Biography is not merely life story of an individual or raw data arranged in a chronological order. It is the part and parcel of a great culture. In other words each biography is an offshoot of the great root, culture. Culture is a complex of many strands, each of varying importance and vitality. It expresses itself through language and art, philosophy and religion, social habits and customs, political institutions and economic organisations of a society and through aptitudes and attitudes, faiths and beliefs, way of thinking and living of an individual. The Biography of an individual, therefore, is one of the expressions of culture. Culture creates, corrects, guides and moulds the biography of everyone. Even during the darkest ages of our history, when great dynasties rose and fell, when the country reeled under the onslaught of the feudal set-up or colonial rule, the fundamental values of our culture retained their identity and vitality. Biography of each individual mainly makes possible this unity and unbroken continuity of tradition and culture. A writer being a sensitive and intelligent man tries to rejuvenate culture
by reaffirming its values. Here, therefore, an attempt is made to peep into the biographies of R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao to understand the influences of culture in moulding their personality and their contribution in strengthening the roots of that culture.

R.K. NARAYAN:

Reviewing the intimate personal account of his life and background in R.K. Narayan's memoir My Days, John Updike, a novelist himself wrote: "The autobiography of a writer of fiction generally superfluous since he has already, in rearrangement and disguise, written out the material of his life many times."(1) To discuss the writer, therefore, we discuss the people in his book. We can draw his social, religious and cultural views, attitudes and tempaments, beliefs and faiths and his conclusion about life from his characters through whom the novelist projects himself and filters his view of life. Narayan seldom talks about his inner convictions or comments on his works.(2) He hates publicity. Basically he is a very shy and reserved person.(3) Moreover, he tries to maintain an objective detachment from his themes and characters. So to draw from his novels his point of view and value system one has to be very cautious. But however
detached he is from his themes and characters, it is possible to draw from his fiction some inferences about his conception of the world. One may try to reconstruct the biography and the culture of this great writer on the basis of the facts and inferences culled out of his works and from his occasional humorous chitchats with the soul-searching interviewers. The contribution and conclusion of other critics are also taken into consideration for the reconstructional efforts.

P.K. Narayan is Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami - the name of the village and father preceding his own name as it is the practice in south India. He was born in Madras on 10th October, 1906. His father was the headmaster of a government high school in Madras State and as was common those days, had a large family (Narayan is the third of six boys and two girls; one other boy and a girl had died young). When he was just two years old he was sent to Madras to be with his grandmother 'and uncle (mother's brother) so that his mother could nurse the younger one without trouble. His grandmother was very strict, intelligent and lovable. She was his first teacher. There he was sent to school later and had the bitter experience of the anti-Hindu feelings of Christian teachers. His very first companions were a peacock
(Nyla) and a monkey (Ramu). When these two pets died his uncle brought a few more pets - a mynah, a parrot, a dog, a cat - they too died in tragic circumstances.

He was a keen observer but not so bright in studies. So he failed first in Madras and then in Mysore where his father was the headmaster. He spent most of his time in the library. In spite of his failures in the examinations, his father did not mind much as he did not have much faith in the examination system at all. Surprisingly Narayan failed in English. This became a blessing in disguise for him as in his leisure he could explore the literary world of Keats, Tolstoi, Dickens, Hardy, Tagore, Palgrave, etc. from the rich library of his father's school. It was about this time that he began writing as well. His poems like Friendship, Divine Music, etc. were applauded by his younger brother and friends (bribed with coffee). But his works were rejected by the publishers. At the age of 24, with great difficulty, he became a graduate.

He tried to get a job in different areas such as, banking, railways and academies. In between interviews he wrote.

R.K. Narayan was inspired by his experience of small town life to create Malgudi. Narayan said to Ved Mehta, "The
Goddess of learning gave me the name."(4) "On a certain day in September (Vijayadasami Day)" Narayan writes in My Days, "selected by my grandmother for its auspiciousness, I bought an exercise book and wrote the first line of a novel, as I sat in a room nibbling my pen and wondering what to write, Malgudi, with its little railway station, Swam into view, all ready-made, with a character called Swaminathan running down the platform peering into the faces of passengers, and grimacing at a breaded face; this seemed to take me on the right track of writing, as day by day, pages grew out of it linked to each other."(5) But this divinely inspired work Swami and Friends was not accepted by the publishers in England, where it had been sent. Finally one day a cable from Purna (one of his tiny band of admirers) who was now at Oxford and who had taken upon himself the responsibility of trying to see the novel published - "Novel taken Graham Greene responsible" - declared the beginning of the Malgudian era.

Meanwhile he proved himself a misfit in various assignments including that of a teacher. Though his writing did not find many takers, he kept on writing. He also fell in love with a variety of women, most of them at a distance. Finally he fell headlong in love with a girl whom he saw drawing water from a street tap in Coimbatore. The girl's father Nageswara
Iyar and his wife admired the straight-forwardness of Narayan when he proposed to their daughter. Alas! the horoscopes did not match. Nageswara Iyer’s astrologer was positive that he would prove either a polygamist or a widower. By bribing another astrologer Narayan got the bride’s parents convinced and the marriage with Rajam was solemnized. The happy marriage came to an end exactly as set forth in *The English Teacher*. (6) His father’s death, his wife’s sudden end, family burden and a little daughter to take care of made him restless. Then, a chance encounter with a psychic medium, enabled him, to make contact with his wife. This psychic experience gave him ‘an understanding of life and death’ and revived his flair for writing. Out of this experience came *The English Teacher*, the autobiographical novel. The intensity and skill of this novel was much higher than those of novels which he had written before the death of his wife (*The Dark Room*, *The Bachelor of Arts*, etc.).

The Second World War depleted his royalty income to almost nothing. To boost up his income and to give a vent to his stagnating creativity, along with a few friends he started a magazine, *Indian Thought*, a quarterly devoted to literature, philosophy and culture. The printer Mr. Sampath (who was,
later immortalized in a famous novel) had to close down the venture due to shortage of fund, paper, etc. Narayan, however, retained the name 'Indian Thought' for publishing his works. Narayan's "personal tragedy has been our gain" Graham Greene writes of the fusion of "Sadness and humour... hand in hand like twins in Narayan's later works."(7) Greene who had correspondence and friendship till his death (over half a century) consistently appreciated and admired the quality of Narayan's work.

"The most celebrated eating place in Salgudi has no board" says H.Y. Sharda Prasad, "and its owner serves what he wants to, not what the clients might want. It is hard to put a sign-board on Narayan's art. He doesn't write to critics' regulations. He writes for his readers, who have to take what he gives. But he is not lofty towards them. He has no design on them, no urge to improve them."(8) Yet readers and Critics do not fail to understand the rhythm and appreciate the genius of R.K. Narayan. C.S. Balrama Gupta in The Journal of Indian Writing in English - Special Number on R.K. Narayan (January, 1972) presents the most salient features of Narayan as a writer: Narayan is a sprightly and hilarious writer with a captivating style which is lucid and limpid and even deceptively effortless. He is basically a delightful tale-spinner: he is a story teller par excellence. He has
an unswerving faith in the basic goodness of man and so he views men and manners and their idiosyncrasies and absurdities with affectionate though sharp eyes. He exposes human frailties and chuckles over them rather than castigates them ruthlessly. Consequently, his humour is quiet and gentle and his irony is poignant and sympathetic. His comedy is warm-hearted and his mockery good-natured. And his satire which is invariably soft and covert is mild and without malice.

Autobiographical details are abundantly reflected in many of his works. Harayan confesses to Ved Mahto that the story 'Breach of Promise' was 'autobiographical' portraying the dilemma of his own mental condition when he failed in the examination. The cause of the defiance of the astrology and the tragic death of his wife left an indelible mark in him and it often became the theme of his stories. Novels like The Bachelor of Arts and The English Teacher delve deeply into the problem of star-crossed love, frustration caused by horoscopes and confirm the traditional faith in astrology as something which can not be brushed aside as superstitions. The same theme emerges in the stories like 'The White Flower' and 'The Seventh House.' His conviction in the extra sensory
perception and his own communion with his dead wife, Rajam is dealt with at length in *The English Teacher*. In *Swami and Friends* the autobiographical element is unmistakable. Swaminathan is one of Narayan's immortal characters and the novelist can not forget him. Swami is cast in the mould of Narayan's own childhood. Swami's grandmother is the replica of author's own grandmother. She, of course, again and again emerges in various incarnations in his later works. Even the name is cleverly chosen - the first half of Swaminathan i.e. 'Swami' is the second half of Narayanaswami, the writer like David Copperfield's 'D.C' is the reverse of Charles Dickens' 'C.D.' Like William Wordsworth, Narayan, through the character headmaster in *The English Teacher* celebrates his world of childhood. "The pain of growing up, the Universality of childhood and the ring of true India"(10) are given life and shape by Narayan.

In the conception and portrayal of woman characters Narayan shows his typical Indianness. To him woman is 'Shakti'. In an interview given to *Probe's* Ranjana Racker he states that he worships womanhood: "Woman is part of Shakti. Divinity is reflected in women. Right from babyhood to old age there is a certain charm, a certain special quality that is natural."
You can not analyse it. It does not depend on cosmetics...
Yes, the concept of just is there. It is nothing that is created. Shiva is presented as a corpse on whom Shakti is sitting and he gets all his power from her. Shiva-Shakti is unique. Without Shakti Shiva is nothing, as per Shankara in Sūndaryalāhirī in his very first verse Shiva ceases to be a 'deva' without Shakti. As I have a religious mind, I take it as an explanation of qualities."(11) Feminine principle is supreme to him.

The traditional Indian womanhood derives its strength and enjoys its peculiar status of supremacy from the noble virtues of love and sacrifice, selflessness and service. All the women characters of Narayan are created in the mould of their traditional counterparts. Positive characters represent Sita, Savitri, Draupati, Kunti, Shakuntala and Kannagi whereas the negative characters represent Surpanaka, Ganga, Mohini, and Madhavi (Kannagi and Madhavi of Tamil Epic Silappathikaram). The positive women characters are the anonymous mothers, aunts, grannies and also the named wives. The negative characters are Shanti, Shanta Bai, Rosie, Daisy, Rangi, Grace, etc. Negative characters are not evil but they are the forces created by God to enact the drama of 'Karma'. Thus Daisy is Ganga who forces a condition on king Shantanu before accepting
his offer of marriage. Savitri's rebellion ends without any charge in anyone. Rosie's soul remains a true wife of Marco though she bodily lives with Raju. Rangi is Mohini who indirectly (by not fanning) brings death to the 'rakshasha' Venu. Shanta Bai is Madhavi. So the positive and negative women characters fill the places of black and white checks of the chessboard to make the balance meaningful and thus the law of 'Karma' is enacted as a preordained drama. She who is an obedient daughter, lovable sister, understanding wife, sacrificing mother and protecting granny is the incarnation of Shakti.

"To be a good writer anywhere" Narayan said to Ved Mehta in his interview, "you must have roots—both in religion and in family. I have these things."(12) Gods and demons exist for Narayan. He believes in the sacredness of Gayatri.(13) He has faith in the immortality of the soul, the law of karma, dharma and such concepts as maya, papa, etc. He draws nourishment from the Hindu ethos, puranas, epics, upanishads and Tamil classics. So we find the ethics of Valluvar, Auvaiyar, Ilango, etc. of bygone era of Tamil literature and the faith and spirit of sages of pure Sanskrit ages. His work
is, therefore, deeply rooted in Indian soil. It does not mean that he portrays only the mummified past. On the other hand he exhibits its present relevance and projects the hope of future. He is more alive to the traditional attitude implicit in the texture of day-to-day life. In his works life is accepted as it is. There may be disorder, disturbance, miseries, etc. — only temporarily. Everything is digested and what emerges out of all the chaos is sheer joy. This is the mystery of Indian life. The innate zest for life, pleasure in sheer living, it's religious routine... are the salient points which enable the Indians and the novelist to take a quiet and generous view of life. As he remarked: "Most Indians pray and meditate at least for a few minutes everyday, and it may be one of the reasons why, with all our poverty and struggle, we still survive and are able to take a calm view of existence."(16) Regarding tradition Narayan said, "Traditionally India is the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Purana. The values remain the same in every village, town or city."(15)

Narayan believes in the affirmation of life— with all its imperfections, follies and foibles. So he never exhibits moral anger or protests against errors. This vision of accepting everything with sheer joy has its roots in an ageless heritage of culture and tradition which attaches great importance to
self-discipline, renunciation, incarnation, doctrine of rebirth, law of karma, dharma and non-violence. In all his works these religious themes find their expression in some form or other. Famous legends, myths, folklore, etc. sustain and broaden their significance. What Daisy says of Raman in The Painter of Signs holds equally good for his creator, R.K. Narayan: "You always find some ancient model."(16) Even the age of science and the advent of modernity donot disturb R.K. Narayan. Rather they make him reaffirm the closeness of tradition and culture. He says: "With the impact of modern literature we began to look at the gods, demons, sages and kings of our mythology and epics, not as some remote concoctions but as types and symbols, possessing psychological validity even when viewed against the contemporary background."(17)

Finding an ancient myth, to convey the vision of modern life, comes to him quite easily and effortlessly. The Dark Room brings out the parallel of Silappathikaram and the triangle of Savithri - Ramani - Shanta Bai, to a certain extent, resembles the triangle of Kannagi - Kovalan - Madhavi. In Mr. Sampat there is a reference to the burning of Kama by Lord Shiva. The Guide is based on the traditional Hindu belief that rain can be brought to end a severe drought if some godly
person sacrifices his life through fasting and prayer. The English Teacher confirms the bliss of married life which continues from generation to generation. Even death cannot break the relation of couples. The Bachelor of Arts stands for the age-old tradition that everything happens for good and the order is a preordained one. The Financial Expert brings out the consequences of excessive attachment to the material world and impermanent nature of wealth. "Vasu, the central character of The Man-Eater of Malgudi, is modelled on Phasmasura. The mythological relationship of the holy Ganga and king Shantanu offers a parallel to Daisy-Raman relationship in The Painter of Signs. The oneness of soul of all living beings tiger and man alike, its sublimation through gradual self-discipline and renunciation and its final salvation from the bondage of Karma and the Cycle of birth is the central theme of A Tiger for Malgudi."(18) The Vendor of Sweets finally leads to the virtue of renunciation and the life of Vanaprastha stage. Jagan has got no deep knowledge of scriptures but his faith in tradition is something which gives him the strength to live.

In the words of Professor William Walsh: "The religious sense of Indian myth is part of Narayan's grip of reality, or his particular view of human life and his individual way of
placing and ordering human feeling and experience. What one can say about Narayan without qualification is that he embodies the pure spirit of Hinduism. In Narayan Hinduism appears at the natural sub-stratum of a sensibility pre-occupied with individuality with the specific, with particularisation. Not that he is concerned with a more ticked collection of particulars. Each detail is seen and presented, so as to imply an essential truth about its own nature, just as the aggregate of details is raised from a simple collection to an order or word or portrait. A detail in Narayan is not only close to the essential object but it contributes its part to a significant whole."(19) Thus the use of myth and legend in the novels of Narayan does not make them mere illustrations of abstract ideologies and beliefs but these emerge as the final vision of the present day reality. The continuity of Indian tradition is confirmed by his works. In this sense Narayan is in the line of old Indian saints and scholars infusing the modern time with the past myths, legends and fables for the safe future. His stories are essentially stories of Indian life.

The characters are firmly rooted in the Indian social order. Swami the innocent and lively school boy becomes the romantic college student, Chandran. He becomes Krishnan to enjoy the bliss of married life. Temptations of money, fame, lust, etc.
when he grows into Sampa, Ramani, Margaya and others. He develops into Raju, a saint. As Jagan he renounces the worldly life and embraces the seclusion of forest life. Finally he becomes Master, the Guru. Swami to Swamiji is rather a full circle. Thus we can find an underlying link among all his novels. Each character is a stage of life destined to play the role for attaining the final goal. He may be the sinner or saint, essentially he is guided and controlled by the age-old customs, traditions and beliefs of Hindu religion. "The Hindu man drinks religiously, sleeps religiously and robs religiously,"(20) writes Professor C.D. Narasimhaiah with a sarcastic sharpness.

Malgudi is the central theme, the soul and as K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar says, "the real hero of Narayan's novels."(21) Uma Parameshwaran agrees with Iyengar that Malgudi is the only 'character' that grows, changes, reacts to time and circumstance, has a spirit, a soul. Malgudi is the fictional externalization of Narayan's vision of traditional life. "Malgudi," observes Prof. C.D. Narasimhaiah, "is the microcosm of traditional Indian society."(22) This Malgudi helps Narayan's psyche to return to his roots. It is a god given gift to him. So he intimately knows each inhabitant and is familiar with each inch of the soil of Malgudi. "It is better
for a writer to know a little bit of the world remarkably well than to know a great part of the world remarkably little," observes Thomas Hardy in his Note Books. (23) Narayan not only knows his little world of Malgudi 'remarkably well' but also created it with such sensitivity that it is both recognizable local in nature and at the same time has a universal appeal which transcends all linguistic and geographical barriers. (24) To Meenakshi Mukherjee: "Nothing could be more provincial and localized than the life of the Malgudi town, yet R.K. Narayan successfully achieves a universal vision through it." (25) Through this Malgudi location, Narayan describes the social, political, economic and religious conditions of the locale and writes about the sub-culture, the festivals and rituals, the beliefs and superstitions, the dialect and idiom and as a whole his philosophy of life.

Through Narayan calls himself just a story-teller, he is much more than that. "I'd be quite happy," he says to his interviewer, "if no more his claimed from me than being just a story-teller. Only the story matters; that is all." (26) The man, who is at peace with his world, at peace with India and the fictional world he had abstracted from the country, knows when to stop his story-telling just as his village story-teller knows: "You must stop before others know you are senile." (27)
Raja Rao:

Raja Rao has not written any autobiography so far. For a creative writer autobiography, in a strict sense, does not exist. Because every piece of his writing is a bit of his inner self. Raja Rao's novels, short stories, his speeches and interviews and his articles are the representatives of his inner and outer selves. Not only his characters speak on behalf of him, but also the very setting, the language, the style... stand for him.

More than any other works, The Serpent and the Rope is largely autobiographical in nature. The striking similarities between the creator and his creation (Raja Rao and Ramaswamy) cannot be missed even while skimming through the novel. Both are brahmins, born in Karnataka, brought up in Sanskritic tradition, both live in France, study history there and marry French women.(22) And so, though Ramaswamy is a character created with feeling and fidelity of the author as a product of his artistic imagination, we can equate both the creator and his creation partially as far as the external life is concerned but fully when the view of life and philosophy are taken into account. According to B.C. Narzeth, "the pseudo-autobiographical point of view has been the chief guiding factor behind the presentation of his (Raja Rao's) narrative
material and philosophical speculations. The compassionate introspective Brahmin 'I' in Raja Rao's fiction comprises certain key phrases: youthful and emotionally susceptible in the stories 'Javni' and 'Akkayya', venerable and material in Kanthapura and metaphysical in The serpent and the Rope and The cat and Shakespeare." (29)

The energetic revolutionary youth, the corner house Moorthy gradually emerges as a Mahatma Moorthy in Kanthapura. Ramaswamy is the next stage of life exploring and experiencing the married life in The Serpent and the Rope. Govindan Nair is the mellowed last stage of life in The Cat and Shakespeare. Moorthy of Kanthapura is the stage of 'Brahmacharya,' Ramaswamy of The Serpent and the Rope is the 'Grihastha' stage and Govindan Nair of The Cat and Shakespeare is 'Sanyasa' stage. Raja Rao artistically represents his own three stages through the above three reincarnations. Thus the author achieves both the artistic continuity and his own life span. The autobiographical element is hinted at in the following statement from The Serpent and the Rope: "... all books are autobiographies... all have a beginning in the man who wrote the book, have absorbed his nights... They all represent a bit of oneself, and let those who can read rightly, the whole
of oneself. The style of a man... the way he weaves word against word, intricates the existence of sentences with the values of sound, makes a comma here, puts a dash there: all are signs of his inner movement, the speed of his life, his breath (prana), the nature of his thought, the ardour and age of his soul. Short sentences and long sentences, parentheses and points of interrogation, are not only curves in the architecture of thought, but have an intimate, a private relation with your navel, your genitals, the vibrance of your eyesight."(29) 

Finally his own words confirm this fact. When Shiva Niranjani indicated the similarities between Ramamurthy the protagonist and Raja Rao and Faulted Raja Rao he thought The Serpent and the Rope was an autobiographical novel he declared: "well Ramamurthy is myself, Ramamurthy is myself, Rama Krishna Pai is myself, the authors, some authors, I would say, write autobiographically. So each one is an aspect of myself. I don't think, you can say - this is me, this is not me."(31) 

He had summed up his career in brief as follows:

Born at Hassan,
The lotus-heart of Karnataka,
Died in Chikkamagalur,
Under the watchful eye of Karnataka's sister,
He was educated on the banks of Ganga and Yamuna,
And is now living in the Western World.

About the places he has visited and those he liked:

I have seen the beauty of Cauvery,
On the banks of Hemavathy have I wandered,
My eyes have seen the light of Belur
And the lost glory of Haleabadu,
I have played on the sands of Talakadu
And in the waters of Terukanambi.

With these few lines he expiates the absence of any pure
autobiography.

Raja Rao was born in a very old Brahmin family of Mysore at
Hassan in 1899. He went to Europe at the age of nineteen,
studying in literature at the University of Montpellier
and at the Sorbonne. The French literary scene over-powered
him. A strong, quixotic urge gripped him. Simultaneously he
knew the strange problem of choosing the appropriate
language of expression and his right structural models. Out
of Sanskrit, Guddkrit, French and English, he felt, English
had the potentialities and unexplored riches. And so finally
he took English to channel his impulses and created
something a native sound structure. Thus the
Maja Rao's fictional output is meagre in quantity but complex and challenging in quality. He admires James Joyce and like him explored English and exploited it to its maximum stretchability. In fact, the parallels between these two giants are astounding. Both the novelists are innovators linguistically, stylistically and structurally; both are intensely autobiographical in their fiction; both became expatriates and found solace and rare hospitality in France; and both are more or less the 'gurus' of scholars, many of whom either before
such untried genius and unconventionality."(33) Both produced limited works and almost with equal gaps between any two works. Raja Rao's Kanthapura is James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a young man, The Serpent and the Rope his Ulysses, The Cat and the Shakespeare his Finnegans Wake and The Cow and the Barbarian his Dubliners. The parallels are numerous and even the stream of consciousness technique is used by both of them.

The complexity in going through Raja Rao's works and understanding them arises partly from multiple influences which have moulded his sensibility and nourished his temperament. Moreover, though he narrates contemporary events, his vision and narration are grounded in timeless traditions and modelled on the Sanskrit puranas, epics, folklore, vedas, upanishads mingled with history, legend and philosophy. Ramayana and Mahabharata gave him the insight into Indian culture and spirituality. To him Ramayana is 'the book of books' and Mahabharata 'epitome of Indian tradition.' He was also influenced by 'Brihatatrotatnakara' and 'the works of Ananda Coomaraswamy.'(34) Apart from these books saints like Shankara, Kanakadasa and his own Guru Shri Atmananda influenced him highly.
Raja Rao's long stay in the west has made him more conscious of his orientalism and Indian values. That is why in work after work he reaffirms the undying Indian cultural tradition with conviction. Whenever and wherever he speaks of India he speaks of it with reverence and passionate ardour. He does not merely glorify the past or positive aspects of life. He accepts the present as well as the negative side as the part of the reality. Through Ramaswamy of The Serpent and the Rope he expresses his devotion to his mother land: "India was wonderful to me. It was like a juice that one is supposed to drink to conquer a kingdom or to reach the deathless - I was born to India, where the past and the present are forever built into one whole experience... The Sanskrit language has a svabhava, a nobility that seems rooted in primary sound... India absorbs everything and makes it her own. India for me is not a country, but an idea, a metaphysic. For me India is the Sum of this world or she is not India.(35) To him Benaras is an eternal city. Even the burning pyres on the bank of Ganges at Benaras are a sort of illumination and add beauty to the surrealistic city. "By making Benaras the focus of his action as it were, Raja Rao succeeds in invoking the reality of 'national identity' in a way that is not possible to a novelist who moves only in the wheels of a political or economic ideology."(35)
Every woman, to him, is Parvati — the Shakti, who gives life and meaning to Shiva rather who makes the 'Shava' into 'Shiva.'

Woman is earth, air, ether, sound; woman is the microcosm of the mind, the articulation 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..."(37) Raja Rao worships the principle of femininity without which masculinity is nothing.

Nothing is a 'Sadhana' for him. 'Sadhana' means according to him, to try to be in contact with the ultimate reality. He maps out the process of his quest through the novel form and explores the possibilities of being and becoming. It has been his endeavour to be in contact with the ultimate. The aesthetic is that sometimes he likes to write Purana...is very much an Indian and the Indian form is Puranic form. Form comes naturally to him. The ultimate aim of man is spiritual or...physical. He tries to attain this aim through his works.

First he wrote Kanthaipura and he was dissatisfied with his spiritual life. So he decided not to write any more. He confesses, then he found his Guru, Shri Atmananda and he made Raja Rao settle down into himself. Other works followed with
the influence of that Guru. In Kanthapura he was a Gandhian. In The Serpent and the Rope he was still searching. The Cat and the Shakespeare vjas the conclusion. (38)

Raja Rao surrenders himself - his body, mind and soul completely to his Guru as the kitten allows itself to be carried away by the mother cat. "He believes in Advaitic truth of 'Shivahom, Shivahom; I am Shiva, I am Shiva,' as Shankara says. According to him, Shiva is the opposite of Shiva. Shiva is not god. It is absolute truth and can be realised when a Guru who is himself a realized being, gives one the Upadesha. Otherwise Shiva is an empty word. Though born in a vedantic family, Raja Rao could not realize the full significance of Vedanta till he met his Guru, Shri Atmananda, to whom he dedicates The Serpent and the Rope." (33) This 'atmamaraapanam', getting pleasure in complete surrender clears the doubt and confusion from his mind and soul. Thereby he becomes an enlightened being himself, a Guru to guide others.

The brahmin (Moorthy) who wanders like a noble cow in Kanthapura becomes a married man (Ramawamy) in The Serpent and the Rope searching ceaselessly and meets his Guru. In the Cat and Shakespeare he (Govindan Nair) emerges as a Guru to make others recognize a serpent as a serpent and the rope as a rope and not the serpent as the rope and vice versa by wiping out the duality.
Raja Rao is interested in the meditative, contemplative aspects of Hindu spirituality. His greatest achievement does not merely lie in reaffirming the Indian tradition in its fullest grandeur but in achieving a synthesis between 'tradition' and 'the individual talent', to use the expression of T.S. Eliot.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


17. The Times of India, Bombay, 2 December 1964.


