, and its sheer natural vulgarity; but at least it has the old port and
the beauty of Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde. Once you go up the hundred
and seventeen steps and see the majesty of the sea from the portico of
the Cathedral the whole of the Greek conquest comes to your mind, and
not far from there one can almost see to the right Saints-Maries-de-la-
mar where the first Christians landed in Gaul. Alas, nobody landed in
Bombay but merchants and the vulgarity had no naturalness about it,
save it were in the Hindu area, where you all most felt you were back in
Baneras.” (SR 44)

The barbaric city of Bombay had no meaning for a Brahmin like Ramaswamy. So are
Paris and Notre-Dame:
“Paris somehow is not a city: it is an area in oneself, a Concorde in one’s being, where the river flows by you with an intimacy that seems to say the divine is not in the visible architecture of the Orangerie or the presence of the Pont des Arts, but where the trees would end,........ there opposite, begirt in her isle of existence, a convocation of stone, uttered truly as never before. For it was the word of God made actual in prayer and fast, in dedication and in pain, that raised layer after of that white intimacy of thought, and this once made high and solid and pointed at space, man wanted to withdraw, to gaze inwards through tower and arc-boutant to see how the Virgin sat the Son of God on her lap. I might have led a cow to her altar had I been in Benares .......... Paris is a sort of Benares turned outward.” (SR 51 - 52)

Naturally, Ramaswamy’s return to Villa Sainte-Anne from India was with a new expectation.

“... I seem to be returning not to my home, some spot of earth known and felt with limb and breath, but to some quarter in myself... yet there was in me the awareness of a new continuity as though now that I had seen India and had told her of Madeleine, and now that Little Mother had given me, as her parting gift and as her blessing to her daughter-in-law two little toe-rings of my own ...I felt at last I was going to make Madeleine mine” (SR 53).
The expectation did not bear fruit was also due to this new awareness of Ramaswamy. Madeleine had not received the telegram announcing his arrival; she was not at home when he had arrived; and all his dreams of making Madeleine his own evaporated. He felt “foreigner in France.” So great was the change in him that when Madeleine came and kissed him, she felt it was like kissing a serpent or the body of death. Ramaswamy’s alienation from either his faith or from his wife, creates a crisis that only leads him to introspection and further involvement in metaphysical musings that prepare the ground for embarking on a meaningful quest. The rest of the story is about the consequences of this new viewpoint of Ramaswamy. For a short period, he had a kind of romance with Catholicism. It was much simpler and easier to believe in god and His prophets; and mistaking his own inner urge, he began to worship the Christian God. It was really the urge to know the “I” in him, but he says,

“Night after night I have opened my eyes and looking out of the window have seen the night birds active in the trees; far away some light has shone, even as it might from the Pyreness, and I have been filled with a longing for God – to kneel, yes, to kneel and worship something that has such a nearness of presence, such historical authenticity” (SR 276).

A contributory reason for Ramaswamy’s acceptance of Christian God was his effort to bridge the gulf between himself and Madeleine. He recorded in his diary: “How I wish I could tell Madeleine I have begun worship her God … I am such a different man today. The God of Women must be the God of her man.” (SR 113) Soon Catholic romance ends, and he returns to his Vedantic principles. Madeleine could not
accept the principle that “The God of woman must be the God of her man”. Brought up in the Judaic Graeco tradition, she could be an atheist, a Catholic, a communist and even a Buddhist, because all these faiths are based on dualistic principles. To her, marriage was like a pair of parallel rails on which runs the life’s train. She had accepted Ramaswamy, she wanted to possess him wholly, but she could never merge her identity with that of his. She could never become a member of his larger family, accepting his Hindu tradition as her own. She was really a Catholic, but her rational mind rejected such miracles as Virgin birth and rising of the dead. She, therefore, became a Buddhist. For Madeleine, a believer of Buddhism, compassion and sufferings cannot be separated. Compassion follows the suffering subject and to have compassion presupposes the existence of the world. Madeleine’s alienation begins a new phase in the life of Ramaswamy. He begins his journey on a mission to know about his identity, meet men and women who could not interpret the life before him, and seeks to assure him of his Hindu tradition and Brahmin identity. Once he enters into the ‘Satsanga’ of new found emotionally rewarding friends he is turned to sessions of sadhana and the process of journey from avidya to ‘Atma Jnana’ sets in.

Savitri, his perfect spiritual partner could be termed as a key figure in his ‘Satsanga’. For Savithri, love is an abstraction. For her, love was a fact, an immediate experience, very much like an intuition. She later marries Pratap and accept his control over herself. Spiritually, however, she belonged to Ramaswamy for he makes her aware of the woman in her. Ramaswamy, is also intended on his part, was indebted to Savithri. Savithri makes him aware of his spiritual continuity, “I could see in myself a
vastness. As it were a change in psychic dimension, an awareness of a more ancient me”. Thus, they complement each other. Their relationship could be termed as a spiritual marriage. She loves him as Meera loved her Krishna. She tells Ramaswamy of her wish,

“ I would lie on your lap, far away where there is no land or road, no river or people, no father, fiancée, filigree, palace or elephants – perhaps just a mother – and on some mountain…”

“ In Kailas …” I said.

“You would sit in meditation …”

“And You?”

“Pray, that you might awaken, and not burn the world with that third eye – that eye which plays with history … And I would go round you three times, once, twice, thrice, and fall at your ash-coloured feet, begging that the Lord might absorb me unto himself… I am a woman, a Hindu Woman”. (SR 208)

Ramaswamy also knew the limitation of his. To Savithri’s question

“Who is Krishna? “ he replied, “I, when I am not Ramaswamy. Where the mind is not, nor the body, there is home, Brindavan, and there he shines, Lord Murare.”

“Then why this sin of Radha?” (SR 362)
He further clarified his deficiencies. “Because Krishna is not Krishna yet. 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)

Ramaswamy and Savithiri understand the spiritual meaning of life. Their role play experience provide the solution that is not Ramaswamy or Savithiri seeking the other, but the extending light of Brahman within the one preaching the other, to be merged into one unity. This session of vidhya is available when Ramaswamy and Savithiri are drawn close to each other, for which Ramaswamy has to pull himself out of Madeleine. He informs Madeleine his idea of illusion and reality in which realization is a difficult journey for which one should do away with illusions and catch up with the reality. Raja Rao takes up the task of moving through the illumination so that the illusion is over come. Ramaswamy narrates the crisis caused by illusion to Madeleine thus:

“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. You might go on saying all the time, ‘No, no, it’s the rope,’ and stand in the serpent. And looking at the rope from the serpent is to see paradises, saints, avatars, gods, heroes and universes. For where so ever you go, you see only with the serpent’s eyes. Whether you call it duality or modified duality, you invent a belvedere to heaven, you look at the rope from the posture of the serpent, you feel you are the serpent-you are-the rope is. But in true fact, with whatever eyes you see there is no serpent,
there never was a serpent. You gave your own eyes to the falling
evening and cried, ‘Ayyo! Oh! It’s the serpent!’ You run and roll and
lament, and have compassion for fear of pain, other’s or your own. You
see the serpent and in fear, you feel you are it, the serpent, the saint.
One-the Guru-bring you the lantern; the road is seen, the long white
road, going with the statutory stars. ‘It’s only the rope.’ He shows it to
you. And you touch your eyes and know there never was a serpent.
Where was it, where, I ask you? The poet who saw the rope as serpentecame the serpent, and so a saint. Now the saint is shown that his
sainthood was identification, not realization. The actual, the real has no
name. The rope is no rope to itself”. (SR 335)

Interesting, his very alienation from his Buddhist wife provides occasions to
reflect upon the reality and illusion. Thus, she becomes the first member of his
‘Satsanga’. Though she does not accompany him, she makes him reflect upon the life
before, and drives him to a session of sadhana. He feels that his discussion with his life
is like a battle.

“Find then, my friend, an Indian Maitreyi. Let me be the woman of the
marches.”

“Una vera marchesa?” I smiled.

“Yes my Prince.”
“He who is,” I quoted an ancient text, “not the body, not the mind, nor the sense organs: he, the true Emperor.”

The battle at last had ended. I must have sat for a very long time in Madeleine’s room, for the moon which I had seen high up in the sky when I came in had set beyond the tower of the cathedral, and night was musical with the noises of owls, with crickets and distant sea. On a quiet night, especially in winter, you could hear the sea from where we were, and whether the world was real or unreal, the sea seemed proof of something unnamable.” (SR 336)

One understands the true nature of the real, when the illusion that causes distinction between the serpent and the rope is removed through Knowledge. The story of the novel, starting from ordinary man-woman relationship. (i.e. Ramaswamy and his mother, sister, wife and beloved) concentrates on marriage and love (Ramaswamy-Madeleine and Ramaswamy – Savithri) and then moves on to self-knowledge. But as his awareness grew Ramaswamy could not go anywhere except to his Guru. When Savithri enters his life, his marriage, disintegrates rapidly. After the ritual marriage to her, he once again speaks of his plans to “finish the history of the Cathars, and well-wed and twice-wed, become professor of Medieval European History at some Indian university”. However, it is only trying to hide his “knowledge and pain” at the idea of Savithri’s marrying Pratap Singh. Ramaswamy’s realization of Absolute is initiated by his encounter with Savithri. She makes him fully and truly conscious of his true spiritual heritage. His love for her becomes a steppingstone to his quest for the
ultimate realization of Truth. Savithri, in a sense, becomes a kind of Guru to him, before he sets out to seek his Guru proper. In sheer desperation he plunges into an affair with sex starved Lakshmi: “Often lying by her I wondered whether I was Ramaswamy, Saroja’s loved brother. Little Mother’s stepson” (SR 296).

However, he soon realizes that he has taken the wrong turn. The story of Gautama renouncing the pleasures of the world in order to seek salvation comes to his mind. The Lakshmi episode over, he returns to France. Later, while in London, he falls seriously ill and has to have a lung operation. During his convalescence, Savithri meets him again and again, and it is during these meetings that his education is speeded up. He now comes to terms with Savithri’s mundane relationship with her husband Pratap, a relationship that need not clash with the spiritual bond between him and her. In the end, Ramaswamy finds most of his worldly ties cut off. He had to accept a divorce from Madeleine, Savithri had settled in her own marriage and so has Saroja; Little Mother has assumed her place in the family at home; his thesis is now completed. He has reached the end of his tether. Suddenly he is filled with a strange longing, the exact nature of which he cannot comprehend in the beginning.

“Do I long for God? He asks in his diary. The answer comes three days later: “No, not a God but a Guru is what I need. Lord, Lord my Guru, come to me, tell me; give me thy touch, vouch safe, I cried, the vision of Truth. Lord my Lord.” (SR 402-403).

Suddenly, the vision of the Guru comes:
“I knew His face, as one knows one’s face in deep sleep. He called me, and said, “It is so long, so long, my son. I have awaited you. Come, we go.” I went and man I tell you, my brother, my friend and I will not return. I have gone whence there is no returning. 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 a formless form of truth; it walks without walking, speaks without talking, moves without gesticulating, shows without naming, reveals what is known. To such a Truth was I taken, and became its servant, I kissed the perfume of its Holy Feet, and called myself a disciple. . . It is the gift that Yagnyavalkya made to Maitreyi, it is the gift that Govinda made to Sri Shankara. It is the gift He made to me, my Lord. May I be worthy of the Lord. Lord, My Master! O thou abode of Truth.”

(RS 403).

Ramaswamy realizes that he must go to his Guru at Travancore. “I have no Benares now, no Ganga, no Jamuna, Travancore is my country, Travancore my name.” (RS 405). The end of Ramaswamy’s quest at the feet of his Guru is in keeping with the spiritual tradition of India, which gives the Guru the highest place in man’s quest for truth. “The Guru is Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesa; he is the Ultimate Reality Itself”, declares a Sanskrit verse. “If you would know the Eternal, Humbly approach a Guru devoted to Brahman”, so says the Mundaka Upanisad (I.ii.12). All Hindu schools of thought maintain that submission to the direction of a competent teacher is essential if
one is to attain the knowledge of God, for religion is a practical science to which
neither books nor scriptures can be a complete guide. The aspirant must, therefore,
associate himself with one who is competent and who can has demonstrated the truths
of religion in his own life, and who can therefore initiate the disciple into secrets of
spiritual enfoldments. The Tantras define two kinds of diksha, or initiation: Sambhavi
(or Sakthi) and Mantri. Sambhavi occurs when the disciple immediately experiences
divine vision, attaining the supreme knowledge by the mere wish or touch of the guru.
Though to us this sudden transformation may seem fantastic, we may see it
substantiated in the lives of Krishna, Christ and Ramakrishna. However, this form of
initiation is possible only through supreme teachers; lesser teachers must have recourse
to the other form of initiation, namely Mantri. In this, the guru initiates the disciple by
presenting him with a mantra, or sacred word or formula. (Laxmana Murthy 89 – 92)

In his Grahasta life – he is paralleled by Vanavasam Ramaswamy always lives in
two world. He is a Hindu but attempts to practise the catholic belief of his wife. He is
married to a foreigner but feels detached on his religious tradition. He is married to
Madeleine but his mind seeks a Maitherei. In real terms, he led a life of a grahastha and
undergoes the mundane and native passions allowed with the death of his son, and also
shaken by the death of his family in India. His association with Savithri is philosophical
and metaphysical very much in two with experiencing the counsel of a true religious
teacher at the same time he is emotionally involved in physical sections of desires with
Lakshmi. If one can say that, his grahastha life is also a kind of vanavas, his spiritual
sections with Savithri are thwarted by physical desires. The true spirit of a Sannyasin is
necessary and yet he finds it eludes him. Even when he seeks relief from the emotional crisis, he finds that he is traveling the North while his prospective guru is in South in Travancore. Raja Rao very subtly makes the life of Ramaswamy dual in several respects the duality could be left behind only when he attains the reality. Raja Rao announces the premise of such a possibility for Ramaswamy when he makes his protagonist travel towards Travancore.

There is a third way also, wherein the guru can teach by his own life. To be in his company is spiritual education. To obey and serve him, to listen to his words – and even to his silences- is to be initiated. Ramaswamy does not tell us which way is to be his. However, it is enough to know that he is on his way to his guru, that his ship is nearing port. To conclude, as K. Chellappan states:

“Literature of both the east and the west abode in images of journey and exile. These motifs often provide the basic metaphor for plot itself. In the east in both the great epics of India, the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha, the major event is the exile of good forces and their return home. In the Ramayana, the archetypal epic of journey in the east, Ramaswamy and Sita create a new home in the forest and later the real exile is Sita’s separation from Ramaswamy, which is the archetypal image for all others ‘ Separation from God, but they also seek and find reunion with him.” (voice in -exile : journey 4 in Raja Rao and V.S Naipant – K. Chellappan P.25).
In both the novels The Serpent and the Rope and Jaya Jaya Shankara, it is the guru, who plays a vital role. In Jayakanthan the guru appears at the beginning and remains a guiding spirit for Adi and others. While in Raja Rao the guru comes in the final stage or in other words Ramaswamy undergoes the spatial and temporal experiential process and becomes fit enough to meet the guru and receive the enlightenment. Ramaswamy’s experience is configured in three levels of space and time. Spatially he lives in India and France, moving different cities in India and finally turning his mind towards Travancore, where he expects to meet his guru. Raja Rao describes his mobility in non-linear terms and yet in psychological plane there is steady movement that takes place in the psychic sphere of the protagonist. Ramaswamy’s problem is a problem of understanding his dilemma, which is made possible as he traverses the different domains, intellectual and philosophical, sensual and physical, and metaphysical and spiritual. These stages could be termed as the corner stones on which Ramaswamy attains illumination. This is carried out as he enters into physical relationships with many women and a kind of traditional emersion by a process of ritualizations. His discussions with Madeleine are intellectual leading to a separation. His relationship with Lakshmi, with a sensual temporary escape, is from a state of avidhya. His encounter with Savithiri is something spiritual providing a release from avidhya. Each of the experiences provide him gradual understanding of human life. Madeleine symbolizes a different course of life. Lakshmi stands for the transcending time, temporality and the events end. Savithiri is a point of transcendence. Ramaswamy gains experience at each level, which are in fact knowledge about human life. Each of these characters and different stations, Ramaswamy undergoes during
process of his quest for the Absolute. Raja Rao very subtly suggests the possibility of meeting a guru at Travancore. For Ramaswamy this is a ray of hope. Therefore, the steady process of temporal journey carries out this course of *vidhya*. The novel deals with many deaths, each departure assuring the possibility of new meeting with the Absolute. Ramaswamy refers to the death of his father, mother and his newborn sons. These disappearances trigger in his mind disturbances leading to the pain of separation and the inevitable quest for illumination. Only after a process of this experiences Ramaswamy is brought to a stage in which he waits for his guru. This is to say only when the sessions of *avidhya* comes to a close, the process of initiation into the world of *Brahman* begins. The entire stages of *avidhya* keeps Ramaswamy and his world apart, Ramaswamy and his woman apart, Ramaswamy and his space apart when the process of initiation begins illusion comes to a halt and reality sets in.

Jayakanthan’s *Jaya* also discusses with the significance of a guru by the faithful Hindu community. According to Hindu tradition, strict observance of religion is necessary. Everyone follows the religious path shown by a guru. The Acharya Swamigal, one of the key characters of Jayakanthan’s novel is conceived as a guru and he says, “As God and we are in essence the same, His grace will help us realize His reflection in our own self” (JJS 93). While giving importance to the role of a guru, Jayakanthan, insists the practice of *dharma* and the religious duties by the Brahmins and other castes. A true Brahmin should no go after money but follow the religion with discipline and devotion. Jayakanthan’s Acharya Swamigal states:
“If the Brahmin should also be lost in the scramble for money with no other mission, then there is no need for him to have a special identity as a Brahmin. If there is such a Brahmin community totally devoid of a purpose I feel the urge to destroy it before others do so. A thing does not deserve to exist if it has no use. If the Brahmin community does not have a special role to play in the service of humanity, it loses its rationale to exist as a community” (JJS 95)

True devotion lies not in mere adherence to meaningless involvement in prayers, or chanting of Vedas and Mantras, but in true service to mankind. Such a service compels one to leave one’s home and engage with the other. During the process of service one picks up experience and through experience, the knowledge of the other and of the self is attained. The crisis at home leads many characters to the doorstep of a guru. In other words, a man engaged in grahastha – family life is unable to solve the riddles of life all by himself and the crisis many a time prevail over him to seek the guidance of people who lead a spiritual life. This is also to say that the philosophical quest begins when existential problems threaten man and his routine in modern living conditions. The shake up occurs in the case of Mahalinga Iyer when he finds the moral and the social order is defied and he is unable to overwhelm the crisis or to undertake the encounter all by himself. The travel from one station to the other-Mahalinga Iyer leaves Shankarapuram and goes to Varanasi – is necessitated by the energies of the human life. Sadashiva Iyer, the family man finds himself weak and seeks his strength
outside his home. For him the emotional or spiritual support exists or is supposed to exist at the next station – the Gandhi Ashram.

Jayakanthan portrays the distinctive difference between the brothers, Mahalinga Iyer and Sadashiva Iyer, in the novel Jaya Jaya Shankara. Sadashiva Iyer is a devoted servant of humanity. He visits the slum dwellings of the Harijans, considered a taboo for a devout Brahmin, he helps the slum people and arranges schooling for them, interacts with their children freely at which the entire family of his is furious. When Sadashiva Iyer says,

“Yesterday in the farmer’s house, I was treated like an untouchable and they gave me bananas and a glass of milk . . . My ritual purity must be preserved, it seems! We are going to run an ashram in the Moongil Kudi, untouchable slum. We will be enrolling Harijan children and giving them Sanskrit, English and Tamil education. I have been chosen as the president of the ashram.” (JJS 30)

Mahalinga Iyer, father of Shankaran is highly disturbed by his brother’s activities and interaction with the untouchables. He is not able to digest the fact that his brother, born in a Brahmin family is mingling freely with the Harijans and doing favour for them. The furious Mahalingam Iyer even fears the consequences of such a transgression and says, “Some terrible tragedy is going to overwhelm our jathi” (JJS 31). Mahalinga Iyer, disturbed by the behaviour of his brother seeks the audience of the Acharya Swamigal, so that he could get some peace of mind. For Mahalinga Iyer, the
Acharya or guru is one who knows the past, the present, and the future. Hence, he visits the Shree Madam of the Acharya with his son Shankaran. He narrates his problems:

“Sarvagna! You know the past, the present and the future. The Brahmins have lost their wisdom and are drift on confusion... Maha Gnani! Please bestow wisdom on us and help us to get out this mire of confusion and conflict.” (JJS 52)

Jayakanthan sharply focuses the different nature of the two brothers Mahalinga Iyer and Sadashiva Iyer. Mahalinga Iyer, the traditionalist, who follows all the codes of a true Brahmin and in practicing the religion is praised by Jayakanthan for his strong belief in the Hindu tradition. At the same time, Mahalinga Iyer finds his brother Sadashiva Iyer following the traditional practices of any Brahmin.

“The elder brother waited under the Nagalinga tree till Sadashivam finished his bath, surya namaskaram and the other daily devotional routine. In the hope of postponing an encounter with his brother, Sadashivam was consciously prolonging his surya namaskaram.

Mahalinga Iyer was pleased that his brother still believed in all this daily devotional rituals. When their eyes met he blurted out, “how come you spoke that way last evening?” (JJS 28)

Sadashiva Iyer observes the practices of the Brahmins by habit, which has reached his heart by the faith practiced by his family and elders, while in reality his is engaged by the quest to serve others. The service to humanity takes him out of the limited fold of
the family and places him in the wide spectrum of society. His quest lies not in merely following the religion and chanting the Vedas and the Mantras but seeing the Brahm in others. He seeks the path of service and believes that truth in life is achieved by serving the Harijans. His quest ends as he sets up the Gandhi Ashram in the Harijan slum Moongil Kudi and feels happy serving them. When Mahalinga lyer comes out of the agraharam and goes to Varanasi, he leaves Shankaran in the Shree Madam. Both the brothers thus are seen moving out of their home space and venturing into new experiences. In Jaya Jaya Shankara almost all the characters seek the guidance of the guru. Unlike Ramaswamy in The Serpent and the Rope who finds his guru in the final stage, Jayakanthan’s characters are lucky enough to get the guidance of the guru somehow at the proper time in their lives. Young Shankaran, had the inner urge, to become a sannyasin and due to this faith in sannyasam he reaches the Shree Madam. Even though he was living with his parents and uncle, Shankaran wished to become a sannyasin. From the bonds of the family life in Shankarapuram agraharam Shankaran moves to the Shree Madam. As Jayakanthan brings out as, “Shankaran had a strong fascination for sannyasa since his early childhood. Is childhood the most appropriate period to nurse an incipient urge for renunciation?” (JJS 36). Shankaran even confesses his idea of becoming a sannyasin to his friend Adi, which clearly shows his mind setup at the early age. He is taken care of by a loving mother a good father and yet his inner urge takes into sannyasin.
“I am not going to wallow in this agraharam trapped in the rut of samsara. I would take to sannyasa and become a wandering monk. Only such a life is close to my heart.” (JJS 42)

Here Shankaran’s quest illuminates in his elevation as the Acharya Swamigal. Jayakanthan places his characters in the novel Jaya Jaya Shankara in different stages of life. Mahalinga Iyer and Sadashiva Iyer are grahasthas in family life while Shankaran chooses the life of the sannyasin. Adi too leads the life of grahasthan. While his son finds himself in ‘vanavasa’. These stages are pictured by Jayakanthan with mythological illustrations from the life of Adi Shankara. Adi Shankara got the sanction of his mother to take to sannyasin life as a.buy. He took the permission of his mother in a strange circumstance. As he was taking his bath, in the river, a Crocodile caught him in the narrative Jayakanthan brings out thus:

“The mother shouted, ‘Oh God! Is there no one to save my darling?’
Sinking up to his neck, Shankaran said, ‘Amma, God will certainly save me. If I resolve to take to sannyasa this very minute, and if you endorse my resolve, God will come to my rescue’ (JJS 42-43).

She endorsed her son’s sannyasin resolution and he was released by the Crocodile, immediately on return to the doorsteps of their house. Shankara refused to step into the house. He said, I am now a sannyasin; I am not in a position to come in and partake of food. Please give me some alms”. So saying, he held out his hands: Bhiksham Dehi” (JJS 42-43). Further Shankaran explains the concept of sannyasam to Adi thus:
“All this is not false, Adi. This worldly life is like a river... Love, attachment and the like are the crocodiles. A sannyasin is beyond these bonds. Anyone with a firm resolve to take to sannyasa would easily shake off these crocodiles.” (JJS 44)

Shankaran, explained the esoteric significance of the story and gives the ideas of sannyasin further as.

“All, look at the river. It takes birth at the mountains, and proceeds towards sea. If you walk along the banks in one direction, you arrive at the sea. If you choose the other direction, you reach the mountain. Scaling the mountain is sannyasa. Joining the sea is samsara.”

Adi cut in “That is all right, Samy. What about plunging into the river, braving its currents and swimming across to the other shore? Can you do it?” He laughed. (JJS 44)

Adi knows how to wade through the water and in the past, he saved the life of Shankara from the whirlpool. However, the journey towards the mountain is tough and far off. samsara is given to every one while sannyasa is meant for a few. Jayakanthan highlights the point that there are different kinds of experiences available from different modes of living. However, one can enlighten the other. Young Adi has enlightened Young Shankaran and Adi in thirst, enlightened by Acharya Shankara later. What emanates from this is Jayakanthan’s pointer that in the pursuit of knowledge, in the quest for the Brahman, one could be the guru to the other. What is important is the faith
to achieve the realization. Adi’s quest is aided by a guidance of Shankaran. For this, he qualifies himself with the service he renders to the others. In the same way Mahalinga Iyer, the sansari, seeks the guidance of the Acharya Swamigal. Acharya Swamigal asked Young Shankaran whether he would join his parents going to Kasi, or if he would stay in the Madam. Shankaran felt that all places were the same, but what is important was that he should receive knowledge and self-realization. However, to stay in the Shree Madam, Shankaran needs to take leave of all and get detached from the familial bonds. Jayakanthan pictures this event in the novel thus,

“The father left, with a long and lingering look planted on his son. Until he disappeared from view, and even thereafter, Shankaran stood transfixed with folded hands. A collage of pictures filled his mind’s eye—Amma, little Devi, aunt, Shankarapuram agraharam, Shankarabharanam River, the bamboo bridge and the figure of Adi he last saw on the bridge. He mentally took leave of each person and each object”. (JJS 59)

This is to say that the quest is developing a mental attitude. Shankara’s folded hands suggest not his salutation, but a fare well. In the Madam, the Acharya Swamigal was explaining a verse from Thirumandiram, a piece of Tamil philosophical literature by Saint Thirumoolar:

“Aasai arumin, Aasai arumin!
Esharoddaimnum Aasai arumin!”
(Break the attachment, break the attachment! Break the attachment even to God!) (JJS 60). This release from all attachments symbolize the state of sannyasin.

Shankaran as a boy is traditionally placed in favourable wavelength to leave for a meaningful quest. This is evident when he addresses young Adi, the Harijan shepherd boy.

"Like everyone else, I am not going to wallow in this agraharam, trapped in the rut of samsara. I would take to sannyasa and become a wandering monk. Only such a life is close to my heart". (JJS 42).

Shankaran moves from simple faith towards ardent search of truth and becomes a sannyasin, who later becomes the leader of the Madam, preaching the essence of Hindu religion. When Adi visits the outskirts of the ashram he happens to listen the Vedas, Sastras and Upanisads and acquires some Braminical virtues. Thus ‘Brahminized’, he marries Swatantra Devi, the daughter of Sadashiva Iyer. At one stage of family life, Adi’s wife Swatantra Devi is caught up in a web of confusion on finding the life before pushing back into significance several ideas and ideal extolled by them. Mahaligam’s new learning confounds the Gandhian following in her she says,

“My fear is growing day by day from that our ideals and life experiences might wither away as hollow folk tales even to our own children”.

(JJS 90)

In a confused state of mind, she is worried about her eldest son who, sucked by the vortex of modern life, dismisses their Gandhian ideas. She is very much perturbed
when their ideal son accepts a government job, claiming to belong to a depressed community.” She is torn between the life of dharma chosen by her and the conflicting principles of her husband and her son. She is terribly upset when she comes to know that her daughter Vedavalli is looked upon “one born of an unholy wedlock”. Her problems stem from the commitments made in the past and the embarrassments thrown by the present time. She feels that her faith in her religion and her understanding of life could not extricate herself from the present malady. Hence, she chooses to visit the Guru – Acharya Swamigal. When she seeks the darshan of the Swamigal, the Acharya consoles her thus:

“Do not worry about anything... You have been following your Dharma in a commendable manner. You will get back the light you seem to think you have lost... darkness will disappear. Your daughter will be relieved of her frustrations. Happy tidings await her. Your lives will be happy and fulfilled” -the saint blessed her. (JJS 92-93)

These words give her a sort of relief and she turns back home with new hope and renewed faith. Adi and Shankaran represent the two paths of life towards reaching the truth - sanyaasa and samsara. At one stage, Adi goes out in search of his son, Mahalingam, who represents the modern generation. For Mahalingam “Life is not frozen but relentlessly on the move”. He is convinced that one has to adjust to the changing times. Moreover, one’s parents should understand the growth - inner and the outer, of their children. It is their duty to teach the children when they are young and when the time comes the sons and daughters have to bid farewell. A toddler’s cart once
used by child has to disappear into the attic. Every one has his or her moorings. Mahalingam’s parents were rooted in Gandhian Ashram, spinning the Kadhi cloth from the wheel. As the wheel rotates the moorings has to change. The intense desire of Mahalingam seems to free himself from the home and engage in a new quest. As the Gandhian era comes to an end, a new age to face a new life has emerged. Hence, Mahalingam, son of Adi declares thus:

"...I feel it is better to be a slave to the society and swing my arms freely rather than be a slave to the family, pushing a time-worn toddler’s cart... you are all idealistic nuts. You have no qualms about crushing your children at the altar of your ideals and idiosyncrasies." (JJS 122)

Jayakanthan takes up the reality of the changes in the world order. He identifies the new paradigms of changes in society - the concept of equality, the notion of self-esteem and self-respect and relationships with fellow humans with no discrimination. The new generation asks for new values in life—equality, liberty and fraternity. In this changing society, Mahalingam seeks the meaning of life in his service to others. Adi, as a Gandhian is convinced that the Harijans need to be brought under the religious umbrella. Harijan’s temple entry should coincide with Acharya’s leading the Ashram. He even recommends that each temples should have its own abide guiding forces, the ashram. Adi represent the innocent past with his wish to bring the Harijans to the temple and ashram to the slum, and suggesting the institution of an ashram attached to each temple. He says to Acharya Swamigal,
“Bringing the Harijans to the temples, and the ashram to the slums – is this at the root of failure? I am convinced that critically assessing our ancestors’ actions would help to formulate a useful road map for our future. We should combine the temples and the ashrams. That is, there should be one ashram attached to each temple. Let these become the workshops to turn out new Brahmins. Let those who merely regard themselves as Brahmins or feel condemned, as Brahmins not be tormented by this problem. As individuals belonging to social order, let them reap the results of their actions- benefits or sins. As the leader nonpareil of our ancient culture, you should issue this proclamation. None but you cancelled accomplish this successfully. (JJS 101-102).

Acharya Swamigal gives a new vision for Adi’s concept of Ashram. The concept of ashram is brought out in these words of Swamigal:

“Adi, you have seen so many Ashrams. What happened to the many Ashrams established by your Gandhi as part of the mighty national awakening? How are you so sure that the same fate will not befall the Ashrams in your scheme of things? Further, are you without an Ashram now? Living in one, why build another? I also belong to an Ashram. But, I am not a carpenter who turns out things. Is a Brahmin a product to be turned out of a lathe? For a seed to sprout, we can only provide it with soil, nutrients and water. Beyond that point, it has to create itself, and so it does. No saint or scientist can successfully interfere in the process. If
we feel we have any additional responsibility in this regard, we may at
best only pray. Even you believe that Brahmana Dharma would flourish
by manufacturing new Brahmins. Let the illusion that tinkering with
outward forms is an achievement in itself be the monopoly of the so-
called reformers. The shouts of ‘we will destroy, we will create’ are only
clever uses to bolster our own positions. Who has bestowed us with the
authority or the capacity to destroy or create? Can you create what is not
there? Can you stop something from its logical demise? Atheism makes
conscious attempts in these directions. Even the world of science laughs
at these attempts. (JJS 112 - 113)

Acharya takes up the point with regard to the changes in the society. The changes
attempted involve creation and destruction. The changes willed could not alter the
growth, which is natural. Atheism and Science attempt to revert certain trends, stop
some changes, disperse with certain practices. What is significant is the fact that life
proceeds on its natural pursuit. There is a limit to disagreement distrust and dissent. Life
is a process, changes are the natural order and the self, when it acknowledges this
reality, understands life. The quest then comes to a halt with a vision of the absolute.
Acharya swamy says to Adi,

“If a son takes to evil ways, his father should also bear a share of the
responsibility. Leave aside fate and the sway of karma…. I am confident
that one who is blessed to be your son will never ever take to evil ways.”

(JJS 111).
Jayakanthan glorifies the character of Adi and elevates him to high status in life. Acharya Swamy or in other words Adi Shankara’s concept of Hinduism – all are equal before God, is praised by Jayakanthan, who says, “Jaya... Jaya Shankara...hara... hara...Shankara”, in the novel – which means glory to Shankara thereby justifying the title Jaya Jaya Shankara. Thus, Jayakanthan glorifies the Hindu religion, its tradition, rituals and customs and insists the fact that the Hindu religion needs a change in its way of practicing and preaching. He concludes that the religion needs reinterpretation or re-reading of the Hindu scriptures so that it gives easy solution for the modern man to practice it. What is important is practice rather than preaching.

According to Jayakanthan the Manavelu Illam is a commune or in other words a ‘Satsanga’ which consists of members like the old man Singarayar – with his rebellious thoughts to fight against the social – political situation. His son Sathyamourthy follows the same footsteps of his father leading a group of people like Mahalingam, Uma and others. Their displacements and mobility teaches them or rather leads them to the sadhara. For Mahalingam, the Manavelu Illam is an ashram and his relationship with Singarayar, Sathyamourthy and Uma makes him realize the reality. Thus Singarayar is a guru to Mahalingam who teaches him reality from his ashram the Manavelu Illam – following the principles of equality and fraternity. For Sathysmourthy the Jail is his madam or ashram where he is a guru to the Jailer, Moorthy. Thus, Jayakanthan traces the concept of ‘Satsanga’ from the beginning of the narrative. Gandhiji is a guru for Sadashiva Iyer. His ideas and principles teach Sadashiva Iyer to join hands with ‘the sons of Hari’, thereby his journey of quest ends finding or father creating his Gandhi
Ashram which is a ‘Satsanga’ for all human beings despite of caste and creed. For Adi, Sadashiva Iyer is his guru, who teaches not only religious scriptures like Vedas, Sastras and Sanskrit but also moulds him to be confidant and brave enough to marry a Brahmin girl. Thus, Adi’s sadhana begins at his marriage and ends in his reunion with his son, Mahalingam. For a brahmacarian like Sathyamoorthy Jail is a vanavas. He accepts it as a penance where he becomes a sannyasin or a guru to the Jailer. The ‘Satsanga’ resulted in spatial and temporal displacement of the characters makes them reach the atma jnana for Sadashiva Iyer it is creating the Gandhi ashram, for Adi creating an ashram near every temple. A place of holy and noble thoughts near a sacred place of worship. Thus, Jayakanthan portrays different ashrams and madams in the novel–Sadashiva Iyer’s Gandhi ashram, Shankara’s Shree Madam, Adi’s own ashram, and the Manavelli Illam of Singarayar, also as an ashram for Mahalingam, Sathyamoorthy, and the Jail too as an ashram. Where, each individual becomes a guru to the other. The ‘Satsanga’ resulted in spatial and temporal displacements of the characters makes them reach the atma jnana. Thus, Jayakanthan concludes that the displacement lead to a ‘Satsanga’ shows the path of sadhana there by reaching the Advaita Dharsan.

In Jayakanthan’s novel the experiences is more temporal as it engages many generations of characters. Young Shankara becomes Acharaya Shankara during the process of Adi’s experiences and illumination. Adi’s relationship with the holy boy, the dear wife and his eldest son project different kinds of experiences for Adi. During the process of which he gave wisdom to understand that what seems to be, a conflict is only an illusion. The Ashram, the abode of sannyasin could also be a school for a grahastha.
The Acharya could effect the true understanding of a father and a son. The Acharya need not be always an acetic in an ashram. The freedom fighter or a social reformer could also be a kind of Acharya dispelling the darkness and assuring the illumination.

Jayakanthan’s ‘Satsanga’ of his major characters are portrayed in the concluding two chapters of the novel deal with how Sathyamoorthy changes the cruel mind of the jailer the emergency period is highlighted were lot of political people and the communists are put in jail. Uma’s father, the Sanskrit Pandit goes to see the Swamigal. Krishna meets him, gives him a letter, and asks him to hand it over to Adi. Later when the Pandit and Adi along with his family come to see the Swamigal, Krishna says that Mahalingam gave the letter to him. Pandit is now worried about his daughter. Krishna says that Mahalingam who was in Delhi, and was hiding with Uma gave the letter to him during the emergency period. It contained details about Satyamoorthy and his principles, which defends Mahalingam and says that Uma is safe with him. They go to Shakarapuram and meet Ambai Gurrukal. He tells Adi about the young Shankaran. Adi takes them to the Shankarabaranam River, which is dry now. Adi bends down and digs the mud and the water flows with a life.

Singarayar and his son Sathyamoorthy are also Gurus to Mahalingam and Uma, they provide true understanding of life to the Sanskrit Pandit and also the jailer. Jayakanthan’s characters are put in the sphere of time rather than space, so that they understand the human life better. Adi is placed in different parts of times in Indian society political as well as social. The three parts of Jayakanthan’s novel provide probings and findings which reveal that Indian society is not basically contradictory but
there is a kind of unity whatever may be the ideal and attitudes of the people attach to Gandhian, Marxian and Anarchist ways of life. This unity seems to proclaim the truth of Adi Shankara’s philosophy of non-dualism. The result of ‘satsanga’ moulds and shapes each individual character in both the novels where in the main characters get their Advaita Darshan but some how there is a guru or a promoter in the ‘satsanga’ who leads the problematic minds to seek the ‘Absolute Bliss’. A guru is not necessarily be an Acharya or a holy saint, a revolutionary could also be a guru. In spite of the long spatial and temporal displacement, the problematic situations and crisis in the minds of Ramaswamy, Adi, Mahalingam, and other major characters. Both the novelists lay emphasis on man guiding man towards reaching the divine. For Ramaswamy Advaita Darshan is possible only through a guru and with his help, he reaches the understanding of the Absolute reality of divinity in each human. Jayakanthan believes that a guru can be a Gandhist, a Marxist and even a revolutionary when the ideal chosen by the different philosophies are towards elevating man and the society there is a touch of divinity in them and then each intuition that promotes such ideals become a temple. Hence, Jayakanthan believes in the progress of society assisted by such temples of service. Hence, Adi proclaims his desire that each temple should have its own Shree Madam. Jayakanthan is accommodating these secular standpoints does of course transgress the chosen limits of religious discussions and the spiritual quest. Yet one can find that Jaya Jaya Shankara has got a strong emphasis of a religious and a philosophical theme in which he attempts to reconcile the apparent illusions like Brahmin non-Brahmin enmity, Brahmin – Harijan divide, Gandhian and Marxist conflicts of ideals. Jayakanthan finds a paradigm of ideal stations in Shree Madam,
Manavelli Illam, Gandhi ashram and the commune in the Manavelli Illam. The characters who converge at these places are a group of men and women who choose a new path towards the new idea. There is a strong desire in them to dispel the illusions of progress and unity Advaita Vedanta proclaims the larger unity of divinity since both the novels attempt to read the divinity in and through experiences and teachers. This researcher feels that the novels are anchored with the philosophy of non-dualism. In range, magnitude and characters. Jayakanthan and Raja Rao differ and yet there is a unity, with an Indian readmit element that units the vision and the treatment of life by both the novelists.

This study attempts to read the contemporary as well as the universal meaning of human life, as evidenced in the two chosen texts The Serpent and the Rope and Jaya Jaya Shankara authored by the two eminent writers of India, Raja Rao and Jayakanthan. The research broadly addressing the faith and quest, precisely attempts a read the two texts in the light of Adi Shankara's Advaita Vedanta.
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