CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION
Ancient Indian literature has rich tradition of short story. It has primarily two forms — the fable and the folk tale. We see these forms in 'Panchatantra' and 'Kathasaritsagara' respectively. A considerable change was seen in the genre short story with the advent of the Britishers in India. Some of the Indians made an attempt to write short story in English. Like their counterparts in the west, they wrote the atmosphere-dominant short stories and the character dominant short stories.

The rapidity of the national movement, the spread of self expression in one's own literary endeavour influenced the Indian short story writing in English. Besides there, a number of journals and magazines that encouraged and published short stories came into existence. Among the pioneers of Indian short story in English may be included Kamala Satyanandan, K.S. Venkata Ramani and K. Naga Rajan. These writers almost followed the tradition of fable in their short stories.

In another wave of writers came Manjeri S. Iswaran and Mulk Raj Anand. Manjeri S. Iswaran made
a realistic record of the events of his times. His stories concerned themselves with the consequences of the world war and the national movement. The characters in his stories are mostly judges, lawyers, doctors, policeman, drivers, fishermen and beggars. Mulk Raj Anand aimed at the presentation of the predicament of the men and women of his time. In his stories his sympathy for the underdog dominates the scene. 'The Barbers' Trade Union, Lament on the death of a Master of Arts' represent his short story collections. Mulk Raj Anand's interest in the poor overweighs his artistic concerns.

Next appeared on the scene Raja Rao,

"An innovator in modern Indian fiction which, thanks largely to him more than any other single writer, has been ushered into the mainstream of twentieth century literature".¹

Born in an orthodox family, Raja Rao drew a lot from the inherited customs and beliefs of the traditional Brahmin family. He does not hesitate to comment on certain social institutions as well as on the events of national importance.

¹. C.D. Narasimhaiah, Raja Rao The Short Stories on after word, p.127.
His work in the court of the Nawab of Hyderabad touched his mental proclivity. He acquired a knowledge of Urdu and also that of Sufism during his days in Hyderabad. Like other young men of the times he too in his short story includes his nationalist fervour. After his brief schooling in Hyderabad he went to England for higher studies. With his contact with Prof. Dickinson he developed his interest in France and French literature. Under the supervision of Prof. Cazamian he pursued some advanced research at the University of Sorbonne. His life in France shaped his career as a short story writer. He equipped himself with the knowledge of various literary trends in France, in general and the West in particular. It was during his stay in France he wrote his first volume of short stories, The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories.

In France Raja Rao came in contact with Camille Monly whom he married later. She was his first critic of his short stories. Naturally he revised some of the stories and gave them good form.

Raja Rao's visits to Gandhiji's ashram influenced him to a certain extent. Like a seeker of
Truth he visited Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondichery, the Ramana Maharshi Ashram at Tiruvannamalai and Pandit Taranath at his Prema Yatana Ashram in Mysore. Naturally the metaphysical concerns that we find in his short stories are shaped by the visits to these Ashrams. His teaching assignment at the University of Texas, Austin also shaped him as a short story writer.

One notices an astounding variety of themes in his short stories. They range from the social to the metaphysical themes. This variety is the fruit of the 'Sadhana' which has a shaped much of his later writing. He has created in his shorter fiction a body of imaginative work which touches the contemporary world with an insight that goes beyond mere social concerns and with a bold colour which transcends drab realism.

In his stories 'The Cow of the Barricades', 'Narsiga' and 'In Khandesh', Raja Rao dwells upon the political awareness of people during the freedom struggle. In 'The Cow of the Barricades' one sees Gandhiji's impact on the people. In 'Narsiga' there are the deepfelt convictions of a boy who wants to free
himself from the alien rule. 'In Khandesh' also a graphic description of the sufferings of a common man finds a place. In 'Javni', 'Akkayya' and 'Nimka' a typical picture of an Indian woman is presented. 'Javni' records the suffering of a low caste woman. 'Akkayya' presents the plight of a widow. 'Nimka' dwells upon the pains and pleasures of Nimka, a Russian girl.

'The Little Gram Shop' concerns itself with the conflict between money and human values. Bania Motilal in the story fosters an acquisitive instinct at the cost of human values. In 'A Client', the cleverness of an oldman is presented. 'Kanakapala' which runs like a fable suggests of false values which erode man's moral beliefs. 'Companion's dwells upon man's potentiality for spiritual liberation attainable through self purification.

'India - A Fable' and 'The Policeman and the Rose' are unique in that these two concern themselves with the philosophical faith of an individual. In 'India - A Fable', there is a record of the spiritual quest of a child, who makes an imaginary journey from
India to Arabia and then back to India. Similar spiritual quest is recorded in the 'Policeman and the Rose' where the protagonist tries to realise God in 'self'.

An interesting feature one notices in the art of Raja Rao is the depiction of intense actuality. Like a typical realist, he records a peasants' unflinching faith in the goddess of the village. There is a graphic description of the actual rural Indian setting, its trees, rivers and the fields. One sees a graphic picture of Indian village at the micro level. Similarly in other stories like 'Akkayya' one gets a typical picture of Indian society.

The rumbling carts outside, the cawing crows, the sun beams that steal through the tile roof, the creating door behind which are the sacks of rice in the hall near the pillar, in the backyard the calf nibbling at the wispes of hay and throwing enormous quantities of dung - all present a typical village life in India. In the words of Prof. C.D. Narasimhaiah

"Even within the compass of a short story so many evocative details of village life get mentioned".  

2. The Policeman and the Rose, p.128.
This portrayed of Indian actuality is seen in the depiction of a widow, a peasant and a low class girl in his short stories.

The short stories of earlier period concern themselves with the problems that India encountered in those days. They reveal to us the relentless struggle made by the Indians against the British. They also dwell upon the issues like the oppression of lower classes, the denial of equal rights to women. As a creative artist, he does not satisfy himself with the mere presentation of the problems but as an artist he recreates the problems without affecting the art of a short story writer. In 'Nimka' he succeeds in depicting most ably Nimka's charm. The narrator who sat hour after hour in Nimka's little room basks in the sunshine of her beautiful presence. There are students who cast mysterious glances at her. This story acquires dignity of dimension of the work of the great European short story writers. There are indirect references to Gandhi and Tolstoy. Though this story sounds simplistic it acquires metaphysical dignity. Like a philosopher the narrator says:
"The good is what had distinction and the bad what is successful .... the Indian is too simple in his death - if there is no cat there is no goodness".

These lines are suffused with Indian thought.

What one sees in his later short stories is a fusion of the fantastic and the metaphysical. In his 'The Cow of the Barricades', the cow becomes a symbol of India in the bondage of foreign rulers. Mahatma in this story is Gandhi, but we don't know much about the master referred to in this story. When the disciples asked the master about the cow, he simply smiled with unquenchable love and fun. The same fantasy is seen in stories like 'Companions', 'In Khandesh' and 'Kanakapala'. One does not know why the snake guards gold. Even in 'India - A Fable' he lets fancy play over fact and leaves it open ended and makes one want to ask .... 'Did Anne die on that date? Did she die at all? This question was raised even in the past at the deaths of Yajnavalkya to Shankara. The epigraphs to these stories certainly and metaphysical implications.
Raja Rao's use of English in his short stories has drawn considerable attention in the world of short story. He earnestly feels....

"We cannot write like English, we should not. We can write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large wood as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will someday prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or American. Time alone will justify it".3

This passage reveals to us his concern for the use of language. In fact, he feels that each wood has a charm of its own. His knowledge of Sanskrit helps him in creating the right philosophical passion. He infuses the rhythm of Sanskrit in English language. For example,

"I dozed away. Only in the stillness
I heard Javni saying .... 'Goddess, great Goddess, as I vowed, I will offer my lamb, protect the child, protect mother, protect her brother, protect master, Oh Goddess! Protect me".

3. Foreword to Kanthapura, Orient Paper Back, Delhi, pp.5-6.
Here the writer does not hesitate to break the formal syntax of the language to create the desired effect. Here the effect he wants to create is the faith of 'Javni' in the Goddess and her concern for the child Ramappa.

As has already been pointed out his short story gives an insight into the metaphysical concerns. For example, 'The Policeman' stands for the law of Karma. When he arrests you, you become free, that means one can be free from worldly illusions only through Karma. 'Rose' represents purity. 'White Rose' is a symbol of holiness. The narrator gives a brief account of the policeman who is subjected to the cycle of birth and death.

"He knows all there is to know, but he does not know the knower. When he knows the knower, there is no knower. Knowledge is knowledge". (p.114)

This passage is highly metaphysical in that it throws light on the soul realizing the supreme soul, the core of Advaita philosophy. This theme recures in 'India - A Fable' where the narrator discusses rebirth and death. Thus his short stories are bound by the thread of metaphysical flavour.
The use of symbolism is another characteristic feature that has made Raja Rao a great writer of short stories. In 'The Cow of the Barricades' Gauri the cow, easily becomes a vehicle of God. In the words of Harrex, the story

Exhibits nationalistic aspiration embodied in the fictional heroine who is God (or the principle of God's love and compassion) as well as holy Mother India.  

The cow response to India's suffering is remarkable:

"She looked very sad, and somebody had even seen a tear, clear as a drop of the Ganges, run down her cheeks, for she was of compassion infinite and true". (p.38)

Because of her epic deed she keeps alive the power of worship and faith which inturn transcend the ephemeral world of illusion and death.

"We all offer her flowers and honey and perfumed sweet meats and the first green grass of the spring .... she will be reborn when India sorrows again before she is free". (p.41)

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Here the feelings of the people acquire, a metaphysical reality.

Similar use of symbols may be found in his story 'The Policeman and the Rose'. The red rose symbolises compassion and romance and the white rose symbolises love, beauty and truth. The policeman too symbolises the law of Karma. The law arrests the individual from birth. The narrator postulates that liberation from arrest as the ultimate climax of the human story of history. The story certainly deals with the imprisonment of the hero, who is also his own policeman jailor. He knows the reference between the compassion of the rose serenity of the rose. There is the victory of ideal truth over impermanent beauty which is the supremacy of Raja Rao's metaphysical concerns. These at a later data appeared as novels.