

**MYTHOLOGICAL AND FOLK ELEMENTS: A CRITICAL STUDY OF  
THE SELECTED NOVELS OF RAJA RAO AND R.K.NARAYAN**

**A Thesis**

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By

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**UNIVERSITY OF KOTA, KOTA**

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*Dedicated to*

*my*

*Father & Mother,*

*For their ceaseless Love and Inspiration.*

## **DECLARATION**

*I, Ms. Tanu Rajpal D/o Sh. Anil Rajpal resident of Vigyan Nagar, Kota, hereby, declare that the research work incorporated in the present thesis entitled **Mythological and Folk Elements: A Critical Study of Selected Novels of Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan** is my own work and is original. This work (in part or in full) has not been submitted to any University for the award of a Degree or a Diploma. I have properly acknowledged the material collected from secondary sources wherever required. I solely own the responsibility for the originality of the entire content.*

**Date:**

*Signature of the Candidate*

**Place:** Kota

## *SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATE*

*I feel great pleasure in certifying that the thesis entitled **Mythological and Folk Elements: A Critical Study of Selected Novels of Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan** embodies a record of the results of investigations carried out by **Ms Tanu Rajpal** for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English, Govt. College, Kota, Kota (Rajasthan) under my guidance.*

*I am satisfied with the analysis of data, interpretation of results and the conclusions drawn. It is an original piece of research carried out by the candidate under my supervision. She has completed the residential requirement of 200 days by residing at the headquarters (Govt. College, Kota) of my workplace i.e. Kota, as per the rules of University of Kota, Kota.*

*I recommend the submission of thesis.*

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## *Acknowledgement*

*May Success tend good people's labour, By grace of him, on whose brow gleams,*

*The moon's delightful crescent favour, Bright as foam on Ganga's streams.*

*(Hitopadeśa, Prastāvika 1)*

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# *Chapter – 1*

## *Formalistic Schema*



## Chapter – 1

### Formalistic Schema

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The India of *Brahma* and *Prajapathi*; of *Varuna*, *Mithra* and *Aryaman*; of *Indra*, of *Krishna*, *Shiva* and *Parvathi*; of *Rama*, *Harishchandra* and *Yagnyavalkya*; this India was a continuity I felt, not in time but in space; as a cloud that stands over a plain might say, 'Here I am and I pour' – and goes on pouring. The waters of that rain have fertilized our minds and hearts, and being without time they are ever present. It is perhaps in this sense that India is outside history. A patch of triangular earth, surrounded by the three seas, somehow caught the spirit without time, and established it in such a way that you can see the disk of gold shine miles above the earth. (SR 128)

In the above excerpt Raja Rao has glorified the repository of Indian mythology and folklore. India is the country whose foundations are deep-rooted in *Puranas*, *Upanishads*, epics like *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, great scriptures like *Bhagavad Gita* and *Ramcharitamanas*. India being one of the oldest and stable civilizations has always been deeply entrenched with things that are conventionally understood as art. It has been enchained with the cultural and spiritual moorings from time immemorial. Whether that is the *Vedas* and the *Jatakas* stories or *Panćatantra* and *Hitopadeśa* – Indian sense of subtle domain has always been a giant monolithic force in motion and continuous evolution. Attracted by her richness she was the cynosure of the world. This made many warriors and foreign kingdoms as well as peripatetic, who came here, explore the land and mostly got settled and assimilated at this land. All this enriched the whole gamut of art, culture and literature of this place.

Man creates Literature and Literature studies man – his origin and evolution, his interests and inclinations, his emotions and sentiments, his efforts, successes, failures and frustrations, his feelings of love, hatred, faith, devotion, loyalty and patriotism and above all his general behavior, virtues and vices. Language is a medium of social interact, specific to each culture passed down as legacy from one generation to the other to give identity and pride with a sense of belonging to a community or even a nation that maintains distinct culture. In a multicultural society, the dominant language in the majority group becomes the social interact with the minority cultural groups who however maintain their own language to interact with their own community.

Literature represents the language, culture and tradition of certain group of people but it is more important than just a historical or cultural artifact. It introduces us to new worlds of experience. It enables humans to probe deeper into the human psyche by providing them with an array of situations which humans can identify with and learn from. It does not exist as an autonomous entity but rather is found within a socio-political, cultural, ideological and aesthetic context which conditions its reception at different moments and different places. Literature, either in spoken or written form, characterizes the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, intellectual and emotional features of any society.

**Mythology** – a body or collection of myths belonging to people and addressing their origin, history, deities, ancestors and heroes and **Folklore** - the oral tradition which consists of the whole of that which is transmitted by word of mouth, are chief elements of any literature. Literature is a process of widening mythology and folklore. Literary works may thus be regarded as mythopoeic and folkloric, tending to create or recreate certain narratives which human beings consider crucial to their understanding of the world.

Lawrence Coupe observes:

. . . the work of the myth is to explain, to reconcile, to guide action or to legitimate. We can add that myth-making is evidently a primal and universal function of the human mind as it seeks a more or less unified vision of the cosmic order, the social order, and the meaning of the individual's life. Both for society at large and for the individual, this story-generating function seems irreplaceable. The individual finds meaning in his life by making of his life a story set within a larger social and cosmic story. (*Myth 6*)

Myth and folklore are therefore very important components of cultural and literary experiences. They are not only the outpourings of the heart of the natives but they carry culture, heritage, social customs, mores and modes of behavior.

The folklore has been an eternal part of every culture since ages. When it comes to Indian folklore, the country of diverse religions, languages and cultures, it has a complete range of tales, short stories and mythological legends, which emerge from all walks of life. The interesting stories range from the remarkable *Panćatantra* to *Hitopadeśa*, from *Jataka* to *Akbar – Birbal*. Not only this, the great Indian epics like *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Bhagavad Gita* are full of didactic stories inspired from the lives of great souls. Being full of moralistic and instructional values, Indian folklore is replete with themes and sub – themes that can be examined in greater depth.

## **What is Folklore ?**

Folklore is a wide concept which encompasses a large body of materials. A.K.Ramanujan in *Who Needs Folklore?* puts it in the following words:

Verbal Folklore, in the sense of a largely oral tradition with specific genres (such as proverb, riddle, lullaby, tale, ballad, prose narrative, verse or a mixture of both and so on), non-verbal materials (such as dances, games, floor or wall designs; objects of all sorts from toys to outdoor giant clay horses), and composite performing arts (which may include several of the former as in street magic and theatre) – all weave in and out of every aspect of living in city, village and small town. What we separate as art, economics and religion is, moulded and expressed here. Aesthetics, ethos and worldview are shaped in childhood and throughout one's early life by these verbal and non-verbal environments. In a largely non-literate culture, everyone poor, rich, high caste and low caste, professor, pundit or ignoramus – has inside him or her, a large non-literate subcontinent. (*Who Needs Folklore?* 2)

Thus Folklore is an all-embracing term for verbal folktales, material culture, legends, myths, fables and performing arts. A folktale is a story which has been handed down through word of mouth, and thus belongs to a particular culture rather than an individual. Folktales, an essential part of oral tradition, carry with them the thumbprint of history. They give us insights into the cultures from which they spring. These folktales, myths and legends reflect a society's cultural foundations and epitomize human experience and embody a strong faith in the cosmic view preserved and worshipped by every culture. Mythology is not a literal rendering of a culture's history, but we can use myths to explore culture – its viewpoints, activities and

beliefs. Myths and mythic symbols are the elementary particles of imagination and creativity.

These folktales, myths or fables are sacred stories which are set in a remote past that relate about the creation of the universe and humankind – and may contain explanations for cosmic and natural phenomena – as well as the origin of civilizations and social and religious institutions. Folktales are among the oldest accounts shared in oral tradition. They encompass a unique body of stories from all people in all places, told throughout the existence of human kind. To explore these folk stories is to explore ourselves and our many facets as human beings. It is the reflection of humankind – its strength, flaws, fears and hopes. They are timeless and ageless as the existence and longevity of the countless number of tales told and recorded, attests to the power of this very special means of expression. It is a mirror charged with echoes of the past and cues of the future.

Indian Literature, compared to other literatures in the world, played a vital role in preservation and proliferation of folklore. It has fostered cultural unity and identity in the present world of rapid industrialization and globalization. Folklore and mythology have been great sources of creativity. In the modern age, they have become powerful instruments in the preservation of both history and culture. Although India remains one of the world's richest sources of folktales, Indian folklore constitutes a virtually unmapped territory of study. Not only tales but oral literature, in general, proverbs, aphorisms, anecdotes, rumours, songs and other modes of narration, has received a short shrift. This neglect of India's oral culture is all the more surprising and unanticipated. Though some work has been done on Folk culture, Folk literature and its other constituents but still a great deal of research has to be done on the exploration of mythical and folkloric theme in the literature and its relevancy in today's world.

### **Brief History of Folkloristic:**

Folklore is perhaps as old as mankind. This term was suggested by William Thoms, a British Antiquarian in 1846. Thoms realized that scholarly work on materials of folkloristic nature was being carried on under various labels such as *Popular Antiquities* or *Popular Literature*, *Comparative Mythology*, *Annals and Antiquities* and therefore needed a single label to designate this area of inquiry. He, therefore, suggested a good Saxon compound **Folk-Lore – the lore of the people** to replace all other somewhat cumbersome terms. The work on materials of folkloristic nature did not begin with the coining of this term; it had been studied with scholarly interest long before Thoms coined the term. An obvious example is the work of the Grimm Brothers who are the real founders of science of folklore, if not the term. Their work cannot be ignored to trace the history of the growth of folklore studies and its impact on the present theoretical advancement. Both Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm were primarily interested in the investigation of German Language.

The contribution of Grimm brothers is commendable in the historical development of the science of folklore and its methodologies. They originally researched and investigated in German language in their work *Deutsche Mythologie*. Jacob Grimm employed the comparative method in his research on German language and dialects. A renowned Russian folklorist Sokolov writes:

If in the field of linguistics the co-incidence of words, sounds and forms in various dialects of the German language leads us back to a general Germanic parent language and the coincidence of these same elements in a series of several related languages leads us to an Indo-European parent language, then according to this same system of the comparative method, similar elements also in the field of folklore, in fantastic forms and subjects must also be treated as a heritage, which has come down to new peoples or their tribal branches from a common ancient ancestor. (*Russian Folklore* 53)

The work, done on German Mythology by Grimm brothers, inspired other folklorists too. Here the mention must be made to the German scholars Kuhn, Shwartz, Manhardt and Max Muller.

Max Muller reshaped and developed the theory of Grimm brothers and used it for Greek and Sanskrit myths. Therefore, it came to be known as 'Mythological Theory' (Sokolov *RF* 60). It is also named as 'Comparative Mythology' and 'Solar Mythology'.

### **Mythological School:**

Max Muller, by accepting and implementing Grimm's comparative method, attempted to explain the phenomenon of myth school. He was an erudite, a great scholar of Sanskrit, a litterateur and a philologist.

According to Max Muller there are four stages in the development of human thought and language –

1. The 'Thematic' Period – the period of the formation of roots and the grammatical forms of the language.
2. The 'Dialectic' Period – the formation of the basic families of the language.
3. The 'Mythological Period' – the formation of myths.
4. The 'Popular Period' – the formation of the national languages.

Max Mullerian concept of myth creation or myth formation emerged as Mythological School of folklore studies. Sokolov observed, "Nevertheless, the theory of Max Muller is considerably broader, in spite of all its methodological unreliability" (*RF* 60). As Muller presented the development of myths in four apparent stages, it covered a wide range of myths.

### **Migrational Theory:**

Theodor Benfey, a German Indologist, translated *Panćatantra* in German language. In the introduction of this translation he pointed out resemblance between Sanskrit and European tales. In Benfey's opinion, this affinity of the themes and subjects is caused not only by the genetic relationship of the people but also by the cultural or historical borrowing. This borrowing took place during migration of population by normal wanderings, wars, conquests etc. Hence it came to be termed as Migrational Theory. Benfey traced the historical and geographical origins of the tales.

This gave stimulus to the establishment of the most famous formalistic school in folklore studies, the historical – geographical or 'Finnish School'.

### **Anthropological School:**

The affinities in the economy of people, their mode of life, customs, language and creative productions became the matter of consideration for the geographers, ethnographers, philologists and folklorists. They found it difficult to explain these cultural similarities in terms of inheritance, migration or borrowings.

"An English ethnographer Tylor and his Scotch follower Andrew Long explained this phenomenon by recourse to anthropological evolution of mankind, which rejected atomistic and diffusionistic explanations, and were consequently known as the views of the anthropological school" (Handoo *Folklore of Rajasthan* 7). Tylor made an extensive research on the modes and *modus operandi* of people of diverse regions and locales and came to the conclusion that all people have some affinities regarding their customs, religions and poetic concepts. The anthropological theory inspired a variety of folklore research and theoretical advancements.



### **Historical – Geographical or Finnish School:**

Three renowned folklorists viz. Kaarle Krohn of Finland, C. W. Von Sydow and Axel Olrik of Denmark founded *Fellows of Folklore* federation and published the series of Folklore Fellows Communication (FFC), which flourishes even today. Their task was "to study the subjects of tales and the determination of the starting points of their origin and the geographical routes of their diffusion" (Sokolov *RF* 90). According to Alan Dundes this methodology reduces a particular tale, more or less, to a statistical abstraction by breaking it into traits and sub-traits after its all possible variants or versions are collected, assembled and arranged. Then the hypothetical archetype of each trait is established. "After the archetype for each individual trait is hypothesized, the projected list of archetypal traits is put together as a possible basic type or the archetype of the whole tale" (Dundes *The Study of Folklore* 415). Despite criticism and controversy, Finnish method still remains one of the most accepted scientific methodologies in the area of historical folkloristic.

### **Psycho-analytical School :**

Sigmund Freud, a great psychologist, influenced the theoretical aspects of folkloristic. The advancements in psychoanalysis and the explorations of sub-conscious mind of man by the writings and experiments of Sigmund Freud had a great impact on study of folklores. Freud leaned on myths, tales and specifically on dreams in folktales for his psycho-analytical explorations of human mind.

Besides Freud, Earnest Jones, Erich Fromm, Giza Roheim and Jung were the analyzers of folk traditions in terms of psycho – analytical interpretations. According to these scholars, if the dream expressed the infantile desire of one human being, myths revealed psychic repressions of the childhood of the whole race or culture.

### **Structural School :**

Folklore changes in subject matter and theme but its structure remains almost unaffected. There are certain patterns through which folklore is shaped and these patterns are followed repeatedly by the creators of folklore.

Vladimir J. Propp, a Russian Folklorist was the first to adhere to this set pattern. He seriously studied the Russian folktales in terms of its structural patterns. Propp's results appeared in his book *Morphology of the Folktale* published in 1928 originally and then in 1968. Structuralism was the most influential theory to emerge in the folklore studies in 1960. The translation of his book not only revolutionized the folklore scholarship but also shook the foundations of the study of oral narrative.

Propp stressed the need to *describe* a phenomenon before trying to find the origin of that phenomenon. Propp terms his analytical approach morphological by which he means "a description of the tale to its component parts and the relation of these components to each other and the whole " (*Morphology of the Folktale* 19). Propp's model based upon his *Morphology* has been tested cross – culturally and it has inspired serious research in the area of grammar and biological foundations of the oral narrative.

Levi – Strauss, a French anthropologist, developed a new model for the structural analysis of folklore texts which was based upon the linguistic theory of De Saussure. It was first appeared in his most influential paper "Structural Study of Myth" in the Journal of American Folklore. Levi – Strauss model was based on the theoretical advancements made in the field of linguistics, information theory, genetics and many other sciences and exhibited what might be called the process of Myth Creation. "Levi – Strauss believed that like language, myth is a code and is to be deciphered in terms of *la langue* and *la parole*, *signified* and *the signifying* and *diachronic binarism*. All these concepts are Saussurian which he developed into a theory of language and were later, applied in various sciences by scholars who believed in the philosophy of structuralism" (Handoo *Folklore of Rajasthan* 13). Levi – Strauss

studies structurally not only myths but food, dress, kinship system and other aspects of a culture. Since Levi – Strauss does not depend on the given data of a narrative, instead he sorts out and rearranges the narrative elements into paradigms in order to reveal the inherent structure, and therefore, his method is sometimes known as *paradigmatic model*. It is with Levi – Strauss model that the problem of mythology has been settled once and for all.

Thus, these are all the theories which headed folklore towards the gradual development. The significance of folklore studies can be figured out with ascertaining the relationship of folklore with other subjects.

### **Folklore and Other Subjects:**

A few scholars seem to have realized that the links which connect folklore on the one hand with humanities and on the other with social sciences, are so strong that ignoring them might put, not only folklore studies, but even those subjects that represent humanities and social sciences , into jeopardy. While it seems necessary to draw a line, however thinner it might look, between the areas a folklorist studies and areas that come under the gamut of related disciplines, at least for marking the boundaries of the discipline, the fact remains that folklore still concerns many disciplines and will certainly be studied across disciplines and sometimes with entirely different perspectives. For example, an anthropologist studying a given phenomenon of a culture say kinship system, almost use folklore data as supportive evidence to sustain his conclusions about kinship system. Similarly a literary scholar tends to relate a literary piece or it's certain aspects such as themes, characters to themes or motifs of folklore. A historian, particularly in present times when academic faith in written histories has begun to shake, uses folkloric evidence for reconstructing the real history of the masses. Known as *oral history*, this kind of history writing is practiced in communities or cultures who lack all forms of written documentation of their past. A linguist or psychologist in the same manner uses

folklore data for their own purpose of studying a given phenomenon in their own fields of inquiries and use folklore data as supportive evidence whenever possible. A folklorist, on the contrary, studies a given item of folklore for its own sake and in doing so he relates the item to the culture as a whole. In a country like India this kind of collective attention gains more prominence in view of the affluent Indian heritage, Indian history and the complex Indian cultural system.

There is no known human society which does not possess folklore. All available evidences lead us to believe that all human societies have folktales, myths, folksongs, proverbs, riddles, ballads, folk dances etc.

Despite this universal trait, however, there are some genres which seem to be culture-specific. For example, it has been noticed that some cultures are particularly rich in certain genres. The fairy-tale is primarily a narrative genre of Indo-European people, the Dravidian cultures of southern India seem very rich in the genres of folk dance and drama, in Tamil and Kannada, it seems proverbs and riddles are in free variation in certain situation.

According to Richard M. Dorson there are four broad sectors of folklore and folklife studies. These are:

1. Oral Literature
2. Material Culture
3. Social Folk Custom
4. Performing Folk Arts

### **Oral Literature**

Oral Literature, called verbal art or expressive literature, are spoken, sung and voiced forms of traditional utterances. Traditionally this has been known as folk literature as well. Oral narrative is one big sub-division of this group, which in turn has its own manifold distinctions. For example, myth, fairy tale, romantic tale,

religious tale, folktale, legend, animal tale, anecdote, joke, numskull tale etc. are the major forms of oral narrative genre. Each of these forms will have many sub-forms depending on the culture in which the form or forms are available. For example, myths have many forms particularly in India. Etiological myths are very common in our country, and so are religious myths. Many of these ancient myths and the religious tales have been recorded in ancient works such as the *Kathasaritsagara*. Similarly we have the world's best tradition of writing animal tales as evidenced by famous *Panćatantra* and *Jataka* tales. Legends too have many forms, but the historical legends of western India, particularly of Gujarat and Rajasthan are very famous. Mythical legends and religious tales of south India are also very well known.

Another major sub-division is oral poetry or folk poetry. This too has its own family of related forms. For example, folk epics, ballads, folk songs, lullabies, work songs and songs associated with ritual and rites such as birth, marriage and death are commonly found in almost all parts of India. And so is the rich oral poetry connected with festive occasions, feasts and ceremonies. *Holi*, *Dipawali*, *Pongal*, *Onam*, *Durgapuja* and *Baisakhi* are some of such festivals of India.

Proverbs and riddles are also an important part of Oral Literature. While proverbs and proverbial expressions have, due to reasons of their important functions in societies, now formed an inseparable part of the written literatures throughout the world; riddles have stayed in the folk life and still function in folk societies as important devices for imparting knowledge about cultural semantics, logic and the behavioural paradigms among the younger members of such societies.

According to Dorson, Folk speech "embrace the local and regional turns of phrase that deviate from the standard language"(*Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction* 6) which is usually taught in schools in an informal manner. Besides these major forms of oral literature there are minor forms also like chants, prayers, laments, cries etc.

## **Material Culture**

In contrast to verbal art or oral folklore, there is physical folklore generally called Material Culture. According to Dorson, Material Culture responds to techniques, skills, recipes and formulas transmitted across the generations and subject to the same forces of conservative traditions and individual variation as verbal art.

This aspect of folklore and folklife is visible rather than aural. Material Culture concern with the traditional societies, their clothes, food, farm and fish, process and earth's bounty, their fashions and tools, furniture and utensils. In Indian context the fishermen of coastal Kerala, carpet making of Mirzapur, the pottery of Assam, the dyers and quilt makers of Rajasthan, the agricultural tools and bullock carts fashioned by Gadia Luhars, the boat makers of Kashmir, the basket making crafts of Manipur etc. come in the field of Material Culture. Studying these folk arts and the changes that have occurred to them is certainly one of the most interesting and challenging areas of Indian folklore studies.

## **Social Folk Customs**

Another important area of folklore and folklife, very close to material culture, is the field of social custom. Here the emphasis is on group interaction rather than on individual skills and performances. Investigations in this area are more concerned about the family and community observances of the people living in villages and tribal belts. Of particular importance are the rites of birth, initiation, marriage, death and similar rites. These rites, as is well known, have special significance in Hindu life and therefore have a well spread field. The rituals and customs associated with the festivals, such as *Holi*, *Dipawali* in north and central India, *Durgapuja* in the east and south, *Gauri-Ganpati* in the west coast, *Pongal* and *Onam* in south and hundreds of similar festivals also form an important segment of Social Folk Custom. Most of these festivals in our country seem to be embedded with agricultural activity and

therefore follow a seasonal cycle. For example, thousands of little customs and ritualistic practices are being observed by Indian village folks for the sake of rains, agricultural prosperity and for warding off natural calamities such as floods, famines etc. Among the tribal populations such practices are more common.

### **Performing Arts**

The fourth and the last sector of folklore and folklife studies may be designated as the Performing Folk Arts. This sector concerns primarily with traditional music, dance and drama. The word performance in the growing new thought of folkloristic, especially in the conceptualists' jargon, associated with every item of folklore; irrespective of its generic applications. According to this school, all items of folklore when delivered are performed. However, performance here strictly means the conscious presentation of these arts – dance, drama, folk music etc. by individual or groups who carry these art forms from one generation to another. Dorson illumines it in these words, "while the renditions of a folktale or a folk song are now usually referred to as performances, they are more casual in nature than the conscious presentation of these arts by individuals or groups with folk instruments, dance costumes and scenario props. The performing arts intersect each with the other and often appear in conjunction " (Dorson *Folklore and Folklife : An Introduction* 44).

One of the most important areas of this sector is the traditional music, which is passed on by ear and performed by memory rather than by the written or printed musical score. India has rich tradition of ancient folk music. The cultural diversity of the land multiplied the forms of these traditions and made them more colourful and enchanting. Traditional musical systems and associated dance forms have generic names. *Kajari, Phag, Ghumars, bhajans* etc. are not mere names of folk tunes but folk categories denoting genres and their complex relations. Of equal importance are the traditional musical instruments of this land. In fact a particular kind of folk music is, at times, identifiable by its instruments only. Just as a tale or a folk song passes on

from one generation to another by word of mouth so are the instruments and the kind of music associated with it passing on from one generation to another by ear and memory.

A similar situation exists when we talk of folk dances and the highly sophisticated classical dance - forms of India. That they have not only influenced each other, but have in fact nourished each other, is a fact that hardly needs emphasis. "In the Indian sub-continent", writes Kapila Vatsyayan, ". . . dance forms . . . have survived, whose origins can be traced back to pre – historic times; new forms have grown up in other places; the buoyant tenacity with which they have continued in spite of many momentous historical, sociological changes presents a bewildering rich and complex phenomenon"(Traditions of Indian Folk Dance 14). Like folk music, the area of Indian folk dances is also very vast. Mostly they go together and share many important characteristics. Many dance forms of India are world famous like *Rasalila*, *Ramalila*, *Nautanki* of Uttar Pradesh, *Bhangra* of Punjab, *Garba* of Gujrat, *Ghumar* of Rajasthan, *Bhavai* of Maharashtra, *Bihu* of Assam, *Kathakali* and *Mohiniattam* of Kerala etc. Folk Drama is another important field in the performing folk arts which has been inadequately discussed in the folkloristic.

Folk Literature reflects life, culture and heritage of a nation invariably. Folk literature and the life of common man are intimately related. They are like the two sides of a coin. Literature, at no point of time, can alien itself from the mainstream of social and cultural life of man. Both life and literature enrich themselves and remain complementary to each other. Folk Literature is the literature of antiquity that serves to posterity and always remains new. The characters and episodes get enlivened in our mind and the images leap out from the pictures, they become the part of our life. The characters talk with us, move us, guide us, though unconsciously, but turn out to be the part of our conscience. To a great extent, it is true, for the people, who first heard these stories, so long ago, loved them, cherished them and narrated them to their own children and grand children without realizing that they were participating in the perpetuation of folk tradition. Folktales permit people to express emotions in a



socially approved manner that would be inappropriate in any other form. Folktales can be an invaluable part of the instructional process. Almost every concept can be extracted from a tale and used for instructional, didactic value. Folklore covers several types of narrative prose found throughout the oral traditions of the world. Folklore is highly creative and often interweaves truth with imagination. The stories invariably offer a unique insight into the culture and the people who invented them.

Every culture's pantheon of mythic characters was the super – family that every man and woman of that culture was born into; these creatures were as familiar as their parents and grandparents, their siblings and their aunts, uncles and cousins. As here in India we are quite familiar with the characters and various episodes of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, the didactic stories of *Panćatantra* and *Akbar – Birbal*.

Thus Folklore is a body of materials, a cultural process, and a method of research applied to those materials and that process; more specifically, which may be termed as 'literature transmitted orally'. The folkloric traditions, pulsating with rich historical insights, transcend cultural authority and transforms into an image of religiosity.

### **Myths and Mythology:**

Mythology is the study of myths. A myth is a story that has significance to a culture or species, a story that addresses fundamental and difficult questions that human being ask: Who and What am I? Where did I come from? Why am I here? How should I live? What is the universe? How did it all begin?

Myths are stories that are peopled by great men and women; by forces of good and evil, by animals – large and small, by trees, the sea and the wind, by giants, gods and other supernatural beings. Myths are the retelling of the religious stories, the stories of universal mythic themes like – the creation of the world, the first Man and Woman, Heaven and Earth, a great surge, the stories of separation and reunion, of serpents and dragons etc. A culture's mythos is the storied foundation of the mythic

themes or stories. Cultural and religious identity in Hinduism is amazingly broad. In Hindu mythology there are as many as 330 million different gods or *devas* that can validate an individual's identity.

Amore and Larry Shinn, in *Lustful Maidens and Ascetic Kings*, described what it is like to grow up with Hindu myths and stories.

To grow up in India is to mature in a world alive with demons and water nymphs, goblins and irate goddesses. Wisdom is often measured not by degrees or formal education, but by the ability to tell the right story or recite a passage of scripture appropriate to a particular situation. Mothers and fathers teach their children religious and family responsibilities through stories. Householders scold their servants with reference to the fate of a character in a particular tale. In classical times, the student priest had to commit to memory vast quantities of scriptures, which varied in subject matter from the techniques of sacrifice to the proper conduct of the king in peacetime and at war. The moral tales and fables as well as myths relating the feats of the gods were common fare for any person who sought to be educated. (5)

The Hindus owe allegiance to the *Vedas*, which are their holy scriptures. The *Vedas* present a complete and panoramic view of life in all his facets. They contain within themselves, not merely the philosophical conclusion of the great *Vedic rishis* but also a detailed record of conduct for ordinary man.

The *Vedas* are divided into four parts viz. the *Samhitas*, the *Brahmanas*, the *Aranayakas* and the *Upanishads*.

The *Samhitas* are hymns sung in exquisite poetry, in praise of the Vedic Gods, like *Indra*, *Agni*, *Varuna* etc.

The *Brahmans* are the liturgical portion of the Vedas and contain details about the *yagyas* and sacrifices to be performed by everyone.

*Aranayakas* are the mature thoughts of persons who having tasted life in all its aspects and not being satisfied with the transient pleasures of the senses, seek the salvation of the spirit in the peace of *Aranayas* or the forests.

The *Upanishads*, otherwise called the *Vedanta*, represent the quintessence of the philosophic thinking and mystic ideologies of seers and sages.

All these four portions present a pattern of life to which the Hindus owe their allegiance truthfully. In Hindu India, life and religion are so entirely mixed up that it is difficult to separate them. Next in importance to the *Vedas*, the *Puranas* are the records of the ancient history of India. The *Puranas* were written in metaphoric and symbolic form to make their reading interesting for the common masses. There are 18 *Puranas* in number. These *Puranas* contain knowledge about the evolution of Universe, History, Metaphysics, Astronomy, Astrology, Science, *Dharma – Shastra*, *Neeti – Shastra*, Law and Disintegration of universe etc. *Purana* is an encyclopaedia of various branches of knowledge and ancient wisdom.

The use of such *Puranic* and folkloric wisdom and myths and symbols in the Indian Writing in English came into vogue with the fiction of Mulk Raj Anand, Sudhin N. Ghose, R.K. Narayan, B. Rajan and Raja Rao. The knowledge of scriptures and epics to these novelists prove that they were deeply entrenched with the perennial philosophy of Hindu Mythology.

Prof. Harish Raizada rightly remarks about the literary value of myths and symbols in Literature:

In the modern literature myth and symbol have gradually acquired a great significance as the appropriate language and the appropriate form for expressing man's deepest thoughts

and highest aspirations. Myths embodying accounts of supernatural beings and actions originated to project philosophical speculation and explain religious beliefs. In course of time, their popularity increased and they became significant because of their apparent spontaneity and collectivity, expressing some lastingly and generally satisfying account of the experience of man. Owing to their universal nature and timelessness and power to convey that which cannot be otherwise expressed, the modern writers have found in myths a useful media of communicating the predicament of the contemporary man and their own view of life. By using mythical situations and characters in modern context, they can view contemporary human situations in a larger perspective of time and leave an immediate impact upon readers who because of their previous knowledge of myths find their response enriched by an element of recognition. (*Indian English Novelists some points of view* 42)

According to M. H. Abrams, there are three significant points in a myth. These are:-

- I. The hereditary character of a myth
- II. Belief of the particular cultural group
- III. Importance of the super-human beings.

If the central figure or the hero or the protagonist is not a super human-being, it is only a folk tale. Myths and symbols are focal points of accumulated hidden knowledge of a civilization. They are drafted in a mystic way in order to carry on an aroma of divinity. Hindu mythology is vast ocean full of such myths and symbols. Meenakshi Mukherjee observes "If a world view is required to make literature meaningful in terms of shared human experience, then the Indian epics offer a widely

accepted basis of such a common background which permeates the collective consciousness of a whole nation"(*The Twice Born Fiction* 131). Incorporating folktales, myths and stories is a means of creatively improving the learning process, making it more meaningful for all involved. One is aware that they can evoke a deep emotional response in some individuals.

Myths sprung up before religion. Every religion's stories are retellings of universal mythic themes. The creation of the world, the first man and woman, Heaven and Earth, a great flood, stories of heroes and heroines and dragons and serpents. The great mythic themes were unknown before the literature. All great works of literature *Beowulf*, *Canterbury Tales*, *Paradise Lost*, and *The Waste Land* etc. are based upon mythic themes or stories.

Since the development of writing, scholars have been dependent on such things like folktales, fables, myths, legends and mythical symbols which are the parts of folk literature. It is imbued with uninhibited energy and unrestrained motivations. Here in this study an attempt is made to unfurl this treasure of cultural heritage with reference to two Indo-Anglian novelists *Raja Rao* and *R. K. Narayan*.

The literary stories from *Ramayana* or the *Mahabharata*, the folk tales and rituals have been abundantly used by them. They have woven various legends, myths and folktales through the web of their imagination into the tales of their own to heighten the effect of their purposes. The incorporation of Indian legends, myths and folktales has imparted the characteristic Indianness to Indian Writing in English. Our traditions, customs, rituals, folklores which have found reflection in the writings of Indian English writers give an insight into Indian culture. The cultural ethos of every society is unique in its form and essence representing the character of its people, their experiences and beliefs. Myths, legends and folklore are in fact the embodiments of these cultural ethos that represent the underlying values and principles of life, the shared experience of the race, the rules and the codes of society.

The Indian writers have, time and again, returned to eternal roots of Indian culture and traditions, taking inspiration from mythology and folklore to impart vibrancy, Indianness, variety, complexity and effusiveness to their writings.

The exploration of these myths, symbols, folktales, legends and mythical situations in the writings of selected Indian writers and find their interpretation in the contextual form has been mainly focused in this research work. It increases knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of the subject of Indian folklore and its role in the enrichment of Indian Writing in English which is a vast arena today with new trends emerging, new talents making their mark, new creative and critical branches sprouting in various directions. With the thematic varieties, technical experiments and linguistic innovations, it is burgeoning every day.

It also concentrates upon discovering the theory, scope and significance of folklore. It examines various categories and types of myths and mythology and the generic differences between myth, legend and folklore. It is an identification of major mythical, archetypal themes in literature and the aspects which are relevant to literature. Besides, it also finds out its relevance to community and the resurgence and vitality of myth today and answers how the folk – theme and mythologies have enriched the literatures and why the artists have been using it as a technique in their writing.

Contemporary Indian writers have attempted to cross cultural boundaries across time, going back to the past in a metamorphic sense to retrieve ancient traditions by incorporating them in their productions. The folklore and myths have been abundantly used by Indo-Anglian writers as it provides the competence to reach to the human psyche and articulates our fears and dreams, hopes and aspirations.

The study not only identifies the incorporation of folk theme and mythology in literature but recognizes its role in the enrichment of art form and infers the values of a culture through evidence from its mythology. The present research presents the subject of folklore with a new perspective. It heightens the history of Indian folklore

and its scope, its current significance and relevance to literature. It adds a new dimension to the subject of myths and mythology by bringing out the various components of folklore and myths, various types of myths and the purposes which they serve.

The study enhances the socio-cultural value of the folk traditions. Indian society is still governed by societal roles and norms that ensure a continuity and survival of its cultural mores. In ancient and pre-literate cultures, stories provided an important means for preserving and perpetuating the myths, rituals, history and other information considered to be of value. For this reason, the reading of folklore can provide a means for gaining insight and understanding of a culture thoroughly.

This research ascertains the basic themes and sub-themes dealt with by the Indian writers in their writings. Folklore and its themes are universal, timeless and ageless. It is a mirror charged with echoes of the past and the hints of the future. They are important constituents of our mental make - up and vital forces in building up of human society. The present study highlights the various aspects of folk-literature which are relevant to contemporary literature. It discerns the causes of its resurgence from few decades and the rising universality and vitality of myths and their integration in literature.

It finds out the reasons that why artists draw plots, characters, themes and style from ancient folk tradition and why it has been a source of enchantment and entertainment from time immemorial. The research acquaints about the relationship between tradition and contemporaneity. It brings out the reasons for its inclusion in literature by the writers and using it as a technique and a vehicle of new vision in their productions. Each writer employs these folkloric materials in their own way in different genres of poetry, drama and fiction. The research is significant from the viewpoint of bringing out vitality, universality and its application in literature.

It analyzes and evaluates the various aspects of mythology and folklore as portrayed by the two great luminaries of Indian writing in English in their works. The

chief novels of the aforesaid writers have been critically evaluated and special emphasis has been laid on the meaning, definition, growth and development of mythological and folk elements in the modern perspectives.

India, the country of diverse religions, languages and cultures is replete with folklore and such myths and mythical allusions which increase the diversity of experience and export a vast amount of Indian culture and thought to the rest of the world. This study discovers and identifies major mythical, archetypal themes in Indian literature. It traces the influence of contents and characters of mythology on literature and the universality and vitality of myth today, the tension between tradition and contemporaneity. Thus this is the contribution of the study that the corpus of writing of Rao and Narayan has been presented through the spectacles of folklore and the function of folklore in enriching the text has been analysed in detail.

This research work presents an insight into Indian culture, Indian mythological allusions and its incorporation in Indian Literature. History books are filled with the names and dates and events which shaped our world but it is folklore which remembers the hopes, fears, dreams and details of everyday lives. It tells us our history, describes where we live, what our values are and ultimately who we are. It has only been in the recent past that a re – recognition and resurgence of the value of oral tradition i.e. folklores has emerged in various corners of our society. In order to bridge the gap between urban and rural consciousness, between the past and the present; the use of mythology to present the modern predicament has emerged as a new trend in post-modernist literature. By using similar mythological situations a broader dimension is given to the present-day chaotic conditions in which humanity is living today. The mythical past affirms man's relationship to the transcendent. It has a value-structure. It is a rediscovery of the past for the present, and an adaptation for the future.

The study of myths and folktales is important not only due to its possible historical and scientific accuracy but because of its metaphorical character.



Mythicizing reality through myths has a purpose if they are fully integrated within the texture of theme as in *The Wasteland*. In Indo–Anglian writings also the writers have made conscious and unconscious use of folklore or myths as a technique.

The writers like Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan have made an effort to retrieve, rediscover and redefine the elements of culture in a creative way, by a return to pride in one's roots, while looking ahead.

In the case of **Raja Rao** the use of myths and archetypes is a legitimate device as he prefers not to depend much on external actions. His employment of myths and folk-elements is largely influenced by the *Puranic* technique of stories within the story. His two novels *Kanthapura* (1938) and *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) have been studied in detail in the ensuing chapters to find out how the extensive use of legends, myths and folk wisdom has imparted integrity, timelessness and comprehensibility to the fiction of Rao.

In both the novels *Kanthapura* and *The Serpent and the Rope*, the myths, fables and legends are inseparable from their fabric. The desire to attach timeless significance to the contemporary reality is in the mind of the novelist when he discloses his desire in the *Foreword* to his very first novel *Kanthapura* to let "...the past mingle with the present and gods mingle with men..." (*Foreword KP*). Of all Indian writers of fiction in English, it is Raja Rao whose work is perhaps the most Indian, both in content and the form. He imparted many elements to Indian fiction: an epic breadth of vision, a metaphysical rigour and depth of thought, a symbolic richness, a lyrical fervor and an essential *Indianness* of style. These were the results of his knowledge of ancient Indian tradition and modern western attitudes. According to Raja Rao, "The Indian novel can only be epic in form and metaphysical in nature. It can only have story within story to show all stories are only parables" (Joshi and Rao *Studies in Indo-Anglian Literature* 167). The consciousness of myth and parables as powerful literary mode of the interpretation of the timelessness of the contemporaneity has been rather slow in the Indo-English fiction and this has been so

in the country like India which is the repository of mythologies, in the country acclaimed as *Vishwa-Guru*.

Myth is a traditional but unauthentic story or tale created by ancient sages and seers with the obvious intention of interpreting the nature of existence as well as conception of good and evil. They reflect the culture and ideology of the people of a region and are related to their religious beliefs and rituals. They are the profound expressions of the varied experiences, basic emotions, inner desires, feelings and thoughts of human beings. They have sprung from their specific social and cultural background and have the essential colour of folk tales or folklores. Myths, in spite of their unknown and ancient origins, have a very distinct advantage as a literary mode. Their intent has been to interpret the predicament of the contemporary individual in the larger perspective. There has been a constant attempt on the part of the modern man to compare his plight with that of the mythical past or his action or behavior with that of the superhuman heroes of the myths. Mythical analogies help the writer to communicate their ideas with precision and economy of diction. Raja Rao was deeply influenced by the traditional lore of India which abounds in scriptures like *Bhagavad Gita*, *Upanishads*, *Puranas* and epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. He is a true *Sadhaka*, who considers literature – a spiritual experience. His traditional and mythical sensibility can be seen in almost, all his works, even his casual similes have mythical references and allusions.

*Kanthapura* is a novel in which Rao has consistently followed the *puranic* technique and folk-wisdom. The background of the novel is the Indian National Movement for Freedom in which Mahatma Gandhi is like a super hero who can be seen nowhere but permeates everywhere. In spite of its social, realistic mode, the novel revolves round its mythic, philosophical and symbolic framework.

The *Puranic* technique and folk element has been amazingly sustained in his work *The Serpent and the Rope* too.

In a letter to M.K. Naik, Raja Rao says:

*The Serpent and the Rope* is to be taken like all my writing as an attempt at a *Puranic* recreation of Indian story-telling; that is to say, the story, as a story is conveyed through a thin thread to which are attached (or which passes through) many other stories, fables and philosophical disquisitions, like a *mala* (garland). (quoted in *Raja Rao* 84)

**R. K. Narayan**, a major novelist and one of the most admired writers, has unobtrusively built up an edifice of fiction which will endure the worst ravages of ephemeral trends and flashy vogues in literature. The myths, legends and folktales have been an integral part of his novels. He has significantly gone back to the roots of Indian myth, tradition and culture and has recreated for us the rich and vibrant picture of Indian society, culture and its people. The use of tales from the *Hindu* mythology, the teachings of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the austere religious practices and beliefs add strength to the fictional art of R. K. Narayan. He has created a fictitious little town called Malgudi – a world of *Krishna*, *Ganesha*, *Hanuman*, astrologers, *snake – charmers*, *pundits*, *devadasis*, ghosts, demons and such other spirits. When he depicts the life of the tradition-bound south Indians, he manages to accomplish more than the invention of a literary place; he offers a portrayal of a folk culture. Narayan writes in *My Days* –

By bus and train, I explored every nook and corner, listened attentively to the claims of the local enthusiasts...that those footprints on a forest tract were Rama's or that the golden tint to the lily pond was imparted by Sita when she plunged in for a cool bath. In every place every one found token of a legendary hero or mark left by the gods during a brief sojourn. (166-67)

In *The Guide*, *The Man-eater of Malgudi* and *A Tiger for Malgudi* he has made a skillful use of analogues from *Hindu* mythology which makes reality more easily comprehensible, pertinent and interesting.

*The Guide* (1958) is a synthesis of folk and mythological allusions with the Indian philosophy. Narayan has adopted them from Hindu scriptures and shows the transformation of its protagonist with the help of these elements.

*The Man-eater of Malgudi* (1961) is based on mythological legend and also explores inter-caste dynamics and the conflict between tradition and modernity.

In the novel *A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983) Narayan has made use of Indian legends and folktales to suggest that beasts may be as capable of thought and feeling as human beings.

Both the novelists have made the use of myths, mythologies and folklore as the source for their fiction, not for the deification of the chosen myths but to recount the myths to the present and to the past beliefs found in those myths. They have rejuvenated the Indian myths and folklores in a true sense. Their affinity with the Indian myths, folk communities and with other oral traditions enables them to develop the themes, shape the structure of their novels and delineate the characters remarkably.

Recently some researchers have worked on the related topics like G.A.Ghanshyam's depiction on *Myths and Legends in the plays of Girish Karnad*, K. Radhai's work on *Treatment of Reality, Myth and Fantasy* in the select plays of Girish Karnad, J. Vijaygowri's research paper on *The Use of Myth in Karnad's Hayavadana*.

In poetry section some articles and research papers have been written on the subjects like *Critical Evaluation of Toru Dutt as a Poetess* by Dr. Rakesh Ravi, *Indian Ethos in the poetry of Toru Dutt* by Rajiv Dubey, *A. K. Ramanujan and the*

*search for Roots* by M.K.Naik, *The Presence of the Past: The Sense of Time in the Poetry of A.K.Ramanujan* by Reuben Elizabeth.

In Indian fiction, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao are the writers on whom extensive research has been done but still new perspectives and new outlooks are there to be explored. The related works are *The Use of Myth in R.K.Narayan's The Man-Eater of Malgudi* by Kulbhushan, *Reality and Myth in R.K.Narayan's The Guide* by Inder Nath Kher, Aithal S. Krishnamoorthy & Rashmi Aithal. *Interracial and Intercultural Relationships in Raja Rao's The Serpent and the Rope.*, Dayal, Prabh. *The Influence of Vedanta on Raja Rao*, Gemmil, Janet P. *Elements of the Folktale in Raja Rao's Cow of the Barricades*, Nagarajan, S. *A Note on Myth and Ritual in The Serpent and the Rope*, Rothfork, John. *Religion and Culture in Raja Rao's The Serpent and the Rope*. Folklore has made a major contribution to the world of arts and literature. Many folk stories and folk songs are beautiful works of art themselves. Folklore has also inspired master-pieces of literature, music, painting and sculpture. The English poet Geoffrey Chaucer used a number of folktales in his famous work - *The Canterbury Tales*. William Shakespeare based several of his plots on folktales. These plays include *King Lear*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Certain legends and myths have attracted artists, composers and writers for centuries. One legend tells us about a medieval German scholar named Faust who sold his soul to the devil. This legend has been the basis of many novels, plays, operas and oriental works. *Faust*, a drama by Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, is probably the greatest work in German Literature. Not less famous is Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, an adaptation of the same theme in English Literature.

Every major culture in the world has a wide variety of folktales to its credit. *The Arabian Nights* includes stories such as *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp*, and *The Seven voyages of Sindbad the Sailor* is a collection of fairytales and folktales from cultures in Asia and North Africa. *Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm* gathered a famous collection of German fairytales and folktales in the early 1800s. The best known tales in this collection include *Rumpelstiltskin* and *Hansel and Gretel*. Epics like the *Illiad*

and the *Odyssey* still continue to be the delight of generations. Ballads which tell dramatic stories in verse like those of Robinhood, stories which illustrate moral stories like *Aesop's Fables*, fantasies like Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, adventure stories like Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* are all adaptations of folklore.

*The Incredible Journey* by Sheila Burford, a Canadian author, describes how two dogs and a cat travel together through the Canadian wilderness to reach the humans they love. In the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries, even Cartoons have their foundation in folk literature. Cartoons based on mythological characters like *Krishna*, *Arjuna*, *Bheema*, *Karna*, *Luv – Kush*, *Hanuman* and *Ganesh* have been the source of enchantment and amazement in later centuries.

The nature of research in this study has been descriptive, explanatory and co-relational. For carrying out the research, an in-depth textual study of selected works *The Guide*, *A Tiger for Malgudi*, *The Man-eater of Malgudi*, *The Serpent and the Rope* and *Kanthapura* has been made. The textual evidences have been searched to explore mythic and folkloric incorporation in the Indian Writing in English and to prove the relation between folklore and literature. The major constituents of Indian folklore viz. *Panćatantra*, *Hitopadeśa*, *Śuka – Saptati*, *Nīti Śastra*, *Kathasaritsagara* etc. have also been dealt with to bring out the origin, development and the scope of the folkloristic. Indian mythological writings, vedāntic philosophy has also been illumined in relation to the incorporation of mythological themes in the fiction of Rao and Narayan.

Folklore differs from myth in that it is the vernacular expression of beliefs, customs and traditions that identify a particular group of people. Classical mythology, and elements of rituals associated with the heroic quest are all narrated through the language of Indian folklore. Hence the oral traditions, vernacular expressions, are all part of Narayan's and Raja Rao's narrative. Myth is both a usable form and a process by which both could affirm what the larger culture had discredited or marginalized by appropriating, revising and reshaping that form for the fiction. Likewise, folklore is

not a collection of things, of commodities but a communication process that operates within the given cultural context. Therefore, the present study will also consider the ways in which the authors transformed and adopted the folkloristic and mythic phenomena to suit the demand of the age.

**Chapter – 2 Thematic Concerns** deals with the thematic study of the selected novels chosen for the research. It provides the framework of the ideas, concepts and techniques used by the novelists in their works. The selected works have been studied and analyzed in the light of implementation of folklore and mythology into them. All the major thematic concerns of the novels have been dealt comprehensively.

**Chapter – 3 Folk Elements: Social and Cultural Contexts** explores the past status of folk-literature and mark out its current significance. It presents the analysis of inter-relationship of folklores and Indian English Fiction. It imparts a new insight by evaluating the selected novels in the light of social and cultural contexts of the folk elements. This chapter deals with the history, definition, evolution and scope of folklore and discusses the major writings of this genre prevailing in Indian culture. *Panćatantra*, *Hitopadeśa*, *Śuka Saptati*, *Jataka Tales* have been briefly introduced here so as to prove the liaison between folklore and fiction of Rao and Narayan. First, the chief characteristics of Folklore have been identified and then they are explored and illustrated from the selected novels. Many verses from *Hitopadeśa* and other story – collections have been found similar to the plot, characterization and development of the stories of the novels. In the Post – Colonial India the collection and study of Folklore gained a tremendous momentum. The scope of Folklore studies and place among the other disciplines has changed over the years in accordance with changing scholarly viewpoints. It has also been viewed as an auxiliary discipline of such fields of study as ethnology, sociology, history of culture etc. Modern Folklore studies are gradually becoming an independent discipline within the overall field of arts as it investigates written works, songs, instrumental music, dance, drama and other collective manifestations of folk creativity. This chapter brings out the social

and cultural perspective of Folklore through the illustrations from the novels of Rao and Narayan.

**Chapter – 4 Mythological Allusions: An Exploration** focuses on the incorporation of the mythological allusions in the Indian Fiction. It lays a special emphasis on the exploration of mythological references used by the two chief novelists of Indian Writing in English in their writings. It also presents the contemporary relevance of mythological allusions in the literature. Besides, discussing the brief history and definitions of Mythology by various mythologists, this chapter brings out the mythical episodes and mythical characters incorporated in the works of Raja Rao and Narayan. Many episodes and characters from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have been revitalized in the writings of these two novelists. *Kanthapura* is the retelling of the Ramayana, a *mini – purana* while *The Serpent and the Rope* is *maha – purana* enriched with the teaching and preaching of *Śankara*, *Mādhva*, *Yagnyavalkya*, *Bhartrahari* and *Kalidasa*.

*The Guide* propounds many verses of *Bhagavad Gita*. *The Man-eater of Malgudi* represents the mythological and eternal conflict of good and evil in which good always emerges as victorious. Three *Gunas – Rajas, Tamas and Sattva*; three *Yogas – Karma, Bhakti and Gnāna* have been practiced in the novels of Narayan and Rao both.

**Chapter – 5 Form and Technique** discusses about the narrative techniques and various creative and performing abilities of the authors taken into account for the research work. This chapter presents a contrast between the style and narrative skills of Narayan and Rao. One is a *Sadhaka* while the other an *Upasaka*; many similar and dissimilar features of both the founder novelists of Indian Writing in English have been enumerated in this chapter.

**Chapter - 6 Conclusion** presents a comprehensive study of the entire work as to reach to the conclusion. India, the land of four Vedas, eighteen *puranas* and mother of all languages i.e. Sanskrit has been acclaimed as *Vishwa – Guru*. It is the impact of



perennial Indian Philosophy which set India on highest pedestal in divinity and spirituality. Many religions sprouted and flourished on its fertile land. It is the land of diverse religions, folktales, fables, myths, rituals and festivals where every nook and corner reverberates with mythical and folkloric mesmerism which have magnetized the Indians and non-Indians for so long. They find peace of mind and soul on this religious land and quench their spiritual thirst by quaffing the divine ambrosia of Indian Eternal Philosophy and moral teachings. It has been discovered during this research that the writings of Narayan and Rao carry an incense of Eternal Philosophy, an exuberance of spirituality and mythology; simplicity and charm of folktales through which they weave their every tale with truth, holiness and enchanting imaginations; and take us into the world of fantasy. The findings of this research show that the writings of Raja Rao and Narayan are truly characteristic of Folklore as the main features of Folklore have been found in their writings. Folklore explains the mysteries of the world, articulates our fears and dreams, imposes order on the apparent random, even chaotic nature of life, entertains and educates. All the representative elements of Folklore characterize the writings of Rao and Narayan. As the Folklore is the living history of the people of a particular time and place, the novels of Narayan and Rao too, give an account of the living history of the people of Post – Colonial India. As Folklore serves as a best medium to pass on living culture or traditions to the posterity, the works of Rao and Narayan have also been found as the repository of Folklore and vehicle of transmitting this wealth to the next generation.

The present era is the era of multi – culturalism and multi – ethnicity where the folk culture of one place is intermingling with another; where many inter-cultural and intra-cultural ventures in writings and in other fields are taking place. The study of folklore and its relationship with other genres of writing can unfurl many aspects of intertextuality. For folk text is a kind of web which is spread "behind, under, around all the texts of our society, and in all its strata, not merely among the rural and the illiterate . . . city and village, factory and kitchen, Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina,

Christian and Muslim, King, Priest and clown, the crumbling alamanac and the runaway computer – all are permeated by oral traditions, tales, jokes, beliefs and rules of thumb not yet found in books" ( *Who Needs Folklore?*5). The present study is relevant in the above context as it brings out the revival and resurgence of Oral Traditions, Mythology and Folklore. The Folklore or Oral Traditions mainly emerge from and belong to the field of illiterate and marginalized people. It is a tool by which the people of subaltern groups can give voice to their predicaments. Keeping in view the growing interests in subaltern literature, the present research would be pertinent. Hence the study brings together past, present and future by eliciting the resurgence, relevance and significance of folklore and mythology in the modern world in relation to the novels of Rao and Narayan and contributes to the field of folklore as well as to the literature.

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## *Chapter – 2*

# *Thematic Concerns*

## Chapter – 2

### Thematic Concerns

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Raja Rao is one of the triumvirates of the pioneering Indian novelists in English. He is, undoubtedly, the most brilliant writer that India has produced. He is unparalleled in fictional technique and in terms of style. His pen derived its sources from the hoary wisdom and time – honoured traditions of India. His writings and expressions were the result of careful and conscious pondering over the subject almost to the point of a perfectionist. This perfectionism in Raja Rao brought meager fictional output and that too after long gaps.

He infused the quintessence of Indian Scriptures into his novels and made them philosophical. *Swami Vivekananda* was a great preacher who preached Indian Philosophy to the world; Raja Rao also did the same but in the manner of a litterateur. He propagated Indian philosophy through the corpus of his writings and gave it an unprecedented exposure. For Raja Rao, India is not a geographical entity but a metaphysical and spiritual reality transcending geographical and temporal barriers. Though he spent most of the part of his life in abroad, yet his soul remained firm rooted in the Indian soil. Indianism, Brahminism, the rites and rituals are so well expressed through him as from the mouth of a native Indian Brahmin. His philosophical outlook found expression in *The Serpent and the Rope* while rites and rituals, myths and legends constitute the structural design of *Kanthapura*.

*Kanthapura* (1938) can be termed as *Gandhi Purana* as Gandhi has been incarnated as Rama. By slaying the red foreigners who represent the ten headed *Ravana* he will prove the supremacy of truth and goodness over evil. The story covers the volatile phase of Indian Freedom Struggle i.e. between Gandhi's *Dandi March* in 1930 to *Gandhi-Irwin Pact* in 1931.

It is a sad tale of a village which is representing the whole India in microcosm. It is a story told in retrospect by one of its former inhabitants, *Achakka*, an aging grandmother. *Achakka*'s narration starts with an elaborate description of the location of the village. *Kanthapura* is a small village in the district of Kara in Mysore, South India. It is situated on the slopes of the Western Ghats which form a wall along the Malabar Coast, facing the Arabian Sea. Cardamom, rice and coffee are the chief crops of the region and there are forests of teak and jack of sandal and sal. *Kanthapura* has about a hundred houses divided into a number of quarters; the *Brahmin* quarter, the Potters quarter, the weavers' quarter and *Sudra* quarter. Some characters like Postmaster Surya Narayana, Patwari Nanjundia, Waterfall Venkamma, Corner-House Moorthy, Temple House People, Fig-Tree House People, Coffee Planter Ramayya, one -eyed Linga and so on are depicted with their queer idiosyncrasies.

Like other villages in India, *Kanthapura* too has its own myths, deities and its own superstitions. The Goddess *Kenchamma*, residing on the *Kenchamma* Hill is the presiding deity of the village. It is believed that she protects the villagers from famine and diseases like chicken-pox, small-pox and cholera. There is a folk song which glorifies the tasks and miracles of Goddess *Kenchamma* :-

*Kenchamma, Kenchamma, Goddess benign and bounteous*

*Mother of Earth, blood of life, Harvest queen, rain crowned,*

*Kenchamma, Kenchamma, Goddess benign and bounteous. (KP 4)*

The story starts with Moorthy finding out a half-sunk *Shiva-Linga* and the resultant construction of the temple and the festivities surrounding the occasion of *Sankar – Jayanthi* and *Harikatha*. Jayaramachar, the *Harikatha* man tells strange *Harikathas*, for along with the gods and goddesses, he would bring in Gandhi, the Swaraj, Khaddar, and the Red-man, thereby mingling politics and religion. The *Harikathas* are having the mythical analogy of India's glorious past. Gandhi is



elevated to the level of *Rama* and *Krishna* who fought with the demons as Gandhi was fighting with the Red-men. But the political propaganda which was being carried out in the garb of *Harikatha* soon reached the government and Jayaramachar is immediately arrested. The government agent Bade Khan keeps prowling about the village and forms an alliance with Bhatta, a corrupted and greedy Brahmin of *Kanthapura* who agrees to work against Moorthy and the other Gandhi men of the village. They curbed the dissemination of nationalistic spirit in *Kanthapura*. Thus there were two conflicting forces in *Kanthapura* – the Gandhi movement for freedom represented by Moorthy and his friends and government repression represented by Bhatta and Bade Khan.

Moorthy started involving with all the people including *pariahs* for awakening in them Gandhism and adopting Gandhian ways – spinning and weaving etc. Bhatta's threats, Moorthy's refusal to yield and the shock of having excommunicated proves fatal to Narsamma (Moorthy's mother) and one morning she is found dead in the fields. Even after his mother's death, Moorthy continues in his mission with indomitable spirit and zeal.

After his confrontations with the officials of Skeffington Coffee Estate and Bade Khan, he forms a Congress committee with Patel Range Gowda, Ramayya, Elder Siddayya and even the Pariahs like Rachanna, Lingayya and Madanna. A few months after this, Moorthy is arrested by police and taken to *Karwar* on false charges of arranging the attack of the Pariahs on the police. He is sentenced for three months of rigorous imprisonment. In the absence of Moorthy, it is Rangamma who takes up leadership of the people and also discusses the *Vedic* texts with the villagers. Campaign people refuse to pay the revenue. Their lands are laid waste and they are forced to leave the village. The villagers of all castes and professions and labourers of the Coffee Estate readily meet the onslaught of the police and government. Satyagrahis are beaten and tortured. Some face threats and some leave their native place *Kanthapura* and settle down in another village *Kashipura*. Dr. M.K. Naik considers *Kanthapura* as “ ... a story of a Small South Indian village caught in

maelstrom of the freedom struggle of the 1930s and transformed so completely in the end that ‘there’s neither man nor mosquito’ left in it” (*Raja Rao* 57). The beginning and the end is like a folk tale which starts with “Our village . . . *Kanthapura* is its name” (*KP* 1) and ends with prays to Goddess *Kenamma* who will save them from every calamity. The beginning and the end can also be termed as mythological as it starts with the founding of *Shiva-linga* and ends with deluge, the *Pralaya*, one of the major motifs of folklore.

Thus *Kanthapura*, an obscure, outdated and slumbering hamlet, leapt to life with the dynamic spirit of Gandhian movement. It delineates, step by step, the social as well as individual, political as well as economic, moral as well as spiritual elevation of *Kanthapurians*. They redeem their village from the social evils of untouchability, racial discrimination, women backwardness, disunity and toddy or wine drinking. The development is gradually noticed in Moorthy and the village folk in the form of the incidents throughout the novel. The whole narration goes on in a story – telling manner. The moral development is prominent and inevitable as we find the villagers equating Gandhiji with *Brahma, Shiva and Krishna* who were all saviours in our Hindu Mythology and to violate their sayings would be a sacrilege. The Indian freedom struggle is manifested here in the mask of folklore. The folk of *Kanthapura* takes part in folk activities of *Harikathas*, the Hindu festivals and the folk songs and believe in their folk deity Goddess *Kenamma*. It was their conviction in folk beliefs that they did not fear to become a part of struggle.

Gandhian consciousness is conveyed through Moorthy who transforms the life of an entire community. The most interesting thing about the novel is that the whole reformation is brought over the village by just following the various methods of communication as *Harikathas, Bhajans, Chants, Group-discussions, Gram – Sabhas, Ramlila* etc. and nothing violent is taken resort to. The garrulous old lady *Achakka* narrates the story in a typical Indian way and evokes the Indian spirit of folk-epic and *Puranas*.

**The Serpent and the Rope (1960)**, the second novel of Raja Rao brought out a new facet of his writings, the philosophical, transcendental outlook towards life and obsession for the knowledge of the self. It is, indeed, a modern Indian *Mahapurana*, both in content and form. It established the superiority of Indian philosophy, Oral traditions and great Indian Scriptures over the World Literature. It is an attempt at a *Puranic* recreation of story-telling and contains story within story, fables, legends, philosophical reflections on Christianity, Buddhism, *Vedānta*, *Tantra*, Mysticism, religion and politics. The manner of incorporating stories within stories is like *Panćatantra* and *Hitopadeśa*.

At the outset of the novel, Ramaswamy the protagonist of the story, declares himself as a Brahmin and off-spring of the great sages and seers like *Yajnyavalkya* and *Madhavacharya*, the great exponents of Dualistic school of *Vedānta* philosophy. The *Brahmin* is defined in the *Bhagavad Gita* as –

*Śamo damas tapah śaucham kśāntir ārjavam eva ċa*

*Jnānam vijnānam āsaktiyam brahma-karma svabhāvajam.* (BG 18.42)

Peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, knowledge, wisdom and religiousness – these are the natural qualities by which the Brahmins work and they are the duties of a *Brahmin* born of his nature (*trans.* Prabhupada BG 18.42). The spiritual ancestors of Ramaswamy succeeded in attaining self-realization and immortality but he found himself decrepit in attaining supreme salvation as he is immersed in ignorance and delusion. When Rama says “I was born a Brahmin” (*SR* 1), he feels proud on his noble lineage and this egoism binds him to the materialistic chain of this world. At first Rama is fully engrossed in materialistic pursuits. After the completion of his education, Rama becomes a lecturer in History. He chooses the *Albigensian* heresy as his subject of research and searches back on the Indian backgrounds. It is to complete his research work that he moves to France. He is granted a scholarship and his post at the university is kept vacant for him. In France, at University of Caen, he first meets Madeleine who teaches history there. She is a

girl of twenty six with bewitching beauty and Ramaswamy is only twenty one. Rama recollects, "Madeleine was so lovely, with golden hair ... it looked so magical, and it looked the perfect Nordic hair ... Her hair was gold, and her skin for an Indian was like the unearthed marbles with which we built our winter palaces" (SR 11). Madeleine is compared with "the palace of Amber seen in moonlight" (SR 13). Rama falls in love with her and soon marries her. In due course, Madeleine is blessed with a son to whom she baptizes as Krishna. Later on, the child falls ill and due to some superstition they change his name to Pierre. Despite all the cares and best medical facilities, the child could not survive and died in the age of seven months only.

After the death of child, Rama is informed from India that his father is seriously ill and he wishes Rama to return to India. Rama thus contemplates, "It seemed wiser for me to go. Madeleine would continue to teach and I would settle my affairs at Home. Mother's property had been badly handled by estate agent Sundarayya, the rents not paid, the papers not in order; and I thought I would go and see the university authorities too, for a job was being kept vacant for me" (SR 15). The life journey of Ramaswamy oscillates between India and France. He spent his childhood and boyhood in India by chanting the hymns and reading *Upanishads* at the age of four and offered the manes with his filial devotion with *til* and *kushas* grass. He enters different *milieus* and environments in Cambridge, Benares, Allahabad, Aix in Province, London etc. and becomes one of them like some aerial Brahmin.

A man is the product of the soil and carries its stamp on his personality, this is true for Rama. Wherever he resided, India was deeply rooted within him and had a great impact on his personality. This is the reason for the delineation of roaming bulls, the *sadhus*, the beggars, the *ghat* scenes, the Benares, the Kashi occupy a large space in the novel. "India is the Kingdom of God, and it is within you. India is wheresoever you see, hear, touch, taste and smell. India is where you dip into yourself, and the eighteen aggregates are dissolved" (SR 221).

He belonged to the lineage of courageous people. His grandfather Kittanna is known for certain heroics - being a good horse-rider, "The impossible, for

Grandfather, was always possible. He never – he, a *Brahmin* – never for once was afraid of gun or sword. He has the shine of a *Dharmaraja*” (SR 5). On the death of his mother Gauri, his father married again and again and Saroja, Sukumari and the eldest Kapila were born of one of his step – mothers. His now step-mother (Little Mother) loved Rama very much. His father was a good mathematician, “for figures are like gnomes, they entice you and lead you away, with backward-turned faces, to the world to the unknown”(SR 14). *Panini* and *Bhartrihari*, the great grammarians of India, were highly eulogized by him.

Rama's visit to India, the surrealist city Benares, the pious city Allahabad and the abode of *Shiva* - the *Himalayas* brings a new change in him and gives a new meaning of life to him. The use of ancient narrative media like long epistles, diary, small parables, folktales, legends etc. acquire a startling effectiveness because of the special tone of the narrator. He glorifies India by presenting *Sthala - Puranas* of every place he visited, “Benares is eternal,” says Raja Rao, “there the dead do not die, nor the living live” (SR 11). He relates the *sthalā – purana* in the following excerpt:

One remembered that it was here that the Aryans, when they first entered the country, camped under the ancestors of these trees, and the Ganges flowing by brought them the richness of green wheat-stalks, the yellow of sesame and the gold of sugar cane. It was somewhere here, too, that *Gargi* and *Yāgyavalkya* must have walked, and out of their discussions by wood-fire and by river-steps, was our philosophy born, and that noble, imperial heritage of ours, Sanscrit, the pure, the complete, the unique. He who possesses Sanscrit can possess himself. (SR 17)

Rao deals with the material culture of the place in these lines,“... magnificent copper work, inlaid with lacquer and ivory; the many bunches of false hair hanging from the roof; the multi-coloured bangles; and the rich fervid smell of *bhāng*, sarees

of intricate designs ...”(SR 10). The *Vishwanath* Temple, the *Annapurna* Temple, the *ghats* of Ganges; all lend a spiritual, folkloric aura to the story. Kashi (Benares) and Ganga flow in the bones and blood of every Hindu as it is illustrated by Rao in the novel, “Benares was indeed nowhere, but inside oneself ..... all brides be Benares born” (SR 24). Both the novels have been written with epic breadth of vision; hence they are hailed as *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. *Kanthapura* with the analogy of *Sita*, *Rama*, *Ravana* and *Hanuman* is called as *Ramayana* while *The Serpent and the Rope* with the doctrines of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the myths of *Radha*, *Krishna* and *Durvasa* is termed as *Mahabharata* of Raja Rao.

After the completion of funeral rites of his father, Rama went to Allahabad and there he met Savithri, the young western educated daughter of the Raja of Surajpur. She was betrothed to Pratap but she did not want to marry him. Rama was fascinated by her beauty and charm. When Rama returned to France for the completion of his research work, he found that the temperament of Madeleine was changing. Georges was visiting their residence frequently, Lezo also came there thrice a week to give lessons in *Pali* to Madeleine in order to help her to study Buddhism. Rama and Madeleine also visited Uncle Charles and Aunt Zoubie. Then Catherine, the cousin of Madeleine came to stay with them for some time. Georges and Catherine fell in love and later on they got married.

Savithri visited them on her way to Cambridge from India. Rama also visited Cambridge in connection with his research work. He came in close contact with Savithri. They got passionately attached with each other. One morning she came with coconut and *kumkum* and performed *aarti* and touched Rama's feet and took him to be her master with God as their witness. This is termed as *Gandharva - Vivah* in Hindu mythology. Rama also consented by giving her the toe-rings which Little Mother had given to him for Madeleine. Savithri was ready to elope with him, but he advised her not to do so. Savithri married Pratap Singh but could not be a good wife to her husband.

Rama came back to India to supervise the arrangements of Saroja's marriage as head of the family. During Rama's stay in India, Madeleine underwent a Caesarian Operation, her life was saved but her second child also died. This crisis changed the whole course of Rama and Madeleine's conjugal life. Madeleine adopted the path of renunciation and became the follower of the tenets of Buddhism. She spent most of her time in prayer and meditation. She was completely transformed into a Buddhist.

Rama went to London for his research work and he fell ill and got hospitalized for a long term medical treatment. Savithri who was in London frequently visited him. Lakshmi, a young lady whom he had met at Cambridge, also visited him. After his medical treatment he returned to Paris and there he found that Madeleine had become a *Sanyasin*. After a short stay with her they were finally divorced. Though, Savithri was connected to him with a spiritual bond. In the end Rama finds most of his worldly ties cut off. He is filled with a strange restlessness. He realizes that he must go to his Guru at Travancore. As it is expressed by G.S. Amur:

The end of Rama's quest at the feet of his Guru is in keeping with the age old spiritual tradition of India which gives the Guru the highest place in Man's quest for Truth. Rama does not tell us which way is to be his. But it is enough to know that he is on his way to his Guru, that his ship is nearing port.

*(Raja Rao 140)*

Rama is said to be the self – portrait of the novelist and the novel is acclaimed as his spiritual autobiography. The Illusion and Reality, the Vedāntic and Buddhistic philosophy, the eastern and western civilization, the Indian and European tradition and the ancient and modern cults are all amalgamated into one and spun into a single thread of *The Serpent and the Rope*. Through the stories and folktales of *Budumekaye*, *Tristan and Iseult*, *Gautama* and the legends and myths of *Satyakama*

and *Ramadevi*, the princess of Avanti, *Radha*, *Krishna* and *Durvasa*, Rao has touched chords of Indian psyche in a very poignant way. Thus the folklore has provided the foreground and background to place this classical novel on the map of Indian Writing in English. The incorporation of folklore in Rao's novel will be dealt with in detail in the subsequent chapter.

To read **R.K. Narayan** is to know India as his novels also abound in Indian myths, legends, fables, images and folklore. Throughout his novels, Narayan has referred to the *Gita*, the *Puranas* and other Hindu Scriptures as his ideals to guide him. *The Guide* can be described as *bildungsroman* where the protagonist Raju gets through the process of self-development in psychological moral and spiritual terms. During his journey from Railway Raju to Saint Raju he gained maturity and turned from a vagabond to a holy saint. As a guide he had no aims or goals in his life but as a spiritual saint he sacrificed his life for the sake of welfare of the people of *Mangala* village. Raju got an inner force and moral strength to move ahead for his pledge of observing fast till rain. His spontaneous sermonizing to the illiterate villagers is supposed to be based on the essentials of Indian myth and lore that he had acquired from the folktales and mythological stories narrated by his mother in childhood. They were residing somewhere in his deep psyche since childhood in a dormant manner but became alive in the catalytic company of Velan, a villager in *Mangala* village.

The theme of enforced sainthood gave birth to this novel. *The Guide* was written between 1956 and 1958 when Narayan was in the United States. The circumstances, in which the novel was written, have been set down by him in his memoir. As it is expressed in these words by R.K.Narayan:

At this time I had been thinking of a subject for a novel: a novel about someone suffering enforced sainthood. A recent situation in Mysore afforded the setting for such a story. A severe drought had dried up all the rivers and tanks;



Krishnaraja Sagar, an enormous reservoir feeding channels that irrigated thousands of acres had also become dry, and its bed, a hundred and fifty feet deep, was now exposed to the sky with fissures and cracks, revealing an ancient sub-merged temple, coconut stumps and dehydrated crocodiles. As a desperate measure, the municipal council organized a prayer for rains. A group of Brahmins stood knee-deep in water (procured at great cost) on the dry bed of Kaveri, fasted, prayed and chanted certain mantras continuously for eleven days. On the twelfth day it rained and brought relief to the country side.

This was really the starting point of *The Guide*. During my travels in America, the idea crystallized in my mind. I stopped in Berkeley for three months, took a hotel room and wrote my novel. (*My Days* 166-67)

The story of Raju is analogical to the life story of several saints from Hindu mythology like Sage *Valmiki*, *Purandarika*, *Bilva-mangala*, *Vamana* and *Rishysringa* which have been discussed in subsequent chapters of folklore and mythology. Raju, the single son of his parents, grows as a child under his mother's love and care, and father's strict guardianship in a typical traditional atmosphere of Malgudi. His mother tells him stories in the evening before going to the bed. One of his mother's objectives, apart from entertaining her little son, is to educate him in the sense of traditional culture and morality. These stories might have been from the episodes of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* to *Panćatantra* and *Jataka Tales*. The theme of such stories narrated by mothers and grandmothers at bed time is characteristically Indian with their sole aim of inculcating moral lessons. Mother is the first teacher of a child. Therefore, Raju got the first lesson of his life from his mother. Soon his father decided to send him to Pyol School and not to Albert Mission School, which was though near to his residence but indulged in converting the boys into Christians and insulting Hindu Gods. The conservative nature of Raju's father was the only reason

that he could not acquire good education. With the advent of train, Raju's education came to an end. Raju's father is not bothered about the education of his son and forces him to see the shop on Railway Station. Narayan criticizes such parents, who consider their children's education only as a means to achieve a material end. They make their children a laughing stock amongst the company of elites as illustrated in a verse in *Hitopadeśa*:

***The mother was his enemy fated, That father an adversary***

***By whom the child, left uneducated, A goose midst swans will always be.***

*(Hitopadeśa, Prastāvīka verse 38)*

In his shopkeeper's occupation he could not find the solace of heart and switched to the occupation of book selling. In leisure time he used to study books, thus educating himself and endeavouring to step up the higher ladder of social stratification. Even the book selling could not hold the interest of challenging Raju and the ardent desire of doing something adventurous forced him to work as a tourist guide and he became popular in a short time as Raju, the Guide.

Education has also been one of the thematic concerns of the novelist as Raju speaks authoritatively to the school master, "I like to see young boys become literate and intelligent. It's our duty to make every man happy and wise" (*The Guide* 41). Raju met Marco, an archaeologist, and his wife Rosie, a paragon of beauty and an ambitious dancer. Her husband does not allow her to dance. By and by, since Marco is busy with his own discoveries in caves and stones, Raju becomes Rosie's lover assuring her of launching her career as a renowned dancer. Rosie is transformed as Nalini, an emerging name in *Bharat Natyam* Dance. Later, Raju, out of jealousy intercepts a letter to Nalini by Marco's lawyer and forges her signature for the release of the jewellery from custody of a bank for which he is jailed. Though Raju was aware of unfairness of his attempts at seducing Marco's wife yet he pursued the wrong way, he ruminates, "A part of my mind went on say, 'No, No. It is not right.

Marco is her husband, remember it', not to be thought of' (G 69). It was the result of moralistic teachings of his mother which she imparted to him right from his childhood in the form of mythological stories.

Rosie, who belongs to the family of *Devadasis*, is raised from a banished state to a respectable social standard but her great inclination towards dance worked as her achilles heel. Raju took advantage of it, the acquaintance of Rosie with Raju changed into intimacy and then in illicit romance. After the separation from Marco, Rosie starts living in Raju's house, in spite of the protests of his mother, "You can't have a dancing girl in your house. Every morning with all that dancing and everything going on . . . it can't go on like this for ever. What will people say" (G 135-36). Her serpent dance with the twists and turns like snake was the beginning of venomous phase of their life. Serpent dance is a folk dance like *Kalbelia* dance of Rajasthan. The *Kalbelias* are nomadic tribes; their main occupation is catching snakes and trading snake venom. Hence, the dance movements and the costumes of their community bear a resemblance to that of the serpent. They are also known as *Sapera*, *Jogira* or *Jogi*. *Kalbelia* songs are based on stories taken from folklore and mythology and special dances are performed during *Holi*, the festival of colours. Their songs and dances are self – composed and transferred to them by their ancestors hence they are the part of oral-tradition.

After observing her dance Raju became assured of her becoming a great dancer and earning name and fame and Rosie became inclined towards Raju as the only source of fulfilling her latent desires. In jail, Raju behaved like a gentleman and there also he could not say no to anyone as it was his tendency of childhood. After his release from imprisonment, he took shelter in a village temple, situated on the outskirts of Malgudi. *Valmiki* acquired sainthood after a long penance and *tapasya* at the behest of *Narada* and then he became a Saint but here the bearded appearance of Raju enforced Velan and the villagers to take him as a great Saint. They both are sinner turned into saint. Though he revealed his past to Velan but still he had a deep reverence for Swami Raju. Velan was the real Guru of Raju who elevated him to the

state of self-realization. He listened to him kindly, patiently and changed him completely. The credulous villagers started coming to him to seek the ways of solving their various problems like marriages, quarrels or drought. They could not recognize the real face hidden behind the mask of fake *Sadhu*. When the drought hit the countryside, he is forced to undertake fast unto death much against his will. As the following excerpt puts it:

It occurred to him that the best course for him would be to run away from the whole thing . . . any one might spot him within half an hour . . . They might drag him back to the spot and punish him for fooling them... He thought suddenly that if they would at least leave him alone at night, he could make some arrangements and survive the ordeal. The ordeal then would be only standing knee deep in water (if they could find it) muttering the litany for eight hours. (G 111)

He surrenders himself completely to the circumstances and dies a ruined man as nothing has left to do for him except observing fast, as he himself exclaims, “ ‘If by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly.’ For the first time in his life, he was making an earnest effort, for the first time he was learning the thrill of full application, outside money and love; for the first time he was doing a thing in which personally he was not interested. He felt suddenly so enthusiastic that it gave him a new strength to go through with his ordeal” (G 212). He reached at a situation from where no retreat was possible. His physical condition became critical, he was offered Glucose and saline but it was of no use. He beckoned to Velan to take him to the riverbed so that he might offer his prayers in the basin of water collected for the purpose. And there he collapses and tells Velan, “It is raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up, under my feet, up my legs.” And with that he sagged down (G 220). Here is a transformation from an ideal child into a tourist guide, then a romantic lover to fake *sadhu*, eventually from a fake *sadhu* to a true martyr.

This is analogical to the tale of *Panćatantra* ‘The Sage and the Mouse’ in which the mouse is turned into a cat then dog and then lion and ultimately realizes his own self and came into its true identity i.e. mouse. The same is true with Raju who aspired to gain higher status and became so ambitious that he forgot his roots, his moral values, his friends; his mother and even his own self. But at the end it was Velan who helped him to put off his mask and live as a true saint inwardly and outwardly.

Raju is 20<sup>th</sup> century version of the age old myths who guides Marco in the caves, Rosie in her dancing career, the peasants in worldly and spiritual matters but he himself remains misguided in his life journey. He could not recognize the true goal of his life, true purpose of his existence and became misguided. It is at the later part of novel when he meets Velan who emerged as his saviour and guides Raju, the Guide. According to Raghavacharyulu, he was “ultimately martyred in his attempt to become a divine tout between God and man. The Guide in guiding others is properly guided by Guide of all” (*The Two Fold Voice* 126). Through the mysterious guidance of God he attained the emancipation of soul.

The success of literature lies in blending both art and morality so that it can edutain (educate + entertain) the readers. Narayan spontaneously chooses the Hindu myths and legends around which his novels are usually woven. As a matter of fact, he owes a great deal to Hindu religion that gets reflected in his novels.

*The Maneater of Malgudi* is also based on such mythological and folkloric episodes from Hindu scriptures and epics. The main antagonist is Vasu, a replica of demon as found in the folktales. The structure of this novel is like folktale when Vasu haunts everyone like a devil and at the later part of novel, he himself dies in an unexpected way. The story is full of awe, wonder and mystery like the mysterious tales of Indian Folklore.

Vasu, the taxidermist, appears out of the blue at Nataraj’s press. To begin his career he was intending to get visiting cards. He learnt the art of stuffing animals

from a master named Suleimann, but before that he learnt wrestling and killed the Guru in an uncontrollable fury. During the conversation with Nataraj, Vasu takes over his attic as living cum working quarters for himself. He did not take permission or ask about the rent. “It was like having a middle aged man-eater in your office and home and with the same uncertainties, possibilities and potentialities” (MM 27). Vasu had the appearance of a monster of folklore. “. . . tanned face, large powerful eyes under thick eyebrows, a large forehead with a shock of unkempt hair like a black halo”(MM 13). He is an atheist like demons. He kills and shoots wild animals in Mempi forest. Eagle who is held sacred by Hindus as it is the vehicle of Lord Vishnu, he kills even it also and when Nataraj questioned about this he answered, “I want to try and make Vishnu use his feet now and then” (MM 64). Thus he bears a perfect image of the *rakshasa*, a monster. On the other hand Nataraj was a staunch believer in Hindu Gods. He brought up in a family where even to kill a fly was regarded as sacrilege. Nataraj was stunned when for the first time he saw an eighteen inch head of a tiger in the back seat of his jeep.

There is the archetypal theme of conflict between good and evil, the *sura* (God) and *asura* (demon). Nataraj, a religious, friendly and unambitious person caught in the trap of a person who shows all the definitions of a *rakshasa*. Nataraj was grateful for everything to the Goddess Laxmi, “I hung up a framed picture of Goddess Laxmi poised on her lotus, holding aloft the bounties of earth in her four hands, and through her grace I did not do too badly” (MM 1). He was a staunch believer in the ways of God while Vasu took himself up as God.

Nataraj is always surrounded by Mr. Sen, the journalist and Shastri, a monosyllabic poet and *Sanskrit* semi-scholar. Nataraj gets into trouble by the illegal activities of Vasu and finds it difficult to mend his ways. A small dog of an old man shot dead by him and the old man comes to complain Nataraj instead of Vasu. Nataraj promises to bring another puppy to him. People suspect a secret partnership between Vasu and Nataraj. When Vasu’s illegal shooting stops due to the strict vigil of the forest authorities, he indulges in seeking pleasures by bringing prostitutes and

call girls. Shastri and Nataraj both dislike the prostitutes marching up and down the stairs. Shastri cites the example of *Ravana* from *Ramayana*, who had ten heads, twenty arms and enormous yogic and physical power as a boon from God Shiva for remaining unvanquished. And yet he also met his downfall. Nataraj quotes example from the *Ramayana* to prove that “every *rakshasa* gets swollen with his ego. He thinks he is invincible, beyond every law. But sooner or later something or the other will destroy him” (MM 96). Besides *Ravana* he also recounts the fables of *Mahishasura* and a boon of immortality and invincibility; and an ability to create a demon like him with every drop of his blood he shed. At last he was also vanquished by the Goddess *Durga* who sucked the blood from his body.

*Bhasmasura* was such a monster, who after being blessed by *Shiva*, the boon of scorching everything he touched, desired to touch *Shiva* himself to test the boon. At last, tricked by *Mohini* (an incarnation of God Vishnu) to place his palms on his own head, reduced to ashes. This mythological truth applies in real life too. “Every man can think that he is great and live forever, but no one can guess from which quarter his doom will come” (MM 97). Such mythological fables have been used extensively by R.K. Narayan in his novels. K.R.S. Iyengar observes, “...they have been the ground plank of Indian culture” (*Indian Writing in English* 211).

All of a sudden Nataraj gets a surprise visit by Rangi, the infamous temple dancer who of late has become the mistress of Vasu. Much to his stunned disbelief and shock she informs him in secret that Vasu has been planning to shoot Kumara, the temple elephant, on the night of the festival when a procession of gods and goddesses is to be taken out into the streets of town. Nataraj tried a lot to save the elephant but having lost hope of rescuing him he surrenders to Vishnu. He cries out involuntarily “O Vishnu! . . . Save our elephant and save all the innocent men and women who are going to pull the chariot. You must come to our rescue now” (MM 183).

This is extracted from *Gajendra Moksha* or The Liberation of *Gajendra*, a *Puranic* legend from the 8<sup>th</sup> *Skandha* of the *Bhagavata Purana*, one of the most sacred books in Hinduism. In this episode Vishnu came down to earth to protect *Gajendra*, the elephant, from the clutches of *Makara*, the crocodile. With *Vishnu*'s help, *Gajendra* achieved moksha or salvation. This story was narrated by *Shri Śuka* to Emperor *Parikshit* at *Parikshit*'s request. The prayer by *Gajendra* on this occasion is called *Gajendra Stuti* :

*śuklāmbardharam Viśnum śaśi varnam śaturbhujam,*

*prasanna vadanam dhyāyēt sarva vighnōpa – śantayē.*

(*Bhagavata Purana Skandha 8*)

In this *śloka* the *Gajendra* is meditating upon Lord Ganesha who is clad in white garment, who is all pervading, who is as bright coloured as moon, who has a smiling face, having four shoulders or hands and who is the remover of obstacles. The similar cry is made by Nataraj to save Kumara, a temple elephant. Here the demon is Vasu. Nataraj had strong belief that Vishnu would come again in any form to rescue this animal. The prayers made with pure heart and for pious cause never remain unheeded and Vishnu listened to him. The same night when Vasu was to kill the temple elephant, he hit himself on a vital part of his head in order to kill a worrying mosquito and met with his own end.

Shastri differentiates the good and the evil and explains the fate of 'asura':

Every demon appears in the world with a special boon of indestructibility. Yet the universe has survived all the *rakshasas* that were ever born. Every demon carries within him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction and goes up in the thin air at the most unexpected moment. Otherwise what is to happen to humanity? (*MM 242*)



In *Kanthapura* the witness narrator *Achakka*, in *The Serpent and the Rope* the Little Mother, in *The Guide* Raju's mother and in *The Maneater of Malgudi* Shastri; all have one common element viz. carries an inexhaustible repository of mythical lore. In *The Maneater of Malgudi*, it is evident that Narayan is a great tale teller who assimilated the Hindu myths and folklore in an incredible manner. William Walsh rightly says:

The truth is that the Hindu myths and religious parables, like D.H. Lawrence's congregational hymns, are important not as theological scaffolding to the fiction but in being part of a whole economy of feeling itself sunk deep into the constitution of the novelist. These things are not present and influential not as a dogma or metaphysics but as a part of a mode of perception . . . They flow in and out of writer's thought and touch. The religious sense of Indian myth is part of Narayan's grip of reality, of 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. (*R.K. Narayan: A Critical Appreciation* 166)

Thus *The Maneater of Malgudi* presents conflict resolution between good and evil as manifested in Indian mythology and folklore.

*A Tiger for Malgudi* published in 1983 is a magnificent novel about a tiger Raja who came to possess the soul of an enlightened being. The novel established the fact that R.K. Narayan, committed as he is to Hindu way of life, consciously turns to legends and fables, which have given him sustaining power all through his career, as a novelist.

This novel is a beast fable illustrating the theme of renunciation, redemption and self-awareness. In his introduction to the novel, Narayan says that two things

contributed to its writing – one a newspaper report that a Swamiji had attended the *Kumbh Mela* festival at Allahabad accompanied by a tiger which apparently did no harm to anybody and went round with him like a faithful dog and second a four inch book mark with the picture of a tiger on it and the legend “I’d love to get into a good book” (*printed on the book mark*). Narayan fulfilled its wish and wrote a whole novel based on the life journey of a tiger. The tiger, Raja is the protagonist of the story. Like the tales of *Panćatantra*, *Hitopadeśa* and *Aesop’s Fables*, an animal is talking, thinking, recalling his past, sobbing and laughing. To the great surprise of readers, he is following ascetic rules of his Guru and the Vedāntic philosophy.

The *Kumbha Mela* is also associated with mythological event of *Samudra Manthan* – the churning of the sea. The *Amrita-Kumbha (Kalash)* came out with other divine things like *Kamadhenu*, *Kalpa – Vriksha*, *Dhanvantari* (the God of Health) etc. from the churning of the sea which was being done by *Devas* and *Rakshasas*, During the tussle between *devas* and *asuras* for the *Amrita-Kumbha*, the *Amrita* fell down on the earth at several places like Nasik, Allahabad, Ujjain, Haridwar etc. All such places became divine with that nectar and in every twelve years *Kumbha Mela* recurs at the confluence of the three rivers at all the above places.

R.K. Narayan came across a hermit with his companion a tiger at *Kumbh Mela* in Allahabad. He did not hold the animal on a leash since he claimed that they were brothers in previous life. Thus, the theme of rebirth is also running through the novel. The master of the tiger is a great *yogi* who is empowered with the immeasurable *yogic*, divine capabilities. He is a real *yogi* who metamorphoses a carnivorous animal into a sensible, vegetarian soul craving for his salvation. People also believe in his extraordinary powers by which he can control anything and travel at any distance. The story begins with an aged tiger Raja lying in its cage and contemplating on its past, its cubhood and wild days in jungle, his later life in bars as the circus star. It attains freedom when it breaks loose from a film – shooting camp and wanders into the town. The terror – stricken public attempts to get it shot but it

enters into a school. It is at this stage that a Swamiji turns up from nowhere and greets Raja as though he were his long – lost brother. The Swamiji will not let anyone call the tiger an animal, a mere beast and Raja follows Swami wherever he goes. This situation is similar to the rhyme *Mary had a little lamb* where lamb used to follow her wherever she went. Both had endearing feelings for each other. The prolonged companionship of the Master gave Raja the ability to understand human speech. The sage portrayed in the novel *A Tiger for Malgudi* renounces his house, his wife, children, his everything out of a total frustration in life. The sage compares his way of renunciation with Siddhartha. Siddhartha left home for the quest of truth, for the welfare of the entire mankind, there is a sea of difference between them on the manner of abandonment. Narayan has dealt in detail with the definition of *Sanyasi*. He says:

A *sanyasi* is one who renounces everything and undergoes a complete change of personality. Why one would become a *Sanyasi* is not easily answered – a personal tragedy or frustration, a deeply compelling philosophy of life, or a flash of illumination may drive one to seek a change. Whatever the cause, when one becomes a *Sanyasi*, one obliterates one's past. A *Sanyasi* is to be taken as he is at the moment. You can never ask a *Sanyasi* about his earlier life. He will never refer to it. It would be a crass, inconsiderate act even to ask a *Sanyasi* his name. He assumes a new name, bearing no mark of his ancestry or class, but indicative of some general beatitude. He had freed himself from all possessions and human ties. Among certain sects the man will even perform his own funeral ritualistically before becoming a *Sanyasi*. A *Sanyasi* is a wanderer living on alms, never rooted to any place except when he seeks the seclusion of a cave or forest, at some stage for prolonged meditation. (TM 9)

*Bhagavad Gita* defines the true Sanyasi as –

***anaśritah karmfalam karyam karm karoti yah,***

***sa sanyasi éa yogi éa na niragninar éākriyah.*** (BG 6.1)

Lord Krishna says, “one who enacts obligatory prescribed actions without expectation of the result of actions he is truly a renunciator and he is the true mystic, not he who lights no fire and performs no duty” (*trans.* Prabhupada BG 6.1). Apart from the tiger of the Grand Malgudi circus, the characters that figure in the novel are the circus captain and his wife Rita. The captain was adopted by Dadhoji of Poona who taught him to educate and tame animals. After the death of Dadhoji, the captain became the in-charge of the Grand Malgudi Circus. Rita is a quarrelsome wife to his husband and fed up with the same sort of activities that she has been performing in the circus. “I am not prepared to spare any of my girls or set fire to myself just to please your fancy. I’m not an orthodox wife preparing for *Sati*” (*A Tiger for Malgudi* 58). It may be noticed here that just by naming *Sati*, a mythological figure and spouse of Śiva, Rita made her intentions clear to the Captain. Though there is a long parable of being *Sati* but the name in that particular situation makes one elucidate oneself precisely. The captain retorted with, “Women are impossible, worse than twenty untamed jungle creatures on one’s hand at a time . . .” (*TM* 38). He replied in his own terminology of a ring master.

Separation as being the law of life is being echoed through the pages of the novel. Through the master himself; Narayan emphasizes the eternal truth, “No relationship, human or other or association of any kind could last forever. Separation is the law of life right from the mother’s womb. One has to accept it if one has to live in God’s plans” (*TM* 174). Right from the childhood, we start believing in rituals, dogmas, scriptural sayings and inevitability of things. We believe that “A great power has determined the number of breaths for each individual, who can neither stop them nor prolong” (*TM* 142). *A Tiger for Malgudi* is a tale wisely told in the manner of *Panćatantra* tales. A tiger is presented like human beings. Narayan presents the

tiger on the possible assumption that “he has only the appearance of a tiger, but he is not one ... inside he is no different from you and me” (TM 146). It is not only an exciting story but enriched with Hindu Philosophy, doctrines from *Bhagavad Gita*, socio-cultural concerns and moral wisdom of folktales.

Narayan ends the novel with the belief in rebirth and doctrine of immortality of soul as propounded in *Bhagavad Gita*, “Both of us will shed our forms soon and perhaps we should meet again, who knows? So Good Bye for the present ” (TM 176). The soul is same of everyone, it is formless and imperishable. The outward appearance is different, inwardly we all are same. After dying, the soul can again reappear in any form from eighty four million types of creatures. As it is written in the verse from *Gita* –

*jātasya hi dhrūvo mrtyūr dhrūvam janma mrtasya éa,  
tasmād apariharye 'rthe na tvam śocītūm arhasi. (BG 2.27)*

One who has taken birth is sure to die, and after death one is sure to take birth again. Therefore, in the unavoidable discharge of your duty, you should not lament (*trans.* Prabhupada BG 2.27). The novel is a glorification of Indian mythology and folklore which contains all the characteristics of moral fables and tales. It presents the belief of novelist in old moral order which should remain intact in the changing scenario of the world. The novel, written in an allegorical mask, depicts Narayan’s true spirit for Hinduism, Indian philosophy, myths and religious parables. Narayan spontaneously chooses the Hindu myths and legends around which his novels are usually woven. All the novels and most of the short stories of R.K. Narayan are set in Malgudi. It does not exist on map but it exists indelibly on the territory of Indian writing in English and in the hearts of the readers of Narayan. He is described as a novelist of middle class.

C. Paul Verghese in *Problems of the Indian Creative Writer in English* remarks:

Despite Narayan's affinity to a typically Indian tradition of story – telling, he steers clear of a message or doctrine to his reader. He is perhaps a 'moral analyst', but does not attempt to impose his views on his reader. He is an analyst of individual feelings, emotions and action in any exploration of hidden human conflicts. (139)

Though Narayan wrote about a small town known as Malgudi yet his themes have universal appeal. It has its own *Sthala-Purana* as described by Raja Rao in the preface to *Kanthapura*. It is a mini India which has all the features of a typical small Indian town. Malgudi is the repository of Indian folk idiom and moral fables which has breathed life and enchantment into the novels of R.K. Narayan.

### **Major Thematic Concerns in the novels of Raja Rao and R.K. Narayana**

R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao both have delineated the quest of self-realization in their novels. The evolution of self from ignorance to bliss is a steady process in which one progresses from awareness to awareness step by step. As it is the case with protagonists of *The Serpent and the Rope*, *The Guide*, *The Man-eater of Malgudi* and *A Tiger for Malgudi*, they are first in the trap of Maya – the illusion, then they get disillusioned of this world and this awakening culminates in elevation of the soul, the state of self-realization; the *Brahma*. Ramaswamy of *The Serpent and the Rope*, Raju of *The Guide* and Raja of *A Tiger for Malgudi* searching for the meaning of life but at a distinct juncture of their life.

As observed by A.K. Kundu in *Vedanta and Myth: A study of R.K. Narayan's Novels*, "The inhabitants of Malgudi are so much attached to their homeland that they are unable to resist the pull of ancient metaphysical India. At one juncture of life the protagonists of his novels understand the value of leading life based on traditional values and religion" (70).

There is an inner conflict in the lives of these protagonists, though they have succeeded in their lives materialistically but still they feel lack of something substantial. This is the thing which becomes the turning point in their lives. As Shirley Chew observes in *The Guide*, "Whatever Raju's initial reasons for making the confession, the course his narrative takes corresponds to his growth from ignorance and self-deception to knowledge and self-realization" (*Indian Literature* 118).

The quest of self-realization forces Ramaswamy of *The Serpent and the Rope* to incline towards *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and philosophy of Śankara, Mādhava, to Buddhism, St. Augustine to Peter Abelard. Eventually he came to realize that *Brahma* is real.

***Brahma satyam jaganmithya, jīvo brahmaiva naparah.***

(*Brahma jnānawali mala* 26)

*Brahma* is the reality, the universe is an illusion. The living being is *Brahma* alone, none else. It is the theory expounded by *Adi Shankara*. On one hand *The Guide* is a *bildungsroman*, Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* is *erziehungsroman* as the protagonist Ramaswamy passes through varied experiences and undergoes a spiritual crisis which metamorphosed him into maturity and recognition of his identity and role in the world. He realizes the reality of the world and of himself. It is Savithri who brings him out from the illusory world to the world of reality.

As the conversation goes between them:

‘Therefore, What is truth?’ I asked.

‘Is – ness is the Truth’ she answered.

‘And is – ness is what?’

‘What asks that question?’

‘Myself?’

“Who?”

‘I’

“Of whom?”

‘No one.’

‘Then “I am” is?’

‘Rather, I am am.’”

‘Tautology;’ She laughed. (SR 130)

The mythological theme of conflict between good and evil is also one of the common themes in these novels. In *Kanthapura* the Red-Men are evil force while the army of Gandhi is a moral and spiritual force. In *The Serpent and the Rope* there is conflict between Maya, the Illusion and the real. The world which appears real is not real; it is illusory, all the human relationships are false based on the materialistic purposes. As a consequence of the conflict between the two, the novelist propounds the supremacy of *Brahma*, the only real thing in the universe.

In *The Guide* Raju weighs his life on the scale of goods and evils. Like *Valmiki*, after many years spent of his life, he realizes that he has been a sinner all through his life and never committed a single act of *Dharma*. It was the supremacy of good in his heart that he decides to die for the cause of humanity if could not live for it.

Vasu in the *The Maneater of Malgudi* was an egotist who can never require anyone to show the difference between good and evil. He was an epitome of ‘*asura*’ who are self-esteemed, self-conscious and arrogant. His beastly and *asuric* powers



have been solely responsible for his destruction and this was his salvation. The myth of *Bhasmasura* is exploited here to show the supremacy of good over evil. Thus Vasu stand for evil while Nataraj for good. The archetypal motif of inevitable triumphs of Good over Evil is enunciated in this novel.

*A Tiger for Malgudi* is itself a moral fable which teaches the lesson to tread on the path of good as the path of evil is the source of all sufferings and troubles of humanity. Thus all the novels are concerned with the cosmic issues; good and evil, man, demon and God.

Gandhi, Moorthy, Ramaswamy, Nataraj, Raju, Raja and Master all have a strong belief in asceticism and spiritualism and all are familiar with the Hindu scriptures and epics which get reflected in the ventures of their life. Thus the theme of asceticism is running through all the novels.

The theme of renunciation is also one common thread knitting together all these novels. Gandhi was a hermit, a saint and Mahatma who left his everything for the sake of his motherland, Moorthy also followed him word to word, Ramaswamy felt non-attachment from the world and achieved the knowledge of self at the lotus feet of his Guru. Raju of *The Guide* and Master of *A Tiger for Malgudi* were also homeless vagabond who renounced the world for the welfare of humanity.

Ramaswamy is also homeless as he says, "There is nobody to go now; no home, no temple, no city, no climate, no age" (SR 407). He is an orphan after the death of his father and Moorthy becomes one with the death of his mother. Raju's mother leaves him for his unruly behaviour and Raja of *Tiger for Malgudi* strays from the jungle to village and from the circus to Master. Vasu, the taxidermist of *Maneater of Malgudi* is also homeless.

All these protagonists are forlorn at some juncture of their life and in the unavoidable requirement of Guru who can bring lantern and show the path of good, path of peace and path of salvation to them. Moorthy found his father figure in

Gandhi, Ramaswamy at the lotus feet of his Guru, Raju in the company of Velan and Raja, the tiger in the divine presence of his master.

Among the other practices, the idol worship and celebration of festivals is the most important theme which figures in almost all the novels of Narayan. In *The Man-eater of Malgudi* the annual function of the *Radha-Krishna* Temple is celebrated with a great pomp. Nataraj is the worshipper of Goddess *Lakshmi* whose idol is situated at his printing shop. Raju in *The Guide* finds many stones under a *peepul* tree in the *Mangala* Village whom people worship with great devotion.

In the novels of Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan there is a great reverence for the idols of God, be it the idol of Goddess *Kenchamma* in Kanthapurishwari temple, goddess *Lakshmi* and eagle in *The Maneater of Malgudi* or the idol of *Nandi* bull in *The Serpent and the Rope*. Rituals and festive occasions have also been an indispensable part of their novels. The rituals ranging from birth to death, marriage to initiation and inauguration to cremation find place in their writings which lend the colour and taste of folklore to them. Every ritual and ceremony is associated with certain belief, myth or legend. We find the celebration of festivals like *Kartika* festival, *Shankar Jayanti*, *Radha-Krishna Jayanti* etc. The ritual of rain-propitiation is dealt with a great significance in the novel *The Guide*. This ritual is still prevalent in the society. In *The Hindustan Times* of July 23, 2008, an article got published in this reference. A unique three day *Maha Varuna Yagnya* was organized under the auspices of *Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam* to propitiate the rain god. Over 150 priests accomplished the rituals amidst singing of *Vedic* hymns.

India is a wonderful country which has inherited many rituals beliefs, myths, cultures and traditions from past several millennia. They have become the part of our existence that even India cannot be imagined without them. One such tradition or age old relationship is between Guru and disciple. The theme of supremacy of Guru can also be observed as one common theme in the selected novels of Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan.

In *Kanthapura* Mahatma Gandhi is a Guru who is moulding the minds of millions of people by his preaching of Khadi, Swaraj and Swadeshi. In *Serpent and the Rope* Ramaswamy met his spiritual Guru on the sojourn of finding truth of the world. Savithri is also playing the role of his worldly Guru who makes him differentiate between *gnaan* and *agnaana*, illusion and reality, the serpent and the rope.

In *The Guide* Velan is the Guru of Raju who even does not preach and give sermons on philosophy of life but directs the life of Raju in right direction. What was *Narada* to *Valmiki*, Velan is to Raju. *A Tiger for Malgudi* is completely based on the spiritual, metaphysical powers of Master of Raja, his Guru. He is so powerful that he changed a wild dangerous animal like tiger into a submissive, meek follower.

Thus both the writers have proved the authority of Guru as propounded by Kabirji in *Kabirvani*:

***Guru bin jnān na upaje, guru bin mile na moksha,***

***Guru bin lakhe na satya ko, guru bin mite na dosh.***

Thus *Guru – Shishya* relationship is also one of the major themes in these novels which gave birth to another theme of inner – transformation. All the protagonists of these novels are undergoing through the process of inner transformation in some way or the other. Ramaswamy, Raju, Raja all are experiencing a change in their inner spirit. Raja transcends his world as well as his body, both are prison houses and Raja successfully elevates himself from the worldly boundaries and reaches to the stage of liberation where everything is in one's control and we are not in control of anyone. He becomes an ascetic, a *sanyasi* by renouncing all the worldly pursuits. This is in close contrast with Vasu of *The Maneater of Malgudi*. A man-eater tiger Raja becomes a *Sanyasi* and Vasu, a human being turns into a man-eater beast. Raja is changed from man-eater, violent animal to non-violent creature and a beast to a sensible creature.

Raju, Vasu and Raja all are mysterious strangers to their places: Raju co-incidently arrives in *Mangala* village, Vasu at the printing press of Nataraj and Raju at *Kumbh Mela*. The affinity of Guru brought inner – transformation in these mysterious strangers, they became as much transformed that they understood the mystery of life and death.

The theme of compulsion or inevitability is also running through the novels – *The Guide & The Maneater of Malgudi*:

A new set of circumstances seemed to be approaching me in an enveloping movement. This was the first time I had heard of an animal hospital. I could have just said, “I don’t know anything about it and ended the matter there but my nature would not permit it. I always had to get into complications, so I said, “All right, let us see what we do for poor Kumar (the temple elephant). What is the matter with him? (MM 114)

It expresses the inevitability of the things which Nataraj could not ignore. The accidental death of Vasu by his own hand, by slapping a mosquito on his forehead, also displays providence of God which always favours to innocent and pure. Every demon heads to the way of his doom from the day he is blessed by the boon. This is inevitable and inescapable.

Raju also expresses the inevitability of the things, when he said, he had to “play the role assigned” to him, “by circumstances”. As it is exclaimed in *Hitopadeśa*:

***Actions, wealth and life’s duration, learning and the way one dies;***

***Fate makes of these discrimination, while in one’s mother’s womb one lies.***

(*Hitopadeśa, Prastāvika* verse 27)

Recollection of the past and the esteem for the wisdom of the age are recurring motifs that signify time as a single continuum. Narayan's themes are based on the archetypal motifs of withdrawal, renunciation and non-attachment. His fiction usually focuses on Gandhian concept of personality, Indian philosophy, value system, myths, tradition, cosmic reality, *Hindu Dharma Shastra*, Socio-cultural processes and problems, spiritual quest, sainthood, self-transcendence, self-realization, relationship between the human and the community. The similar concerns have been observed in the writings of Raja Rao but it is more elevated in spiritual terms that it gets transferred to the periphery of metaphysicality.

Both the writers have focused on the mores, myths, customs, beliefs and language which characterize the small villages like *Kanthapura* and Malgudi. The inclusion of folklore and myth in the fictional writing of these two writers endows the common place people, places and even stones with the mythic grandeur and significance of archetypal narrative. Narrative is a dynamic vehicle for them to preserve, transmit and reshape the culture in affirmative ways that celebrate the past, that give continuity with the present and that offer faith in human potential.

Be it Ramaswamy of *The Serpent and the Rope* or Moorthy of *Kanthapura*; be it Raju of *The Guide* or Shastri of the *Maneater of Malgudi* and Master of *A Tiger for Malgudi*; all carry and act in accordance with the wisdom of Indian folklore, mythology, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* to which they came into close contact in their childhood. The Indian oral tradition is present in their psyche and became the eventual source of salvation in the most critical conditions of their lives.

Rao and Narayan also had a close association and inclination towards Indian folklore and mythology. They have been attracted towards myth and folklore right from the beginning of their career because the element of timelessness and antiquity draws them. Distance lends enchantment so myths, by their distance, charm modern readers. Indian myths have undying significance and relevance in all ages so writers recreate them through explanation of their potentialities. They provide an abstract

story pattern which is concretized with the Midas touch of myth and folklore. They are literature in themselves. They are ethical, philosophical, religious and cultural. They embody the nature, the spirit and the culture of Indian Literature. It is the literature which gives the glory of crown to the text as it is illustrated in a verse from *Hitopadeśa*:

*Insects cling to flower fine,*

*And with them rise to crown's estate.*

*Stones too are honoured as divine,*

*when set up by the good and great.*

*(Hitopadeśa Prastāvika 45)*

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# *Chapter – 3*

## *Folk Elements: Social and Cultural Contexts*

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### Folk Elements: Social and Cultural Contexts

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*All things that are seen or heard,*

*In Science or the Sacred Word*

*All things in interstellar space,*

*Are known among the populace.*

(*Panćatantra* 349)

We might choose such maxims from Vedas and the older books of Folk Literature. The origin of every literature is Folk or the *populace* from where every word passes to science or to sacred word so Oral Tradition is the foundation of every literature. The ordinary working people of every nation in the world are the creators of the material wealth of society. At the same time, they are the creators of spiritual culture, which ranges from social organization, customs and traditions to medicine, technology, literature and art. Today, there still exist many tribes of people who have lagged behind in their social evolution and are still leading a rather primitive life yet they all possess a rich treasure of folk songs, myths, legends, folktales, painting, sculpture and dance. We are often astounded and thrilled to discover the true beauty of these artistic achievements which form a fundamental part of their culture. After a long time, it is recognized that folk culture is a phenomenon that has been widespread since the dawn of history. Although the attention has been turned towards its study but it can only be looked in retrospect.

In the history of India, the development of folk literature and art as part of the life of the people can be traced back to Neolithic times and its progress can be charted alongside the advancement of society. While the class structure in society

underwent a great change but Indian Folk Literature and Art continued to grow and develop in its own course. Due to some prejudices of the upper class of society, its worth was not considered but after a short time a radical change emerged in the mindset of intelligentsia of post-colonial India. Many progressive intellectuals started collecting and compiling folk songs and stories. At the same time, serious research in this field was carried out and it was spread on an even wider scale with more clear standards and significance. In later ages the folk culture regained its genuine respect and merit. Research work has made great steps forward under the guidance of the new ideology and in the past few decades this field has been developed at a greater pace. These changes in attitude towards folk-literature are closely related to the rise and fall in the social status of those who create and those who enjoy folk literature and art.

India is the homeland of Fables and Folk Literature. The users of allusions to *Aesop's fables* which have crept into our everyday language realize that these stories, their special form and technique can be traced to very remote sources in India. Some thinkers as Benfey in Germany, M. Cosquin in France and Mr. Clouston in England have declared that India is the Home of the Fairy Tale and that all European fairy tales have been brought from there by Mongol Missionaries, by Gipsies, by Jews, by traders, by travellers. The majority of the drolls or comic tales and jangles can be traced without much difficulty back to the Indian peninsula. Benfey sees the origin of Folktales, except the Aesop's Fables, India, and thinks the spread west ward had taken place through three channels:

1. A certain number of oral tradition before the tenth century.
2. After 10<sup>th</sup> century by literary tradition along the lines of Islamic influence, particularly through Byzantine, Italy and Spain.
3. Buddhistic material through China and Tibet (or directly) to the Mongols and from the Europe.

## A Brief History of Indian Folklore

A brief history of folklore with special reference to India can be enumerated as below:-

Since the Aryan domination of India from about 2000 B.C. onwards, India came to be known as 'Aryavarta' the land of the Aryans or 'Bharatvarsha', the land of the Bharatas, an Aryan tribe which settled in the land between the Indus and the Ganges.

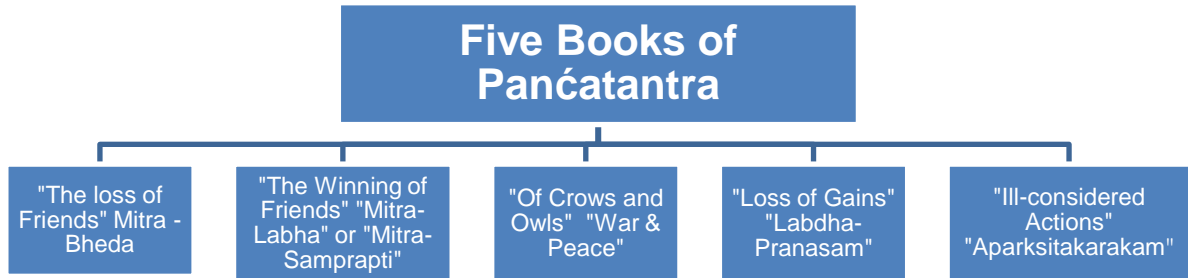
India has as rich a culture as creative and imaginative nation and wit and humour as equal to China. India was China's teacher in religion and imaginative literature and world's teacher in trigonometry, quadratic equations, grammar, phonetics, Arabian Nights, animal-fables, Chess as well as in philosophy and that she inspired Boccaccio, Goethe, Herder, Schopenhauer, Emerson and probably also old Aesop. India enriched the treasury of folk literature. There are two outstanding collections of animal fables in Indian Literature the *Panćatantra* and the *Hitopadeśa*. The first is the older and the richer collection, consisting of 87 stories, the second of 43, of which 25 are found in the *Panćatantra*.

According to Dr. Hertel, the *Panćatantra* was probably written down in the second century B.C. in Kashmir, but the stories themselves are much older from evidences in Sanskrit works. It was the German Sanskrit Scholar, Theodor Benfey, who translated the *Panćatantra* in 1859 and started the comparative study of beast fables. The science of comparative philology had been started by the English pioneer of Sanskrit studies, Sir William Jones in 1789; however its foundation was laid by Franz Bopp in 1816 through the comparison of Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Celtic and Teutonic words.

*Panćatantra* means 'Five Sections' or 'Pentateuch'. Curiously, a German version of these animal fables, made in 1481, was one of the earliest printed books in Europe, and an English version was among the books that came from

Caxton's printing press. Also the *Hitopadeśa* was one of the first printed Sanskrit books in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Sir Edwin Arnold translated the *Hitopadeśa – Book of Good Counsels* from the Sanskrit in 1861. The *Panćatantra* was translated into English by Stanley Rice in 1924 and by Arthur W. Ryder in 1925.

The *Panćatantra* was therefore one of the most widely known and widely translated books of the world in the middle ages. The genius for creating fables seems inexhaustible in Indian Literature. When one remembers that many of the stories in the Arabian Nights, including that of the famous *Sindbad, the Sailor* are of Hindu Origin, it is not easy to accept the view that such tales are not of native Indian growth. Like the 'Arabian Nights', the *Panćatantra* uses a framework that of a king despairing of teaching his two dull princes and finally engaging a wise *Brahmin* who pledged to teach these two dull boys the complete *Nīti*, or wisdom of human intercourse, in six months and who proceeded to teach these lessons on human nature through the fables, cleverly weaving one tale within another and very often making one character in story start telling another story before one is completed. The tale adorns the moral and the moral adorns the tale. When we come to know about the betrayal of crocodile with monkey and monkey saves his life with his sharp wit, we relate the incident to the rationalizing errors of humans of daily life. There is an advantage in making animals talk like men, rather than make gods do the same. When animals talk like men, we at least feel as if we were hearing children talk like grown-ups which is pleasurable but when we make the gods talk like human beings, we feel as if we are listening to old men talking like children. Rather than being anthropomorphic with the gods, these stories are anthropomorphic with the animals.



*Panćatantra* or the 'Five Books' has taken a sojourn around the world with the sole aim of awakening of intelligence and wit in the young.

*Since verbal science has no final end,*

*Since life is short and obstacles impend,*

*Let Central facts be picked and firmly fixed,*

*As swans extract the milk with water mixed.*

(*Panćatantra*14)

The world is full of mystery and magic and people have tried to explain this enigma, since time immemorial, through stories, legends, mythologies, fables, folklore and fairytales. This culture treasure house of India's various sub-parts, where plethora of languages, writing systems, traditions, sub-cultures exist, is like milk of paradise to the spiritual nourishment of all people of the world.

Another famous Indian story collection is the "*Kathasaritsagara – the ocean of the streams of story*" compiled in 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. by Som Deva. These tales influenced the world and provided source material for *Arabian Nights* and the *Decameron*. Even Shakespeare based a couple of his plays on these early Indian stories; *Cymbeline* and *All's well That Ends Well* etc. Some tales have religious or sacred roots; others have roots in the upper-class literary traditions.

*Hitopadeśa* is a collection of Sanskrit fables in prose and verse. It is a compendium of good counsel. Though, it is similar to *Panćatantra* in vein but distinctively different in treatment. It was written in Sanskrit in 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century AD by the Sanskrit scholar Narayana Bhatta. ‘*Hita*’ is for good and ‘*Upadesha*’ is counsel. These stories are the good counsels for the welfare and benefit of everyone. Imparting morals and knowledge, *Hitopadeśa* is one of the most widely read Sanskrit book in India. It encouraged proficiency in Sanskrit expression through the telling of moral stories in which birds, beasts and human interact. *Hitopadeśa* has been translated into many languages. *Emperor Akbar* asked his minister *Abul Fazal* to re-publish the book with an apt moral at the end of each story. This was published under the name of the *Criterion of Wisdom*. *Hitopadeśa* was translated in English by Charles Wilkins who made the first translation of the holy *Bhagavad Gita*. Another translation of *Hitopadeśa* by Sir Edwin Arnold was published in London in 1861.

Thus *Hitopadeśa* tales are the priceless treasure of morality, ethicality and hoary wisdom of India. Its world-wide translation and recognition is the testimony of its timeless relevance.

*Jataka Tales* are a voluminous body of folklore. They are the tales concerning with the previous births of Buddha. Traditional birth and death dates of Gautama are 563-483 B.C. The *Jataka* tales are dated between 300 B.C. and 400 A.D. The moralistic values are instilled in them as the fragrance is instilled in the flower.

Originally written in *Pali* language, *Jataka* Buddhist tales have been translated in different languages around the world. The luminous fables of *Jataka* are intended to impart values of self-sacrifice, morality, honesty and other humanitarian values to people. No less than 547 in number, *Jataka* Tales are an important part of Buddhist Literature. These tales represent former incarnations of Buddha, at times like an animal, a bird and sometimes like a human being, the future *Siddhartha Gautama*.

Many *Jatakas* have parallels in the *Mahabharata*, the *Panćatantra*, the *Puranas* and elsewhere in non-Buddhist Indian Literature. The *Jataka* tales have been illustrated frequently in sculpture and painting, art and literature. At Ajanta Caves, *Jataka* stories sights are inscribed with quotes. Thus *Jataka* tales, though belong to Buddhist Literature, still are refreshed and full of didactic values.

‘The Enchanted Parrot’ or the ‘*Suka Saptati*’, ‘Seventy Stories’ told by a parrot to keep her mistress from going out with her lovers for sixty-nine successive nights when her husband was away, is a charming collection of tales of feminine and masculine infidelity, with a predominant sense of the comic, happening in a world of easy make-believe as suggested by the ‘*Arabian Nights*’. The tales are for the most part simple and *naïve*. Like the *Arabian Nights* and the *Panćatantra*, it employs a framing story; like the *Panćatantra* and the *Hitopadeśa*, it employs the device of a tale within a tale and delights in insertions of moral maxims for enlightenment of the readers and hearers. Like the *Ocean of the Streams of Stories – Kathasaritsagara*, it rather delights in comments at the expense of women, dull husbands and in the stories of rogues. The author of this story book is unknown but the book was widely circulated and was certainly known to have existed before 11<sup>th</sup> century.

The stories about animals often relate what are clearly the practical experiences of humans. Ordinary fantasy stories do not lack such integration with human experiences. Rather this integration helps to give these stories their significance and depth of meaning. Folktales are specially prized among the prose writing of folk literature for their artistic flavour. Throughout the world they share many common characteristics in artistic expression. This is due either to the spread of ideas or to the similarity of the life experiences and creative imagination of the creators. They do possess a full-fledged experience of real life and the traditional skills of literary creation. They are the works which never get completed in a single lifetime, but are often told, retold and improved upon by thousands of people over many generations. They are artistic creations handed down by the ordinary people of a nation. They are neither historical documents nor authentic records of social



phenomena and yet they are a reflection of the lives, activities and psychology of different people at different periods in history. They allow us to have the rarest opportunity to swim in the ocean of recollection to collect the pebbles of reminiscences and to swing in the dream world of infant imagination. According to Frazer, “Folklore may be said to embrace the whole body of people’s traditional beliefs and customs, so far as they appear to be due to the collective action of the multitude and cannot be traced to the individual of great men” (*Man, God & Immortality* 42). Thus folklore is an articulation of collective consciousness.

### **Characteristics of the Indian Folklore**

According to the studies done on folklore, the following characteristics of folklore may be pointed out:-

- 1 Much of Indian folklore has a religious character and it may be associated with sacred rites or festivals.
- 2 Social stratification or the Hindu *Varna-Vyavastha* also influenced the character of Indian folklore. The scriptures and resources of knowledge were circumscribed to the upper castes so lower castes people resorted to oral traditions of their own which was sometimes the mimic or sometimes parody of the great scriptures like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* or *Bhagavad Gita*.
- 3 Oral folk epics seek to strengthen the legitimacy of local rituals and rites and serve the purpose of preserving the history of the names of all the important people and places in community.
- 4 Folklore glorifies local heroes and places and the heroes are often deified and worshipped in a particular community.
- 5 Folktales were the media of teaching religious precepts and moral, ethical lessons to the young and the source of entertainment for the old.
- 6 Folklore cannot survive in a set form. It continually changes, varying and developing because it is shaped by the memories, creative talents and immediate needs of human beings in particular situations.

- 7 The process of oral variation is the life-blood of folklore.
- 8 Folklore is the knowledge of the people of a particular region. Their mannerisms, their fields of business and their *modus-operandi*; all can be analyzed through folklore.
- 9 The protagonists of Indian folklore are often romantic as well as mythical heroes.

Folklore is the reservoir of wisdom and socio-culture values. In West also, Galda and Cullinan noted that Folk tales possessed the following features:-

- ★ “Heroes and heroines represent traits such as cleverness, bravery or supreme silliness.
- ★ Plot lines are direct and uncluttered by side issues.
- ★ Stories contain very little ambiguity: good is supremely good and evil is outrageously evil.
- ★ Conflict is identified early.
- ★ Resolution is decisive.
- ★ Characters are delineated economically.
- ★ Themes express the values of the people who created them.
- ★ Language is direct, vivid and vernacular.
- ★ Setting is geographically vague; time is vague.”

*(Literature and the Child 136)*

Thus it may be said that “Folk literature contains references to a society’s values, what the people value; what they laugh at; what they scorn; fear or desire and how they see themselves” (Young & Ferguson "From Anansi to Zomo" 259). Thus folklore serves as a mirror to man and society.

## Genres of Folklore

- ★ Short Sayings: Jokes, Proverbs, Riddles etc.
- ★ Anecdotes: Personal stories based on facts but may include exaggeration or fantasy.
- ★ Full Narratives: Stories, Ballads, Fables, Fairy Tales, Folktales which may be fictitious.
- ★ Parables : They are the short stories that teach a moral or spiritual lesson, especially one of those told by Jesus as recorded in the Bible.
- ★ Myths : Sacred Stories from mythology which are believed to be true.
- ★ Legends : They have an element of sharing local history and heroic deeds of historical figures. Unlike other folk literature, legends are usually associated with particular times and places in history.
- ★ Literary Tales : Some authors choose to create new tales using traditional folk motifs and style. These stories are referred to as literary tales.

- ★ Non-Verbal Behaviors : Such as customs, music, dance and Handicrafts also are the part of folklore.

These are the major genres of folklore through which it finds expression and gets diffused to the coming generation.

### **Indian Folklorists :-**

The scientific study of Indian folklore gained an impetus after Indian independence. Many systematic surveys conducted using various anthropological disciplines and methods. The rulers in the colonial India paid great attention towards local cultural knowledge and folklore in order to reach to their psyche. Christian missionaries used it for their own evangelical purposes. The British writer Rudyard Kipling, who spent a good part of his life in India, was well conversant with the local language and traditional literature. His two Jungle Books contain stories written after the manner of traditional Indian folktales. The Indian milieu is presented at its best in his writings with the Indian names of characters. Many other contemporary writers strived to manifest Indian folklore through their writings.

After Indian Independence in 1947, scholars began to search for their national and local identity through legends, myths and epics. Devendra Satyarthi, Krishna Dev Upadhyaya, Jhabberchand Meghani, Prafulla Dutta Goswami, Ashutosh Bhattacharya, Kunja Bihari Dash, Somnath Dhar, Ramgarib Choube, Jagdish Chandra Trigunayan and others pioneered the collection of Indian folklore, although their approach was more literary than scientific.

During the 1970s, Indian folklorists trained at universities in the United States began to employ modern theories and methods of folklore research. Academic institutions and Universities in India established departments to study the folklore of their respective regions, particularly in South India, with the aim of preserving their

cultural identity and languages. They have produced thousands of trained folklorists and in the last five decades, much has been done to collect and preserve folklore.

During the 1980s the Institute of Indian Languages and the American Institute of Indian Studies began a systematic study of Indian folklore. Contemporary Indian folklorists include Jawaharlal Handoo, V.A. Vivek Rai, Komal Kothari, M.D. Muthukumarswamy, Birendranath Dutta, B. Reddy, Sadhana Naithani, P. Subachary, Mahendra Mishra, Molly Kaushal and Raghavan Payanand.

An emerging trend among folklorists, initiated by A.K. Ramanujan (1929-1993), endeavors to interpret folklore from an Indian point of view instead of using a western model. He revealed to us the grandeur of our folklore and myths, their versatility and taught us to look at them with reverence and not with disregard. According to him Indian folktale traditions are the richest in the world. He translated the Kannada folk tales into English. He explored the multi-ethnicity of Indian Culture with reference to self, society, folklore, religion, gender, literature and history. *Folktales from India, Oral Tales from Twenty Indian Languages (1991) and Flowering Tree and other oral tales from India (1997)* are good examples of his works in Indian Folklore studies.

Besides A.K. Ramanujan the other eminent scholars of India who worked on folklore are *Gunther D. Sontheimer, Clinton Seely, Arjun Appadurai, Frank Korom*. They got training from various universities in USA and Europe and adept with modern theories and methods of folklore research. They set a new trend of the study of folklore in India.

Here the mention should also be made to Finnish folklorist Lauri Onko and Peter J. Claus, an American folklorist, whose important field work on *Siri* and *Tulu* epics also led the path towards the understanding of new folklore studies in India. Over the years, various institutes have also been established across India, whose contributions substantially helped the discipline of folklore and folk culture studies,

including the Central Institute of Indian languages, The National Folklore support centre and Centre for Studies in Social Sciences amidst others.

The flavour of folklore and magic of myth can be found in almost all the Indian novelists but it was present in Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan in a more distinguished way.

Raja Rao delved into the *Vedāntic* philosophy and presented a holistic vision with the combination of both physical and transcendental. His philosophical outlook in his writings conferred upon him the status of a classical writer. Raja Rao admitted, himself, to have been influenced by the ancient Indian epics such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* which according to him epitomize the Indian tradition and wisdom. M.K. Naik remarks, “Raja Rao has lent a philosophical depth to Indian novel in English”(Raja Rao160). Profuse employment of mythological stories, images, concepts and characters endow Rao’s fictional discourses with a unique magnetic power.

Narayan’s works unabashedly invoked Hindu tales or traditional Indian folklore to emphasize a point. His every novel is the glorification of Hindu myths, *Puranas* and folk wisdom. Malgudi has come alive in story after story in such a way that it has now become a part of Indian folklore. The religious and philosophical beliefs based on the great Indian epics, legends and folk tales implicitly affirm certain values of Indian traditional life and undeniably confer on his novels artistic uniqueness. Narayan represents what C.D. Narsimhaiah has defined as ‘the traditional novelist’, a man who writes “not merely with an intense social awareness of his own age but with the past of India in his bones” (*R.K. Narayan's The Guide* 91). It has been strived here to trace out the folk element in the novels of these two novelists, how they infused vibrant world of folklore into their works and enlivened the whole spectacle by using it as a technique.

## **Folk Element in the Novels of Raja Rao**

‘And where is India?’

‘Oh, far, very far’, I said, looking across the tree-tops to the sky.’

Here the narrator’s conversation with a French child in Rao’s story *India: A Fable* expresses Rao’s spiritual attachment towards his motherland. His India is not a distinct territory on the globe but a conglomeration of green fields, valleys and forests, rivers and mountains. “There was no sand any more. There were many valleys, green, green like the fields. A lot of water. Then there were trees. A lot of trees made a forest. A lot of forests made a country. A country with a lot of forests and many-many rivers is called India” (*The Meaning of India* 25). With the nostalgic haze Rao is reviving the memories of his homeland India to whom he was spiritually connected but physically aloof. Raja Rao’s consciousness was deeply embedded in the Hindu philosophy and the Indian ambience as it was evident in his novels when the protagonists always came back to their Indian roots to find out solutions to their problems. His love for Indian culture and philosophy found expression in many of his essays and articles like *Jawaharlal Nehru: Recollections and Reflection*, *The Climate of Indian Literature Today*, *Varanasi*, *Trivendrum*, *The Caste of English*, *Jupiter and Mars*, *The Cave and the Conch*, *The Writer and the Word* and so on. Most of these were published in English journals and magazines and newspapers like *Illustrated Weekly of India*. He also published some non-fiction books on India like *Wither India?*, *Changing India: An Anthology*, *The Meaning of India*, and a short story *India : A Fable*.

Raja Rao was an Indophile whose Indian soul always strived to be in communion with Indian aura. His unquenched thirst for Indian ambrosia got quenched in the divine gulps of Indian aestheticism, Indian philosophy, metaphysicality when expressed in his novels.

As K.R.Rao in *The Fiction of Raja Rao* puts it:

Raja Rao's gifts as a story-teller and as a myth-maker are seen in the way in which he 'mythologizes' contemporary events and lends to them a peculiar native colour and resonance. He draws inspiration from the resources of Indian myth and legend, episode and anecdote, and creates an ethos all its own. (26)

### **Kanthapura**

*Kanthapura* (1938), the debut novel of Rao is an excellent example of the combination of *puranic*, mythic and folk-tale elements. His spiritual bent of mind and preoccupation with the national history, patriotism and the simple Indian village is expressed in the novel. In *Kanthapura* the three distinct strands - the political, the religious and the social are so cohesively interwoven with each other that they present a panoramic view of the revival in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. "The story covers the very volatile phase of Indian freedom struggle between Gandhi's Dandi – March in 1930 to Gandhi-Irwin Pact in 1931. Raja Rao has presented the story in the *Puranic* 'Akkhyan' style" (*The Fiction of Raja Rao* 60). *Kanthapura* is an oral narration by witness – narrator in a *puranic* style.

This story has been termed as *Sthala-Purana* by him in *Foreword* to *Kanthapura* in which "the past mingles with the present and the gods mingle with the men" (*Foreword Kanthapura* ). The contemporaneous socio-political upheaval is mingled with the rich and religious mythology of India. The classic lore reverberates in this novel. The story is narrated in the folktale pattern as it is chronicled by an elderly grandmother of the village, "Achakka...of the Veda Shastra Pravina Krishna Sastri's family" (*Kanthapura* 12). The memory of the events of two years earlier is still fresh in the mind of the grandmother. She herself had been an active participant



in the upsurge of National Movement. She has nowhere emphasized her role and her personality is also kept in the background.

The story is being narrated by her in a typical Indian way.

It may have been told of an evening when as the evening dust falls, and through the sudden quiet, lights lit up in house after house, and stretching her bedding on the veranda a grandmother might have told you, new comer, the sad tale of her village. (*Foreword, Kanthapura*)

Achakka first informs us of *Kanthapura's* geographical location –

Our village – I don't think you have ever heard about it – Kanthapura is its name and it is in the Province of Kara. High on the Ghats is it, high up the steep mountains that face the cool Arabian Sea, up the Malabar Coast it is, up Mangalore and Puttur and many a centre of cardamom and coffee, rice and sugar-cane. (*Kanthapura* 32)

Story-telling is an art in which one word is put after another, one sentence is drawn after another as to weave *a garland of repose* (phrase taken from Andrew Marvell's poem *The Garden*). The colours, shades and strokes of brush are put in such a way to enliven the picture on the canvas of life. *Kanthapura* is also such breathless story or collection of stories illustrating an interminable tale of Indian Freedom Struggle, in the age – old Indian tradition of story-telling.

From her rich repertoire of tales, Achakka has chosen to narrate the uneventful chronicle of Indian freedom struggle which is recorded in the annals of India in red letters. Iyengar in *Indian Writing in English* makes it a point, “What happens in *Kanthapura* is by no means a unique experience, but the telling of the story gives the whole affair an *itihasic* – at least a *puranic* dignity” (392). The

narrator had been a witness to tumultuous upheaval of *Kanthapura* and was endowed with highly poetic imagination.

Prof. Harish Raizada comments on the narrator in these lines –

In *Kanthapura* Raja Rao uses witness narrator or ‘I’ as witness point of view. The story is told by an old and simple-hearted village woman Achakka who is supposed to relate a modern tale. She does not, however, narrate her own life story for she is but a minor character and not the chief protagonist in the novel. She simply unfolds the tale of her South Indian village Kanthapura as it rallies to Mahatma Gandhi’s call of non-violent, non-cooperation movement in the twenties. Like a chorus in Greek Tragedy, she reflects on the circumstances which she has witnessed but in the making of which she played no significant role. Her narration acquires the flavor of the story-telling technique such as old grandmothers follow for telling legendary tales to children at night. (*Indian English Novelists* 38)

Achakka has been aptly chosen as the storyteller as she is fond of chatting and is loquacious in the true style of a typical Indian grandmother. She narrates in a suspenseful and spell-binding way which never allows the listener to yawn and get bored. She is equipped with every minute detail about her village, village’s past, its legends, the gods and goddesses associated with them, the activities around the village and she is acquainted with every inhabitant of the village. To make the story throbbing with life, she gives short epithets to the names of the character of the novel - Corner-House Moorthy, Front-House Akamma, Nose Scratching Nangamma, Pork-marked Sidda, Water-fall Venkamma, Coffee-Plant Ramayya, one-eyed Lingayya. She is sometimes simple and straight-forward and sometimes very excited with every minute expression. She changes her tone and stress to suit different situations.

Meenakshi Mukherjee observes thus:

*Kanthapura* is narrated by an old woman to a hypothetical listener. . . Raja Rao's choice of this narrator serves several purposes at once. Making this old woman the narrator enables Raja Rao to mingle facts and myths and in an effective manner. For the old woman, Jawaharlal is a *Bharatha* to the Mahatma who she believes will slay *Ravana* so that *Sita* may be freed. For her Gandhi had attained the status of God and Moorthy is regarded *Avtara* in *Kanthapura*. The characteristically concrete imagination of the uneducated mind pictures the Mahatma as large and blue like the *Sahyadri* Mountain on whose slopes the pilgrims climb to the top, while Moorthy is seen as a small mountain. To her the *Satyagraha* becomes a religious ceremony to which she devotes her sacred ardour. (*Twice Born Fiction* 141)

It could only happen in India when the serials like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were televised on *Doordarshan*, there had been silence pervading in the streets, the people shut their shops to catch the serial and those who did not have television went to their neighbours to witness each and every episode of these two great scriptures. The legends of these immortal epics are assimilated in the psyche of Indian people. They still listen to the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* with zeal and excitement. One may find the mass in *Ram-Lilas* which still becomes invigorated and overpowered with emotions in the episodes of *Sita-Swayamvara* and *Bharat-Milap*. The Indian psyche is moulded and transformed by our mythological and legendary folklore. Meenakshi Mukherjee opines: "The Indian people are still closer to their mythology than the modern Irish or British people are to Celtic folk-lore or Greek legends" (*The Twice Born Fiction* 131). The analogy from *Ramayana* is lending a fairy-tale charm to the novel. The princess *Sita* (*Bharat Mata*) is in the clutches of a demon (Red-Man), a heroically brave person Moorthy, with the spiritual powers of

super-human or Demi-God Mahatma Gandhi, will free *Sita* from the demonic shackles of Red-men.

*Harikatha* is a folk spectacle of mixing song, dance and recitation. The folk form of expressions like the song, dance, folktale, myth, *bhajan* and *harikatha* are all put to effective use by Moorthy in propagating Mahatma's message. Moorthy has revitalized some of the cultural forms and turned them into effective vehicles for communicating and spreading national awareness. The message projected straight to the heart and bosom of the folk of Kanthapura when conveyed in a mythical framework and folklore pattern.

Gandhi is a legendary figure to the villagers. He is living lore for the Kanthapurians and the subject of their *Bhajans* and *Harikathas*. Jayaramachar the harikatha man mixes myth and reality, "Siva is the three-eyed," he says, and Swaraj too is three-eyed, self-Purification, Hindu-Muslim Unity, Khaddar" (*KP* 14). Like the folktales, the element of fantasy pervades in the novel in the description of Gandhi's birth and growth by Jayaramachar:

And as he grew up and after he was duly shaven for the hair ceremony, he began to go out into the villages and assemble people and talk to them and his voice was so pure, his forehead so brilliant with wisdom, that men followed him, more and more men followed him as they do Krishna, the flute player, and so goes from village to village to slay the serpent of the foreign rule. Fights, says he, but harm no soul. Love all, says he, Hindu, Mohamedan, Christian or Pariah, for all are equal before God . . . Truth must you tell, he says, for Truth is God, and verily, it is the only God, I know. (*KP* 16-17)

Gandhiji is described as an *avatara* of *Rama*; of *Krishna* and eternal lord *Shiva* himself. He is thus representing the ethos and principles of three epochs or *Yugas* – the *Satyug*, the *Treta Yug* and the *Dwapar Yug*. Lord *Shiva* is one of the

Gods of Hindu Trinity - *Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh*, the creator, the preserver and the destroyer respectively. On the behest of sage *Valmiki* and on the direction of *Brahma* to redeem the land of *Bharath*, Lord *Shiva* himself got incarnated on this earth. “And lo! when the sage was partaking of the pleasures. Brahma offered him in hospitality, there was born in a family in Gujrat, a son such as the world has never beheld . . . and hardly was he in the cradle than he began to lisp the language of wisdom” (*KP* 16).

There is both poetry and fantasy in what the *Harikatha* man narrates in the form of ordinary story. The novelist captures in the *Harikatha* man’s performance the whole of the Indian tradition brought up-to-date as he hears it rendered in the villager’s own idiom, as observed by C.D. Narsimhaiah in Introduction to *Kanthapura*( *KP* vii-xviii). Raja Rao has made use of a large number of words and expressions in order to express the Indian sensibility and ethos. A few of them may be taken into account here as examples from *Kanthapura*:

1. *The Ghats* (1)
2. *Sandal and of Sal* (1)
3. *'he-ho'*(2)
4. *Zamindar* (33)
5. *Maharaja* (32)
6. *Bhajan* (29)
7. *Lathi* (46)
8. *Yoga* (147)
9. *Panchayat* (103)
10. *Hari-Om* (102)
11. *Karma* (129)
12. *Charkha* (27)
13. *Vidya* (146)
14. *Patwari* (33)
15. *Goat – Eyed* (65)

16. *Badmash* (205)
17. *Coolies* (65)
18. *Mandap* (87)
19. *Laddu and Pheni* (113)
20. *Veranda* (110)

The South Indian folk Idiom is mixed up with the emotional excitement of the characters in *Kanthapura*. At several places we find the literal translations of local dialects and proverbs. The following examples may be given from the novel *Kanthapura*:

1. If rains come not, you fall at her feet and say. (2)
2. The air is empty. (11)
3. How are the rains in your parts? (34)
4. I'll drop a word in your ear. (39)
5. Every squirrel has his day. (110)
6. I am no butcher's son to hurt you. (41)
7. Helpless as a calf .(55)
8. Sons of concubine are planting well. (19)
9. Moorthy has gone through life like a noble cow. (6)
10. Otherwise Brahminism is as good as kitchen ashes. (40)
11. He was as honest as an elephant. (12)
12. Why do you seek to make our stomach burn? (2)
13. A crow and sparrow story. (22)
14. Stitch up your mouth. (84)
15. He wanted me to be his dog's tail. (97)
16. Go and ask the squirrel on the fence. (58)
17. I shall squash you like a bug. (21)

Indian ambience echoes through various ceremonies, rites and rituals – Hair – Cutting Ceremony, rice- eating ceremony, marriage ceremony and death anniversary.

They also reveal the social conditions of the villages and the religious and spiritual beliefs of people which were being observed in the remote parts of contemporary India. These rites and rituals, occasions and ceremonies become the part of folklore in a due course of time. They have their own history, their own myth related to their existence in the society.

Folklores are an everlasting, endlessly flowing statement of truth which cannot be fractured into a before or an after. Thus the figure of Gandhi is directly carved into the tableau of unbroken lore and literature. Consequently the story told in the village of Kanthapura by the *Harikathamani* is a further drop added to the eternal flowing and increasing Ocean of Stories – *KathaSagara*. The social realism and ideologies of Gandhiji are comprehended to the villagers with the ennobling religious fervor of *Harikathas*.

Achakka, the story teller in the novel, also entails the story of Great Goddess Kenchamma in a grandiloquent manner.

*Kenchamma is our goddess,*

*Great and Bounteous is she . . .*

*Never has she failed us in our grief. (KP 2)*

This song is like a folk song which evokes in us the images and attitudes meant for the people of *Kanthapura*. *Kenchamma* is the blood and bone of the village, she is the core and cure of villagers' lives and whatever takes place in *Kanthapura* is the ordeal of Goddess *Kenchamma*. The story-tellers in the novel relate chronicles about the Mahatma, the *Swaraj* and the mythical figures from *Vedas* and *Puranas*. Rangamma, Ratna and Jayaramachar all narrate the stories, vividly and dramatically which evokes the spirit of India's traditional folk epics and *Puranas*. M.K. Naik has noted, "Rao consistently tried to adopt the Western form of the novel to suit his Indian subject matter. He used traditional Indian genres such as *Purana*, *Sthala* –

*Katha* and the Indian beast fable to structure his works. Thus formally his novels are based on Indian models” (*Raja Rao* 34) and the *puranic* mode of writing which is the soul of his writings.

Some anecdotes are also related in the novel. The following example may be given here:

You know once there was an ignorant Pathan who thought the Mahatma was a covetous man and wanted to kill him. He had a sword beneath his shirt as he stood waiting in the dark for the Mahatma to come out of a lecture-hall. The Mahatma comes and the man lifts up his sword. But the Mahatma puts his hands on the wicked man’s shoulders and says, ‘Brother, what do you want of me?’ And the man falls at the feet of the Mahatma and kisses them, and from that day onwards there was never a soul more devoted than he. (*KP* 17)

Thus Raja Rao has made an extensive use of verbal illustrations in *Kanthapura* in the forms of parables, legends, myths, word-pictures, familiar, expressions and allusions which appeal to the imagination of his major characters, colouring the entire atmosphere of the novel in the hue of folklore.

There is a reference to the well-known story of *Harischandra* who was a great votary of truth. “Rangamma says, ‘Oh no, the Mahatma need not go as far as the sea. Like *Harischandra* before he finished his vow, the gods will come down and dissolve his vow, and the Britishers will leave India, and we shall be free and we shall pay less tax, and there will be no policemen”(*KP* 172). Though everything is silent and dumb in *Kanthapura* after the revolt and many people moved to Kashipura, yet still their psyche longs for the *upanishdic* lore – the *harikatha*. “In the afternoons we all gather on the veranda pressing cotton wicks and hearing the Upanishads – it’s Temple Vishwanath’s son Shamu, who’s at the Mysore Sanskrit College, that does us the readings. Of course, it can never be like Ramakrishnaayya’s. They say Rangamma is



to be released soon”(KP 256). Thus the listening to the oral scriptural lessons was inexorable part of their life.

Like Aesop’s fables there is animal creation in the novel. The serpent-lore is related in a very fascinating way and eagle plays a vital role in ploughing ceremony of the Kanthapurians. “and everybody looks up again and again for the goddess vehicle Eagle to show itself”(KP 160). The eagle is the feature of God and the vehicle of *Kenchamma*. It must appear in the sky at the ploughing ceremony so that the Kanthapurians can be assured of the blessings of their bounteous Goddess *Kenchamma*. It is like she has given the permission to start their agricultural operations.

“Rangappa goes in and comes out with a silver pot of holy water, and he throws a handful in each of the eight directions, and they say, ‘Now, we can till the earth’”(KP160). It was their unswerving faith in Goddess *Kenchamma* as well as the compulsion to follow the traditional ceremony to be done at the time of initiating the tilling of the earth.

The eagle is then compared with Moorthy at another place in novel when Moorthy goes into the Pariah Quarter to propagate about Congress and guidelines of Mahatma; he is welcomed as some consecrated thing, a divine presence. "and then all the women and all the children of the pariah quarter come and sit in Rachanna’s central veranda and they all gaze silently at Moorthy, as though the sacred eagle had suddenly appeared in the heaven” (KP 103).

Like beast fables the fact and fancy, the abstract and concrete are mixed together in Pariah Siddayya’s long, rambling discourse on **Serpent – Lore**.

Now as for water – snakes, take my word, they are as long as they are silly, like the tongues of our village hussies . . . But the snake that is as short as he is wicked is the green snake. He is bad enough; the green snake, but you haven’t seen the flying

snakes of this country. Now you know the cobra, the python, the green snake, the water-snake, the krait and the rattlesnake, and you know how they move. They move like this – on the earth, like all living creatures. . . . Never, I tell you, has a cobra bitten an innocent man. It was only Chennayya's Dasappa who ever died of a Cobra bite. . . . And so he goes on, Siddayya telling story after story. (KP 72)

Siddayya has presented a discursive speech on snakes with the little anecdotes related on them. The incidents with Sahib, Sankamma, Chandrayya, Ramayya, Chennayya's Dasappa related to the snakes have been narrated with folkloric hue. With great awe and horror the listeners are listening to his serpent – lore which is full of hyperboles and digressions which are the very essence of folk – narrative.

Then there is the long interminable tale of India – the *Bharatha* who is mythologized as the chief daughter of Brahma. India is eulogized with its golden glory of past in these words:

Far down on the Earth you chose as your chief daughter *Bharatha*, the goddess of wisdom and well-being. You gave her the sage-loved *Himalayas* on the north and the seven surging seas to the south, and you gave her the Ganges to meditate on, the *Godavery* to live by, and the pure *Cauvery* to drink in. You gave her the riches of gold and of diamonds, and you gave her kings such as the world has never seen! *Asoka* who loved his enemies and killed no animal; *Chandragupta* who had the nine jewels of wisdom at his court; and *Dharmaraya* and *Vikramaditya* and *Akbar* and many a noble king. And you gave her, too, sages radiating wisdom to the eight cardinal points of the earth, *Krishna and Buddha, Sankara and Ramanuja*. (KP 15)

The staunch belief of Kanthapurians on their local deity *Kenchamma* imparts folkloric touch to the novel. As in folktales the listeners are always assured about the victory of the hero what may be the predicaments or how strong may be the enemy, their Goddess *Kenchamma* too, is omnipotent. As it can be observed in the following passage, uttered by the villagers when Moorthy was in jail. "The Goddess will free him. She will appear before the judges and free him. And Rangamma vowed she would offer a Kanchi Sari to *Kenchamma* if he were released, and Ratna said she would have a thousand-and-eight flames ceremony performed and Nanjamma said she would give the Goddess a silver belt, . . . and all said 'The Goddess will never fail us – She will free him from the clutches of the Red-Man" (KP 133).

The villagers have their own folk song which they sing at every auspicious occasion. It evokes the images and attitude as to what *Kenchamma* means to the people of *Kanthapura*:

*Kenchamma, Kenchamma*  
*Goddess benign and bounteous,*  
*Mother of Earth, blood of life,*  
*Harvest queen, rain crowned,*  
*Kenchamma, Kenchamma*  
*Goddess benign and bounteous. (KP 4)*

She is the nucleus of activities in village. A marriage, a funeral, sickness, death, ploughing, harvesting, arrests, releases, festivals, felicitations are all blessed by her. There may be epidemics like small-pox or chicken-pox, there may be seasonal illnesses like influenza and cholera, and the villagers make a vow before her and the next morning wake up to find the fever has left. Their mornings come with thinking of her and they sleep prostrating before her.

Folk-Literature gives the impression of togetherness, of unity and of unanimity. The Kanthapurians have many such threads which bind them together and compel them to be in harmony with each other. The *Harikathas*, the folk songs, the ceremonies and rituals, the *Kartik festival*, the *Sankara jayanti*, the *Rama festival*,

*the Krishna festival, the Ganesha festival* etc. are all observed by them wholeheartedly with spiritual fervor. "Kartik is a month of the gods, and as the gods pass by the Potters' Street and the Weavers' Street, lights are lit to see them pass by" (KP 116).

Thus the villagers were very close to their traditions, their gods and scriptures. It was because of this proximity to Indian sensibility that they participated in the Indian freedom struggle not directly but indirectly. Their collective conscience cursed the British Government and blessed the Mahatma with kingship:

*Our King, he was born on a wattle mat,  
He's not the king of the velvet bed,  
He's small and he's round and he's  
Bright and he's sacred,  
O, Mahatma, Mahatma, you're our  
King, and we are your slaves. (KP 213)*

Gandhi was their government, the sovereign ruler of the world, the very incarnation of God:

*There's one Government, Sister,  
There's one Government, Sister,  
And that's the Government of the Mahatma. (KP 207)*

This all could happen due to their grasping of Gandhi's principles through folk spectacles of *Harikathas*. They were not *Harikathas* in literal sense but **Gandhi** – **lores** presented in their own folk idiom. The birth of Gandhi, the expeditions of Gandhi, the *Swaraj*, the *Khadi*, and the Salt-March are all presented to them in mythical framework of *Puranas*. Gandhi became their *Guru* who showed them, right way to tread and cleared their doubts about 'vidya and avidya' (KP 146). There is naturalness, ease and spontaneity of folktale in this narration. "They say the Mahatma will go to the Redman's country . . . he will get us *Swarajya* . . . come back with *Sita* on his right in a chariot of air" (KP 257). Gandhian consciousness is conveyed through Moorthy who transforms the life of an entire community but the fact is that the story is narrated by Achakka, an old woman who is able to evoke the Indian spirit

of folk-epic, the *Puranas*. She uses typical local dialect and reacts to things directly and vividly.

As observed by K. Ratna Sheila Mani:

Like the teller of tales in the oral tradition, the narrator is endowed with legitimate imaginative freedom and assumes a reasonable omniscience in presenting some scenes in as if she were physically present at the time. Her account of Bhatta's visit to Rangamma (*KP* 41-45) is only one example of many. As she narrates, the story becomes a stream of her memory. ("Mythic Narrative" 91)

Thus Raja Rao has experimented with the style of Stream-of-consciousness of Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and Joseph Conrad just to lend the narration an ease, spontaneity and breathless flow of folktale or folk – narrative. He has made a plentiful use of direct speech, enriching the conversations with Indian idioms, archaisms, cultural anecdotes and terms or expressions. Sometimes directly translated from his mother tongue into English like Akkayya's swear words "you dirty donkey – whore, you dog – born, you donkey's wife, tap – like nose" etc.

Adjuncts are frequently used in oral – narration for highlighting a word or phrase, this is also done in *Kanthapura*. For eg. "And the Swami, who is he? " (41), ". . . my heart, it beats like a drum. " (182), "she has never failed us, I assure you, our *Kenamma* " (2) and "Our village – Kanthapura is its name " (1).

Rites and Rituals, myths and legends constitute the structural design of *Kanthapura*. The novel is an ample testimony to the fact that the villages in India are inveterate myth – makers; they are the origin of folk – tales, folk – say and folklore. The collective conscience, group celebrations of festivals, the intimate epithets for villagers, the *panchayats* and *sabhas* give advent to the folk spectacles.

Folklore is the part of our culture which works as a binding force as it is binding the people of *Kanthapura* in the novel through *Harikathas*, *Bhajans* and Indian Scriptures Readings.

Here the quote from B. A. Botkin would be relevant:

Folklore constitutes a part of our culture in the proverbial folk – say and accumulated mother wit of generations that bind man to man and people to people with traditional phrases . . . Folklore derives its integrity and service value from a direct response to and participation in group experience and the passion of the individual and the common sense. ("Definitions of Folklore" 256)

*Kanthapura* is a piece of folklore as it has many characteristics of Folk Literature. The story progresses in a manner of folk legend. Gandhi is the invisible deity while Moorthy is living hero of this folk legend. They fought against the *asuric* rule of Red – Men through two weapons of Satyagraha and Truth. Eventually, the flag of *Dharma* i.e. '*Dharmapataka*' flown high in the sky, Gandhi established Non – Violence as a creed, a *Dharma*. They put their lives on stake like the heroes of the legends for the cause of their country and resurrection of *Bharat – Mata*. The life and spirit of the protagonist of the novel has been depicted as analogous to the life and spirit of great heroes of Indian epics and legends. They are jostling with the adversaries to emerge as a triumphant at the end.

From the first line to the last phrase; from the first episode to the last narrative; from the introduction to the epilogue *Kanthapura* is interspersed with many small parables, the stories within the story, the tales which begin with folkloric patterns like "Once upon a time " (2), "This is how it all began " (69), "This is the story Jayaramachar told us " (15), "Today it will be the story of " (14) etc.

"Kanthapura has the characteristics of "living folklore" (*Twice-Born Fiction* 38). "Told by an old woman, the story evokes the spirit and discourse of the oral tales of the eloquent vernacular" (Parthasarthy "The Chessmaster and His Moves" 561). Harikathas, the performances of a learned storyteller who narrates episodes from the *Bhagavat – Purana* and devotional literatures of Indian Languages are representing the oral – tradition of India. Other characteristics of the oral narrative include the use of prayers, songs, proverbs, mythology, idiomatic expressions, epical treatment of plot, settings and characters make it a representative novel of Indian Folklore and Folk – Literature. The *Foreword* to *Kanthapura* itself defines it as an oral – tale and not a written text.

The origin of Goddess *Kenchamma* is revealed through Achakka when she relates expeditions of sage Tripura. He saved *Kanthapura* from the demoniac powers by undergoing a great penance and bringing down the Goddess *Kenchamma* from Heaven. "And she waged such a battle and she fought so many a nights that the blood soaked and soaked into the earth and that is why the *Kenchamma* Hill is all red"(KP 2).

This myth of bringing down the Goddess *Kenchamma* is having *puranic* recreation but the further information about the red colour of hill is the part of folklore. It is the belief of the people of *Kanthapura* about that red – hill and the belief when passes from one generation to next generation, it ushers into the vast gamut of folklore.

Thus *Kanthapura* is the recapitulation of antiquarian mode of oral – narration which was full of mystery, wonder, thrill and emotional as well as psychological recreation. The novelist has aptly used the technique of oral – narration for presenting the contemporary political, social, economic predicament of Indian society. The effect of Gandhian movement, the surge of Gandhian thoughts could not well be depicted by any other mode of writing. Every nook and corner of India was under the stimulus of Gandhi, it is very successfully depicted through the technique of adapting

the novel into oral – narrative. India lives in villages, it was propounded by Gandhi but it is proved in this novel. It has also been observed that many genres of Folk – Literature were having their origin in villages. Folk songs, Folk – tales have been the source of recreation in villages, hence they are the place of their origin. The Folklore emerged from the pastoral surroundings of villages and got proliferated under the realm of Folk Literature. *Kanthapura* is also such piece of folklore in which the whole India and Indian traditions can be mirrored. It was unthinkable to have this novel with such massive appeal without oral – narration.

### **The Serpent and the Rope**

K.R.S. Iyengar says, “If *Kanthapura* is Raja Rao’s *Ramayana*, then *The Serpent and the Rope* is his *Mahabharata*. If *Kanthapura* has a recognizable epic quality, *The Serpent and the Rope* is more than an encyclopaedia in its scope” (*Indian Writing in English* 397). The story-teller or the spokesperson of *Kanthapura* i.e Achakka is familiarized with *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Sthala-Purana* while Rama of *Serpent and the Rope* is well-versed in philosophy, myths and legends of various civilizations and “he can discern parallels between them and forge a link between the past and the present by comprehending the essential oneness of history” (“The Feminine Principle in *The Serpent and the Rope*” 125). *The Serpent and the Rope* is a cardinal point in the fictional output of Raja Rao. It contains everything; dialogues, poetry, diary entries, legends, *Jataka* tales, quotations from literary texts, argumentation on philosophical or historical subjects. *Kanthapura* was the maiden attempt of Rao at writing of the novel. By the time he wrote *The Serpent and the Rope*, he had attained the literary and philosophical maturity of thinking.

Being felicitated with the Sahitya Akademi Award and adulated by major critics of Indian writing in English like C.D. Narsimhaiah, E.M. Forster, M.K. Naik, Lawrence Durrell, K.R.S. Iyengar and host of others, the novel has been acclaimed as a classic of those times. It is a truly representative novel of Indian ethos, religio-cultural tradition and oral tradition. “It has been also acclaimed as a



greatest metaphysical novel in English language, though the actual writing of the novel was done in 29 days in Paris but it took ten years to come in its present shape” (M.K. Naik *Raja Rao* 76).

The title of Raja Rao’s novel *The Serpent and the Rope* refers to the famous Sanskrit dictum, a warning that a serpent can be mistaken for a rope. The main story describes rituals that are both scriptural and related to folk practice. On religious and scriptural grounds it is related to Śankara’s doctrine of *Sarpa evam Rajju* in Sanskrit and in folk practices there is lore about it. It is a tale of rope and snake. A traveller on a village footpath at dusk sees a snake lying across his path. He becomes shocked and screams for help. Another person comes along and casts the light from a flaming torch on the snake. The traveller sees that it is only a rope and continues on his journey in peace.

Rao considers his entire work as “... an attempt at *puranic* re-creation of Indian story-telling: that is to say, the story; as story, is conveyed through a thin thread to which are attached (or which passes through) many other stories, fables and philosophical disquisitions like a mala (garland)” (M.K. Naik *Raja Rao* 103). *The Serpent and the Rope* is also passing through the episodes from *Vedas*, *puranas* and Holy Scriptures. Rama, the hero of the novel, declares that he was born a Brahmin and traces his lineage to the *upanishadic* sage *Yagnavalkya* through *Madhavacharya*, the great exponent of Dualistic school of Vedānta philosophy, down to his recent forefathers who left their hearth and home in the quest of Truth. By his very nature a Brahmin is inclined to renunciation of worldliness and materialism, “Serenity, self-control, austerity, purity, forbearance and also uprightness, knowledge, realization and faith, are the duties of a Brahmin born of his nature.”

*Śamo damas tapah śaucham ksāntir ārjavam eva ca*

*Jñānam vijñānam āstikyam brahma – karma svabhāva – jam.*

(BG18.42)

Indian Literature compared to any other literature in the world, played a dominant role in the preservation and propagation of oral traditions and folklore. *Vedas* are the oldest form of folk-music and folk-wisdom that has survived till date. *Sama-Veda* is the finest and ancient folk-wisdom that the world has ever witnessed. The date of the *Vedas* is apocryphal, in the sense that some place it much later than 1500 B.C. and some much earlier. It may be placed approximately between 2500 and 600 B.C. They are the primitive part of Indian folklore. The ultimate value of truth, goodness and beauty, the Eternal Law (*Rta*) and the ultimate Reality can be seen in it. The *Bhakti Yoga*, mysticism, splendour *Vibhuti Yoga*, knowledge, *Karma Yoga* are the basic contents of *Vedas*. The *upanishadas* are the concluding portions of the *Vedas*. They form the basis for the *Vedānta* philosophy and make a systematic attempt of penetrating into the mysteries of the vital, the mental, the psychic and spiritual life. In the *Serpent and the Rope*, the influence of *Vedas* and *Upanishadas* is ostensibly visible in the following statement from Rama:

I was born a Brahmin – that is, devoted to Truth and all that, ‘Brahmin is he who knows Brahman etc. etc. ... But how many of my ancestors since the excellent *Yagnyavalkya*, my legendary and *upanishadic* ancestor have really known the Truth excepting the sage *Madhava*, who founded an empire or, rather, helped to build an empire, and wrote some of the most profound of *Vedāntic* texts since Sri Sankara? There were others, so I’m told, who left hearth and riverside fields and wandered to mountains distant and hermitages to see God face to face’, And some of them did see God face to face and built temples . . . I even know Grammar and the *Brahma Sutras*, read the *Upanishads* at the age of four, was given the holy thread at seven – because my mother was dead and I had to perform her funeral ceremonies, year after year, my father having married again.(SR 1)

Here Rao is talking about *Vedic* seers and sages and rituals which are prescribed to the Brahmins as per the doctrines of *Vedas*. The protagonist has been akin to all *vedic* scriptures and cultures right from his childhood. The Indian tradition was so firm-rooted in his heart and psyche that it did not get loosened even after his proximity to diverse cultures of the world. He had been in London, France, Aix-de-Provence and many other places but he could never forget the *ghats* of Ganga and holy Benares.

When Rama and his Little Mother reached to Benares he also chanted, mantras along with her.

Little Mother, having recovered her peace, started reciting as at home *Sankara's Nirvana Astakam*. I have loved it since the time Grandfather Kittanna returned from Benares and taught it to me, I would start on '*Mano-budhi Ahankara....*' with a deep and learned voice, for after all I had been to Sanskrit school. Little Mother followed me, and verse after verse: '*Shivoham, Shivoham, I am Shiva, I am Shiva,*' she chanted with me . . . Once again at the request of Little Mother I sang out a hymn of Sri *Śankara's*, and this time it was *Sri Dakshina-murti Strotam*.(SR 10-11)

Though Ramaswamy had been living in foreign yet his inner psyche was immersed in *Vedic* texts, hymns and mantras. When Ramaswamy was performing the funeral rites of his father he ruminates on the philosophic conversation between *Yāgyavalkya* and his wife *Maitreyi*:

Night, a rare and immediate night, was covering the vast expanse of the Benares sky. Somewhere on these very banks the *upanishadic* sages, perhaps four five or six thousand years ago, had discussed the roots of human understanding. And *Yagyavalkya* had said to *Maitreyi*, 'For whose sake, verily

does a husband love his wife? Not for the sake of his wife, but verily for the sake of the self in her.’ Did Little Mother love the self in Madeleine? I knew I did not. I knew I could not love: that I did not even love Pierre. I took a handful of Ganges water in my hand, and poured it back to the river. It was for Pierre. (SR 12)

Thus at every event of his life he reminds the sages and the great wealth of Indian Literature which gives him sustenance in all circumstances. It was the affinity to Indian folklore and Sanskrit that brought close Ramaswamy and Savithri.

As he exclaims, “And the only curious thing I remember about Savithri that day was – I said to myself: Here is a very clever person, but she never says anything that really matters. We had one thing in common: we both knew *Sanskrit* and could entertain each other with *Uttararamacharita* or *Raghuvamsa*” (SR 16). This proximity and reverence for Indian tradition in the heart of Ramaswamy also became the reason for the separation of Ramaswamy and Madeleine. After meeting Little Mother and Savithri, he realizes the absence of something significant in the behaviour of Madeleine. The lack of feminine principle of Madeleine is manifested in her emotional stillness. When Madeleine asks Ramaswamy, “What is it separates us, Rama?” he tells her, “India” (SR 331). Thus the familiarity with the Indian tradition was the cause of separation between Rama and Madeleine and the same was the foundation of nearness between Rama and Savithri.

Madeleine is a realist; she brought up in the realistic environment of France while Rama was a *Vedāntin* who brought up with breathing into the traditional air of his home, by reading and listening scriptures, by reciting the accomplishments of his ascetic ancestors. The traditional India sticks to his inherited psyche, despite his European sojourns, Ramaswamy refrain from giving Madeleine a departing kiss or from taking her arm in public as that seemed to him discretion of Indian values. At the time of boarding and landing at Santa Cruz he chants the *Gayatri Mantra*. Thus

Indianism was flowing through his vein as the impact of Indian folklore which he listened and integrated in his life right from his birth.

Little Mother is the embodiment of folk-wisdom. She is a pious Indian lady with a sound knowledge of Indian folklore. The day being a Saturday, she tells Rama the story of *Shri Rama* and recites instances where telling and hearing the story of Rama and Sita every Saturday has worked wonders and failure to do so has created disasters to the families, his own family included. This reminds us of the *Satyanarayan Katha* which is done in the houses by people on every full moon day for the well-being of the family. "It's Saturday today, and you've come just in time for the story of Rama, said Little Mother, and seating me beside her, she told me once again the story of Rama"(SR 247). The method of narrating the story is like the old parables of oral tradition. The story is narrated thus: "Once upon a time there was a Brahmin, and he said to himself, "Oh, I am growing old; I want to go to Benares." And so he called his son and said, "Son, Brahma Bhatta, I am growing old, I've grey hairs on my skull, and my body is parched like a banana skin. I must now go to Benares. Keep Mother and the cattle in good state and I leave you this House of Nine Pillars, and the wet fields and my good name. Look after them then, Son, for a twelve year." (SR 129-130) The whole story is related by Little Mother to Rama and he listened it spell bound. Further Ishwara Bhatta, the old man set out to journey for Benares with his daughter. His wife Bhagirathi and villagers wept for him and the wife fell at the feet of her Lord and said, "Well, he goes, my Lord, to Benares; to bring light on the manes" (SR 130). And she asked to his husband what they would do meanwhile. And he said, "Wife, my sweet half, keep the house clear and auspicious; the son look after the house and cattle. And when Saturday comes - just tell the story of Rama" (SR 130). Ishwara Bhatta left for Benares and on the way at the banks of Nerbudu, he saw an ascetic seated in firm meditation. He implored him to marry his daughter and fulfill the duties of a householder. The venerable man agreed to it and Ishwara Bhatta took *tulasi* leaf and water and gave the daughter unto

the venerable ascetic. He went away very fast and whomsoever he met on his pilgrimage, who was troubled in any way, he narrated the story of Rama to them.

The story of Rama made them free from their sufferings as happened in the case of a forlorn lady who was waiting for her husband for twelve years in the case of blind old man and his daughter-in-law whose son and husband had gone on a journey and never returned, he related the story of Rama thus: “Rama, Rama give us wealth and give us splendour; give us the eight riches auspicious, give us an heir, earth and garden; those who go to towns distant, may they return, may the body be firm and innocent; give eyes to the blind, legs to the lame, give speech to the dumb. Rama, Sri Rama, give us thy presence and thy blessings. And daughter”, said Ishwara Bhatta to the daughter-in-law of the house, “tell the story of Rama every Saturday – it will bring you things auspicious” (SR 131).

When he moved steadily on his way, there appeared a lightning and peal of thunder and he had the *darsana* of *Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Bharatha* and *Satrugnya* with the faithful *Hanuman* behind them. “There was such music, and holy a look on the face of the Lord, and flowers, petals upon petals sailing and raining on the earth and Ishwar Bhatta fell on his eight-parts and arose. And when he stood, the Lord of compassion vouchsafed him many a blessing and said, “The pilgrimage is fulfilled; let the pilgrim return to health and home” (SR 132). Then he returned to homeward and again met all the sufferers who were now freed from their troubles due to the influence of story of Rama. The blind man bestowed with his eyes, his son too returned from journey. The husband of the forlorn lady returned. He also went to the hermitage of his son-in-law whose home was bright with grandchildren and daughter. He told them also the story of Rama and how he was about to reach his nine pillared house but there everything had arrived in a ruined state as Brahma Bhatta his son and Bhagirathi his wife could not get time to tell the story of Rama in all these years.

As it is narrated in the story:

The Saturday went, and Sunday and Monday and Saturday came again the story was not said. Week after week went by, and there were always the cattle to look after, and the sowing to be done. The byre roof started falling and the pillars of the house, and cracks appeared on the walls; the field became fallow, and yet the story of Rama was not told. Sickness came and old age, and the house fell and the lands were all sold; the cattle had died of this pest and that, and stubble beard had appeared on the face of the son – and the Father did not return. (SR 134-35)

Then after some days they got the news that Ishwara Bhatta was returning after seeing the face of Sri Rama. “Bright was Ishwara Bhatta’s face like a millions suns effulgent, and he had grown neither old now young, so steady his looks, so kind his eyes. (SR 135)

His wife and son were in so disheveled state that he could not recognize them and they told him whole account of their life when he left them. He was too sorrowful and asked them that they had narrated the story of Rama every Saturday. Brahma Bhatta replied, “No father, when I went to Mother, Mother was busy with kitchen and when she came to say ‘Son, it’s Saturday, the day of the Story of Rama,’ I, had to go to the collection in the fields” (SR 135). To this Ishawara Bhatta accused them as sinners and started narrating the story of Rama. And no sooner did he start telling them the story of Rama, everything started to take its own previous form. “The house rose on its pillars and the granary stood on its four walls; the cattle began to low from the bright red byre, and there were servants and bailiffs, and the carriage house full of carriages and chariots. . . The son had grown so young to look at, and wife with marks auspicious of venerable splendour” (SR 135-36).

The tale is narrated in the manner of religious parables. There is the motif of penance if not worship or propitiate the God in a proper way. This motif is found in fables belonging to a certain region or certain sect. In folk tribes the people worship and propitiate their God to bless them with good rain, grain, health and wealth. If they will not worship or they commit any kind of mistake the God will punish them so as to remind them to worship him. Such folklores may be found in Indian villages and towns all and sundry. They still permeate among the village folk who are quite fearful and superstitious.

Little Mother has a wealth of proverbs besides these religious fables. When Saroja's marriage preparations were going on in the house she says, "A marriage at home maketh well-water rise to lip of earth" (SR 139) and again at the arrival of Rama at home it is exclaimed, "Even the fire knows you are here – from the day you came it has purred and purred . . . A man at home is like a god in the temple.' To Little Mother a proverb always meant an incontrovertible truth" (SR 140). Again at one place she denounces English and Western Culture by saying, "To learn English is easy, it may take only a few years. But to say, "*Rama – Sita, Krishna – Govinda*" it takes many lives. The young will never understand,' she muttered to herself, and left us" (SR 148). There are many proverbs and aphorisms in the repository of Little Mother which she learnt out of deprivation and chill penury. Another proverbial dialogue comes from her; "For a Shiva's lip of the courtyard,' quoted Little Mother – another of her proverbs – 'Shiva's head is the Kailas. And for a woman the sacred feet of her husband be Paradise'. You cannot argue against a proverb" (SR 167). Thus Little Mother was jeweled with rich culture of Indian culture and aphorisms.

Madeleine, Rama's wife also had a knack for telling stories. She used to narrate the stories from *Jatakas* to Hinduism. She came into the influence of Buddhism with Georges. Ramaswamy relates one such incident; "Of an evening, when I was still busy at my work, Georges would drop in and I could hear him and Madeleine very fervent in discussion. She turned her attention more and more to Buddhism. The intellectual virility and the deep compassion of the Buddha often



filled her evenings with joy and wonderment. She would tell me, lying on the bed next to me, story after story from the *Jatakas*, and she wondered that Buddhism had not conquered Europe but Christianity had” (SR 56). Ramaswamy had a flair for stories and parables; this is the reason why he ruminates on such stories. He was so thrilled with her stories that he listened to her whole night. Then he remembers the story by Grandmother Lakshamma:

Grandmother Lakshamma used to tell us a sweet story: ‘**Once upon a time**, when *Dharmaraja* rules *Dharmapuri*, he had a young son of sixteen, *Satyakama*, who had to be sent away on exile because his step-mother wanted her own son, *Lokamitra*, to be placed on the throne. Weak this *Dharmaraja* was, and the Minister one day took young *Satyakama* away, and left him at the white beginnings of a jungle path on the frontiers. And *Satyakama*, beautiful in his limbs (As though moon – beams had been melted and made solid as silver, for the hands and the feet of this prince,’ said Grandmother), he walked down the path forlorn, now asking for advice from a butterfly and now from a roaming elephant. Neither had anything to tell him but shed tears in compassion which explains why the elephant has such poor sight, and the butterfly two additional eyes on its wings – and the trees, made hollow with the winds, rolled a lamentation that all the forest could hear. So much virtue had never walked that jungle path before; even the jackal went immediately to the rabbit to bring the gladsome tidings that a Prince was walking amongst them, shining with the disc of truth over his head. (SR 59)

The story rolls on in the manner of folktales of *Panćatantra* and *Hitopadeśa* where animals, trees, plants, flowers, objects of nature are taking part in life story of *Satyakama*. There is awe, suspense and mystery of the medieval oral

tales. The story further moves with the response of forest towards the predicament of the hero. The whole forest becomes silent and *Satyakama* collides with an uncertain object, “round as a river pebble, big as a temple flower-basket, and with streaks like those on an antelope, black and white, was a *budumekaye*. Though there was neither wind nor sound the little vegetable freed itself from its vine and started rolling in front of the Prince. The Prince was too full of tears to see it. But suddenly he heard the lion roar from some distant mountain cave and in that instant of fear he saw with his eyes this round and rolling vegetable” (SR 60). The supernatural machinery is making the tale more fascinating, and it is also one of the features of folk tradition. The Prince *Satyakama* followed that pumpkin (*budumekaye*) till the evening set in, just as the night fell, the round vegetable hit against a huge rock and burst into pieces. “And from inside this *budumekaye* rose a young and auspicious Princess whose beauty could blind the eye, and illumine the night. “Oh! said the Prince in wonder” (SR 60). Front the rock a door opened and golden steps appeared. The halls and parlours and chambers were made of gold. The setting here is akin to the surroundings of the fairy tale ‘*Alice in Wonderland*’. Six white Princess came together to greet the Prince and from the opposite the seventh Princess came with the garland in her hand and they wed each other.

In Indian folktales this is one of the rudiments that after a long quest and struggle all is well at the end, the Prince and Princess gets married happily with each other. Here also Prince is Ramaswamy and *budumekaye* is Savithri, though they did not legally wed each other but the spiritual Marriage or *Gandharv Vivaha* had taken place between them. “Savithri was a real princess by birth, but what must have brought the story back to me was that as I stood at the bottom of the gangway, this somewhat round and shy thing rolled down the steps as she ran, with her august and aloof and lone brother behind her. I had almost to catch her by the hand lest she falls against some trunk or cargo, as it lay on the pier” (SR 62). King *Dharmaraja* came to *Dandakavathi* the capital of *Satyakama* and *Ramadevi*, the princess. He offered a magnificent feast to King and his four queens. *Satyakama* served Ganges water to his

guests and such a “spurt of milk burst from the Chief Queen’s breasts that all the world wondered. *Satyakama* fell at his mother’s feet and told them the story of seven princess” (SR 61). King ordained *Satyakama* to return to *Dharmapuri*. When he returned to the capital, the citizen of *Dharmapuri* welcomed him with *Kumkum* water and silver census and decorated every door with mango leaves to welcome their Prince. Here is the archetypal motif of folktales, the separation of son and mother/father and in the due course of time and sequence of events they meet at the end. Thus the story is narrated by Ramaswamy in the manner of a folk tale and lends the hue and aroma of folklore to the novel. The life of Ramaswamy and Savithri is also moving ahead in the manner of folktale; first they met, came close to each other, got separated and, eventually, spiritually wedded to each other.

Then Ramaswamy talks about the palm leaf manuscripts which were handed down to him by his ancestors. They were carrying the commentaries from *Upanishads*, *Vedas* and scriptures like *Ramayana*. Ramaswamy gives the description of them in these lines:

Grandfather had such a lot of palm-leaf manuscripts that had come generation on generation down to us. Some of the manuscripts were still there. I wiped them gently and tried to read here and there. Some were on medicine, some on *Vedanta* (mostly commentaries on the *Upanishads* by *Ganaapada* and *Sankara*, the *Rig-Veda Samhita* or the *Ramayana*) and others on sundry things, such as a strange book on lizard-wisdom, which interpreted the clucking of house-lizards on the wall (unlike most of the others, this was in Kannada): One cluck meant bad, two meant success and four and five meant different things during parts of the day. There were also Sanscrit manuscripts on house-building . . . How proud I was to read it again. (SR 159)

He still remembers the oral tradition passed on to him by his grandparents and takes proud on this wealth he is bejeweled with. He says, “I wandered about thinking of where Grandfather Ramanna had taught me this or that, of *Amara*, *Nirukta*, the *Isa* and *Kena Upanishads*” (SR 159). The Oral Tradition which is handed over to him by his ancestors is the matter of proud for him.

The lizard wisdom is also the part of folklore. The elder people in some towns and places predict the future after consulting and observing the movements of the lizard. Some good omens and bad omens are also associated with lizard. In some folk tradition, to see the lizard on the occasion of *Deepawali*, is a good omen. If it falls on any organ of the body, it is believed to affect differently one’s life.

If Ramaswamy was familiar to oral tradition through the palm-leaf manuscripts, Madeleine had its own repository of folklore i.e. ‘*Tripathikas*’. She had many *Tripathikas* in her room which expounded the theory of *Buddhism* to her. Some of them were written in Pali language. Lezo helped her to read Pali texts. As Rama refers about her books in these lines, “Her books were carefully arranged on one side, all covered with yellow and brick red cloth. I guessed they were *Tripathikas* . . . ‘I can read Pali easily now’, she explained as I looked her treasures” (SR 180). Though a French woman, she became well-versed with the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. She acquired the yogic powers through *yogas* and meditations. It was all the effect of *Buddhism* and renunciation. It lent her spiritual calm and inner power to deal with the world.

As Ramaswamy quotes for her:

She started looking fixedly at the sun, and began meditations on the infinity of space. ‘Do not think of the past. Do not think of the future,’ She would repeat Nagarjuna’s diction, ‘and keep your mind in its cool state’. Her yogic *asanas* helped her; she bought a book on *Yoga* by *Swami Parmananda*, and she was so competent in her locust pose or

the swan posture. She also took the Buddhist vow of lying on her right side – the lion position – and said she slept splendidly, needing only five hours of sleep now. (SR 182)

Thus she had become an ascetic who used to advise people in their family matters, marriage or financial activities, “Madeleine made many *mandalas* and sat amongst them. She woke up as in India at three o’clock in the morning, the *brahmakala* and sat in meditation till eight o’clock” (SR 183). She observed fast of forty one days for the well-being of Ramaswamy, when he felt down with poor and weak lungs. 'Rama', she said, ‘you must, must be cured.’ One day, all of a sudden, she declared: ‘I’m going on a forty one day fast – on *Buddha Avalokiteshwara*. I had a vision and I am sure I can cure you” (SR 183). She used to wake up early in the morning at 2 o’clock and chant verses in her peculiar accent. She used to make invocations with her deep referential mantras till 4 o’clock. "The words came quicker and gentler, the mantras became more and more melodious, and little by little the flowers opened to the morning, the Mediterranean sang out its shores, birds spoke, children rose and cried, and man walked back to his journeying work with the spirit of a child, of a happy father, of a new incarnation on a new earth” (SR 183-184).

Then after some days, Rama saw an apparition of a tall, skeleton like person. When he told this to Madeleine, she was very happy as according to the texts, on the twenty second day, an apparition would appear in front of Rama. Rama was astonished to see this. The birds became familiar with Madeleine as they came and sat on her shoulder while she reached in some other world in her *Japa*. She used to apply bitter oranges on his chests as she was directed for it in her dream, “For Madeleine had had a vision between eleven o’clock on the fortieth day and then on the forty first it was made clear to her: an Arab doctor with beard and authority appeared to her in her dream. ‘Twenty-one days and bitter oranges on the chest,’ he said” (SR 185). The apparition, the chanting of mantras and visit of a doctor in vision are all like medieval lore of romance. It is full of mystery, suspense and supernatural

beliefs. The application of the supernatural machinery imparts the charm of folklore to the novel.

To all such fasting of forty one days and caring of Madeleine, Rama had no apparent reciprocation. He responded with these lines of *Bhavabhuti*:

“I recited *Bhavabhuti*, as if I were explaining something to Madeleine.

*Panchavati, where with her I have spent so long*

*As if it were my own true home,*

*Panchvati, the immediate, object of our constant talk.*

*But now alone is Rama, and faded his dearest things,*

*Heartless would it be not to linger long looking.*

*Or leave without deep salutation To Panchavati.*

And now Madeleine understood. (SR 186)

Rama made Madeleine understand his feelings through these heart-touching lines of *Bhavabhuti* from *Uttararamcharitam*. Rama is becoming nostalgic of his previous life when Madeleine was so deeply and warmly attached to him but now Madeleine was transformed into a Buddhist completely. Her room was separate, her food was now measured with the palm of her hand, and her sleeping and awakening were all totally different from Rama. She blames herself for critical situation of Rama and underscores a legend of India in her discourse: “That is why I say it. I have prayed night after night, as you said Emperor *Baber* prayed for his son *Humayun*, that I be taken away in your place. You are young, you are a man, and you have yet to live. When I knew you first you were such a sprightly, vivacious being. It is I who brought all this on you. I am only a log of flesh, and anyone can take my place. But you, you are the head of the family” (SR 187).

One more *Vedāntic* parable runs through the text of the novel. Madeleine had a wound in her foot and Rama bought a pair of strong country shoes with crepe soles for her. Then he reminds a story and narrates thus:

**Once upon a time, and that was a long time ago,** there was very good man. He did whatsoever he undertook perfectly – he was, let us imagine, a *Charentais* – so one day, when the sun was very hot, he said to himself, the sun is hot here in courtyard, it is hot there on the road – and he looked farther and he said, it is hot there on the stretch of fields, and hot, too, on the hill. It must be hot in the valley below, and beyond the river and the towns it must be hot too. And beyond the palaces of the city and the fields and the mountains, it must be so hot, hot, in the desert that be, and the wide, dust-bearing plains. Round the whole world it must be hot. (SR 193)

By saying thus, he thought of protecting himself from the scorching heat of sun. He got an idea to cover the whole earth with leather, he thought of cutting and sewing every spot of earth with the patches of leather. He started cutting and shaping the animal hides. The bull, standing in the yard, saw him and laughed at him. When good man asked the bull about the reason for his laughing, he explained the strangeness of his thought. It said,

It will take him all the night and all the day, cutting the hide and stitching it; first in this courtyard and then on the road with its ruts, on the stretch of fields with their furrows, on the still standing forests and the sands by the river; and the winter will be gone and then the summer, and the sun will rise and grow hotter and set. The Master will grow old and his children will be born and they will grow old, stitching and stitching the leather round the earth. And bulls will die, and elephants and

horses, too, and sheep, and the earth will take a long time to get covered. It will, of course, be covered with hide, one day after many suns and moons. But if only instead, I thought, the Master who gives me the steel shoes every four months if only the Master made a pair of nice country slippers, the Master could go in winter and where he would, through furrow or forest, and the sun would not scorch his feet. (SR 194)

The good man was so much impressed with the answer of the bull that he patted and caressed him. Then it laughed, the good man too and all the trees and hills too laughed with them. Thus it is the element of folk tale where nature is participating in the human action. Then the author relates about the second birth of the bull and says, “And when the bull died he went naturally to the *Kailas* of *Lord Shiva*, and became a servant companion of *Nandi* . . . The story is like one of those medieval stories about the curé and his wise dog” (SR 195). Another tale is from Buddhist *Jataka* Tales, the tale of *Vassita* and the Lord Buddha. *Vassita* went to Lord with the dead body of her baby in her lap and asked him to enliven him, Lord asked the lady to bring mustard seeds from the house where no death had occurred ever. As these lines puts it:

*Vassita*, whose child had lain dead on her arm, said at each door, “Had there been anyone dead in this house ever?” And they all said. “Yes, yes, sister, yes mother.” Then did she come back to the Lord and say, “Lord, be this not the name and nature of Mother-hood, that that which we bear must always perish, as we ourselves shall of eighteen aggregates compounded?” And to her then, with the child, the dead child before her did the Buddha, the lord of compassion speaks and says, ‘Thou speakest the truth indeed, little mother, for all that has birth must perforce have death. The complex must dissolve the becoming end in being.’ Then she said, did *Vassita*, ‘Lord, take me unto thy fold’ (SR 122).



The famous *Jataka* tale is recounted here by Madeleine to Rama. It is so heart rendering that Madeleine moves to tears after reading and relating this. She might be relating this story to the real incident of her life i.e. the death of her dearest son Pierre. Though she does not make it clear but her sobbing and her sorrowful state bring it out with the help of this tale. Raja Rao incorporated the tales in the fabric of the novel in such a magical way that they look like the indispensable part of the text and very cohesively they are assimilated into the context that it would have been arduous to present things without them.

It was the effect of these Buddhistic tales which attracted Madeleine very much as Rama says – “She turned her attention more and more to Buddhism. The intellectual virility and the deep compassion of the Buddha often filled her evening with joy and wonderment. She would tell me, lying on the bed next to me, story after story from the *Jatakas*, and she wondered that Buddhism had not conquered Europe but Christianity had” (SR 56). Thus Buddhism filled the vacuum in the life of Madeleine.

At another place the French legend of Tristan and Iseult is incorporated into the very texture of the novel. As the conversation goes between Savithri and Rama:

King Mark of Tintagel awaited his Iseult. I would have to give her to him, but having drunk the potion of Granval I would meet her by brooks and forests; I would be torn by dragons but some day we would lie in the forest, the sword between us. Some day love would be strong enough to shatter the rock to fragments, and we should be free to wander where we would, build an empire if we cared.

‘And we shall have a bambino’, she said, and laughed as though she had caught my thought.

‘Two’, I added. ‘One is Ganesha and the other Kumara.’

‘And we shall throw colours on each other at Holi under the mountain moon. Our Indian Eros shoots, with a flower, so why burn him?’(SR 103)

The tale of Iseult and Tristan became popular during the 12<sup>th</sup> Century which has been retold in numerous sources with many variations. This is a tragic tale of love between the Cornish Knight Tristan and the Irish princess Iseult. The legend of these two lovers is also narrated at another place in novel and their destiny is compared with Savithri and Rama:

You could imagine Tristan le Preux moving on the boat, with Iseult, the daughter of the King of Ireland, she, the beautiful, who was married to King Mark. And the nephew was bringing her to him, for it was a promise that the young had made to the old and come fire, come water, it had to be respected and obeyed . . .one night while they were playing chess they asked Brangien, the faithful, for wine and for more wine to drink. Brangien, the faithful, being full of sleep, it was the potion of love meant for King Mark that she gave unto one first and the rest to the other, and such passions rose in them that not even the waves in the sea would know of such rising and such demand . . . Iseult gave herself unto Tristan, who through fire and forest, through torture and exits, was to be her love. And when he went away and tried to warm his heart through another Iseult, Iseult of the White Hands, no warmth came for there was no love in him. So the ships brought the news of his illness and hopelessness to Iseult of Cornwall, and she took her boat and sped towards him. But when she came

Tristan was just dead and she lay beside him dead. A bramble linked them even in their grave; it rose from the grave of Tristan. (SR 207)

As Iseult came to meet Tristan all the way from very far place, Rama was also waiting for Savithri when he was hospitalized due to his lungs disease. As he exclaims in the following excerpt: “Banners flew in the air, trumpets were tried in the streets, and like thoughts seen in consciousness little aeroplanes returned to their starting points; perhaps in one of them, I thought, looking out of my hospital window, Savithri. I had not heard from her for a long time, but I knew she was coming, I knew she would come. And no sooner had she come than would I know” (SR 207). The novelist has tried to explain the sacred love of Ramaswamy and Savithri with the tale of Tristan and Iseult.

Thus in the whole novel, the protagonist is not the one who is proceeding towards his pilgrimage of life but the reader is also taken on the pilgrimage with him. He not only depicts the exquisiteness of Benares, Allahabad and Haridwar but also narrates the legends, myths and parables from the *Puranas* and other sources to give the authentic touch to this story of the heart and the mind of Moral India. The Ganges, the Himalayas, Benares, the Thames, London, Oxford and Paris all come alive with their peculiar *Sthala-Puranas* and enchanting folklore. These folktales are transporting one to the world of charm and fantasy and at the same time providing the novelist a structural framework to present his thoughts in a striking way. The novel reflects Rao’s great learning, his mastery over a number of literatures, mythologies, philosophies and religions. His oeuvre presents a blend of culturally diverse experience as he had the experience of hybrid cultures.

In most of his writings and most famously in *The Serpent and the Rope*, Raja Rao tried to capture what India meant to him. India was the body and soul for him; he could not imagine his existence without it and outside it.

As he puts it in the following lines:

a hypostatic presence . . . I was paying homage not to my country . . . but to some nameless magnanimity, a mystery that has eyes, a sense of existence, beautiful, beautiful Mother, my land . . . India is an idea, a metaphysic. Why go there anyhow, I thought; I was born an exile, and I could continue to be one. My India I carried wheresoever I went. But not to see the Ganges, not to dip into her again and again . . . No, the Ganges was an inner truth. (SR 191)

As the child loves his mother, such was the love of Rao with his Mother India, its heritage, its ambience, its oral tradition, its myth and folklore. Truly, this love and affection for his motherland and its assets got manifested in his writings. *Kanthapura* and *The Serpent and the Rope* is the testimony of this fact. R.K. Narayan also belonged to the literary era of Raja Rao. Myth and Folklore constituted a prominent part in the works of R.K. Narayan too.

### **R.K. Narayan**

While talking to Ved Mehta, R.K. Narayan said, “To be a good writer anywhere you must have roots both in religion and in family. I have these things” (*John is easy to please* 148). This is true about Narayan whose works were deeply rooted in Indian soil. The impression of Indian Literature, Indian Philosophy and Indian Cultural tradition is apparently visible in his writings. He has been interested not only in the stories in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and the man and woman of virtue and nobility portrayed in the ancient tales but also in the *mantras* and *slokas* used in worship of Hindu Deities.

R.K. Narayan is considered to be the most Indian of various Indian English writers. Narayan presents a profound moral vision in his novels. “This vision has its roots in an ageless heritage of culture and tradition” (Gilra 9). His fictional town

Malgudi has an oral traditional history that goes back to epic times. The towns' past is indelibly involved with the past of India, crossed and recrossed by the legendary or historical figures of *Rama*, *Sita*, Gods and Goddesses, *rakshasas*, and *asuras*, *apsaras* and *gurus* and *sadhus*.

In many novels, Narayan has taken the motifs of folktales; like the mythical and archetypal motif of triumph of good over evil in the *Maneater of Malgudi*, the transformation of a rogue into a saint in *The Guide* and the supremacy of guru over god in *A Tiger of Malgudi*. The moral and psychological nuances are presented in the characters through the spectacles of folklore.

Some characters are the prototypes of classical mythology and folklore like a suffering woman for *Sita*, a jealous man with *Duryodhana*, a man of principles and law as *Yudhishthira*, a man of ego and arrogance as *Ravana*, a man of truth as *Harishchandra*. The characters in Narayan's novel also adhere to such prototypes as Raju – the prototype of *Valmiki & Angulimala* who were rogues turned to saints, Rosie a typical Indian woman, Vasu a mythological demon and Master in *Tiger of Malgudi* as the divine Guru of Indian Philosophy. A.K. Kundu adulates him in these words, "It may be noted that the legends of the past in Narayan's interpretation must not be regarded as an escape from the present day life, on the contrary he brings ancient myths to our reality. These legends are his pride for folk wisdom, for ancient India, for spiritual heritage of his country" (*Vedanta and Myth* 146-47).

Narayan belonged to a great tradition of ancient sages, the traditional art of story – telling which has a long antiquity in India. The stories of *Upanishads*, epics, *puranas*, *Hitopadeśa* and *Jataka* have their ultimate source in *Vedas*. His stories belong to vedic times, thus he is the man of antiquity. Many episodes from the novels of R.K. Narayan can be illustrated through the *slokas* or verses from *Hitopadeśa* and *Panćatantra*.

Narayan has stressed on the value of heritage of past. What the *śāstras* have prescribed is good for everybody for a peaceful, harmonious and happy life. Any

revolt against or deviation from the set system or tradition, brings despair and frustration which amounts to their ultimate defeat. As it happens in the case of Raju and Rosie in *The Guide*, Rosie was a *devadasi* and Marco by marrying her brought her in a good status in society but still she left him and went to Raju. She became disloyal to her husband, violated the ethical rules of an Indian woman. For this violation she regretted a lot but it was all futile. Raju became so passionate about her that he forgot she was already married. Raju's mother warned him to be away from such serpent woman but he did not listen to her mother. When Rosie came to live with Raju, his mother could not tolerate and left the house forever. Though he faced bad consequences of not following the right path shown by his mother, but he regretted very late in his life. In *Hitopadeśa* there is a story of a disloyal woman "*The woman with two Lovers*". The woman was a cowherdess and her husband was a good man but still she deceived him.

*Na danen na manen na arjaven na sevāya,*

*Na śastren na śāstren sarvathā vismaha striyah.*

(*Hitopadeśa Bk II verse 114*)

By gifts one cannot win their heart, Nor by praise or honest pleas,  
or being helpful, strong or Smart, For girls are always hard to please.

(trans.*Hitopadeśa Bk II verse 114*)

Some women are hard to please and don't remain loyal with their husbands so they leave their husbands for someone else as it is said,

*Gunaāśrayam keertiyūtam ċa kantam, pati ratigyah sādhanam yuvānam,*

*Vihaya shīghram vanitā vrajanti, narantaram śeelgunādi hīnam.*

(*Hitopadeśa Bk II verse 116*)

A husband young and handsome, rich and famous too,  
Also good at making love and full of merits true,  
But women as soon as they can will leave him for another man  
The lover, though he may have virtues very few.

*(Hitopadeśa Bk II verse 116)*

Raju also could not control his senses, his passions and invited adversities in his life. As it is illustrated in the verse from *Nīti Śāstra*:

*Āpadām kathitah pantha indriyanam sanyamah,*

*Tajjayah sampadām margō yeneśtam ten gamyatām.*

*(Chanakya Nīti Śāstra )*

This verse is translated as, 'not controlling the senses is the road to adversity and sorrow. Conquering the senses is the road to prosperity and happiness. To choose either of the two is one's own decision.'

The novel is written in flash-back technique where Raju is relating the chronicle of his life. "My troubles would not have started (Raju said in the course of narrating his life story to this man who was called Velan at a later stage) but for Rosie. Why did she call herself Rosie? She did not come from a foreign land. She was just an Indian. I told her at first opportunity what a great dancer she was and how she fostered our cultural traditions and it pleased her" (G 9).

The sensual desires which aroused in his heart for Rosie forced him to leave the path of righteousness. He brought up in a disciplined air of father and loving care of mother.

As Raju narrates about his childhood:

She sat at my side, awaiting Father's return. Her presence gave me a feeling of inexplicable cosiness. I felt I ought to put her proximity to good use, and complained, 'Something is bothering my hair', and she ran her fingers through my hair and scratched the nape of my neck. And then I commanded, 'A story'. Immediately she began, '*Once upon a time* (emphasis mine) there was a man called *Devaka*...' I heard his name mentioned almost every night. He was a hero, saint, or something of the kind. I never learned fully what he did or why, sleep overcoming me before my mother was through even the preamble. (G 21)

The same story of *Devaka* he tried to narrate to the folk of Mangala Village when he was taken as a Sadhu there but he could not remember the full story.

By giving to god, do you know how it multiplies, rather than divides? Do you know the story? He began narrating the story of *Devaka*, a man of ancient times who begged for alms at the temple gate everyday and would not use any of his collections without first putting them at the feet of the god. Half-way through the story he realized that he could not remember either its course or its purport. He lapsed into silence, Velan patiently waited for the continuation. (G 18-19)

It was the passion of child Raju to listen to those stories and enjoy them in his childhood imaginations. He could remember their names and the preambles which he listened in his consciousness, rest of it was forgotten. He also relates the story of wailing woman who went to Buddha to re-live



her son. The same story of *Vassita* was narrated by Madeleine in *The Serpent and the Rope*. The story goes like this,

Do you know what the great Buddha said? The other edged nearer. ‘A woman once went wailing to the great Buddha, clasping her dead baby to her bosom. The Buddha said, ‘Go into every home in this city and find one where death is unknown, if you find such a place, fetch me a handful of mustard from there, and then I’ll teach you how to conquer death.

The man clicked his tongue in appreciation and asked, ‘And what happened to the dead baby, Sir?’

She had to bury it, of course, said Raju. ‘So also, he concluded, while doubting in his mind the relevance of the comparison, if you show me a single home without a problem, I shall show you the way to attain a universal solution to all problem.’ (G 14-15)

It was the wealth of wisdom which he gained in his childhood through his mother. His mother used to narrate him the incidents and episodes from Buddhism, Hindu Scriptures *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, the folk-tales and fairy-tales.

This gave Raju a chance to air his views on life and eternity before the boys. He spoke to them on godliness, cleanliness, spoke on *Ramayana*, the characters in the epics; he addressed them on all kinds of things. He was hypnotized by his own voice; he felt himself growing in stature as he saw the upturned faces of the children shining in the half-light when he spoke. No one was more impressed with the grandeur of the whole thing than Raju himself. (G 47)

Here Raju spoke to the boys of a school at the behest of their teacher. His talks were always based on religion, scriptures, mythology and fables but still there was a pragmatism and logic in them, like it may be noticed in this excerpt:

Raju gave an explanation for each in the best manner he could manage, but he found his answers never diverted their minds. He decreed, 'you must not think too much of it. The rain-god sometimes teases those who are obsessed with thoughts of him. How would you feel if someone went on mentioning and repeating your name all hours of the day and night for days and days on end?' (G 93)

The situation worsened in the village with dried wells, parched earth, dead livestock and "huge concourses of women with pitchers arrived at the river which was fast narrowing" (G 93). When the cattle died due to draught, Raju related many anecdotes of the death of animals from mysterious causes. "There are snakes which bite into their hoofs. 'There are certain kinds of ant whose bite is fatal to animals'" (G 96). Thus he observed the things with a rational outlook and lent a new vision to the myths and beliefs of village folk of Mangala.

Due to one misunderstanding of Velan's brother they took Raju as their messiah who would not eat anything till it rained. As Velan makes it out to the villagers, "This Mangala is a blessed country to have a man like the Swami in our midst. No bad thing will come to us as long as he is with us. He is like Mahatma. When Mahatma Gandhi went without food, how many things happened in India? This is a man like that. If he fasts there will be rain. Out of his love for us he is under-taking it. This will surely bring rain and help us. Once upon a time a man fasted for twenty one days and brought down the deluge. Only great souls that take upon themselves tasks such as this . . ." (G 102-3). When Raju came to know about this new subject which had crept into the village, he was astonished and asked Velan what it was about.

He explained to him what his brother had told him and what Raju, the swami was expected to do:

Velan gave a very clear account of what the saviour was expected to do – stand in knee-deep water look to the skies and utter the prayers lines for two weeks, completely fasting during the period – and to, the rains would come down, provided the man who performed it was a pure soul, was a great soul. The whole countryside was now in a happy ferment, because a great soul had agreed to go through the trial. (G109)

He implored to Velan that he could not do so as it was a ritual to propitiate rain god which must be done by a Saint and he was not a Saint at all. He related his whole life – story to Velan but still Velan took him as a Saint and addressed him as Swami. The ritual of praying for rain used to perform by the *Vedic* priests. They used to perform *Vedic yagnyas* to invoke gods of rain – *Varuna* and *Indra* in order to obtain rainfall. The most popular verse from *Vedic* scriptures, that modern Hindus quote in support of this faith based activity, is from *Bhagavad Gita*:

***Annād bhavanti bhūtani parjanyaḥ anna – sambhavaḥ,***

***Yajñād bhavati parjanyo yajñāḥ karma sambhavaḥ.***

(BG 3.14)

Lord Krishna reveals to Arjuna in the battlefield as written in Vyasa's *Mahabharata*. It means that the life is born from food, food is produced by rain, rain is produced by performing *yajnya* and that *yajnya* is performed by doing *Karma*.

According to various folk beliefs, different types of rituals are performed to propitiate rain god like the marriage of frogs is performed in some areas while in

others the people sit in a cauldron of water and observe fast till it rains. Thus rain is an indispensable thing in the lives of people so they have associated with superstitions and folk beliefs the appeasing of rain god.

Though Raju preferred to be a fugitive than to face those innocent villagers, but after a long rumination the thought which developed in his mind was, "If by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly? For the first time in his life he was making an earnest effort," for the first time he was learning the thrill of full application, outside money and love; for the first time he was doing a thing in which he was not personally interested. He felt suddenly so enthusiastic that it gave him a new strength to go through with ordeal" (G 237-38).

C.D. Narasimhaiah commented on this situation of Raju, the Swami in an article "Narayan's Comic Mode" in the book *Makers of Indian English Literature*':

Where did the strength come from? There is no direct answer to the question. But it is implicit in the way the story enacts itself. The strength, we know, came from the hitherto untapped reserves of the stories of good men that sacrificed themselves for others he had daily heard from his mother, it came from the simple faith of the villagers, a faith which by its purity and depth could move even the hard – hearted. . . The strength comes also from within – from Raju's readiness for the first time to rise above himself for other's sake. ("Narayan's Comic Mode" 105)

The Indian psyche is so much steeped in the Indian classics, scriptures, legends and folklore that even a vagabond like Raju gladly laid down his life for the good of community. The unlettered village folk believed word to word in the preaching of Raju, the swami; his mother was also a religious and god-fearing lady who could not bear to live with a dancer, a *devadasi*. On the other hand Rosie, a typical Indian woman, later felt guilt in her inner self after leaving her husband.

She understood the place of her husband in her life as it is illustrated in *Hitopadeśa*:

“If all the others they may wear, there can be no ornament,  
for womankind, more excellent, there to have the husband near.

Without him they cannot shine, glittering though with jewellery fine.”

*(Hitopadeśa, Bk 3 verse 27)*

The traditional values inherent in Rosie compelled her to bemoan: “After all, he is my husband”(G 201). To die on the doorsteps of her husband was better for her than going and flirting with Raju. Thus by sacrificing himself on the altar of social welfare Raju did penance and made him a pious soul. Now he was washed of all blemishes.

As it can be illustrated from a verse from *Hitopadeśa*:

***Vaneapi dōshaha prabhavanti ragiñām, graheapi pañcendriya nigrahastapah,***

***Akutsite karmani yah pravartate, nivratt ragasya graham tapōvanam.***

*(Hitopadeśa, Bk 4 verse 89)*

In forests too do problem chase those who follow passion's ways,  
and those who can control their senses, At home itself can do penances.

For home too is a hermitage, For one who subdues passion's rage,

And such works does carry out, As no one can despise or doubt.

*(Hitopadeśa, Bk 4 verse 89)*

Raju was the captive of *Kaam, Krodha, Moha, Lobha, Ahankar, and Mada* all through his life. It was in the later phase of life that he could experience the self realization. He was guiding people but he himself was misguided – an aimless vagabond. After meeting and being in proximity with Velan he could lift off the mask and appeared in his true self. He became free from all the worldly shackles. The moral of the novel can be:

Anger, lust and dark delusion, Arrogance and pride and greed,

All these six deserve exclusion, who gives them up has joy in deed.

*(Hitopadeśa, Bk 4 verse 101)*

The novel *The Maneater of Malgudi* is also structured like a folk tale. As in folktales, here is a hero and a villain – Nataraj and Vasu. Nataraj represents the opposite of everything Vasu stands for. Nataraj is reserved in nature, religious social and a *brahminic* man while Vasu is loquacious, bully, atheist, arrogant, aggressive, fearless, dauntless, careless and selfish. Nataraj learnt the love for animals in childhood. His grandfather gave a coin every morning for buying sugar to put in corner in the house of ants to feed on. Vasu learnt the art of taxidermy, to kill animals and then preparing, stuffing and mounting the skins of animals with life like effect.

Vasu is like the *rakshasas* of Indian folk tales who with his nefarious activities disturbs the quietness of Malgudi and is so much egoistic and perverse that he killed cow, a scared animal worthy to be worshiped as *Kamdhenu* in Hindu Mythology. He was a *mleccha*, a beast, a barbarian, a man-eater as Nataraj exclaims, “Now it was like having a middle aged man-eater in your office and home, with the same uncertainties, possibilities and potentialities” (*Maneater of Malgudi* 30). Vasu occupied the attic in the press of Nataraj and started doing his work of taxidermy. “On the little terrace he had put out some skins to dry; there was a tub in a corner in

which the skin of the tiger was soaking. Skins of smaller animals lay scattered here and there, and jungle squirrels and feathered birds were heaped in corner” (MM 60).

There stood stuffed crow, a golden eagle and a cat. He converted the whole attic into a heap of carcasses, Nataraj says looking this wildest scene, “Not in my wildest dream had I ever thought that my press would one day be converted into a charnel house, but here it was happening, and I was watching helplessly. Sometimes it made me very angry. Why couldn’t I ask him to get out?” (MM 64) Nataraj could not muster up the strength to knock him out of the attic. He did not have the courage to go up to him and ask, “Take yourself and your museum out of here!” (MM 66). It was not possible for Nataraj; he compares his place with ‘Noah’s Ark. “Stag-heads, tiger skins and petrified feathers were going to surround me forever and ever. My house was becoming a Noah’s Ark, about which I had read in our scripture classes at Albert Mission” (MM 71).

Noah’s Ark is a ship, a vessel in the Genesis Flood narrative in The Genesis Chapter 6-9 from The Bible. Through this vessel god saves Noah’s family and world’s animals from the flood. Noah was instructed by god to build an ark as after seven days there would be a deluge. When the flood arrived Noah’s Ark started floating on the water and he saved himself his family and other creatures of the world. Nataraj was also surrounded by all types of creatures in his press, when Shastri exclaims: “There was a hyena at the foot of the stairs . . . how can I do any work with a wolf and a whatnot staring at me? And there’s a python hanging down the handrail of the stairs” (MM 93). The atmosphere was unbearable for Nataraj, indeed, it was repulsive to see his place turned into an unkempt store house of carcasses. He tries to explain his predicament through this proverb, “Sastri, you know the old proverb, that when your cloth is caught in the thorns of a bush, you have to extricate yourself gently and little by little, otherwise you will never take the cloth whole ?” (MM 94)

Sastri quotes a verse in Sanskrit which said that “to deal with a *rakshasa* one must possess the marksmanship of a hunter, the wit of a pundit, and the guile of a harlot”

(MM 94). Sastri defines this demoniac creature as possessing, “enormous strength, strange powers and genius, but recognized no sort of restraints of man or god” (MM 94).

As it is illustrated in *Hitopadeśa* that –

From that very night, O king, when in the womb, one comes to stay,

A ceaseless journey will him bring, nearer death each passing day.

(*Hitopadeśa*, Bk 4 verse 86)

Sastri also observes the same in relation to Vasu. He says – “Every *rakshasa* gets swollen with his ego. He thinks he is invincible, beyond every law. But sooner or later something or other will destroy him” (MM 94).

Then he expatiates the lives of some mythological *rakshasas* who met their destruction inevitably. Thus the destruction of Vasu was also inevitable. As in the folklores, we have observed that all the devils and monsters meet their ends through one weakness of their mind or body, the same was true for Vasu. The thing which Vasu could not stand was mosquito. A mosquito makes him crazy and “Night and day. I run when a mosquito is mentioned” (MM 26).

Vasu had been saying from the beginning that one thing he could not put up with was a mosquito, it drove him crazy. There is one tale in *Panćatantra* on *The Bug and the Flea* (a mosquito). It resembles the story of Vasu and Natraj. The flea Mandavisarpini lived in the folds of the exquisite white silk sheet that covered the bed of a king in a certain country. She fed on the blood of king and was very happy to spend her days. One day a bug managed to enter the grand bedroom of the king. The flea saw him and asked to leave the king’s room but he did not do so. He was so cunning that through his authoritative talks and cunning ways he made the flea ready to let him suck the blood of king on one condition. The condition was to bite the king when he was in deep sleep and not before, the bug understood and got ready for it.



As soon as the king entered the bed room and lied down to sleep, the bug could not control himself and bite the king. The king jumped with the needle – like bite of the bug and ordered to clean the bed at once. The servants examined the entire bed in every fold of the sheet and there they found the flea and killed him at once. On the other hand, the cunning bug-monster hid itself in a certain corner of the room. This is how the good soul flea had to pay for her goodness as Nataraj was paying for believing on and permitting Vasu to live in the attic of his press.

One more *asuric* or devilish activity he started there in the press of Nataraj. He started bringing prostitutes in his attic which was something intolerable to Nataraj but that too he was ignoring. When Sastri was indicating Nataraj about Rangi, a disrepute woman he responded like he did not know anything about. As the conversation goes:

“If this sort of thing goes on, our reputation in the town will be ruined. I saw Rangi going downstairs. Is she the sort of person we should encourage here? Is this is a printing press or what?”

Who is Rangi?

He looked desperate, shy and angry. I was enjoying his discomfiture immensely.

“Oh, you are asking as if you didn’t know!”

“I don’t know what you are saying, Sastri. What is it all about?” (*MM* 106)

Nataraj was helpless to prevent this all and then a new problem arose in front of him when he got entangled in the sickness of *Kumara*, the temple elephant. Though he did not know about animal's hospitals and good clinics for their treatment but one of his friends, Muthu implored him to help that elephant to stand on his legs. Nataraj helped him out of the way and *Kumara* got well.

One night when Nataraj, with his two allies, was working till midnight for completing an assignment, Rangi came to talk to him from the attic of Vasu. After this hectic work all the three were sleeping for while when she appeared on the other side of the curtain.

She interrupted my midnight dreaming with, “I must get back before he awakes. Listen: he is talking of shooting your Kumar tomorrow. Be careful.”

I took a little time to grasp the sense of her information. The name Kumara stirred up in me all the necessary memories, from the first day when we had made him get up on his legs, through all our efforts to restore him to health, to this day when he was peacefully swaying and crunching all the sugar cane that the children of the neighborhood brought him. (MM 155)

It was unbelievable for Nataraj and he asked many questions to Rangi to confirm it. She said, “I am also a woman of the temple and I love that elephant. It must not be shot. Sir, you must somehow see that he doesn’t do it. Please save the elephant” (MM 155). Rangi was a *devadasi*, a temple dancer and she was about to perform in front of the god during the procession, she would dance between the decorated chariot and the group of pipers and drummers. When Nataraj asked her why did Vasu want to kill the elephant, she answered, “He says it's more useful dead. He may kill me for speaking, but I don’t care. I want to save poor Kumar” (MM 159). To this Nataraj was enraged to anger and decided to hand that devil over to police. Before this he tried to talk to Vasu and make him not to shoot *Kumara*. “I laughed pretending that he was joking. I looked at the time. I had wasted nearly three quarters of an hour in this tete – a – tete, and still I had not come to the point. How was I to ask him for an assurance that he would not shoot the elephant? (MM 170) It was a challenging task for him to discard all his calculations which he had made in his mind.

Vasu retorted with these words:

I can make ten thousands out of the part of this elephant – the tusks if my calculation is right, must weigh forty pounds, that's eight hundred rupees. I have already an order for the legs, mounted as umbrella stands, and each hair on its tail can be sold for twelve *annas* for rings and bangles . . . it's a perfect animal in that way. Every bit of it is valuable . . . I could retire for a year on the proceeds of one elephant. (*MM* 171-72)

Nataraj tried all the methods of taking Vasu on thinking about Kumara on humanitarian grounds but a *rakshasa* will always remain a *rakshasa*. “He laughed diabolically. “You want to know everything, my boy, wait and you will know whatever you have to know will be known one day,” he said in a biblical manner” (*MM* 172). Nataraj left from there and reached at the place of festival where every second he was thinking about the elephant, the innocent people in the procession:

The sight of the god, the sound of music, the rhythm of cymbals and the scent of jasmine and incense induced in me a temporary indifference to everything. Elephant? Who could kill an elephant? There came to my mind the tale of the elephant *Gajendra*, the elephant of mythology who stepped into a lake and had his leg caught in the jaws of a might crocodile; and the elephant trumpeted helplessly, struggled, and in the end desperately called on Vishnu, who immediately appeared and gave him the strength to come ashore out of the jaws of the crocodile. “In this story, I told myself”, “our ancestors have shown us that an elephant has a protected life and no one can harm it.” I felt higher at heart. When the time came the elephant would find the needed strength. The priest was circling the camphor light before the golden images, and

the reflections on the faces made them vibrate with a living quality. God Krishna was really an incarnation of Vishnu, who had saved Gajendra, he would again come to the rescue of the same animal on whose behalf I was...

Unknowingly I let out a terrific cry which drowned the noise of children, music, everything. "Oh, Vishnu!", I howled. "Save our elephant, and save all the innocent men and women who are going to pull the chariot, you must come to our rescue now. (*MM* 180)

Listening to his terrific cry, every-body got stunned and all of a sudden the whole activity stopped. Muthu, veterinary doctor, the chairman came to ask about his well being. Nataraj revealed about danger on elephant Kumara to the chairman and he went home through the back lanes accompanied with his wife. The next day Muthu, journalist, poet Sen came to Nataraj to ask what really had upset him. He narrated them about Vasu's plans. They got agitated and complained to police. The inspector remained down stairs and all the four went to him to warn him to be away from the procession and the elephant Kumara. When the journalist mentioned about the women and children in the procession, Vasu answered:

What's this special point about women and children? You are all practicing chivalry, are you? If men are to be caught in a stampede why not women and children also? What's the point in saving women and children alone? What will they do after their men are stamped out? If you are a real philosopher and believe in reincarnation, you should not really mind what happens. If one is destroyed now, one will be reborn within a moment, with a brand new body. Anyway, do you know why we have so many meals in our country?, so that the population may be kept within manageable limits. Have you not observed

it? At *Kumbh Mela*, thousands and thousands gather, less than the original number go back home – cholera, smallpox, or they just get trampled. How many temple chariots have run over the onlookers at every festival gathering? Have you ever paused to think why it's arranged thus? (MM 194-95)

This philosophical discourse of Vasu shows that he was averse to God like the devils of the folktales. He had no fear of anyone as Rangi says, "You don't know him well enough. He is afraid of nothing on earth or in heaven or hell"(MM 203). He had no love for any creature of this world, no respect or concern for any human being. He was a selfish beast who could go to any extent to fulfill his appetite. He had all the features of *rakshasas* who will never be on good terms with human being.

Nataraj was resting at his home when his son came after visiting the procession with his teacher. He was very happy and described all the minute details about the procession. How he amused himself by devising the game of hide and seek between the legs of the devotees assembled in the hall, how he played pranks with the chief priest. "Then he went to tell me how one of his friends was waiting for a chance to poke a needle into the elephant's side. At this I remonstrated, "Never do that. An elephant will always mark such a fellow down and . . ."I thought I might turn his ideas from these dangerous paths picked up one of his picture books and tried to read him a story. "Once upon a time..."(MM 200).

Thus Nataraj narrated his son the well known story of the *Elephant and Tailor*. This story is entitled as *The Revenge of the Elephant* in *Panćatantra*. Through this story Nataraj tried to teach the lesson to his son but at that time he was more interested in the activities of temple. He wanted to be there in the hullabaloo of the festivities in the procession. Nataraj also became busy in watching the procession, when it came near his house. "From my place I could see the flower-decked top of the chariot and the little bulbs sparkling on it, the head of the elephant brilliant with the gold plates from Talapur, and the hunched form of the mahout" (MM 216). To the

sudden shock of everyone, the news Vasu's death floated about the town. He was found dead in his attic at the arm-chair. The death of Vasu gave a sudden twist to the story. Sastri remarked on his death, "I knew he would come to some such end, these people cannot die normally" (*MM* 220).

Many people were suspected of his death; the inspector, Muthu, Sen Nataraj also. When Nataraj's son Babu came to know about the death of such devilish person, he behaved very excitedly, he took his father as hero who killed *rakshasa*: "But he is terribly excited about everything...and, and, feels proud that you killed a *rakshasa* single-handed! At least you have Babu to admire you" (*MM* 231). When Nataraj implored his wife to stop her to spread such sort of talks, she answered with a proverb – "You close the mouth of an oven, but how can you close the mouth of a town?" It is also the part of folk wisdom by which one expresses oneself in aphoristic way. These proverbs also have their origin in folklore.

Like the motifs of many folktales the hero, here too, is exiled as nobody talks to him and everyone suspects him to be the murderer. Though he did not succumb to such unreligious act but was compelled for facing the aversion of society. As it can be observed in this excerpt, "When people passed along, Market Road and looked at me, I averted my head. I knew what they were saying, "There he sits. He ought really to be hanged for murder." My friends of Mempi village came near me again. They had enough trouble with the police as the result of knowing me and visiting my press. "That press! Lord Shiva! An accursed spot! Keep away from it!" (*MM* 234) Everybody left him, Sen, the poet, Muthu and even Sastri. It made Nataraj hardened at heart and short tempered. It was very sympathetic moment when he says, "This was the greatest act of destruction that the Man-eater had performed; he had destroyed my name, my friendship, and my world. The thought was too much for me. Hugging the tiger cub, I burst into tears" (*MM* 237).

And then Sastri appeared from somewhere as his savior. He actually had gone to pilgrimage with his wife for some days. Nataraj then, let his heart open to him and

says that everybody takes him as a murderer and keeps away from him. Sastri was like one messenger of god who knew all the mystery of Vasu's death. As he was in temple's committee, he got a chance to speak to Rangi and came to know about the truth. Rangi informed him that Vasu was angry with her so he did not eat anything and reside himself on the chair as the cot-frame was broken during the tussle with inspector and his allies. Rangi sat beside him to fan him and keeping away the mosquitoes. But, they both dozed off due to the fatigue of the day. The mosquitoes returned with their battalion as the fanning was stopped. It disturbed his sleep and enraged him. "Next minute she heard a sharp noise like a thunder – clap. The man had evidently trapped a couple of mosquitoes which had settled on his forehead by bringing the flat of his palm with all his might on top of them. The woman switched on the light and saw two mosquitoes plastered on his brow. It was also the end of Vasu," concluded Sastri" (MM 239-40). It relieved Nataraj who understood now everything, the alarm which was set by Vasu to awake him at the start of procession rang up when Nataraj arrived there. Every thread of mystery of Vasu's death was now lying clear in front of everyone. Nataraj's cry reached to Vishnu who really appeared to save elephant and save Nataraj from blasphemy. Sastri further narrated about the inevitable destruction of the demons in the universe, no matter how invincible they had been.

Every demon appears in the world with a special boon of indestructibility. Yet the universe has survived all the *rakshasas* that were ever born. Every demon carries within him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction, and goes up in their air at the most unexpected moment. Otherwise what is to happen to humanity?" He narrated again for my benefit the story of *Bhasmasura* the unconquerable, who scorched everything he touched, and finally reduced himself to ashes by placing the tips of his fingers on his own head.(MM 240)

The tale of Vasu is also akin to the story of *Bhasmasura*. He put his own hand on his head and Vasu met his end by clapping on his forehead. Both were egoist and full of pride. Thus it is a moralistic folktale which teaches one the unquestionable supremacy of god, godliness and truth.

The end of Vasu is like the end of devils in folktales. The athlete like, bullied personality, a giant man Vasu is brought to death by the least of god's creatures, a mosquito. A taxidermist who turned many dangerous animals into carcasses fell down with just an instigation of mosquito.

The similar theme is illustrated in a verse from *Hitopadeśa*:

*Arakṣitam tiṣṭhati dev rakṣitam, surakṣitam devhritam vinaśyati,*

*Jivatyanathoapi vane visarjitah kratprayatnoapi grahè.*

*(Hitopadeśa, Bk II verse 18)*

When one has fate in his defence, Then he may stand without protection.

But, targeted by providence, though guarded he will meet destruction.

The orphan in the forest cast Lives ; at home he may not last.

*(Hitopadeśa, Bk II, verse 18)*

Thus *The Maneater of Malgudi* is a masterpiece of R.K. Narayan which is a true representative novel of Indian writing in the English in which folklore is incorporated in a structural way. The whole novels moves like a classical story in which one is excited to know what would happen next. Right from the first line to the last it has followed the technique of oral tradition and represents the conflict resolution of good and evil as depicted in Indian folklore.



A *Tiger for Malgudi* is a haunting tale about a tiger said to have possessed the soul of an enlightened human being. The novel establishes the fact that R.K. Narayan consciously turned to legends and fables, which have given him a sustaining power all through his career as novelist.

The structure of the novel is like Æsop's fables, fables of *Panćatantra* and *upanishadic* lore. The stories in *Upanishads* are also like fabricated tales of Æsop's which illustrate some philosophical doctrines or eternal moral truths. The *upanishadic* way of teaching is always by conversations between man and man, between man and birds or animals or by some such parables.

A tiger is the central character of the novel. As Narayan expresses in the introduction to the novel:

It also occurred to me that within a few exceptions here and there humans monopolized the attention of fiction writers. Man in his smugness never imagines for a moment that the other creatures may also possess ego, values, outlook, and the ability to communicate though they may be incapable of audible speech. Man assumes he is all important, that all else in creation exists only for his sport, amusement, comfort or nourishment. Valmiki, the greatest of poets, who composed the *Ramayana*, cried out when he noticed the agony of a bird whose mate was shot down by a hunter, "Man the destroyer, who'll not let innocent creatures mate in peace..." I wished to examine what the result would be if I made a tiger central character in a novel.  
(*Tiger for Malgudi* 8)

Here the tiger is recounting the tale of his life. The novel is written in first person and the tiger itself is the speaker.

He was lying in the cage of a zoo and scrutinizing the face of the zoo corners. After examining their activities he says –

You are not likely to understand that I am different from the tiger next door, that I possess a soul within this for bidding exterior. I can think, analyse, judge, remember and do everything that you do, perhaps with greater subtlety and sense. I lack only the faculty of speech.

But if you could read my thoughts, you would be welcome to come in and listen to the story of my life.”

(*Tiger for Malgudi* 11-12)

Like the tales of *Panćatantra*, the beast is speaking, acting and doing all the human activities. He is recollecting his past, his cub hood, his emotions, his panic, his pride, his self realization and an ultimate peace in the lotus feet of his Master. The protagonists of *The Guide & The Serpent and the Rope* may be compared with Raja, the tiger. They also went through the process of self-realization as Raja underwent in the divine guidance of his Master. It would be proper to use possessive pronouns his for him as he occupies the stature in the novel, as equal to a hero. He is talking like a sensible man, nay, like a philosophical man. As in the following lines: “I remember my cub hood when I frolicked on the sandy bank and in the cool stream, protected and fed by a mother. I had no doubt whatever that she would live forever to look after me: a natural delusion which afflicts all creatures, including human beings. However, she just vanished from my world one evening” (*TM* 12-13). He is relating his childhood experience and many anecdotes about how he came to live as a king of the forest, his nasty and pleasant experiences with the rabbits, jackals, porcupine, black faced *langur*, monkeys, the crows, kites, vultures, eagles and leopard.

One such anecdote he relates of the porcupine, “While all living creatures avoided me, there was one which I took great care to avoid – the porcupine, after an early experience. Out of a sort of recklessness I once tried to toss him about, and received such a stab of quills over my nose, jaws and paws that I retreated to my cave and collapsed” (*TM* 15). Then he relates the lore about how the tigers came to have stripes:

The first tiger in creation was very much like a lion, endowed with a tawny, shining coat of pure gold. Imagine! but he offended some forest spirit which branded his back with hot coal. Thus goes the fable, which I didn’t believe in, a canard started by some jealous creature like the leopard who felt inferior owing to his spots, but made a virtue of it. The leopard couple sang this fable every time I passed by. (*TM* 17)

The denizens of jungle have their own folklores regarding the origin of some animals or extinction of some animals, the flora and fauna of the region etc. Thus the novel follows the pattern of *Panćatantra* and *Hitopadeśa* in which one story is incorporated in another story ; the story of leopard and the story of porcupine, the story of jackal and the story of lioness are all interconnected like the tales of *Panćatantra*. Raja relates his encounter with the lioness which was as large as him:

I have never encountered anyone so strong . . . But my dignity would be lost – especially with the jackal there watching my humiliation. I should fight it out, even if one of us were to die in the process. We butted into each other, scratched, clawed, wrestled, grappled, gashing, biting, tearing each other, and I also stood up and threw my weight on her and struck, but it was like beating a rock – she was no normal animal: there is a limit to physical endurance; and I could stand it no longer; I collapsed on the ground bleeding from every pore. (*TM* 19)

The jackal that was standing at a distance came as a mediator to bring them close. He advised them to be a joint force instead of being adversaries. He said, “No one will ever try to stand up to you, except a crazy tusker, whom you could toss about between you two . . . if you combined you could make all the jungle shake” (*TM* 20). They both realized the truth hidden in the suggestion of jackal and started following each other and soon became mates. “We have no recovering of time in the manner of human beings. But by the time the scars on our backs were dry, a litter of four was added to our family, climbing and jumping us all the time in the cave” (*TM* 21). Everything was going on quite well. Raja, accompanied by his family was spending happy days of life. He was happy to see his cubs jumping, rolling, prowling and playing with their mother. But like the sudden twists in traditional tales, some human beings encroached in the forest and trapped Raja’s wife and cubs. He was lying in his cave when he heard some unfamiliar voices and strange noise. He searched for them in the whole forest but he could not find them. Eventually he reached in human colony where they were lying on the cart. It made him furious and he stayed there in the village itself for some days. There he caught some animals, scared the villagers and at last they tried to kill him but he succeeded in escaping from there.

He repented for being there in the village and ruminated on his past days when he was living majestically in the forest. He says – “I had thought that there could never be any creature stronger than a tiger. I was mistaken. A human being may look small, without prominent teeth or claws, but he is endowed with some strange power which can manoeuvre a tiger or an elephant as if they were toys” (*TM* 28). He had perfected the art of snatching cattle at night despite the defensive measures of villagers. They used to keep up bonfire all night, post vigilant guards armed with sharp weapons and scattered poisoned meat for tiger Raja.

The novel is full of little anecdotes which are meaningful in themselves. They do not need any preamble or conclusion to describe them. Raja then narrates his meeting with one of the important persons of his life i.e. Captain. Captain owned

Grand Malgudi Circus. The art of running the circus, he learnt from Dadhaji in Poona. The Grand Malgudi Circus had its origin in a certain 'Grand Irish Circus'.

Raja relates the story of Captain becoming Captain and Grand Irish Circus:

When questioned on the Irish origin or contents of his circus, he generally explained, “When I was down and out at Poona, I met a chap, a down-and-out Irish man who owned a half starved pony, a yellow monkey, and a parrot which could pick up numbers and alphabets from a stack of cards. He took them about and displayed them here and there in the city. He dispensed with his pony, selling it off to a Tonga owner, and managed with the parrot and monkey, which became his sole assets; he could maintain them inexpensively with a handful of nuts for the monkey and guava fruit for the parrot. He had a portable signboard painted, GRAND IRISH CIRCUS, and set it up in the town hall compound, street pavements, or markets square and attracted a crowd. He called himself O’Brien though he had a brown skin and never uttered a word of English or Irish but spoke only ‘The Native Language’ in order to establish support with his public, as he always took the trouble to explain”... “I could call myself Captain, by the same logic he could be O’Brien. (TM 32)

O’Brien sold his good will and the circus to captain for fifty rupees Dadhaji taught him the skill and knowledge to handle animals and Captain became a good trainer and started handling the whole business of circus. After Dadhaji’s death, captain shifted the circus to Malgudi and his circus came to be known as GREAT MALGUDI CIRCUS. Captain was considered as a wonderful man who metamorphosed the whole town and grabbed name and fame for it.

After a short stay in Malgudi, the Captain heard about the ‘tiger’ from the villagers. They visited many times in collector’s office and to the clerk’s but it had been of no avail. At this the villager tries to explain his thought with the help of a folk saying, “As it is, we meet only the *pujari*, not the god in the sanctum, and the *pujari* denied what the god promises” (*TM* 30). Captain had gone to the collector’s office for the renewal of some petty licence. There he heard the communication between the villagers and the clerk. Captain promised them to catch the tiger when he would reach to their village. He chased the tiger unrelentingly and trapped him eventually.

Raja was now a captive and remembered those days in the following excerpt, “My Master, later in my life, has mentioned hell, describing the conditions that would give one a feel of it. Now, recollecting the day of my trapping and the journey onward, I realized its meaning” (*TM* 43). Captain, the owner of the circus, remained his commander for the upcoming years. It was undefined pandemonium for Raja to be there in the cramped cell of his cage, an endless state of torment with no promise of relief and escape” (*TM* 47). He suffered loneliness, helplessness, restlessness, immobility and unbearable hunger. Later, when he explained this stage of his life to his master, he said:

You probably in a previous life enjoyed putting your fellow – beings behind bars. One has to face the reaction of every act, if not in the same life, at least in another life or a series of lives. There can be no escape from it. Now you have a chance to realize how your prisoners must have felt in those days, when you locked them in and watched them day by day to measure how far you had succeeded in breaking their spirits.”

“Why should I have done that?” “I can’t answer it; people only follow their inclinations, and sooner or later find their reward or retribution. That’s the natural law of life, as inevitable as the ripening of a mango in its season or the fall of a withered leaf” (*TM* 48).

The same thought is expressed in the story “The Traveller and the Tiger” in first section *Mitralābha* of *Hitopadeśa*.

*rogśok paritāp bandhan vyanani ěa,  
aatma apradh vrakśānam falanyetāni dehinām.*

(*Hitopadeśa, Mitralābha* verse 41)

Bondage, sickness, grief, afflictions

are fruits on trees of one’s own actions.

(*Hitopadeśa, Mitralābha* verse 41)

The story emphasizes the similar theme that what is written in his destiny one cannot erase. However, these are your previous actions too and malpractices like greed, wine, and women etc. which pave the way of self-destruction.

The story “The Traveler and the Tiger” goes like this:-

There lived an aged tiger by the side of a lake. He saw a traveler passing by from there and seeing him cried to take the bracelet of gold from it. The traveler overcame by greed, stopped and asked the tiger how he could trust a murderous creature like a tiger. To this the tiger replied very cunningly. ‘Listen, you wayfarer; said the tiger, ‘in the past, when I was young, I was indeed very wicked. I killed many men and cattle at that time. But now my wife and children are dead, and I have no family any more. A holy man instructed me to practice charity and other virtues, in accordance with that advice, I bathe and distribute alms. I have grown old, my fangs and claws have dropped. Why shouldn’t I be trusted?’

For it is said,

***Ijyaadhyayan dānani tapah satyam dhraṭih kshamā,***

***Alobh iti margoayam dharmasyāst vidham smratah.***

*(Hitopadeśa, Mitralābha verse 8)*

Rituals holy, sacred study, Doing penance, charity

Truth, forgiveness, fortitude, And not coveting; virtues road

With this eight, the scriptures say, is paved to form the righteous way.

*(Hitopadeśa, Mitralābha verse 8)*

Further the tiger illustrated a verse from scriptures and made the traveller believe that it was a religious soul. As it says, “I can see that you are in a very bad way. I am therefore trying to give you something. As the scriptures say, help the poor, O son of Kunti, Do not to lords your money give. What good is medicine for the healthy? But the sick, by it may live”(TM 19). The tiger compelled the traveller to take a bath in the lake and get the bracelet from it. Under the spell of greed, the traveller went into the lake to bathe. He got trapped in mud of lake and unable to run away from there. The tiger showed off the false concern for the traveller while the traveller was unable to flee from there and said to himself –

Of cleaved and horned creatures, of rivers and men who bear arms,

one should not trust their natures, nor of king of feminine charms.

*(Hitopadeśa, Mitralābha verse 19)*



He also ruminates about his destiny in the following verse –

*Sa hi gaganvihari kalmaśdhvanskari,  
daś śatkardhari jyotiśhaam madhyachāri,  
Vidhurapi vidhiyogadrasyate rahunaso,  
likhitamapi lalate projhita kahsamarthah?*

*(Hitopadeśa, Mitralābha verse 21)*

Though sporting with the stars in heaven, And piercing night with myriad rays,

The moon himself, by fate's decree, is swallowed by the Eclipse demon.

From your brow who can erase, what's writ there by your destiny?

*(Hitopadeśa, Mitralābha verse 21)*

While he was lamenting on his lot, the tiger killed and devoured the traveller.

Here 'A Tiger for Malgudi', the lord of the jungle was with the lord of the circus who assumed himself as the lord of the universe. Raja started learning the lessons given by him, how to run round and round till his whip stops, jumping on the objects, cross the hurdles. After this learning, he accepted the sovereignty of the Captain, "I had thought in the jungle that I was supreme. Now that was gone. I was a defeated king, and Captain was the unquestioned suzerain" (TM 53). The beast of jungle was now turned into "That miracle tiger Raja – the magnificent"(TM 65). Raja became very popular with the Jubilee shows of the circus, his act was the most prominent act of it. Raja's magnificent acts allured the cine – directors and producers. Raja was now proposed to be the part of the film. The director said – "Inspired by your circus act I sat up that night and wrote the outline of the story in which Raja would be the main feature. The human side in the story will be hero called Jaggu. I have already booked him, he was an all-in wrestler and physical feats performer and weighs one hundred

kilogram, two meters in height. When he is photographed, his figure will fill a wide screen. I had booked him and was looking for a story” (TM 81).

A giant like hero was also occupied to stand as an adversary to tiger. Raja could not feel comfortable in the feverish atmosphere of outdoor shooting. The feelings, the orders, the messy dialogues, the authoritative attitude of director were all unbearable for him. The most repulsive thing for him was the rehearsal of standing on the hind legs which was beyond his capability as he says, “A creature needs the support of four legs for stability. Somehow human beings balance on two legs . . . It’s not only difficult but a degradation for a quadruped – you are too exposed; no wonder humans have to cover their waists. While they tempted me with a bait to stand up, the camera followed my action, the act repeated till I was sick of it” (TM 112). It was a desperate situation for Raja but still he bore the lashing of whip and touch of electric shock by the captain.

Though he expressed himself mutely and could not utter to the captain to be away from him. He could not say that “Go away, before any harm befalls you, my good man. After all you have fed me and protected me. I shall honour you for it. But please go away and leave me alone. I won’t be yours slave any more... Please understand and leave me alone. Please listen to my advice” (TM 113-14). But he did not understand the gesture of Raja as it is illustrated in a verse from *Hitopadeśa* -

***Asambhvam hem mragasya janm tathāpi rāmō lulubhe mragāya,***

***Prayah samapann vipattikale dhiyoapi punsam malina bhavanti.***

*(Hitopadeśa, Mitralābha verse 28)*

Never was born a deer of gold, Yet Rama coveted such a deer.

The mind, too, weakens, we are told, when calamity is drawing near.

*(Hitopadeśa, Mitralābha verse 28)*

Raja who was like a baby to Captain and he understood all Raja's winks and pranks but could not understand his desperation, his intolerance at such crucial time. Perhaps, Captain had lost his power of thinking; his mind became weak like Rama when calamity was approaching him.

Raja lost his control at the touch of that electric gadget and tore off the head of Captain in an attempt to knock down that device. Captain met a sudden end and Raja set free to move here and there. Thus it was one story of Raja and Captain in the novel. The story was full of twists and turns where a wild beast tiger became submissive to Captain and followed all the instructions of him meekly but at the end the Captain, the owner of Malgudi circus met an unexpected blow of the same slave – like tiger Raja. Many such stories one can find in the folktales where the master reared the animal with care and love and the animal became fierce to him and killed him.

Raja then entered into school premises where he found cozy place to sit in the Principal's chamber. Here he met his master, his Guru. Someone called him brute, to this his master said:

Never use the words beast or brute. They're ugly words coined by man in his arrogance. The human being thinks all other creatures are beasts. Awful word!" when someone asked the master who he was, he answered, "You are asking a profound question. I've no idea who I am! All my life I have been trying to find the answer. Are you sure you know who you are? (TM 118)

The Master was a philosophical type of person, well-versed with scriptures and a philanthropist. While the delegates from Save Tiger Project and a bullied man Alphonse were making arguments on the point of shooting of the tiger inside Headmaster's room, the Master was observing the whole proceeding in a silent and pensive way.

There comes a hilarious scene of comic tales when Alphonse warned everyone to be a hundred yard away and be at safe place as he was going to kill the tiger. While he was the centre of attraction and everybody was watching him and fearing what would happen next, how would the tiger behave, he took a flask out and took a large gulp of rum. Then "he picked up his gun and examined it keenly, and conducted a little rehearsal by pressing the butt against his shoulder and aiming at an imaginary tiger. He withdrew the gun and placed it at his side, took out the hip flask again, and took another long swig "(TM 138).

Thus, when Alphonse was expected to behave like a courageous hero, he turned out to be a pusillanimous coward. He could not take as much strain on his nerves and fell down.

Then, the Master appeared as a divine soul, an omnipotent being who can control even the fierce beast like tiger. He got ready to unlock the room and go inside without any arms or protection. To this the Chairman of 'Save Tiger Project' prevented him to do so. The Master retaliated in these words – "I can tame a tiger as well as any circus ringmaster. It's after all my life that I'm risking" (TM 142). When the Chairman and his members mentioned the laws about life, death and suicide, he replied with an illustration from *Bhagavad Gita* –

Life or death is in no one's hands: you can't die by willing or escape death by determination. A great power has determined the number of breaths for each individual who can neither stop them nor prolong . . . That's why God says in the *Gita*, I'm life and death, I'm the killer and the killed . . . Those enemies you see before you, O *Arjuna*, are already dead, whether you aim your arrows at them or not!(TM 142)

*Ya enam veti hantāram yaścainam manyate hatam,*

*Ubhau tau na vijanīto nayam hanti na hanyate.*

(BG 2.19)

"Neither he who thinks the living entity the slayer nor he who thinks it slain is in knowledge, for the self slays not, nor is slain"(trans.Prabhupada BG 91). The Chairman was bewildered at the arguments of the Master. He asked the Master to sign an affidavit absolving them from all responsibilities of his life and death. He wrote the dictated note and signed it. The Master, then, unlocked the door and intruded into the silence and freedom of the tiger, Raja tried to kill the intruder but he himself fell back. Raja explains his situation at that time in these words – "He was not there, though a moment ago I saw him enter. I heard him say, 'Understand that you are not a tiger, don't hurt yourself. I am your friend . . .' How I was beginning to understand his speech is a mystery. He was exercising some strange power over me"(TM 144). Thus Raja started understanding the human speech with the miraculous powers of the Master. Raja became subdued and pensively listened to the words of Master which he spoke on his violent attacks. The Master said:

It's a natural condition of existence. Every creature is born with a potential store of violence. A child, even before learning to walk, with a pat of its chubby hands just crushes the life out of a tiny ant crawling near it. And as he grows all through life, he maintains a vast store of aggressiveness, which will be subdued if he is civilized . . . sooner or later it has to go, if not through wisdom, definitely through decrepitude, which comes on with years, whether one wants it or not. The demon, the tormentor, or the tyrant in history, if he ever survives to experience senility, becomes helpless and dependent, lacking the strength even to swat a fly . . . you cannot continue your ferocity forever. You have to change . . . (TM 145)

The master is like a magician or conjurer of the folktales who can bring a change in the creature. He can endow the quality of understanding human speech to Raja or he is like a sage of hoary times who can bestow a boon or curse on any creature. Raja became restless at the change creeping up his body and soul. “I felt restless and wanted to do something or at least get away from the whole situation, back to my familiar life, back to the jungle, to the bed of long grass – I sighed for the feel of the grass on my belly. I was sick of human beings” (TM 145).

The supercilious leopards, owls and jackals were more companionable for him than these truant human beings. The master asked Raja to come out of the door and ignore the people around him. “This is one of the rules of *yoga* to steady one's mind to look down one's nose and at nothing beyond. That's one way not to be distracted and to maintain one's peace of mind”(TM 149). Raja did the same; he meekly followed the heels of Masters and remained heedless towards the reactions of the crowd. He was following him like Mary of the rhymes who used to be followed by his little lamb. This spectacular scene was like a dream to Alphonse who got up when Raja and Master passed by him.

The people were astounded at the extraordinary powers of the hermit. Some took him as a sage from Himalayas and some considered Master and Raja as brothers. Everyone was uncertain about the belongings of the master, someone says – “The question remains, who is this tiger-tamer – the terrible animal trots behind him, while the circus-*wallah* for all his expert control could not save himself in the end” (TM 152). They both reached the foot of Mempi range and found a shelter there. The master asked Raja to go where he liked for finding his food and forbade him to go far. Raja accepted his advice like a good disciple. They both started living in close communion with nature's surroundings. Raja loved to listen on God, Life, Death and Existence from his Master.

The effect of the preaching of Master on Raja may be observed here –

He described god in his own terms as the creator, the Great Spirit pervading every creature, every rock and tree and the sky and the starry; a source of power and strengths. Later when my Master questioned me about it, I said that God must be an enormous tiger, spanning the earth and the sky, with a tail capable of encircling the globe, claws that could hook on the clouds and teeth that could grind the mountain and possessing, of course, immeasurable strength to match. On hearing my notion of God, my Master burst into a laugh and said, “It’s often said that God made man in his own image, it’s also true that man makes God in his own image. Both may be right; and you are perfectly right in thinking of your god as a super tiger. Also it may be true. What we must not forget is that he may be everything we imagine and more. In *Bhagavad Gita* He reveals himself in a mighty terrifying form which pervades the whole universe in every form of life and action. Remember also, He is within every one of us and we desire our strength from Him . . . (TM 158)

As it is said by lord Krishna in *Bhagavad Gita* –

***Īswarah sarvbhūtānam hrideśe arjuna tiśthati,***

***Bhramayansarvbhūtāni yanatrarūdhāni mayayā.***

(BG 18.61)

The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone’s heart, O *Arjuna*, and in directing the wanderings of all living entities, who are seated as on a machine, made of the material energy (trans. Prabhupada BG 18.61). Thus all the activities of living entities

are directed by the super soul. He lives inside the heart of every creature. The living entity gets what he deserves and is carried by the material body. Raja explains the super soul in his own terms. As human beings imagine their God in human form with two legs and four arms, a human face with a divine halo behind the face, Raja also imagined God in his own terms as an enormous tiger. But it was his master who made him understand the spiritualism and God. He learnt to control his senses, his appetite and realized his inner-self. This phase of his life was elevating and exhilarating. He got accustomed to many changes which were appearing in him. Like the protagonists of *The Guide* and *The Serpent and the Rope*, Raja also reached at the stage of self realization. He learnt to know himself, to understand the world in which he lived through the enlightenment provided by his Guru, his Master.

Raja became inquisitive to know about the life of his Guru, the past of his Master. To this, the Master gave an account of his life as a worldly man, busy in amassing wealth and living by the clock an artificial life with no substance. One day, it seemed all useless to him and he renounced everything in the manner of *Siddhartha*.

One day it seemed all wrong, a senseless repetition of activities, where one's head always throbbled with next plan, counting time or money or prospects and I abruptly shed everything including (but for a bare minimum) clothes and fled away from wife, children, home, possessions all of which seemed intolerable. At midnight, I softly drew the bolt of our back door, opening on the sands of *sarayu* behind our house at Ellaman Street, while others slept and left very much in the manner of Siddhartha. (*TM* 161)

Gradually with the course of time he acquired anonymity and wandered through the forests without a slight worry of past, present or future. The proximity of Raja and Master became a mysterious phenomenon for the people so they started coming to such remote place to see them. They became popular as “a man living in the company



of a tiger” (TM 162). Master's wife also came to meet him and to take him to house but he declined by saying that the past or future did not exist for him, he lived in the present moment only. He explained her wife that there was no other reason for leaving the house than the inner transformation.

Thus the lives of Raja and his Master spent on with the meditations, ablutions, preaching and self – realizing. Gradually, they both ushered in the old age. Raja became weak, decrepit and his hearing was also impaired. To this Master said – “Raja old age has come on you. Beautiful old age, when faculties are dimmed one by one, so that we may be restful, very much like extinguishing lights in a home, one by one, before one goes to sleep” (TM 174).

The master had a realization in his dreams that his time to attain *Samadhi* has come so they must be separated now. The master handed over Raja to delegates from Zoo, just to keep off Raja from starvation. It was a very poignant and touching moment when they both parted each other. The Master explained his philosophy: "No relationship, human or other, or association of any kind could last forever. Separation is the law of life, right from the mother’s womb. One has to accept it if one has to live in God’s plans” (TM 175).

This is the moral of the story which is illustrated in *Hitopadeśa* too –

Water, fire, poison, weapon, Hunger, sickness, freaks, of nature

Encounter with such cause or reason, Separates life from every creature.

(*Hitopadeśa, Mitralabha* verse 162)

In Raja’s case it was natural dotage due to old age and hunger which persuaded Raja to get separated from his Master, his Guru, and his life. Before setting out for zoo, the Master thrust his hand through the bars and whispered to Raja, “Both of us will shed our forms soon and perhaps we could meet again, who knows? (TM 175) After death one gets another birth, the soul remains imperishable and only the body

dies. In this way the cycle of birth and death goes on incessantly. Master also believes in this cycle of death and birth that's why he assures Raja to meet again in second birth which may be in any form. Though the Master was detached from all bondages and relations but he was emotionally attached with Raja which enforced him to be with each other in every birth.

Thus the relevant use of tales from the *Hitopadeśa* and *Panćatantra*, the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the austere religious practices and beliefs added strength to the fictional art of R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. By taking resort to perennial wisdom they have tried to bridge the gulf between the past and the present. Their fiction offers a reworking of traditional Indian Folklore in the contemporary literary context.

A.K. Ramanujan in his preface to *Folktales from India* calls the folktale a poetic text that carries some of its cultural context within it. He also calls it a travelling metaphor that finds a new meaning with each new telling.

The folktale tells a single story, there are usually no sub-plots and the tale concentrates on a single figure, who dominates the action. It has a traditional 'once upon a time' beginning followed by a rising action, a climax, and an anti-climactic "They lived happily ever after" ending. There are also sets of oppositions in the narrative scheme of the traditional folk tale; good people juxtaposed with supernatural and so on. They develop their own thematic and structural patterns. All these essentials of folktale and folklore we have seen in the novels of R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. The writings of these two novelists can be called the quintessential of the Indian Oral Tradition. Many episodes, incidents, anecdotes and events find analogical semblance with the stories of *Panćatantra* and *Hitopadeśa* which are the compendium of perennial wisdom and philosophy and can aptly be termed as Mini – Scriptures.

Both the writers have used digressions, devotional and folk songs and Sanskrit verses to explain the story or give it a concrete form. This digressional technique of weaving stories within story is the substantial quality of Indian Oral Tradition,

whether they are the tales of *Panćatantra* and *Hitopadeśa* or verses of *Bhagavad Gita* and *Jataka tales*, all have been transmitted to the next generation in words or oral form. Rao and Narayan revealed to us the beauty of our folklore and myths, their versatility and relevance transcends time and age. Indian folklore traditions are the richest tradition in the world and they made it known to the world. Literature and Folklore are complementary to each other. Literature, in written form helps in preserving oral tradition and Folklore, transmits lofty thoughts and ideas to posterity and highlights the relevance of the stories of the past to the generation of present. Folklore provides, a strong base, a solid foundation to erect the aesthetic mansion of Literature. If Literature is body, then Folklore is soul which will always remain imperishable and will exist in society for time immemorial as a guiding source to posterity:

*May splitting of Partners only be, In the camps of your adversary.*

*May the wicked go a fatal way, And meet destruction every day.*

*May joy and all prosperity, Among the people always be.*

*And many children ever play, In this grove of stories gay.*

*(Hitopadeśa Suhrdbheda verse 182)*

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# *Chapter – 4*

## *Mythological Allusions:*

### *An Exploration*

## Chapter – 4

### Mythological Allusions: An Exploration

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**“With myth, everything becomes possible.”**

(Claude Levi Strauss *Structural Anthropology* 208)

Myths and Mythology have been an integral part of literature since the time immemorial. An integrative mythology whether inherited or invented is the soul of literature. According to Northrop Frye, Literature is conscious mythology; as society develops, its mythical stories become structural principles of story-telling, its mythical concepts, sun-gods and the like, become habits of metaphoric thoughts. In a fully mature literary tradition the writer enters into structure of traditional stories and images.

Diana Wynne Jones remarks “If you take myth and folklore, and these things that speak in symbols, they can be interpreted in so many ways that although the actual image is clear enough, the interpretation is infinitely blurred, a sort of enormous rainbow of every possible colour you could imagine”(Reflections 267).

In Indian Mythology, the stories are told, as symbols of fundamental truths within societies, having a strong oral tradition. They are, generally concerned with some extraordinary things, events and beings. They have been one of the richest sources of inspiration for literature, drama and art. Many types of myths prevail in the Indian society, some deal with the cosmological events or with crisis moments in the life cycle of the individual. Cosmological myths deal with the creation of the universe. Myths in the life-cycle of human beings primarily concern with birth, puberty marriage, baptism, initiation, death etc. The myths related to festivals, occasions are also common in the mass of India. Here it would be apt to quote the



maxim popular in Indian society, *Saat Vaar* and *Aaath Tyohar* which means there are seven days in a week but we do celebrate eight festivals in seven days. Thus myth and mythology are the embodiment of the basic and general truths that govern the mindset of the people. The significant episodes of Mythology are capable of revealing various shades of meaning and shape the deeper stratification of the psyche. India is a continuity; changing, transforming all the time and the timeless gods and goddesses, their feats and tales cling about Indian people in many ways. The writers and critics have also seen it through different spectacles.

K.Satchidanandan observes:

There is one line of critics from Vico to Malinowski, Durkheim, Mauss and Levi-Strauss who have tried to bridge this gap through positivistic and rationalist approach aligning myth with rationality. Another line aligns myths with the evolution of consciousness as is done by Herder who treats myths as allegories, or Max Mueller who considers myth a *linguistic disease* while a third group of eminent modernists including Jean Piaget and Roland Barthes consider myth to be superior reason. Existentialists like Kierkegaard, Jaspers and Heidegger associates myth with the basic questions of being, encompassing and nothingness; the Structuralists like Propp, Levi-Strauss, Todorov and Kristeva try to offer a poetics for mythic form, and Post – Structuralists like Derrida look at the institutionalisation of the mythic discourse as a linguistic phenomenon. In short there are ways and ways of looking at myth and its relationship to literature and life.

*(Myth in Contemporary Criticism xii)*

Myth has been defined in many ways. According to M.H. Abrams:

In Classical Greek, *mythos* signified any story or plot, whether true or false. In its central modern significance, a myth is one story in a mythology – a system of hereditary stories which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group and which served to explain (in terms of the intentions and actions of supernatural beings) why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, and establish the rationale for social customs and observances and the sanctions for the rules by which men conduct their lives. (*Glossary* 106)

Thus *mythos* constitutes the fables, legends or sagas which rationalize the universe and the world around us. Indian mythologist Devdutta Pattanaik defines mythology in *Why I insist on calling Myself a Mythologist?* as a subjective truth of people that is communicated through stories, symbols and rituals. He adds, unlike fantasy that is nobody's truth and history that seeks to be everybody's truth, mythology is somebody's truth.

Myth provides the main outlines and the circumference of a verbal universe which is later occupied by literature as well. In all cultures, mythology merges insensibly into, and with literature. Myths are the reservoirs of new meanings. They acquire new meaning in different context. In Indian society the tragic victim is also glorified as hero/ heroine. Myths when employed by modern writers acquire a new lease of life. The characters grow out of their mythical worlds and are reborn in the contemporary world and share the modern man's life problems. The contemporary literature hence continues to dig into the world of past experiences, so as to surmount present complexities. This is perhaps the reason for the growing interest of the contemporary Indian writers towards mythopoeia.

The use of myth is a potential strategy to represent reality. Sometimes it is serious and philosophical as in Raja Rao and sometimes comic and farcical as in

Desani. In R.K. Narayan, reality itself gets a mythic dimension. The works of R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao have been examined here to reveal the re-interpretation and revisioning of mythology through their characters, plots and narrative technique.

Raja Rao's works reflect Indian life and culture in all its rich complexity. C.D. Narasimhaiah is the first critic who noted mythological backdrop in his novels. A.S. Rao also opines the similar thought for *Kanthapura* in this extract, "The novelist uses mythical motives to interpret the immediate reality in terms of eternally recurring experiences. He combines the secular and spiritual forces in his portrayal of the Indian struggle for freedom" (*Socio-Cultural Aspects* 69). Raja Rao has used the mythology and folklore as the media to present his thoughts and feelings precisely to the readers. Mythology and Folklore is morphed into the structural mode of the novel.

The whole of Indian Freedom Struggle is fabricated into the threads of mythology and folklore. The novel *Kanthapura* depicts the spiritualization of the Freedom Movement within the parameters of Indian Cultural conventions. Rao has adroitly inter-woven the conventional mythology with contemporary reality. The recurrent reference to myths adds new dimensions to the struggle for freedom for "exaggeration of reality by myth is the necessary way of achieving the eternity in space" (Nityabodhanand *The Myths and Symbols in Indian Civilization* 7). Raja Rao has recaptured the magnificent mythical imagination of Indian antiquity in his novels.

The novel *Kanthapura* follows the primeval order of *Varanshrama* as stated in *Vedas*. There are quarters of different castes in *Kanthapura* locale. The town is diversified in Brahmin Quarters, Potters Street, Pariahs Quarters and *Sudra* Quarters. We may find the mythological allusion of this fact in *Bhagavad Gita* in the following verse:

***Brāhmana kṣatriya viśam sūdrānām ca parantapa***

***Karmāni pravibhaktāni svabhāva prabhavair gunaih. (BG 18.41)***

It says that the activities of the *Brahmanas*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaisyas* and *Sudras* are clearly divided according to the qualities born of their own nature. The *Sudras* stood at the lowest level in this *Vedic* hierarchy and Brahmins were on topmost place. The Brahmins were not supposed to intermingle with the *Sudras*, Moorthy a Brahmin, when does so, his mother dies of fear of being excommunicated. Casteism pervaded in the small town of *Kanthapura* and the *Vedic* rules were being followed there strongly.

Gandhi is mythologised in the novel and has been positioned on the pedestal of God where he is compared with a great God of Hindu mythology – *Krishna*, “You remember how *Krishna*, when he was but a babe of four, had begun to fight against demons and had killed the serpent *kali*, so too our Mohandas began to fight against the enemies of the country... more and more men followed him as they did *Krishna* the flute-player; and so he goes from village to village to slay the serpent of the foreign rule” (*KP* 16). This the way of Indians that they preserve their memories about legends and mythology in a story form. Our symbols of mythology are varied and many; most probably Gandhi too, will someday pass into a legend of mythological nature. Indians will enlarge him to an idealistic size where he will be worshipped as an idol, a deity.

Gandhian Moorthy got immersed deeply into the primordial radiance of his inner self. He experienced a holy version of Mahatma after which he felt like an ethereal being. He remembers the mythological tale of *Prahlada* and *Hiranyakashyapu* where *Prahlada* is thrown down the mountains, drowned in seas and given poison to be killed but every time *Hari* – the *Vishnu* saved him, as it may be illustrated in the following passage:

. . . and he remembered the child *Prahlada* who had said *Hari* was everywhere , and he said to himself. ‘I shall see Hari, too,’  
. . . And that very evening he said to his mother, ‘Mother, now you can throw me down the mountains,’ and she asked, ‘Why,

my son? And he answered, ‘Why mother, because *Hari* will fly down and hold me in his arms as I roll down the mountains. And if you send elephants to kill me, the elephants will stand by and say, “This is *Hari*’s child,” and lift me up with their trunks and seat me on their backs and throw a garland round my neck. And the poison you will give me in the cup of death will become water of flowers, for mother, I have seen *Hari* . . . (KP 90-91)

Here in this mythological tale of *Prahlada*, the reader can easily comprehend the analogy of *Prahlada* and Moorthy and *Hari* and Gandhi. At another place this mythological analogy is taken as a reference, as it can be noticed in the following lines – “And then Moorthy says, ‘Seenu is our fifth member,’ and Range Gowda says, ‘Every *Rama* needs an *Anjaneya*, and he’s your fire – tailed Hanuman,’ and they all laugh, and so Moorthy and Range Gowda and Rangamma and Rachanna and Seenu become the Congress Panchayat Committee of Kanthapura” (KP 108). The phrase fire-tailed Hanuman relates the whole story of Hanuman when he fired *Ravan’s Lanka* with his tail and here with this one line analogy the author has entitled Seenu as a great warrior of Moorthy’s *Sena* as *Hanuman* was the chief warrior of *Vanar Sena* in the war of *Ramayana*.

One Swami Ji who was wearing the robes of saint came forward and addressed the people. His thoughts were all in favour of British and against Gandhi. He says, “All this is very good, but if the white man shall leave us tomorrow it will not be *Rama-Rajya* we shall have, but the rule of the ten – headed *Ravana*. What did we have, pray before the British came - disorder, corruption and egoism, disorder, corruption and egoism I say’ . . . and the British came and they came to protect us, our bones and our *dharma*. I say *dharma* and I mean it. For hath not the Lord said in the *Gita*, whensoever there is ignorance and corruption I come, for I, says Krishna, am the defender of *dharma*, and the British came to protect our *dharma*” (KP 126-27).

The Swami Ji argued with the people by taking recourse to mythology of *Ravana* and the verse from the *Gita*. As he knew the people were as much akin to divine scriptures and their characters and verses as to their neighbours and relatives. One more verse from the *Gita* appears in the following lines – “No, sister, that is not difficult. Does not the *Gita* say, the sword can split asunder the body, but never the soul? And if we say, we shall not move a hair, we shall not move a hair ”(KP 152-53). As it can be illustrated from the following verse of *Bhagavad Gita*:

*acchedyo'yam adahyo'yam akledya'sosya eve éa*

*nityah sarva-gatah sthānur a'calo yam sanatanah.*

(BG 2.24)

The soul is indestructible; the soul is incombustible, insoluble and unwitherable. The soul is eternal, all – pervasive, unmodifiable, immovable and primordial. (trans. Prabhupada BG 2.24). Thus the verses from the *Gita* have also been contextualized in the colloquial language of people of *Kanthapura*. They talk about the episodes from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* as well as the verses from Holy Scriptures.

The *Śiva* mythology is also enlivened in these verses in the novel –

*Changing he changes not, Ash-smearred, he's Parvati's Sire,*

*Moon on his head, And poison in his throat,*

*Chant, Chant, Chant the name of Eesh,*

*Chant the name of Śiva Lord! (KP 155)*

The phrases ‘ash – smearred’, ‘*Parvati*’s Sire’, ‘Moon on his head’, ‘poison in his throat’, all have a mythological tale behind them. Why *Śiva* came to be known as these attributions, have long mythological tales behind. They all glorify the lord *Śiva*

and the people of *Kanthapura* invoke the three – eyed god to protect them from every danger. As they sing in chorus:

We lighted the sacred flame, and our mouths bitter, we clapped  
our hands and we sang,

*Siva, Siva of the Meru Mount,*

*Siva, Siva of the Ganga's head*

*Siva, Siva of the Crescent-Moon,*

*Siva, Siva of the Crematorium-dance,*

*Siva, Siva of the unillusioned heart, Siva, Siva . . . (KP 221)*

The analogy is established between freedom struggle and the eternal war of *Ramayana*. That battle was also the battle of good and evil in which evil was vanquished by the god. Mahatma Gandhi and *Rama* were the main exponents of these eternal wars. *Bharat Mata* is *Sita* who has been abducted by *Ravana*, the Red-men. As it may be seen in the following lines – “He will bring us *Swaraj*, the Mahatma. And we shall be happy. And *Rama* will come back from exile, and *Sita* will be with him, for *Ravana* will be slain and *Sita* freed, and he will come back with *Sita* on his right in a chariot of the air, and brother *Bharata* will go to meet them with the worshipped sandal of the Master on his head. And as they enter *Ayodhya* there will be a rain of flowers” (KP 258).

It will not be an exaggeration to say that the whole novel is mythologized and it was through mythology that Rao could penetrate the hearts of readers and the inner chords of human psyche. Mythology retains the root of any culture and culture gets flourished by taking recourse to mythology. Here in this novel, mythological illustrations are serving two purposes; one, it propagandized the freedom struggle to every person of town and they become the part of it, Secondly, mythology laid the

foundation and prepared a solid background on which the whole novel is constructed. The mythological hue had been lent to the novel in the *Foreword* itself by Rao. He said, “*Rama* might have rested under this *pipal* tree, *Sita* might have dried her clothes, after her bath, on this yellow stone, or the Mahatma himself on one of his many pilgrimages through the country, might have slept in this hut, the low one, by the village gate . . . one such story from the contemporary annals of my village I have tried to tell” (*KP Foreword V*). Thus the *sthala-purana* – the local history of the place is portrayed in a way that it represents the history of the whole nation.

Gandhi is also mythologized; he has been set on the pedestal of God. One day he will also become the part of mythology. Many tales about his birth and non-violent feats will be narrated to posterity. He will be taken as some mythological heroes who were endowed with the extraordinary powers of swaying the mass. Gandhi, like *Krishna*, is preaching the principles and doctrines of *Bhagwad Gita* to Moorthy who is paralleled to *Partha* or *Arjuna*. *Kanthapura* is like mini *Bhagavad Gita* where the people are being taught to be detached from worldly things, to perform tasks without thinking about its fruitfulness i.e. *Nishkama Karma*.

*Bhagavad Gita* is the quintessential Indian text, with its roots in the *Rigveda* and the *Upanishads*, informs the life of the Indian today as it did in the past. *Sankara* and Gandhi, Radhakrishnan and Ramanujan many have commented on and contextualized it in their writings to explain its relevance to everyday life. Raja Rao’s writings also abound in the preaching from *Gita* and Indian esoteric knowledge from *Vedas* and *Puranas*.

The use of the mythical figure of *Krishna* further demonstrates that myth enabling a social translation within a specific Indian context is not outside change in *Kanthapura* but within it. Rao’s use of mythology in his writings can be read as an attempt to connect with an ancient though still – living cultural tradition of India. Gandhi myth, *Kenchamma* myth have been dovetailed into the very structure of the novel to show the belief of the villagers in the rituals.



Both myth and rituals have been interwoven with the story of the novel. The myths of *Prahlada*, *Hanuman* and *Shabri – Rama* and rituals of yoking of bulls to the plough under the *Rohini* Star, celebration of *Kartik* festival and various ways of appeasing Goddess *Kenamma* present the rhetoric of fiction in Raja Rao's writings. Here characters have become mythological figures and symbols, their actions have become rituals and their speech is elevated to the level of *ślokas* and *mantras*.

There is a parallelism between River *Ganga* and Goddess *Kenamma*. At the outset of novel, Achakka tells us that the vicinity of *Kanthapura* was afflicted by a *mleccha*, a demon who used to devour young sons as his food and took young women as his wives. The sage Tripura brought Goddess *Kenamma* on the land of *Kanthapura* after a long penance like *Bhagiratha* who brought *Ganga* on earth for the redemption of his ancestors. The earth of *Kanthapura* got sanctified after the emergence of Goddess *Kenamma* as river *Ganga* purified the land of *Bharat Varsha*. She is the blood and soul of *Kanthapura*, a supreme village deity. There are some lesser deities also who takes care of various problems of the village. Ankamma takes care of Cholera; Mariamma takes care of small pox and other diseases including those of the cattle. It has mythical parallel with the legends of various rivers in India. *Ganga* is the supreme deity while *Yamuna*, *Saraswati*, *Narmada*, *Godaveri*, are lesser deities who have been abluting the sins of humanity. As M.K. Naik observes:

. . . Nevertheless, the legends about *Kenamma* and *Himavathy* immediately recall passage like those describing the merits of the river *Narmada* in *Matsyapurana* and *Agnipurana* the merits of the river *Godaveri* in the *Brahmapurana*, and the legends connected with *Krishna* and *Radha* in various places of *Vishnupurana* and *Bhagavatpurana*. (Raja Rao 64)

Thus in the novels of Raja Rao; *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, Myths and *Puranas* form a solid foundation on which the whole fictional mansion is erected. It provides a

strong firmament to his writings and this is the reason why such scanty output made Raja Rao famous on International grounds. The importance and immanence of *Vedas* and *Upanishads* with regard to the novels of Rao and Narayan is expressed in the following extract from an essay entitled *Books which have influenced me* by M.K. Naik from “Illustrated weekly of India”:

. . . whether it is through Dante or Shakespeare, through St. Thomas Aquinas or Nietzsche, you come back to the *Upanishads* and the *Vedanta*, realizing that wheresoever you go, you always return to the *Himalayas*, and whatever the rivers that flow, the waters are of the *Gangotri*. (quoted in *Raja Rao* 45)

Such is the strength of an undying tradition with its continuity and vitality. The similar tale of sage *Valmiki* and *Tripura* is found in *Kathasaritsagara* by the medieval Kashmiri poet Som Deva. It is also the tale of divine birth like *Kanthapura*, in which Gandhi’s birth, his life, his tenets, his doctrines all have acquired the hue of a superhuman, an *Avatara*. The myth of Gandhism is playing a central role as it is observed by Chitra Sankaran in the recent revised edition of her critical volume on selected works by Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan:

The overriding influence of myth in all aspects of life, in ritual, methods of worship, and even inter-community relations, can be observed in the novel. However, the sudden influx and deep influence of the Gandhian movement, itself interpreted as a myth by the villagers is central phenomenon elucidated in the story. (*Myth Connections* 41)

The eruption and evolution of the village *Kanthapura* is also mythical and falls under the category of cosmogonic myths which describes the birth, evolution, destruction and rebirth of the village through the age old myths of creation and destruction. *Kanthapura* is a *puranic* tale where we can find semblance between

eternal war of *Devas* and *Asuras* and *Satyagrahis* and Red-Men. Gandhi is the *avatar* of God who landed on earth to rescue *Bharat Mata (Sita)* from the prison house of *Ravana* (Red Men). By comparing this mortal war to the legendary war of *Ramayana*, Rao very meticulously integrates the mythical and contemporary to elevate the contemporary to the level of myth.

Devdutt Pattanaik, a celebrated mythologist, terms mythology as an inevitable part of society. He presented his views in an interview with Namya Sinha published under the title *No Society can exist without myth*.

No society can exist without myth; Humans cannot function without myths because myth creates nations of right and wrong, good and bad, heaven and hell, rights and duties. Marriages, monogamy, peace, salvation, non-violence are all concepts based on myth; they don't exist in nature. All religions, all nations, all tribes, all ideologies, all ways of life are based on myth . . . only a world without humans is a world without myths. (To Namya Sinha in an Interview)

The next novel of Raja Rao, *The Serpent and the Rope*, may be illustrated here with the above quote. In this novel, the novelist has successfully tried to convey his philosophical notions through the channel of myths and mythology. Ramaswamy's love; his quest for self-realization, his philosophy of life are all expressed through mythical stories. A number of myths and legends, Indian and European, find place in the novel viz. *Satyavan-Savithri*, *Radha-Krishna*, *Shiva-Parvathi*, *Iseult and Tristan*. The *Radha-Krishna* myth and the *Siva-Parvathi* myth that recur in *The Serpent and the Rope* elevate the relationship of Rama and Savithri to spiritual heights.

Rama is well versed with the myths and legends of different civilizations and he has tried to yoke together the theories of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Dante, Homer, Rousseau, Victor Hugo, Zola, Rilke, Romain Rolland to Indian myths and legends of

*Yāgnyavalkya, Maitreyi, Gārgi, Bhartrahari, Kalidasa, Tulsidas, Aurobindo, Anand Coomarswamy* etc.

The novelist has conceived Benares and Ganges, with all their holiness, both literally and symbolically. They are the ancient symbols of Hindu civilization, and they exist in the consciousness of one born in *Bharatvarsha*. *Kashi* is also the city where the first expounder of *Advaita Vedanta*, *Adi Guru Śankara*, formulated his commentaries on the *Brahma Sutras*, the *Upanishads* and the *Gītā*. Raja Rao catches the real spirit of Benares and is furious at those who have desecrated the place with all their fraud and charlatanism. Benares is even within a Hindu, one who is real Brahmin. “Benares was indeed nowhere but inside oneself: ***‘Kāshī Kshétram, Sharīram Tribhuvana janānīm.***’ And I knew, all the brides be Benares born” (SR 24). Rao being a great academician of the Hindu scriptures understands the spirit of the holy river. The rivers are like his life blood which flow in his spiritual vein. He expresses his love for *Ganges* in the *Introduction* to the novel, “the Ganges was an inner truth to me, an assurance, the origin and end of my Brahminic tradition. I would go back to India, for the Ganges and for the deodhars of the Himalayas, and for the deer in the forests, for the keen call of the elephant in the grave ocellate silence of the forest”(The *Serpent and the Rope* xxviii). Rao has tried to explain the relationship between Ramaswamy and Savithri with the symbol of Ganges. As it may be noted in the following excerpt from the novel:

For whatever I gave her she accepted, as the Ganges receives the waters of the Himalayas, that go on down to the sea and come again as white flakes of snow, then blue, then very green, and so, when the sun comes the northward again, the ice melts and once more the Ganges takes the waters down to the sea – so we gave love to each other, as it did not belong to us but to a principle, another, an impersonal reality, from which we saw gifts emerge in each of us, and gave each other with ceremony. For us therefore all was celebration, festival . . . (SR 85)

At one other place Savithri has been compared to *Lakshmi* the goddess of wealth, according to Indian mythology. “She was the source of which words were made, the Mother of Sound Akshara-Lakshmi, divinity of the syllable; the night of which the day was the meaning, the knowledge of which the book was the token, the symbol, the prophecy” (SR 82-83). Thus through mythological parallels the novelist has tried to present the personality and disposition of the characters. By taking recourse to *Ramayana* and its brief story, *dharma* has been defined to Swanston, a colleague of Savithri. As the following passage puts it:

Well, *Ravana* wants to possess the world-he’s taken *Sita*, daughter of the furrow, child of Himalaya and wife of *Rama*, away; he’s kidnapped her and taken her away and made her his prisoner.’

‘And so?’ said Jack, joining the discussion.

And so, *Rama* has to fight his battle. He goes about in the forest and the animals of the wild and the brush of the air join him, for the cause of *Sri Rama* is *dharmic*, . . . So when *Rama* goes to liberate *Sita* from the prison island of *Ravana*, the very monkeys and squirrels build roads and bridges, carry messages, set fire to fearful cities, because *dharma* must win.

What’s *dharma*? asked Swanston. ‘*Dharma* comes from the word *dhru*, to sustain, to uphold. It’s as it were the metaphysical basis of the world – in so far as the world exists, of course – and it’s the same *dharma*, to continue the story that forced *Sri Rama*, after having burnt *Lanka*, killed *Ravana* and liberated *Sita*, and after returning to *Ayodhya* the capital, to send Queen *Sita* away in exile, that the Kingdom of *Ayodhya* be perpetually righteous. The impersonal alone is right,’ I said. (SR 92)

*Dharma* has been glorified in Hindu epics of great eminence like *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Chanakya Nīti*. The value of *dharma* in Indian philosophy may be observed in the following verse from *Chanakya Nīti*:

***Sa jīvati gunā yasya dharmō yasya sa jīvati***

***Gunā dharmavihīnasya Jīvanam nishprayanam***

(*Chanakya Nīti* 14.13)

He lives who has good qualities. He also lives who has *dharma*. The life of one who has neither good qualities nor *dharma* is without any purpose. The relationship of Savithri and Ramaswamy has also been paralleled to the myth of King Mark and Iseult. As the following passage brings it out:

King Mark of Tintagel awaited his Iseult. I would have to give her to him, but having drunk the potion of Granval, I would meet her by brooks and forests; I would be torn by dragons but some day we would lie in the forest, the sword between us. Some day love would be strong enough to shatter the rock to fragments, and we should be free to wander where we would, build an empire if we cared.

‘And we shall have a bambino’ she said, and laughed as though she had caught my thought.

‘Two,’ I added. ‘One is *Ganesha* and the other *Kumara*.’(SR 103)

The mythical story of Tristan and Iseult has been frequently mentioned by Ramaswamy. It is but natural for Rama, working on the Cathars and living in Provence, to think of Tristan being asked to bring King Mark's bride when he is asked to persuade Savithri to accept – Pratap win Savithri for him, as it were. Here Iseult is

Savithri, Pratap is King Mark and Ramaswamy is Tristan. In this story Tristan the nephew of King Mark was asked by him to bring Iseult. But during the sea voyage, Iseult's maid gave the pair, the love potion which was prepared by Iseult's mother for King Mark and Iseult. Tristan and Iseult are overcome by violent passion for one another which they proceed to satisfy at once. Yet Tristan is still duty bound to fulfill his mission on which King Mark had sent him. So he hands over Iseult to his uncle, but they do not cease to be lovers. Thus, through mythological parallels the novelist has, meticulously, communicated the relationship between Ramaswamy and Savithri. At one more place, Savithri is compared with *Radha* and Ramaswamy with *Krishna*. It seems that their whole conversation goes on in an indirect way or, it may also be said, in a mythological way. As it may be noted in the following lines:

‘I’ve known my lord for a thousand lives, from *janam* to *janam*  
have I known my Krishna . . .’

‘And the lord knows himself because *Radha* is, else he would have gone into penance and sat on Himalaya. The *Jamna* flows and the peacock feathers are on his diadem, because *Radha*'s smiles enchant the creepers and the birds. *Radha* is the music of dusk, the red earth, the meaning of night. And this, my love, my spouse’(SR 106).

At another place, when Savithri is sitting in train and looking out of the window to Ramaswamy with tears over her cheeks and face, she promises to Ramaswamy in a mythical way “*Parvathi* says she will come to *Shiva*, when *Shiva* is so lost in meditation that were he to open his eyes the three worlds would burn”(SR 108). Thus through the analogical mythological figures he has conveyed the viewpoints of the characters.

It is the love of Indian mythology, Indian philosophy and *mantras* in the heart of Raja Rao which he express in the novel in these words, “With the work of dawn I heard such a grave and long-drawn mantra, ‘*OM DHIH – OM GIH – OM JRIH*,’ that

I thought I was in Hardwar, and the Ganges flowing by me. It is beautiful to live, beautiful and sacred to live and be an Indian in India” (SR 174).

After every one or two pages we find mythological figures spun into the very fabric of the novel. Here, in this excerpt, we may notice the mythological episodes from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. ‘You remember *Dharmraja* sold his kingdom – nay, even his wife, gambling? Even so did *Harishchandra* give away his kingdom for the Truth. *Sri Rama* went into exile because his gamble-minded father promised anything she wanted to his young wife, and his young wife gambled for the kingdom of her own son. Recently Mahatma Gandhi said to the British – in the middle of the war, mind you, when the Japanese were at our door – “Clear out and leave India to anarchy. We will know what to do with ourselves” (SR 189). The entire mythological episode of *Radha*, *Krishna* and sage *Durvasa* is referred in the story of the novel to explain the Indian philosophy of Absolute, the ‘I’ and light of the Truth. “I am reminded of a very moving story of Radha and Krishna” (SR 216). Through *Radha – Krishna* myth the hero narrator communicates his point of view on the realization of the Absolute. Through his symbolic ritual marriage with Savithri he draws great satisfaction, his self is illuminated and she helps him to attain the ultimate Truth.

In the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* the woman is worshipped as goddess. It is said in the *Vedas*.

***Yatra Naryastu Pujyante Ramante Tatra Devtaha.***

***Yatraitastu Na Pujyante Sarvastatra Phalahā Kriyaha***

*(Laws of Manu 3/56)*

'Acharya Manu opines where the women are worshipped and respected, the gods have their abodes and where they are ill--treated and disrespected all the deeds become immaterialized'(translated by G.Buhler). Raja Rao has also presented women in a panegyric way in more than three passages.



It can be termed as *Nāri-Stuti* in Hindi which is illustrated here in this excerpt:

Woman is the earth, air, ether, sound, woman is the microcosm of the mind, the articulations of space, the knowing in knowledge, the woman is fire . . . To Mitra she is Varuna, to Indra she is Agni, to Rama she is Sita, to Krishna she is Radha. Woman is the meaning of the word, the breath, touch, act; woman, that which reminds man of that which he is . . . Woman is kingdom, solitude, time; woman is growth, the gods, inherence; the woman is death, for it is through woman that one is born; woman rules, for it is she, the universe . . . Woman is the world Woman is the earth and the cavalcade, the curve of the cloud and the round roundness of the sun (SR 204-05).

The woman is eulogized in the novel in the prototype of *Vedas* and *Upanishads* where woman has been ordained to set on the pedestal of Goddess. At one place, we find Madeleine and Ramaswamy discussing on one more Vedāntic system of Hindu mythology i.e. Buddhism. When Madelein asks about Buddhism Ramaswamy answers, “It tries to take more and more of *Vedānta* into it, so that the Buddha becomes a Hindu *avatāra*, and the *Mahāyāna* almost a *Vedāntic* system – but a negative that is all ”(SR 190). Buddha, 567-487 B.C., was a great Hindu, a *Kśatriya* and a prince. But moved by the miseries of the world, he renounced the palace and the world to find solution for these ills. After a good deal of hard thinking under the *Bodhi* tree, which for centuries has been considered holy, he got enlightened. Asked about the existence of God, he answered, “I do not know.” So, he was an agnostic and not an atheist. All his teachings are based entirely on the *Upanishads*, although he did not consider the *Vedas* as authoritative. In the novel *The Serpent and the Rope* Buddhism plays a significant role. The hero gets away from Buddhism but his wife Madeleine goes deeper into it and became a true Buddhist “It’s the eighth moon today, and I’ve taken to fasting. I’m going to be a good Buddhist” (SR 170).

She was learning Pali to understand the Buddhistic texts. “She turned her attention more and more to Buddhism. The intellectual virility and the deep compassion of the Buddha often filled her evenings with joy and wonderment. She would tell me, lying on the bed next to me, story after story from the *Jatakas*, and she wondered that Buddhism had not conquered Europe but Christianity had” (SR 56). So leaving the Holy Grail Madeleine now starts paying whole hearted attention to Buddhism. Rama considers Buddhism as a ‘supreme religion of a poet’ it gets merged into *Vedānta* and Buddha becomes a Hindu *avatāra* and Mahāyāna becomes a Vedāntic system, but a negative one. Rama is a born Brahmin and his Brahminism never allows anything else to be superior to him. It is strange that Brahminism brings the two souls Rama and Madeleine together which gets separated through Buddhism.

The separation of Rama and Madeleine had dramatic stages which grows in a pyramidal form and culminates in the divorce. When Madeline delved tip-toed in the delirium of Buddhism, her husband become no more than an outsider for her as it may be seen in the following dialogue between Ramaswamy and Madeleine:

The room smelt of something familiar it smelt of sandalwood.

‘Why did you come?’

‘To see you.’

‘You cannot see anything but the eighteen aggregates.’

‘But eighteen aggregates can see eighteen aggregates.’ I said, laughing.

‘There it is no business of mine,’ she said, and started counting her beads.’ (SR 220)

Thus Buddhism played a pivotal role in the novel, at one hand the Indian spiritualism brought together Savithri and Ramaswamy, at another the Buddhism

annihilated the love between Rama and Madeleine. Both of them proceeded towards the way of renunciation, the *Nirvāna*.

The novelist has written the novel against the background of the Hindu Philosophy where the Buddhism and the modern philosophical bias have also been presented with mature understanding. To study the novel one should be acquainted with Indian Philosophy. The Elephant and the bull in the novel are also the symbols of the Indian mystic belief. The statues of bull and elephant correspond to the mythological figures of *Nandī* and *Ganeshā* respectively. Savithri is also a mythological figure who appears in *Mahabharata* in an episode of *Savithri* and *Satyavan*. She is a princess. She marries *Satyavan* a bright, handsome, youthful son of a blind and exiled king in full awareness of fact that *Satyavan* is destined to die one year later. When on the appointed day, *Yama*, the god of death arrives and takes away the soul of *Satyavan*; *Savithri* persistently and relentlessly follows him, asking for the soul of her husband. *Yama* offers her several boons. But she rejects all these and would have nothing but the soul of her husband. Pleased with *Savithri*'s steadfastness in her wifely devotion, *Yama* relents and revives *Satyavan*. In this way *Savithri*, who has become an exemplar of wifely devotion, love and fidelity, snatched her husband *Satyavan*, from the clutches of death. The *Savithri* of the novel too, helps the hero, Rama, to transcend the world of morality by putting him on the road of Self-Realization and making him aware of the nature of true union in spirit.

The Indian philosophy and Indian religious tradition are rooted in the *Vedas*. *Vedas* the *Rīg*, the *Yajūr*, the *Sām* and the *Atharv* are the breath of the Eternity, divine in origin and direct revelation of the knowledge of the eternal spiritual truth. The title of the novel *The Serpent and the Rope* is evidently an English rendering of the famous *Vedāntic* logic, 'The *Sarpa-rajjū-nyaya*-the serpent and the rope theory of *Advaita Vedānta* or non-dualism. It was propounded by Indian philosopher *Sankarācharya* in the eighth century A.D.

He says:

Just as owing to ones ignorance of the rope, the rope appears to be a serpent, the self is regarded as the individual soul, owing to the absence of the true knowledge of the self. At the word of a reliable person, the illusion disappears and what seemed to be a serpent is now seen as a rope. When truth is known we are no longer defined by the appearance – the snake – appearance vanishes into the reality of the rope, the world vanishes into *Brahma*. This darkness of ignorance is dispelled by the light of wisdom which the *Guru* brings. It is then that we realize that *Brahma* or the Absolute is the Reality or the rope, and all else is serpent or unreality. (qtd. in "Illusion and Reality" Ahmed Ali 16)

The phenomenal world seems real, solid and substantial on the physical plane but it disappears when the aspirant attains the transcendental consciousness. Normally, man experiences three states: the working state, dream and deep sleep. In the waking state, the mind deals with gross matter, in dream with mental forms and in deep sleep it remains dormant. These states come and go. The seeker is their witness. The soul is the constant factor in all the states and is therefore, different from these. This experience is gained by the seeker through austerity. Then he realizes: *Aham Brahma asmī*, I am *Brahma*. These cryptic statements are called the *Mahavākyas* or the Four Great Affirmations of the *Vedānta* Philosophy.

These are four in all. The first three are –

1. *Tat Tvam Asi* means when you attain the knowledge, you become God.
2. *Ayam Ātma Brahma* means this self is *Brahma*.
3. *Prajnanam Brahma* means knowledge is *Brahma*.

These three *Mahavākyas* form the operative part of *Vedānta* and the last, ***Aham Brahma Asmī***, I am *Brahma*, is the realization of the truth and is the crown and culmination of the *Vedānta* philosophy. Raja Rao has projected these verities of Indian philosophy by spinning into the very structure of the novel. There are three schools of *Vedānta* –

1. *Advaita* or Monism
2. *Viśiṣṭ Advaita* or Qualified Monism
3. *Dvaita* or Dualism

*Advaita* was propounded by Śankarācharya. According to him, the world is not real; it appears to be so because of the veil of *Maya*. *Brahma* alone is real. The term *Advaita* literally means No-two ness, so as per this philosophy, God (*Brahma*) and the Soul (*Atman*) and the world are one and the same. Ramaswamy, the hero of the novel, owes his ancestral lineage belonging to sage *Yāgyavalkya* and other *upanishadic* ancestors. Rama asserts his *Vedāntic* lineage in the following excerpt:

I was born a Brahmin that is devoted to Truth and all that, ‘Brahmin is he who knows *Brahma*’, etc. . . . But how many of my ancestors since the excellent *Yāgyavalkya*, my legendary and *upanishadic* ancestor, have really known the Truth excepting The Sage Mādhava, who founded an empire or rather, helped to build an empire, and wrote some of the most profound of *Vedāntic* texts since Sri Śankara? There were others, so I’m told, who left hearth and riverside fields, and wandered to mountains distant and hermitages to see God face to face and built temples. (SR 1)

Rama was also the follower of *Advaita* or Non-Dualism. The other two philosophies of *Vedānta*, *Viśiṣṭ Advaita* or qualified Monism and *Dvaita* or Dualism have their different canons and doctrines. Ramānūja Acharya, the exponent of

qualified Monism, propagated that God is *Saguna Brahman* and not *Nirguna Brahman*. The qualified non-dualists believed that the universe and the individual souls are the body of God. They believe that God incarnates himself on earth in human and other forms, from time to time, to save the world from unrighteousness.

Mādhva-Acharya interpreted the *Upanishads* and the *Brahma Sutras* as being Theism and Realism. The soul and the world are very real and eternal like god, according to Mādhva. They are distinct and absolutely separate from one another. The Non-Dualism or *Advaitavād* permeates in the whole novel. Some illustrations are as follows:

I sang it as never I had chanted, with the full breath in  
my lungs:

***Natovyoma bhūmir natejo navāyur,  
chidānanda rūpah, Shivoham, Shivoham***

Not hearing nor tasting nor smelling nor seeing,  
But Form of Consciousness and Bliss; Shiva I am, I am Shiva.

***Aham nirvikalpi nirākāra rūpih,  
Chidānanda rūpah, Shivoham, Shivoham.***

I am beyond imagination, form of the formless,  
Form of Consciousness and Bliss; Shiva I am, I am Shiva.

(SR 55-56)

The entire novel promulgates the *Vedāntic* philosophy of Hindu mythology; Ramaswamy is the spokesperson of Rao through whom he has put forward his unwavering faith in Indian mythology. Thus the novel is a perfect amalgam of legend, myth and folklore.

It is very beautifully described by Ragini Ramchandra in *Raja Rao: An Anthology of Recent Criticism* in the following words:

*The Serpent and the Rope* has stolen upon our senses like the scent of jasmynes. It is not one story, but many woven round one and often into it, one theme at different levels, a mingling of many cultures; many nationalities (chiefly Indian, French and English though there are also Russian, Spanish and Italian nationalities as well), at least three languages – English, French and Sanskrit. Add to it myth, legend, philosophy, poetry and history – all this rich material has been beautifully and most successfully organised and fused into a single theme by the symbolic imagination of the novelist. It is a novel, but novel conceived as dramatic poem. (216)

The world of mythical Indian Tradition not only allured Rao but R.K. Narayan too, remained charmed throughout his writing career towards them. Narayan inherited this love for Hindu mythology and legends from his grandmother in his childhood. Beside his religious grandmother, his house being in the vicinity of various temples, he imbibed religious values at home. Narayan is no original thinker; he has no independent philosophy to propagate in his novels. He largely subscribes to the Hindu ideals enshrined in the ancient Hindu Scriptures. Narayan says in his novel *The Printer of Malgudi*, “Our epics undoubtedly are a veritable storehouse of wisdom and spirituality. They contain messages which are of eternal value and applicable to all times and climes, irrespective of age, race or sex and so on . . . India has a lesson to teach to the rest of the world” (*The Printer of Malgudi* 166).

It was his tremendous love for Indian scriptures which got expressed in the form of the English abridgement of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. He employed the temple, the village, the town of Malgudi and the river Sarayu as recurring symbols in his novels. The river Sarayu and the temple have been perennial symbols of religious

culture, creativity and light. The Gods and Goddesses, the *suras* and *asuras*, the Indian rituals and festivals the proverbs and aphorisms lend a mythological aura to his novels. His work may be termed as retelling of Indian mythology with all the little nuances and subtle cognizance of it. He admitted to Ved Mehta, "his inability to write novels without *Krishna*, *Ganesh*, *Hanuman*, astrologers, *Pundits* and *devadasis* or temple prostitutes, and explained his point of view by adding characteristic humble way that in any case that has turned out to be his India" (G.B. Baghmar *R.K. Narayan: The Novelist* 359). Though science has advanced a lot but still Indians are reluctant to forgo their age-old beliefs and inveterate social values. Narayan could also not alienate himself from his socio-cultural moorings. The Indian epics and *Puranas*, the quintessence of India's cultural heritage, gave a solid foundation to his novels. Perhaps, this was the prominent reason of the global encomium and world – wide acclaim of R.K. Narayan's fiction.

In *The Guide*, the novel awarded by Sahitya Akademi & dubbed into a Hindi film, we may observe the teachings of *Bhagavad Gīta* which is the compendium of sublime thoughts. It instructs the man about *Yoga*, Devotion, *Vedānta* and Action. Every religion of the world is, however, convinced that to achieve the ultimate aim of life is to master the senses, purification of character through acquiring superior morality and eventually leading the self to selflessness, a pre-requisite for achieving salvation. The emancipation of soul can be attained, according to *Śankara*, by knowing the ultimate truth i.e. *Brahma*. The *Brahma* can be known to the people who control their mind and senses. As it is said in *Bhagavad Gīta*:

*yoga-yukto viśuddhātma Vijitātmā jīendriyah,*

*sarva bhūtātma – bhūtātma Kurvann api na lipyate. (BG 5.7)*

One who works in devotion, who is a pure soul, and who controls his mind and senses is dear to everyone, and everyone is dear to him. Though always working, such a man is never entangled. (trans. Prabhupada *BG 5.7*)



Raju, the guide is also the person who first got entangled in the worldly sensual desires and then became a saint by controlling his desires and senses. His life – journey finds analogy with Saint *Valmiki* who was also a robber and turned out to be a great Sage *Valmiki*, the writer of *Ramayana*. With the help of myths, Narayan has linked the present with similar mythical parallels, thereby achieved universality and kept alive the tradition.

As in the novel, Raju depicts the idols associating them with the mythology – “It must be the source of Sarayu mentioned in the mythological stories of goddess *Parvathi* jumping into the fire; the carving on one of the pillars of the shrine actually shows the goddess plunging into the fire and water arising from the spot” (G 57). Raju had a good knowledge of Hindu mythology which he acquired from his mother in the form of bed-time stories.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is a work of imperishable significance. It gives profound insights which are valid for all times and for all religious life. In the novel *The Guide*, Raju refers to *Bhagavad Gita* many times, “While discoursing on *Bhagavad Gita* to his audience the other evening. . . ” (G104) and “Lord Krishna says here. . . He entered into a semi-philosophical discourse on a set of rambling themes, starting with the eating of good food and going on to absolute trust in God’s goodness”(G 105-106). The temple, the village, the town of Malgudi and the river Sarayu have been used as recurring symbols in the novels of R.K. Narayan.

The most important symbol in his novels is river Sarayu, the pride of Malgudi and undoubtedly an inseparable part of Malgudi landscape. The temple is not just ruined temple but it is a perpetual symbol of religious culture, creativity and light. The banyan tree, fire, milk etc. have also been dealt with symbolic dimension and significance.

The life journey of Raju, the guide may also be illustrated from the verse of *Bhagavad Gita*. As it is written in it:

***api cet sudurācāro bhajate mām ananya bhāḥ***

***sādhur eva sa mantavyah samyag vyavasito hi san.***

(BG 3.30)

Even if one commits the most abominable actions, if he is engaged in devotional services, he is to be considered saintly because he is properly situated.(trans. Prabhupada BG 3.30)

Raju also became a saint, but in the early phase of sainthood he could not understand the meaning of true *Sanyasi*. It was in the later phase of his life where he devoted himself entirely to the humanity. He entirely surrendered himself for the cause of welfare of society and there he got redeemed of his sins like *Valmiki*. Myths and legends of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are well assimilated in the psyche of Indian people. They reveal that for the woman, her husband is everything and to obey him is her *param-dharma*. These epics define an ideal father, an ideal mother, an ideal brother and sister. The characters of these mythological episodes present the highest standard of any relationship. In *The Guide*, we may notice this in the relationship of Marco and Rosie. Rosie leaves her husband for the sake of her aspirations but later on, longs to die at her husband's door step. She realizes that total submission and devotion to the husband is the only way for the woman to attain peace. This is the only religion for the woman to follow. The chief characters in the novel Raju, Rosie and Marco are the products of Hindu Culture coming down to us for generations.

Raju can also be compared to the mythological character *Bhagiratha* who brought *Ganga* down to earth from the heavens. As Raju brought rains after a long fast and penance on to the earth of Malgudi, it all happens in a mythological way. As in the

long ascetic *tapasyas* the sages and seers reached towards unreached, explored the unexplored vistas of their inner-self and the spiritual world; Raju also explored himself and reached at the crest of his existence. Thus many episodes from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* can be illustrated from Narayan's novels. As Rosie asks Raju to get *Pundit* to read *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* for her in these lines – "I shall also want him to read for me episodes from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, because they are a treasure house, and we can pick up so many ideas for new compositions from them"(G123). These lines may truly be applicable to Narayan too who took many ideas, plots, characters, stories from these great reservoirs of mythology and made it an inseparable part of his fiction.

We may, surely, find one or two characters, in his novels who are well-versed in scriptures like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Nataraj and Sastri in *The Maneater of Malgudi*, Swami in *A Tiger of Malgudi* and Raju's Mother in *The Guide* are the examples of it. Raju's mother in *The Guide* reads scriptures daily and has a sound knowledge of Indian Mythology. "She quoted numerous mythological stories of *Savitri*, *Seetha*, and all the well known heroines. Apparently it was a general talk, apropos of nothing, but my mother's motives were naively clear" (G 155). She also narrated many anecdotes relevant to particular incidence. "She narrated an anecdote about the trouble created by my father's unreasonable, obstinate attitude in some family matter and how she met it . . . After a few days she began to allude to the problems of husband and wife whenever she spoke to Rosie, and filled the time with anecdotes about husbands, good husbands, mad husbands, reasonable husbands, unreasonable ones, savage ones, slightly deranged ones, moody ones, and so on and so forth; but it was always the wife, by her doggedness, perseverance and patience that brought him round" (G 155). Raju's mother is the counter part of Achakka in *Kanthapura*.

The snake-dance of Rosie is also presented in mythologised way where the writer has named the mythological gods in relation to the movement of snake. "Lights changed, she gradually sank to the floor, the music became slower and slower, the

refrain urged the snake to dance – the snake that resided on the locks of *Shiva* himself on the wrist of his spouse, *Parvathi* and in the ever radiant home of the gods in *Kailas*. This was a song that elevated the serpent and brought out its mystic quality; the rhythm was hypnotic” (G 212). Serpent stands for venom and deception; here the novelist endeavours to show the venomous and deceptive nature of Rosie with the help of the symbol of serpent.

As it is also commented by A.K.Jha in *R.K. Narayan : Myths and Archetypes in his Novels* that “Narayan’s approach to such gods and goddesses is not that of a moralist but they form an indispensable part of his story – as indispensable as his omnipresent characters like Gaffur, Talkative Man, Raman – the Painter of Signs etc. Such elements offer help to the author in strengthening his ironic vision which is the soul of his writing ” (42). The whole novel is propounding the teachings of *Bhagavad Gita* as mentioned in its Chapter-3 *Karma – Yoga*.

Lord Krishna here says that there are two classes of men who realize the self. Some are inclined to understand him by empirical, philosophical speculation and others are inclined to know him by devotional work. In the verse 6 and verse 7 of Chapter-3 these two types of people are explained:

***karmendriyāni Samyamya ya āste manasā smaran***

***indriyārthān vimūdhātma mithyācārāḥ sa ucyate.***

(BG 3.6)

Anyone, who having controlled the five working sense organs remains thinking within the mind about sense objects, that foolish being is known as a hypocrite.

(trans. Prabhupada BG 3.6)

*Yas tv indriyāni manaśa niyam yārabhate 'rjuna*

*karmendriyaih karma – yogam asaktah sa viśiśyate. (BG 3.7)*

But anyone who regulates the senses by the mind O Arjuna, begins the science of writing the individual consciousness with the Ultimate consciousness by the actions of the working sense organs without desire for results; he is superior. (trans. Prabhupada BG 3.7)

Raju's life is an example of both such types of persons. Before adopting Sainthood and in the earlier phase of sainthood too, he was a hypocrite. He displayed himself a true ascetic but actually he was not. It was in the later or decisive moments of his life when he regulated all his senses and united himself with the supreme soul, the *Brahma*. The eventual yielding unto the God redeemed him from all the sins. Thus the novel is based on unique features of Indian philosophical system which is prescribed in *Bhagavad Gita* too that every sinner gets salvation. The only condition is true faith in God and its mysterious ways. *Valmiki, Angulimala, Kalidasa. Guru Ravidasa* all were pardoned as they had unswerving faith in God. The end of the novel *The Guide* is a vindication of Indian rituals, mysticism and spiritualism that are the various manifestations of Indian philosophy.

Narayan was inclined towards mythology and *Vedāntic* philosophy from his early novels. As he proceeded from the earlier novels to the later novels, he matured as a writer with profound moral vision. In the novel *The Maneater of Malgudi*, he has shown the mythological tussle between good and evil, *devas* and *asuras*. When one reads the novel, one remembers the eternal war of 'Devasur Sangram' when *devas* and *mlecchas* churned the Great Milky Ocean - *Ksheersagar* with the help of the snake *Vasuki* and acquired Nectar – the divine water. In every age there has been tussle between good and evil. In the age of *Ramayana*, *Rama*, the epitome of goodness ended the ten headed *Ravana*, in the age of *Krishna*; *Krishna* killed *Kansa* and in *Mahabharata* disseminated the sublime thoughts of *Gita* to the world.

Here in *The Maneater of Malgudi*, Vasu the taxidermist is a *mlechcha* and Nataraj is a noble soul. Vasu has all the wickedness of *rakshasa* and Nataraj observes the preaching of the scriptures. The entire novel is woven on a mythological plane of war between good and evil in which good wins inexorably. Narayan has based the plot of the novel on the myth of *Bhasmasura*.

As he writes about his novel:

At some point in one's writing career, one takes a fresh look at the so-called myths and legends and finds a new meaning in them. After writing a number of novels and short stories based on the society around me, some years ago suddenly I came across a theme which struck me as an excellent piece of mythology in modern dress. It was published under the title, the *Maneater of Malgudi* . . . I based this story on a well known mythological episode, the story of *Mohini* and *Bhasmasura*. (*Gods, Demons and Others* 47-48)

The myth of *Bhasmasura* is pervading into the entire novel. Sastri, the assistant of Nataraj call Vasu a *rakshasa*. At this, Nataraj refers to the *puranic* legend of *Bhasmasura*. This *rakshasa* gained, through his austerities, super human powers; *Shiva* booned him that whomever he touched on the head would be reduced to ashes. Armed with this, he wished to test the boon on *Shiva* himself, So that the God had to flee in panic to *Vishnu* for help. *Vishnu* garbed himself in the form of *Mohini*, a beautiful lady, and appeared before *Bhasmasura*. Being crazy in her seductive beauty, *Bhasmasura* fell madly in her love and started following her.

*Mohini* promised to yield to the *rakshasa* on the condition of dancing with her. Thereupon *Mohini* started a dance and put her hand on her head. The *rakshasa* did the same and at once burned himself to ashes.

The portrayal of Vasu is based on the mythical *Bhasmasura*. Vasu thinks himself as all powerful and invincible. He took an attic in the office of Natraj and turned it into a brothel. He entertained all sorts of girls of the town. He is an atheist who takes the celebrations like *Radha-Krishna* Marriage and *Kumbha-Melas* as the wastage of money. He is full of lust anger and sensual pleasures. *Krishna* in the *Bhagavad Gita* describes the demonic disposition in the following verses:

***dhyāyato visayān pumsah sangas tesū pajayate***

***sangāt sanjāyate kāmah kāmāt krodho bhijāyate.*** (BG 2.62)

While concentrating on objects of the senses a person develops attachment to sense objects; from attachment desires are born, from desire anger arises. (trans. Prabhupada BG 2.62)

***Krodhād bhavati sammohah sammohāt smṛiti vibhramah***

***smṛti bhramsād buddhi – nāśo buddhi – nāśāt pranasyati.*** (BG 2.63)

From anger delusion occurs, from delusion bewilderment of memory, after forgetfulness of memory the loss of spiritual intelligence and losing spiritual intelligence one perishes. (trans. Prabhupada BG 2.63)

It is so happens with Vasu who takes proud on himself. Pride is the door to doom; the mythological *mlechchas* are the evidence of it. *Ravana*, *Kansa*, *Hiranyakashyapu*, *Mahishasura* all doomed to death due to their hamartia of ego and pride. Sastri expatiates on the lives of various demons in *Puranas* to prove that every *rakshasa* is born with the day and date fixed of his end. Sastri says,

There was *Ravana*, the protagonist in *Ramayana*, who had ten heads and twenty arms, and enormous yogic and physical powers, and a boon from the gods that he could never be vanquished. The earth shook under his tyranny. Still he came

to a sad end or take *Mahisha*, the *asura* who meditated and acquired a boon of immortality and invincibility and who had secured an especial favour that every drop of blood shed from his body should give rise to another demon in his own image and strength, and who nevertheless was destroyed. The Goddess with six arms, each bearing a different weapon, came on a lion, for the fight, which sucked every drop of blood drawn from the demon. Then there was *Bhasmasura*, who acquired a special boon that everything touched should be scorched, while nothing could ever destroy him . . . reduced to ashes that every second, the blighting touch becoming active on his own head. Every man can think that he is great and will live forever, but no one can guess from which quarter his doom will come. (MM 95)

Before leaving from the office of Natraj, he also narrated the anecdote of *Daksha*, “Or think of *Daksha*, for whom an end was prophesied through the bite of a snake, and he has built himself an island fortress to evade this fate, and yet in the end . . .” (MM 96). After, all such illustrations from Indian mythology, Natraj felt very encouraging and his belief in mysterious ways of *Vishnu* strengthened than before.

*Krishna* is also pervading throughout the novel. Natraj was a person of religious bent of mind. He enjoyed listening to the monosyllabic verses composed by his friend. “Among my constant companions was a poet who was writing the life of God *Krishna* in monosyllabic verse. His ambition was to compose a grand epic, and he came almost every day to recite to me his latest lines. My admiration for him was unbounded. I was thrilled to hear such clear lines as “Girls with girls did dance in trance,” and I felt equally excited” (MM 2). Natraj was thankful to the poet for writing on the greatness of the tale of *Krishna* and our cultural tradition. The title of his book was *Radha-Kalyan* i.e the marriage of *Krishna* with *Radha*. The poet and Sastri all were exalted at the completion of the volume with the marriage episode.



They proposed to celebrate the occasion of marriage of God, as it would be auspicious to do so. They needed a lot of money for it but still they were full of enthusiasm on the point of celebration of God’s marriage. This is the love, respect and endearment for the Gods and Goddesses of Hindu folk that they do not leave any stone unturned to propitiate their Gods. The love for their Gods is there in the hearts of people right from their childhood. The rituals, festivals, *vratas & upvasas*, fasts and feasts they accomplish at the cost of their lives. Though Nataraj was in a great stress of arranging money and for the well – being of temple elephant; as Rangī, the temple dancer informed him that Vasu was about to kill Kumara in the festival procession of God. But when the song of *Krishna* and *Radha* was played and enacted by Rangī, Natraj forgot all the anxieties and perplexities. “The story of Krishna and Radha was now being recited in song form by a group of men, incoherently and cacophonously, while they acted as vocal accompanists for Rangī's dance as she swayed and gesticulated. With all the imperfections, the effects of the incense and the chants made me drowsy and elated, and I forgot for a moment all my problems. Vasu was like an irrelevant thought” (MM 179). The sound of religious music, the rhythm of cymbals and scent of jasmine and incense induced in him a temporary indifference to everything around him.

Suddenly the elephant came into his mind and he remembered the mythological tale of *Gajendra* who was saved from the jaws of crocodile. Then he felt relieved by saying to himself, “God *Krishna* was really an incarnation of *Vishnu*, who had saved *Gajendra*; he would again come to rescue of the same animal on whose behalf I was . . .” (MM 180). As it is said in *Bhagavad Gita* by Lord *Krishna*:

***yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata***

***abhyuthānam adharmasya tadātmānam sṛjāmy aham.*** (BG 4.7)

Whenever and wherever a decline of righteousness and a predominance of unrighteousness prevail; at that time I manifest myself personally, O descendant of Bharata (trans. Prabhupada BG 4.7).

Every emblem of God is as much lovable and respectable to the Hindu folk as the God. All the major gods and goddesses have their symbolic vehicles. When once Nataraj went into the attic and saw the skins, the blood, the flesh of the animals which turned that place into a charnel house, he regretted at that moment when he let his place to Vasu. There he saw a *garuda*, the vehicle of *Vishnu* which was transformed into a lifeless thing. At this he argued with Vasu:

“Don’t you realize that it’s sacred? That it’s the messenger of God *Vishnu*?”

“I want to try and make *Vishnu* his feet now and then.”

“You may be indifferent but haven’t you seen men stopping in the road to look up and salute this bird when it circles in the sky?” I wanted to sound deliberately archaic and poetic.

He ruminated for a second and added, “I think there is a good business proposition here. I can supply them stuffed eagles at about fifty rupees each. Everyone can keep a sacred *garuda* in the *puja* and I’ll guarantee that it won’t fly off. Thus they can save their eyes from glare. I want to be of service to our religious folk in my own way.” (MM 64)

The religious folk of South India salute the *garuda* when they see it circling in the sky but for Vasu it is just a commercial article by which he can make out a lot of money.

The novelist also talks about *devadasi* system of India in this novel which was prevailing in India from medieval ages. In South India a *devadasi*, a servant of God, is a girl dedicated to worship and service of a deity or a temple for the rest of her life. It is also termed as temple prostitution as *devadasis* were supposed to gratify the sensual needs of priests of temple. Rangi, the temple dancer, is also a *devadasi* who

comes to Nataraj and informs him about the plan of Vasu to shoot the elephant. She says, "I am also a woman of the temple and I love that elephant. It must not be shot. Sir, you must somehow see that he doesn't do it. Please save that elephant" (*MM* 155). They used to call themselves the *woman of the temple*; it was a social custom in which the woman who became *devadasi* had to devote her whole life for the cause of temple and the priests of the temple. This social custom recurred in the novel *The Guide* too.

Nataraj also believes in the boons and blessings of Goddess *Lakshmi* who is the Goddess of wealth according to Hindu Mythology. He says, "I hung up a framed picture of Goddess *Lakshmi* poised on her lotus, holding aloft the bounties of earth in her four hands, and through her grace I did not do too badly" (*MM* 1). He accepts that he was doing well in his business due to the grace of Goddess *Lakshmi*. She is the spouse of *Vishnu* and emerged out from *Samudra Manthan* – the churning of the sea. These mythical gods and goddess are the part and parcel of Indian human psyche.

William Walsh aptly says:

The truth is that the Hindu myths and religious parables, like D.H. Lawrence's congregational hymns, are important not as theological scaffolding to the fiction but in being part of a whole economy of feeling itself sunk deep into the constitution of the novelist. These things are present and influential not as dogma or metaphysics but as a part of a mode of perception . . . They flow in and out of writer's thought and touch. The religious sense of Indian myth is part of Narayan's grip of reality, of 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. (*R.K.Narayan* 166)

Vasu, the only villain in Narayan's fictional Malgudi is allegorically a *Puranic* demon. Nataraj, Sen, the poet, Sastri, the people of Malgudi, all are fed up with the tricks and pranks of Vasu as the innocent people & saints were troubled under the rule of *Ravana* and *Kansa*. They all were very powerful but had a germ of self destruction inherent in them. The God himself came on earth in the form of incarnation to nullify the boons of all such *rakshasas*. *Rama* shot in the naval of *Ravana* to destroy the *Amrita Kalash*, in *Narsinh avtara* the God killed *Hiranyakashyapu*. *Vishnu* incarnated in the form of *Daśavtar*; fish (*matsya*), tortoise (*kurma*), boar (*Varah*), man-lion (*narsinh*), dwarf (*Vaman*), Rama – the Axe Wielder (*Parśurama*), *Rama* of *Ramayan*, *Krishna*, the *Buddha* and *Kalki*.

Here in the novel *The Maneater of Malgudi*, the novelist presents the restoration of moral order with the annihilation of Vasu, the taxidermist, which is something symbolic of the *puranic* triumph of good over evil. The death of Vasu is well contrived from the beginning of the novel when Vasu says that the one thing he cannot bear is a mosquito. On the fateful fatal night when he has to sleep on his arm-chair, he gets bothered by a mosquito who sits on his forehead. He slams it with colossal strength in his rage and dies at the same moment. Thus a mosquito was his weakness, his Achilles heel, which doomed him to death.

Nataraj is another name of *Shiva* so here also God came to rescue the innocent creature like Kumara - the temple elephant. There is a contrast between "the demoniacal, self-centred, egotism of Vasu and ineffectual, self-effacing altruism of Nataraj, between the temerity of Vasu and the timidity of Nataraj," (Ramteke *R.K.Narayan* 71) between the righteousness of Nataraj and unscrupulousness of Vasu, between the modesty of Nataraj and arrogance of Vasu.

Thus the *Maneater of Malgudi* is the recreation of *puranic* myths of:

1. Triumph of good over evil.
2. Moral order establishes itself and
3. Everything on earth is pre-ordained.

The novel and novelist has proved the inexhaustible vitality of *puranic*, mythical lore through the conflict between good and evil; between Nataraj and Vasu.

*A Tiger for Malgudi* resembles to Puranic beast fable. Beast fables are quite common in *Indian Puranas*, *Mahabharata* and even in such later works as *Kadambari* by Ban Bhatt. The Indian writers found nothing strange or unnatural in these stories. Even the Buddhist and Jain writers often used the animal motif in their teachings. Besides *Panćatantra* and *Jataka Mala*, *Kathāsaritsagara*, *Hitopadeśa*, *Śuka Saptati* are some invaluable treasures of Indian literature in which animals have been attributed with the humanly qualities. By making the tiger Raja, the central figure in the story, Narayan has followed the Indian tradition of beast tales.

Indian literature effectively mirrors the ethos of its deep and sympathetic understanding of animals through innumerable stories. Even amongst these, one could pertinently mention, are the *Hitopadeśa*, the *Panćatantra* and *Śuka Saptati* which abound in allegorical references to the animal world. Many such stories can be figured out from Indian mythology and oral tradition. The tiger is also associated with Indian mythology and its gods and goddesses. Siva, the god of the ancient non-aryan race of India is clad in a tiger skin and it is a tiger skin which is his seat. Probably the tiger was the most primitive vehicle of Goddess *Parvathi*. Thus tiger is a mythological creature of Indian oral tradition. Here in Narayan's novel *A Tiger for Malgudi*, it is imbued with humanly qualities and acting as a person who is narrating his own life-story of reaching from zero to zenith, of exploring his own unexplored self, of realizing his very own unrealized existence with the help of his *Guru*.

Here the myth of cycle of births and release from the bond of *Karma* is enunciated. As we see in these lines when Raja newly arrived in circus and looked all the creatures curiously, he said, "I had a glimpse of bear, but no deer, which did not seem to have come to the notice of the Captain. So far so good for them; only cursed creatures weighed down with the *Karma* of their previous lives, seemed to have come to his notice, who wielded his chair and whip like a maniac" (*TM* 49). It was also

explained to him by his Master the *Guru*, that one cannot escape from his previous *Karma*. He explained the reason of his being behind bars in circus in these words:

You probably in a previous life enjoyed putting your fellow beings behind bars. One has to face the reaction of every act, if not in the same life, at least in another life or a series of lives. There can be no escape from it. Now you have a chance to realize how your prisoners must have felt in those days, when you locked them in and watched them day by day to measure how far you had succeeded in breaking their spirits. (*TM* 48)

The writer also attacks on insatiability and greed of human being. Raja contrasts the lives of brutes with the lives of human being. “Tigers attack only when they feel hungry, unlike human beings who slaughter one another without purpose or hunger”(TM 117). According to the scriptures one should be content with what they have. As it is illustrated in *Chanakya Nīti*:

***Śāntitulyam tapō nāsti, na santōśāt param sukham,***

***Na triśnaya paro vyārdhin, éa dharmō dayā samah.***

(Chanakya Nīti)

Chanakya says no penance is equal to peace of mind, no happiness is equal to contentment, no illness is equal to greed and no *dharma* is equal to kindness. Sanskrit, the language of *Vedas* and *Upanishads* is also eulogised by Raja’s Master. He says, “It’s in *Sanskrit*, in which our scriptures are written, language of the gods. I write only *Sanskrit* although I know, ten other language including Japanese” (*TM* 143). The same ideas about Sanskrit we noticed in *The Serpent and the Rope*, where Ramaswamy said, “One who possesses Sanskrit, possesses himself” (*SR* 35). Sanskrit is a great language. Sir William Jones said about Sanskrit, “The Sanskrit language whatever be its antiquity, is a wonderful structure, more perfect than the Greek, more

copious than the Latin and more exquisitely refined than either. . .(*Hinduism and its Rationalism* 149). Thus Sanskrit, the language of *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, has been glorified by both the novelists in their writings

When everyone checks the Master to not to open the door of Principal's Chamber where Raja was sitting inside, the Master answers them in a philosophical way with the *śloka* from *Gita*. "Life or death is in no one's hands . . . That's why God says in the *Gita*, ' I'm life and death, I'm the killer and the killed . . . Those enemies you see before you, O Arjuna, are already dead, whether you aim your arrows at them or not!" (*TM* 142).As it is propounded in these lines from *Bhagavad Gita*:

*Tasmāt tvam uttiṣṭha yaśo labhasva Jitva śalrūn bhukṣva rajyam samraddham,*

*Mayaivaite nihalāh pūrvam eva, nimitta – mātram bhava savyasāchin.*(*BG* 11.33)

Therefore arise for battle, O Arjuna, you will gain fame by conquering the enemy and enjoy a flourishing kingdom. All these warriors have been slain already by me due to previous design, you are merely the instrument. (trans. Prabhupada *BG As It Is* 11.33) At one more place, the Master is preaching the tiger on a very famous doctrine of Indian philosophy; Non – Attachment and *Sanyama* (Control of Senses). The tiger said:

My Master told me, "The eye is the starting point of all evil and mischief. The eye can travel far and pick out objects indiscriminately, mind follows the eye, and rest of the body is conditioned by the mind. Thus starts a chain of activity which may lead to trouble and complication or waste of time, if nothing else; and so don't look at anything except the path." Sometimes I could not resist looking at cattle or other creatures, which I would normally view as my rightful prize. But I'd immediately avert my eyes when I realized what I was doing.(*TM* 155)

*Indriyasya endriyasyārthe rāga dvesan vyavasthitau*

*Tayor na vasam āgacchet tau hy asya paripanthinau. (BG 3.34)*

Attraction and aversion of the senses to their corresponding sense objects is unavoidable; one should not be controlled by them; since they are obstacles in one's path. Here the master exhorts the tiger, Raja to live life in a self-righteous way. He is sermonizing on the theory of Self - Less Action - *Niškama Karma* as propounded in the *Bhagavad Gita*. At many places we can see such mythological harangue by the Master. "Understanding the turmoil in me, my Master said, "Do not crave for the unattainable. It's enough you realize. All in good time. We cannot understand God's intentions. All growth takes place in its own time. If you brood on your improvements rather than your shortcomings you will be happier" (TM 160).

Thus, Raja learnt a lot from his Master besides the art of reckoning or counting the numbers, the time, the present and the past. According to the Master it was the habit of the human being which "has made us human beings miserable in many ways. We have lost the faculty of appreciating the present living moment. We are always looking forward or backward and waiting for one or sighing for the other, and lose the pleasure of awareness of the moment in which we actually exist" (TM 161). Raja wanted to know about the past of his Master, how he happened to become an ascetic, a yogi. At first, the Master was reluctant to tell about his past but afterwards he related his chronicle of life. He was also an ordinary man busy and active in his life but got exhausted with the repetition of the activities so he abandoned everything.

The life story of Master is also akin to the mythological story of *Siddhartha* who renunciated the world to seek the truth. He propounded the cult of Buddhism and became popular as *Gautam Buddha*. The Master also got exasperated with this world "where one's head always throbbled with the next plan, counting time or money or prospects - and I abruptly shed everything including (but for a bare minimum) clothes, and fled away from wife, children, home, possession, all of which seemed intolerable. At midnight, I softly drew the bolt of our back door, opening on the sands



of *Sarayu* behind our house at Ellamman street, while others slept, and left very much in the manner of Siddhartha . . . ” (TM 161). When the people heard about Master and Raja-the tiger living together, they started coming to Master for his *darśana* though he did not entertain them to assume himself as a great Saint. The people took him as a demi-god who can control even a beast like tiger. The Master also preached them on living with love and fraternity and forbade them to waste their time in fighting.

If you are ready to hate and want to destroy each other, you may find a hundred reasons – a diversion of canal water in your field, two urchins of opposite camps slapping each other, rumours of molestation of some woman, even the right to worship in a temple, anything may spark off a fight if you are inclined to nurture hatred – only the foolish waste their lives in fighting . . . (TM 165)

Rebirth is also a major tenet of Indian philosophy which is stated again and again in the novel. According to Hindu mythology, the body perishes and the soul remains imperishable. The soul travels from one body to another till it seeks the liberation the *Nirvana*. The Master said to the tiger, “Looking back, I would say that in one of your previous births you might have been a poet and your deeper personality retains that *vāsana* still. Whatever one had thought or felt is never lost, but is buried in one’s personality and carried from birth to birth. You must have been a poet, perhaps many centuries ago in the court of a king” (TM 166). In the last lines of novel too, the Master promises the tiger to meet in his next birth, “Both of us will shed our forms soon and perhaps we could meet again, who knows? So, goodbye! for the present” (TM 176).

Thus Narayan has made use of myths and symbols to enrich the story in meaning. His religious fervour becomes clearer with his novel *A Tiger for Malgudi* where he allows salvation even to the tiger. The tiger may be a metaphor of human being or the

author may be showing the presence of the same universal self in all creatures. As it is put forward by *Krishna* in *Gita*, that in every creature of this world there is small *anśa* (a part) of *Brahma*:

***adhibhūtam ksharo bhāvah purushaś éadhidaivatam,***

***adhiyajno 'ham evātra dehe dehabhritām vara. (BG 8.4)***

O best of the embodied souls, the physical manifestation that is constantly changing is called *adhibhūta*; the universal form of God, which presides over the celestial gods in this creation is called *adhidaiva*; I who dwell in the heart of every living being, am called *adhiyajna* or the lord of all sacrifices (trans. Prabhupada *BG As It Is* 8.4). Thus, the universe is the cosmic form of the supreme lord and He dwells in the heart of every embodied being.

Narayan enunciates three *Yogas* or ways to God in these three novels: *The Guide*, *The Maneater of Malgudi* and *A Tiger for Malgudi*. The three pathways to God are *Karma Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga* and *Jnāna Yoga*. These are *margās* or pathways for the conquest of self. They are called *Yogas* because *yoga* means yoking one's mind to God or union with God. *Jnāna-Marga* is the pathway of knowledge, wisdom or illumination. It is an intellectual approach as we have seen in the life journey of Raja – the tiger and the Master are based on *Jnāna-Marga*. They realized their inner self and got united with supreme soul.

*Bhakti-Marga* is the way of love, faith or devotion. It is an emotional approach. When we say we must serve God by *Bhakti*, it really means that we must serve our fellow human beings and creatures. *The Maneater of Malgudi* enunciates the same philosophy where Nataraj saved an elephant from the beast like person, Vasu. Nataraj is following the *Bhakti Marga*. He has faith, love and devotion in god

*Karma-Marga* is the way of action or service. It is a physical approach. This is the way of attaining God by a man doing his daily secular work considering it as

worship. The story of *The Guide* is based on *Karma Yoga* where Raju, the guide remained active in the service of people first as a guide and later as a saint. He advocated the path of *Karma* and preached the people of Mangla village to become a *Karma-yogi* and implored them to believe in their *Karmas*. Thus his novels depict different means of achieving enlightenment –

*Karma Yoga* – Self less Actions

*Jnāna Yoga* – Self Knowledge

*Bhakti Yoga* – Self Surrender

Thus myth and mythology has an undeniable presence in the novels of Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan. The core wisdom of *Vedic* India and the great scriptures have worked as a life force to their fiction. The teachings of *Bhagavad Gita*, the verses of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and other religious legends formed an edifice of strong moral authority on which they erected the wall of great Indian Fiction. They touched the nerve of Indian folk and explored the human psyche with the help of mythological foregrounding. They associated the common place incidents with the uncommon mythical parallels and made their incidents unforgettable. This was, perhaps, one of the major reasons of their international encomium and acceptance. We may sum up with these lines of Northrop Frye as stated in *Words with Powers: Being a Second Study of the Bible and Literature*, "Every human society possesses a mythology which is inherited, transmitted and diversified by literature" (*Introduction* xiii).

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# *Chapter – 5*

## *Form and Technique*



## Chapter – 5

### Form and Technique

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**All the great utterances of man have to be judged not by letter but by the spirit –  
the spirit which unfolds itself with the growth of life in history.**

As R.N. Tagore exclaimed in the Preface to *Sadhana – The Realization of Life* that the great utterances or expressions must be judged by their spirit and not by their letters and words: it may be true for the spirit of writing of Rao and Narayan which they exhibited through their uninhibited energy, unified sensibility and perpetual love for their culture and nation.

India was a metaphysical and eternal entity for both the novelists; Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan. Rao visited many countries but carried India where so ever he went and Narayan propagated Indian values on the alien lands. Both of them had a religious background, a scriptural surrounding and an inherent *brahminic* culture which endowed them with the repository of Indian myths, legends and folklore. As Raja Rao puts it:

That for me is India, not a country, not a historical presence among nations, but a hypostatic presence . . . I was paying homage not to my country . . . but to some nameless magnanimity, a mystery that has eyes, a sense of existence, beautiful, beautiful Mother, my land . . . (SR 193)

India is the land of *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and *Puranas*, a land which is alive with all the five senses of visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory and tactile. These five senses are discernible and perceptible in the Indian Philosophical System. The scriptures like *Bhagavad Gita*; epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabhart*a and moral philosophies and

fables like *Nīti Shastra*, *Panćatantra* and *Hitopadeśa* are the flesh and blood of Indian literary tradition.

They provide us the ability of how to see, listen, touch & taste the things and live our lives, how to tackle our problems of daily lives and how to live a successful, ethical moral life. These scriptures, *Vedas*, *Puranas*, legends, myths are the part of Indian Folklore or Indian Oral Tradition because they reached to the posterity in oral form. For instance *Ramayana* was orally narrated to *Valmiki* by *Narada* and then *Valmiki* wrought it out in epic form. Rajo Rao and Narayan both have been enchanted to this golden treasure of Indian Folklore which they incorporated in their novels very successfully and with contemporary relevance. We observed influence of myth, mythology and folklore on Rao and Narayan in their novels in all aspects of life; in domestic chores, in rituals, methods of worship and even inter-community relations. Intellectually and emotionally they were deeply rooted in the Indian tradition, Rao was more immersed in the philosophical tradition of the *Advaita Vedānta* of Śankara. According to Śankara, the self (*Atman*) and the universal (*Brahma*) are one and identical. This doctrine says *Tat tvam asi* – you are That. He rejected dualism and believed in Liberation (*Moksha*) as the ultimate aim or end of life. This metaphysical bias cannot be found in Narayan though he emphasized on scriptural teachings but still he belongs to physical ground than this transcendentalism. In the *Foreword* to *Kanthapura*, Rao talks about *Sthala-Purana*, the legend of the place, of a god or godlike hero or heroine. He added a new dimension into Indian Literature by familiarizing with such terms as *Sthala - purana*. As he puts it in *Foreword* to *Kanthapura*:

There is no village in India, however mean, that has not a rich *sthala-purana*, or legendary history of its own. Some god or godlike hero has passed by the village – Rama might have rested under this *pipal* tree, sita might have dried her clothes, after her bath, on this yellow stone, or the Mahatma himself, on one of his many pilgrimages through the country, might have

slept in this hut, the low one, by the village gate. In this way the past mingles with the present, and the gods mingle with men to make the repertory of your grandmother always bright. One such story from the contemporary annals of my village I have tried to tell. (*KP Foreword v*)

The *Foreword* to *Kanthapura* worked as an impetus for the writers of Indian Writing in English; it was not only the *Foreword* to *Kanthapura* but *Foreword* to the writers of Post-Colonial age.

On the very first page of the novel we find an invocation to Goddess *Kenchamma*, “the goddess of the village, chanted in the language of international recognition, as if it was the *vedic mantra* uttered by our Aryan forefathers as they poured into the Gangetic Valley. Its folk rhythms had been miraculously infused into English ” (C.D. Narasimhaiah, *Raja Rao: Each Work a Magic Casement* 54). Rao has treated his novels as *Puranas* which abounds in digressions, in episodes and passages in stories into stories and telling one interminable tale. As Raja Rao says in the *Foreword* to *Kanthapura*:

The *Mahabharata* has 214, 778 verses and the *Ramayana* 48,000. *Puranas* there are endless and innumerable. We have neither punctuation nor the treacherous 'ats' and 'ons' to bother us – we tell one interminable tale. Episode follows episode, and when our thoughts stop, our breath stops and we move on to another thought. This was and still is the ordinary style of our story telling. I have tried to follow it myself in this story. (*KP Foreword vi*)

Thus the narrative technique of *Kanthapura* is similar to Indian *Puranas* which are a blend of narration, description, philosophical reflection and religious teaching. The opening description of *Kanthapura* is in the spirit of *Sthala-Puranas* elaborating the legendary history of the place. The use of religious metaphor is also an

outstanding aspect of the narrative technique of *Kanthapura* where a *Harikatha* man mingles the political ideas with religion. The unlettered folk of *Kanthapura* imbibe more successfully the religio-political ideas to their psyche. *Harikatha* refers to a performance in which a learned story teller narrates episodes from the story of a major deity (e.g. *Krishna*) drawing upon sources such as the *Bhagawat Purana* and devotional literatures of Indian languages. *Purana* “ancient stories”, are a class of sacred works, eighteen in number, that contain historical events, legends, myths and stories of creation and evolution of the universe. Through these *puranic*, scriptural stories the novelist touched the inner chords of human psyche. Achakka, the witness narrator remarks, "As he Jayaramachar, *Harikatha*-man, he talks of *Damyanthi* and *Shakuntala* and *Yashoda*, he must say something about India and something about *Swaraj*. The subtlety of the Gandhian thoughts and the complex political situation of Pre-Independence could be explained to the unlettered villagers only through legends and religious stories of gods " (*KP* 104). *Kanthapura* is an outstanding example of the combination of *Puranic* and folklore elements.

The *Sthala-Purana*, the local, mythical lore of Kenchamma, the rituals and festivals, the Gandhian myth of *Rama*, *Ravana* and *Sita*, the folk songs and garrulous style of narration of Achakka lent the novel the characteristics of being categorized with Folklore. Here it would be relevant to quote Meenakshi Mukherjee, "*Kanthapura* is characterized as "living folklore" which evokes the spirit and discourse of the oral tales of the eloquent vernacular" (*Twice Born Fiction* 106). S.P. Swain in the article “Search for Identity: A Study of Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope*” presents a contrast between Rao and Narayan while introducing the novel *The Serpent and the Rope*:

Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope* is an intricate medley of philosophy, religious system and cultural history. Like R.K. Narayan’s novels, it is not a realistic and humorously ironical portrayal of Indian reality but a philosophical exposition of Indian way of life. Mystifyingly bewildering, it postulates the

intrinsic point of the novelist's thematic preoccupation. The novel is not only an assertion and affirmation of Indian values but an acute and melancholic longing for such affirmation which stems from one's being alienated from the core of one's self. (*The Fiction of Raja Rao* 149)

Raja Rao employed the mythological framework in some of stories and in others the technique of folklore contributes to the obvious Indianness of the stories. As M.K. Naik says, "The form he experiments with here is the folk tale form or the popular legend with all simplicity and credulity, its myth-making power and the strong moralistic substratum on which it is, in the popular wisdom, often grounded " (*Naik Raja Rao* 50). While the setting of *Kanthapura* is a village in Karnataka on the Western Ghats of India, the setting in *The Serpent and the Rope* spans several locations in Britain – (Cambridge, London, Oxford), France (Aix – en – Provence, Montpalais, Paris) and India (Allahabad, Bangalore, Benares, Mumbai, Delhi, Hariharapura, Hyderabad, Kodaikanal, Madurai, Mussorie).

While *Kanthapura* was breathless tale narrated by an old woman as a grandmother, *The Serpent and the Rope* is an autobiography of holy Vagabond, Ramaswamy, who is narrating the story of his life, from nothingness to the realization of the self; If *Kanthapura* is a story of Indian Freedom struggle in the background then *The Serpent and the Rope* is a quest to identify between *Sathya* (Rope) and *Mithya* (Serpent). It is based on the *Vedāntic* philosophy of Non-Dualism as preached by Śankara. Here the role of Guru is highlighted who makes us to see the difference between Shadow and Reality, the substance and non-entity, the *gnān* and *agnān*. The Guru brings one into the light of wisdom from the darkness of ignorance.

The phrases 'sad and even chronicle', 'life is a pilgrimage' 'a holy vagabond' etc. delineate the novel as a sojourn of the protagonist to reach to the crux of life. He reaches to the ultimate end of his life i.e. Self-Realization after undergoing many fluctuations, ups and downs. Rama explains the concept of illusion and reality with

the help of an episode from *Mahabharata*. *Dussasana* walked into a mirror thinking that it was path in the park. Rama says that only by breaking the glass i.e. illusion can one realize reality. The novel *The Serpent and the Rope* has a strong metaphysical bias. The novelist has used Sanskrit quotations in the novel to give it a more profound touch. He admires the Sanskrit language most and it was his great wish to write in Sanskrit. Rao has done the Sanskritization of English Language. Quotations in the original, together with English translations from the Classical Sanskrit poets, *Kalidasa* and *Bhavabhuti* and from the devotional hymns of *Śankara* and *Mira* are skillfully woven into the story and function as a parallel text. As it may be observed in following excerpts:

***Asuwanajala seeja seeja, Prema bela boyi.***

With the water of my tears I sprinkled it; And I reared the creeper of love, (SR 67)

There is nobody to go now; no home, no temple, no city, no climate, no age,

***Kashwam Koham Kutha ayatha ka mé janam ko mé tātah?***

Who are you and whose; whence have you come? (SR 230)

This is verse 23 of Śankara's *Bhaja Govindam*. 'Who are you? Who am I? Whence have I come? Who is my mother and who is my father?' *Bhaja Govindam* is a strong exhortation to renounce this false, changeable world and to pursue the Absolute, the *Brahma*.

The use of French and Sanskrit verses helps the narrator to make his arguments convincing, authentic and universal. Many French phrases have been used in the novel like:-

*Fiancailles* – eangagement, *Curè* – parish priest, *Tante* – Aunt, *méllopee* – sad, monotonous chant, *Grands Magasins* – big shops, *Jeune fille* – young girl, *mon ami* –

my friend, *impitoyable* – ruthless or pitiless, *ma petite* – my little one, *Lakmé* – Lakshmi, *Maitre* – yes, master, *Merci* – thankyou etc.

Beside them, many Italian and Latin words have also been incorporated in the text of the novel. It is the testimony of wide scholarship of Rao that he has taken allusions, exhaustively, from many cultures, languages and mythologies.

Rao employs the narrative technique of ‘I’ as the protagonist narrator. He reveals his innermost understanding of Indian life through his self-revelatory letters and introspective diary entries. The hero narrator’s use of notebook entries and diaries is the part of modern narrative technique.

Mythology defines the religious beliefs historical traditions as well as the cosmologic speculations of a society. Rao’s skillful contextualization of Indian mythology and folklore and Sanskritization of English suits his themes and techniques. He personified human virtues through fables, allegory and symbolism. Ramaswamy, an expatriate, came into touch with many cultures but adhered to his inherited traditional psyche. He lived in France, England for many years but carried his India wherever he went. The novel illustrates that how deeply the tradition, the mythology, the folklore sinks down into an Indian’s unconscious self. The Indian values were so deeply imprinted on Ramaswamy’s soul that it became a reason of separation between him and his wife. When Madeliene asked him,

“What is it separated us, Rama?

‘India.’

‘India? But I am a Buddhist?’

‘That is why Buddhism left India

India is impitoyable.’ "(SR187)

India was the reason of separation and India was the reason of proximity between Rama and Savithri. The subtle difference in their disposition and intellectual expeditions inexorably pulled them apart. For Rama, India and Indian woman meant a woman clad in *Sari*, *Kumkum* on her forehead and a sacred thread (*Mangal – Sutra*) in her neck. Savithri was a nameless grace for Rama, an emblem of Indian values and Indian woman. "It was then that he noticed the difference - Madeliene's not being an Indian sharply: Auspicious, so auspicious – with kunkum, coconut and choli – piece, bangles on the arm, the necklace of the black beads – is life." (C.D.Narasimhaiah *SR* xix)

The novel flows on like a limpid river on the surface but within the waters there is much to be measured. There is hardly any beginning, the middle and an end in the plot in the sense that narrative has not been demarcated by the artist. Rao, with the use of *upanishadic* allusions and *Vedāntic* analysis of life, has lent the mythological impression to the novel. The sentences are aphoristic and epigrammatic which may be elaborated and elucidated in the length of one page or more. These sentences are in consonance with the *Vedāntic* and philosophic tone of the novel. For instance, the following sentences from the novel are the testimony to the fact:

‘The impersonal alone could be the Truth.’ (93)

‘God *is*, and goodness is part of that *is*-ness. The good can only be the true, as the Greeks say.’(55)

‘. . . For in evil you seek good, but in the good you are goodness yourself.’ (54)

‘Love is never born, but all is premonition of love.’ (66)

‘Breath is the solar herdsman of the living, says the Rig-Veda, and hence yoga and all that.’ (82)

‘To disobey *dharma* is to give pain.’(210)



'The world is either unreal or real – the serpent or the rope.'(191)

'Death and Birth are meteorological happenings.'(120)

'India is apart, that is why she has no history.'(97)

'Joy is the identity of love.'(210)

'India is an idea, a metaphysic.'(216)

Rao has made new experiments in style in *Kanthapura* too. The syntax of the sentence lends it a charm of folktale. "Our village – I don't think you have ever heard about – *Kanthapura* is its name and it is in the province of Kara"(KP 2). The long sentences running into several lines and sometimes small sentences joined together by comma or 'and'. This is in accordance with the garrulous and loquacious style of the narrator of the novel – an old woman Achakka.

Indian phrases and idioms have been translated from English to Hindi literally. While going through the novel we notice the phrases like – 'traitor to his salt', 'Licker of your feet', 'Sparrow voice', 'laid is laid', 'stomach that has borne eight children', 'like a banana trunk', 'helpless as a calf' etc. All such sentences present the Indian sensibility in the language which is alien but the spirit is very own.

As it is remarked by C.D. Narasimhaiah in Introduction to *Kanthapura*, "Instead of saying, 'nip it in the bud', Raja Rao, perhaps because of its aesthetically offensive imagery in the Indian context, uses the Indian idiom, 'Crush it in the seed.'

In *The Serpent and the Rope* too, we observed the phrases like *Kitchen-Queen*, *Siva-Siva*, *Ayyo-Ayyo*, *Krishna-Krishna*, 'lay leaves' for set the table, stomach burn for heart burn, give it a flavour of Indianness. One can easily notice that for Rao, language is the link between the mundane and esoteric, speech for him is *Mantra*. Repetitive speech or Sound has the power of *Mantra* which imparts a mythical quality to his language. Mythic symbols such as *Himalayas*, *Ganges*, *Shiva*, *Benares*,

*Kashi, Yāgnyavalkya, Krishna, Radha, Durvasa* present the image of Mythic India – the land of Mythology and Folklore.

In *Kanthapura*, Achakka fascinates readers with her digressional speech, proverbs, idioms, parables and allusions and in *The Serpent and the Rope* Ramaswamy, the protagonist, binds the reader in such an erudite knowledge of *Vedāntic* philosophy of *Advaita*, *upanishadic* teaching of *Yāgnavalkya* and *Mādhva*, the philosophized preaching of *Bhagavad Gita* and psycho-analysis of Jung, Frazer, Marcel Proust and many more. Achakka's consciousness provides the past and the present, making the narrative a single mythic scheme and implying a timeless principle.

Ramaswamy, the quester of Truth, connects the concrete with abstract, the *ātman* with the *paramātman*, the soul with the *Brahma*. Thus Rao's use of mythology and folklore in the corpus of his writing connects with the shared cultural, religious and metaphysical heritage of his country. The myths and folklore have been used by Raja Rao, undoubtedly as a fictional technique to illuminate the historical significance of the present crisis or to establish link between the eastern and western cultures respectively in *Kanthapura* and *The Serpent and the Rope*, moreover, they also revealed the vitality of the ancient values which are still seen as living force in the present India. Rao's oeuvre is the product of an Indian mind who was transcultural, multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic. The choice of vocabulary, typical Indian expressions and new forms of syntax constitute the artistic personality of Raja Rao distinguishing his individual style from the style of other Indian Fiction writers in English. M.K. Naik remarks, "Raja Rao has lent a philosophical depth to Indian novel in English" (*Raja Rao* 160). Naik called him a metaphysical, philosophical man. "R.K. Narayan is the novelist of the individual man, just as Mulk Raj Anand is the novelist of the social man and Raja Rao that of metaphysical man" (*The Ironic Vision* 1). The narrative technique and style of the writing of R.K.Narayan carries its own peculiar individuality.

R.K. Narayan is a born story-teller. One of the reasons of his world-wide popularity and universal charm is the folkloric pattern of narrating the stories. He is essentially a humorous writer whose keynote interest is keen observation and ironic, harmonious way of telling his story. This was the charm of his story telling that adorned him with the title as first Indian Chekhov and then Jane Austen. Narayan's work lack the immensity of Rao and the sincere commitments of Anand but his writing has the freshness of folktales, the clarity, simplicity and brevity of short stories. That is the reason why he has a bearing on the chords of human psyche. One more reason of swaying the masses was that behind the simple tales, there lied a source in the great epics or in regional lore. Some themes of major novels are suggested by principles of Hinduism. Narayan has used myth and oral-tradition as a technique to illustrate his moral vision of life. William Walsh remarks, "Narayan's fastidious art, blending exact realism, poetic myth, sadness, perception and gaiety . . . it is kind but unsentimental, mocking but uncynical, profoundly Indian but distinctly individual" (*R.K. Narayan: A Critical Appreciation* 169).

It is very pertinent to note that usually a creative writer strives very hard to communicate his ideas in a language that does not belong to him or is other than his own. Even Raja Rao, in the preface to *Kanthapura* expressed the problem of Indian writers in English in these words, "One has to convey in a language that is not one's own but the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought – movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. . . It is the language of our intellectual make up – like Sanskrit or Persian was before – but not of our emotional make up" (*KP Foreword* vii ).

It was not the case with R.K. Narayan as he himself said in an interview with William Walsh, "I was never aware that I was using a different, a foreign language when I wrote in English because it came to me very easily. I can't explain how English is a very adaptable language. And it's so transparent; it can take on the tint of any country" (*R.K. Narayan* 7).

Narayan's success in using English Language as a medium of expression in creative writings has been eulogized by almost every contemporary critic. His language has the simplicity, lucidity and objectivity of the stories of *Kathāsaritsāgara*, *Panćatantra* and *Hitopadeśa*. His language and style is akin to the garrulous style of tales of *Jataka* and *Shuka-Saptati*. His works are like a painting of an artist whose combination of colours, strokes of brush and expression on the canvas speak and he himself remains silent yet eloquent; he is also unseen yet present in the corpus of his fiction. His language is racy and graceful and straight – forward as the language of the folktales. The humour and irony in his novels is also one of the characteristics of folktales.

In his language, syntax comes closer to the pattern of the normal conversation of an educated Indian. Narayan has a keen sense of observation and masterly strokes of Satire and Humour pinch smoothly but leave their mark. There are such instances in all his novels. To take an instance: "A strong dog lay snoring on a heap of stones on the road side, kept there since the first Municipal Body was elected for free India in 1947 and meant for paving the road" (*The Maneater of Malgudi* 40).

We may find all types of people in his stories and novels – peasants, clerks, priests, artists, historians, guides, shopkeepers, teachers, saints, thieves, taxidermists, printers, prostitutes, dancers and others. As we see in *Panćatantra* and *Hitopadeśa* the stories have all types of characters and every story teaches something about life to us. The novels of Narayan, too, are concerned with social and moral vision of life. He has not been interested in the analysis of deep psychological things but acted as a detached observer of life. He has been an idealist, humourist of life, of himself, of society.

Malgudi also has its *Sthala-Purana*, its oral legendary history that goes back to epic time. Rama would have passed that way on his way to Lanka and paths of Malgudi would have been touched by his lotus feet. Towns' past is involved with the

past of India crossed and re-crossed by legendary and mythical personalities like *Rama, Sita*, Gods and Goddesses, of *rakshasas* and *asuras*, *apsaras*, *gurus* and *sadhus*.

The themes of his novels are also *Puranic* and Folkloric. The story of *The Guide* is evidently based on the Hindu notion of a sinner becoming a saint, in Nataraj (*The Maneater of Malgudi*) Narayan depicts that the Malgudians are mere puppets in the hands of fate and that they have nothing in their hands that they can do or undo in this universe.

*A Tiger of Malgudi* is the glorification of Guru which is also an ancient theme. In this novel Guru has the capacity to transform a beast into a prudent human being who also wants liberation from this chain of birth and death and wants to experience Self-Realization like mortals. For tiger Raja, his Guru becomes everything.

This theme is illustrated in *Guru Gita*:

***Dhyanmūlam guro murṭih, pūja mūlam guroh padam,***

***mantra mūlam guruvakyam, muktī mulam guroh krupa.*** (*Guru Gita* 174)

The root of meditation is the image of guru; the root of worship is the foot of guru; the root of mantra is guru's statements; and the root of liberation is guru's grace as it is explained in *Guru Gita* (trans. Narayananda *Guru Gita* 174).

Narayan has employed the first person narrative method in *The Guide* and *The Maneater of Malgudi* while in *A Tiger of Malgudi* the tiger is talking and interpreting his inner feelings and individual self-expressions like an animal lore. It is also one of the basic characteristic of folklore when an animal is talking and behaving like a human being. The first person narrative method imparts a perspective and variety as well as authenticity to the narrative. The dialogues in his novels are also very natural and lucid like of the fables and folktales. The background and setting of his scene is as united as his design of plots, his characters, his dialogues and his narrative technique. There is clarity and precision of ethical stories in his novels.

Narayan is an objective writer not a propagandist like Anand. He stands aloof and detached from the incidents of the story and never seizes an opportunity to moralize or preach or philosophize. Every novel of Narayan gives a moral purport and a final moral lesson can be deduced from them. The three novels which have been taken for this study can have the following corresponding morals:-

### **1. *The Guide***

Those sinners who do penance and come into the feet of Supreme lord are released from all evils. As, it is propounded in *Bhagavad Gita* in verse 9.30:

***Api cet su-durācāro bhajate mām ananya bhāk,  
Sadhūr eva sa mantavyah Samyag vyavasito he sah. (BG 9.30)***

Even if one commits the most abominable action, if he is engaged in devotional service he is to be considered saintly because he is properly situated in his determination. (trans. Prabhupada *BG* 9.30)

### **2. *The Maneater of Malgudi***

The sinner must be and will be punished.

"Every *Rakshasa* gets swollen with his ego. He thinks he is invincible and beyond every law. But sooner or later something or other will destroy him"(MM 84).

### **3. *A Tiger for Malgudi***

Guru is the means of Self - Realization. There is no knowledge without Guru. Blessed are the pure in heart for they meet God through the Guru. In *Guru Gita* Verse 1.65 propounds the same thought:

***Na gurodhikam tattvam, na gurodhikam tapah.  
Na gurodhikam gnanam tasmai shri guruve namah.(GG 1.65)***

There is no true principle than the Guru, no greater penance than the Guru and no *gnānam* (Knowledge) loftier than the Guru; to that Guru my prostrations (trans. Narayanananda *Guru Gita* 1.65).

There is an irony in the title of the novel *The Maneater of Malgudi* where Maneater is a beast like *rakshasa* – a *mlechcha* of the ancient mythology. He is an amoral, cantankerous, egoist with no scruples, no common sense and no gratitude. He eats flesh, kills animals and consumes liquor like *asuras*.

Narayan employs the conflict of good and evil in *The Maneater of Malgudi* which is the pattern of epics and *puranas*. Narayan writes:

The strong man of evil continues to be reckless until he is destroyed by the tempo of his own misdeeds. Evil has in it, buried subtly, the infallible seeds of his own destruction. And however frightening a demon may seem, his doom is implied in his own evil propensities. (*Gods Demons and Others* 5)

This novel has the ingredients of folklore and mythology both. The plot is based on an ancient mythological episode of *Gajendra-Moksha* where Vishnu came to rescue an elephant (*Gajendra*) so it falls in category of mythology but because of the well known motif of ‘Conflict of Good and Evil’ of folklore and lucidity, simplicity of language it comes into genre of folklore.

In the *Guide* the thief pretends to be a *Sanyasi*, he is accepted in this role by the villagers of Mangala and even by Velan who knows his true identity. At this point, the reality and illusion mixes together. This is Maya, in which the real is not visible and which is visible is not real. “The mask becomes the face of the chief protagonist ” (A.K. Kundu *Vedanta and Myth* 105). Maya is also one of the major doctrines of *Vedāntic* philosophy.

This theme is, in some way or the other, similar to the theme of *The Serpent and the Rope* of Raja Rao. This novel is also a journey of the protagonist to understand the difference between Serpent (Illusion) and Rope (Reality). It is true that Raju does not show the same kind of awareness of

which Raja Rao's Ramaswamy is capable of in *The Serpent and the Rope* but towards the end of the novel he understands the importance of disinterested action. With a great linguistic competence, he has imbued the novel with Indian sensibility. By putting Indian proverbs, mannerisms, customs, rituals an Indian response to all the happening makes it a completely Indian novel based on Indian *Vedāntic* philosophy. The myths and legends and our religious and cultural heritage have shaped our minds and imaginations, behavioral pattern and general attitude to life. Narayan, therefore, contends that all imaginative writing in India has had its origin in *The Ramayan* and *The Mahabharata*; an author would pick up an incident or a character out of one or the other and create a new work with it. Narayan has done so in true aspect whether it is Raju or Nataraj, Vasu or Marco all of them are dipped in *Puranic* tradition.

*A Tiger for Malgudi* is also an exploration of philosophical Indian myths and metaphysical parables of Hindu religion. It is the marvel of narrative technique in this novel that the dividing line between the natural and supernatural, the divine and the animal is blurred and overlapped. The tiger Raja is attributed with the characteristics of a human being and becomes a true pupil to his Guru. The way his Guru renounced his family, his children and the world is analogical to the renunciation of *Siddhartha*; the theme of self-realization, rebirth etc. lend a mythological hue to the novel. The tiger is behaving like a person and achieve the importance of a protagonist, as the whole story is spun around him; it lends the novel the authenticity to be placed with folktales and folklore.

Thus Narayan used myth and folklore as a technique to lend a moral vision of life. He is an absorbing storyteller whose easy flow of words entertains the reader. Mythological and Folkloric allusions are the way to contemplate the past and to consider what might be retrieved, reclaimed and affirmed by being integrated into the present.



“If Anand is the novelist as reformer, Rao is the novelist as metaphysical poet, Narayan is simply the novelist as novelist” says William Walsh (*Narayan* 6). And later on Walsh calls R.K. Narayan ‘the novelist as moral analyst’ (*Narayan* 96). Here, it has been strived to explore the moral analyst in Narayan's corpus of writing.

Narayan is the comic genius, a writer pure and simple and Rao is the religious & philosophical novelist. They made innovations in themes and techniques, created their characters in their situations social as well as psychological. If Narayan is known for social and psychological realism, Rao is famous for metaphysical ideas. Narayan dived deep into the Indian tradition with his novels: *The Maneater of Malgudi* (1962), *The Tiger of Malgudi* (1983), *The World of Nagaraj* (1990) and *Grandmother's Tale* (1992).

However, the plunge of Rao in Indian tradition was more profound than Narayan. Narayan's characters are rooted in Indian tradition and superstition. He touched the psyche and emotions of people by the art of narration and story – telling, evocation of Indian myths and regional lore. They popularised him world – wide and he popularized them in turn. As in *The Guide*, the psychological upliftment of Raju made him acceptable to the credulous Indians.

Rao dealt with Indian metaphysics and narrated his stories by taking recourse to the great epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Rao has explained mythical mould of his novels thus, “The book that has filled, my imagination and come to me for years at every crucial point of my life to interpret and to help is the *Ramayana* . . . Buddhist texts have deeply stirred me, . . . They did influence me at one time, with their poetry and rich humanity . . . but there is something of the *Kshatriya* in me and always go back to the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*” (H.M. Williams *Studies in Modern Indian Fiction in English* 71)

Narayan also remained inclined towards the mythical coalescence into the novels from *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*. Rao believed in a

particular school of *Vedānta* while Narayan had no such beliefs in any specific doctrine or school. His novels depict the Indian beliefs or Hindu beliefs viz. immortality of the soul, life after death, oneness of being, quest for realization, the preaching of *Gita*, the ethics of *Nīti – Śāstra* and moral vision of *Panćatantra* and *Hitopadeśa*.

The protagonists of Narayan's novels realize that leading life on the ancient traditions and spiritualism is important. Out of a crisis or a catastrophe, they acquire a better understanding of their life. The protagonists see an ethical and spiritual development of them and eventually meet to the self realization which has also been the main theme of the novels of Rao. The novels of both the novelist have one common thread in the fabrics of their novels i.e. a moral and spiritual enlightenment with the help of *Vedāntic* myths and folklore.

Rao and Narayan both were acquainted with Sanskrit, the language of ceremonies and rituals. Narayan was well-versed with many Sanskrit works like *Yoga Vasishtha*, *Devi Bhagavatam*, *Ramayana* by *Kamban*. He expressed his wish to be a traditional story teller who enlivens the *puranic* stories with quotations from the Sanskrit songs and topical hits: but unlike his contemporary Raja Rao, he makes no attempt to adapt for his own purposes the ancient *puranic*, *itihasic* or *upanishadic* form. Even when he consciously and deliberately relates his novels to ancient themes as in *The Maneater of Malgudi* he prefers wisely to tell his story as any modern European or American novelist narrates but the Indian scriptures, their doctrines, their ideology is always present in the background. Narayan incorporated folklore and mythology in a traditional way while Rao scrutinised the scriptures and incorporated them in the novels in metaphysical way. Thus Narayan is the man of tradition while Rao is the man of metaphysics.

It was the belief of Raja Rao and Narayan that the devotion to God is a means of liberation. This requires the surrender of *self* to the will of God while engrossed in the mundane affairs of life, the man forgets to realize his

inner self. Ignorance of the real self is the cause of this suffering. Real Bliss can be attained through the knowledge of the Self. The novels of R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao also delineate this quest of *self* to achieve the Eternal Bliss.

The influence of *Vedic* culture may also be noticed on the characters of Narayan's and Rao's novels. Rama, the hero of the novel *The Serpent and the Rope* and his little Mother are imbued in the hue of Indian Folklore and Mythology. They have a good acquaintance with Indian *Vedic* Scriptures, the folktale of *Budumekaye*, the legendary lore of *Tristan and Iseult*; Rama quotes from *Uttaramcharita* of *Bhavabhuti*, *Bhagavad Gita*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata Bana's Kadambari* and *Mira's* verses. Little mother is also a repository of folklore; she knows all the *Kathas* related to peculiar festival and carry *Vedic* discipline in all the rites.

Achakka in *Kanthapura* is also a religious lady *Veda-Śāstra Pravina* and observes all the rites and fasts as prescribed in Hindu Mythology. Such characters may be found in the novels of Narayan too. Raju's mother in *The Guide* and, to a certain extent, Rosie and Raju are also under *Vedic* influence which they realized at many junctures of their life. It was the knowledge of *Vedic* Scriptures which checked them to do anything ethically wrong. Nataraj in *The Maneater of Malgudi* is also a staunch believer of *Shri Hari Vishnu* and *Laxmi*, whose picture he keeps hanging in his office to get the bounteous blessing of the Goddess. Swamiji in *A Tiger for Malgudi* and, later on, Raja, the tiger became true ascetics and the believers in *Vedāntic* philosophy. Thus the characters of both the novelists have been influenced with *Vedic* Culture and philosophy but their way to deal with it have been different. Anand is known for his social concern, Narayan is known for his mythological evocations of social life while Rao writes about Indian life in metaphysical perspective.

Narayan and Rao both were the products of Gandhian age. Both revel in their works the sensitive awareness of the forces of Gandhian revolution

and thwarting pulls of past oral tradition. Rao's *Kanthapura* and Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* are an illustration of Gandhian lore. The novels of both the writers have captured the momentous Indian National Freedom Struggle as it affected the life of the common man and created new apprehensions and uncertainties. The protagonists in the concerned novels viz. Moorthy, Ramaswamy, Raju, Nataraj and Raja-the tiger have their own disquietude and perturbations but still Rao and Narayan conceded them the capacity to rise like a phoenix from his ashes to take a hand in the regeneration of the world around him. In the choice of the themes and experiments in idiom and language, their corpus of fiction shows a powerful use of mythology. They offered a reworking of traditional myths in the contemporary literary context. Both the writers have chosen the allegorical stories from popular lore and Sanskrit traditions. The legends and folktales have also been observed in their writings. Folktales and Folklore belong to all strata of society and there have been a constant intermingling of human, animal and divine in the folktales and fables. Sometimes some super human powers also appear in them. These characteristics of folklore are discernible in the works of Rao and Narayan both. The description of rituals, ceremonies and festivals in the novels of both the novelist, not only reveal the traditional and cultural consciousness of the writers but are effective in presenting a real picture of the characters and background of India. The rituals related to marriage, farming, baptism, cremation; the festivals of *Ganesh*, *Kartika* and *Sankara* all display the socio-cultural milieu of the contemporary society and the social concerns of the writers.

One more thing common in both the novelists is unquestioning belief in Indian philosophy and Indian heritage which is characteristically visible in their protagonists. Here we can compare the two protagonists from novels of Rao and Narayan. Rao's Moorthy and Narayan's Raju find themselves in the role of what may be described as an ancient Indian archetype. They have been endowed with the importance of public figure that swayed the masses, one

with his moral and patriotic power (Moorthy) and the other with his ascetic, spiritual powers (Raju).

The characters of Rao and Narayan usually discover that they must go back to their Indian heritage, their scriptures, *Vedas* and *Upanishads* if they are to find themselves in fullest sense. A return to original root is a panacea to them. Both the writers have drawn references from myths, folklore and popular wisdom with many of their characters illustrating that they are directly or indirectly influenced by these sources as well as the classical literature, fairy-tales, fables and historical legends.

They employed myth to illustrate or substantiate their argument and to convey their ideas effectively. Mythical analogies help the writers to communicate their ideas skillfully with economy of diction. Both the writers have tried to concretize the abstract with the help of mythology and folklore. They linked their ideas with mythical past and gave it a distinct shape to convey the most abstract notions in their works. There was Indian sensibility, moral vision, magical charm of language and style and bewitching beauty of narration of *Hitopadésa* and *Panćatantra* in the novels of Rao and Narayan.

Writing for Raja Rao was like *Sadhana* and he did it as a true *Sadhaka* (ascetic) and attained that blissful spiritual growth of *Brahma* and *Atman*. While he himself was a *Sadhaka*, Narayan can be acclaimed as *Upasaka*. *Sadhana*, a Sanskrit term is for a means of accomplishing something or more specifically, a spiritual practice. It includes a variety of disciplines that are followed in order to achieve various ritual or spiritual objectives.

*Upasana* literally means – sitting near but normally the term is used in Hinduism to devote a prescribed method for approaching a deity or God or getting close to a deity or deities.

In the *Vedas*, some *Upasanas* are prescribed whereby one meditates on the all pervading *Brahma* as some aspect of creation, such as fire, water, directions, food, mind, joy etc. Thus *Upasana* can be described as systematic practice of a prescribed method of worship for pleasing and winning the

attention of deity or it can be a deity –less practice of austerities involving meditating upon some aspect of nature as told in specific *Vedic Upasanas*. *Sadhana* is a study or science of spirituality and *Upasana* is its application to be very near to God.

Thus Rao as a *Sadhaka* - a true austere and ascetic accomplished one spiritual practice in his works i.e. *Advaita Vedānta* and consistently followed it throughout his novels while Narayan remained in close communion with god; like an *Upasaka*, a worshipper and did not believe in any particular *Vedāntic* philosophy. He meditated upon middle class folk and incorporated all Gods, Demons and Others in his works.

At one hand, the literature was a means to spiritual growth and self realization for Raja Rao, the *Sadhaka*, at another it was *Karma Yoga* for Narayan, the *Upasaka*. Their austerities provided a strong foundation to Indian writing in English as they were the founding fathers of this genre. The novelists of modern generation are also following their footsteps. It may be illustrated with a verse from *Bhagavad Gita*:

***yad yad ācarati śresthas, tad tad evetaro janah,  
sa yat pramānam kurute lokas tad anuvartate. (BG 3.21)***

Whatever noble persons do, others follow.

Whatever standard they set up, the world follows.

(trans. Prabhupada BG 3.21)

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# *Chapter – 6*

## *Conclusion*

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### Conclusion

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**“India is the Kingdom of God and it is within you. India is where so ever you see, hear, touch, taste, smell. India is where you dip into yourself and the eighteen aggregates are dissolved” (SR 221).**

India is the land of Aryas, the land of first civilization of the world, the land of ten incarnations i.e. *daśavatara* of Lord *Vishnu*, the land where rocks and trees, rivers and *ghats* throb with the presence of God, the land where Buddha achieved *gnānam* under tree of *Bodhi*, the land of Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, the land of *Panćatantra*, *Hitopadeśa* and *Kathasaritsagara* – the ocean of stories. It is the kingdom of God which we perceive through our five senses. It is the land which abounds with myths, legends and folklore and allows us to plunge into ourselves. If one wants to understand and interpret India, one must go to the Indian Oral Tradition, Indian Folklore and Indian Manuscripts – the *Pandulipis*. There are many facts and information which are still bound in the unexplored and unreached oral traditions. Myths, Folklore and Legends are the roots of this full blossomed tree of India which are though hidden but strongly attached to the soil.

History is the chronological records of events but it is folklore which records moral codes, behavioral pattern, passions and impulses of the people. This research work explores the elements of Folklore and Mythology in the novels of R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. They have profusely incorporated in their novels from the rich treasure of Indian Folklore and Mythology. The *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* are believed by Hindus to have been revealed by God. The *Upanishads* are in addition regarded as the consummation of *Vedic* philosophy and therefore described as *Vedānta* – the end or the *summum bonum* of *Vedic* knowledge. Besides *Vedāntic* philosophy, their novels carry the essence and spirit of folktale as many distinguishing features of folktale and folklore have been searched out in their novels. An extensive research has been done

on the major aspects of the novels of R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao but they have never been analyzed with the perspectives of folklore.

The episodes, the incidents, the characters of the novels of these two novelists had parallel themes and close resemblance with the stories and verses from *Panćatantra* and *Hitopadeśa*. The stories, themes and verses from these two story collections and *Nīti Śāstra* of Chanakya have been integrated in their writings. They have also taken two great epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* and the *Bhagavad Gita* under their perusal and incorporated the characters, the mythological episodes in their novels. These scriptures are the quintessence of Indian Culture. The principal values that have been the moorings of our culture have been eroded through the vicissitudes of centuries. But they have persisted and will continue to do so. The perennial philosophy of Indian Culture is the one single thread that gleams unbroken through the vistas of our history and has sustained our nations. These two Indian novelists have reminded us of our heritage and summon us to stand true to its essentials and verities. The persistent use of Indian myths and legends, added a peculiar charm to their novels. Their way of handling language and expressing Indian sensibility through English is as effortless as the flow of water falling from the snow capped mountains. In this study the selected novels of R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao are explored in light of their application of folklore and mythology in the corpus of their writing.

Indian psyche is nourished on fables, parables and legends during the different stages of their life – childhood, boyhood, manhood and old age. The myths and mythology are the inherent part of Indian Literature. The epics, scriptures, *Vedas* and *Puranas* are the repository of truth and wisdom and have been providing solutions to every riddle of humanity right from the creation of the universe. This is the reason why writers have been modifying, transforming, re-interpreting and re-contextualizing myths to articulate contemporary reality. The ontological, metaphysical experiences which the writers witness in society, agonies and woes by

violence, tensions and conflicts, pains and pangs, clashes and confrontations etc. find apt mythopoeic tools for intense expression of their psyche in Indian Literature.

The reason behind their revivification is their naturalness, spontaneity, timeless relevance and universality. In the present age of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary studies and research, myth and folklore have paved the way for fresh interpretation and contemporary representation in the realm of literature.

The fiction of these novelists showcase the intricacy of folk literature, it showed that how myths are intrinsically woven into our psycho-cultural fabric. They brought out the intricacies of the modern and post – modern world by associating them with the folk wisdom. In all the different novels different aspects and features of folklore have been envisaged.

Folklore is a system of knowledge, a mode of thought, a kind of art, and an interesting and effective means of communication. Folklore encompasses the customs, knowledge system, games, beliefs, practices, literature, performing and non-performing arts which include dance, music, theatre, drama, painting, sculpture, making of crafts with several materials, festivals etc. All the components related to art and culture fall under its periphery.

Folklore is a product of a special form of verbal art. Literature is the manifestation of this verbal and folk arts and for this reason the closest connection exists between folklore and literature. In folk art and sculpture art, the myths and legends of great epics are enlivened, so they also become the eternal part of folklore. Lore is a story, a myth, a body of traditions which passes from one generation to the other so all the well – known story collections are also the part of it. *Panćatantra*, a major constituent of folklore, had an impact so great that as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD it was translated into Arabic under the title *Kalila – Wa – Dimna* and has been very popular in the Arab and Persian world ever since. Though an interior form of life, animals have been endowed with ennobling qualities which provide lessons in morals even to human beings.

Folklore is a collection of fictional stories about animals and people, of cultural myths, jokes, songs, tales, beliefs and rituals. It is a description of culture which has been passed down verbally from generation to generation in any written or oral form. Folk literature is about the individual experience from a particular society. The study of folk tradition and knowledge is called Folkloristic. There had been many schools of thought and theoretical advances that shaped folkloristic studies. The major schools of thoughts are:-

1. Mythological
2. Migrational
3. Anthropological
4. Historical – Geographical
5. Psychoanalytical
6. Structural

Folklore may be based on universal truths or unfounded beliefs and superstitions. The main purpose of folklore is to convey a moral lesson and present useful information and everyday life lessons in an easy way for the common people. Folktales sugarcoat the lesson of hard life in a mild way and teach us how we should behave. It is one of the best mediums to pass on living culture or traditions to future generations. Folk literature is not merely a carrier of cultural values rather it is an expression of self-reflection. It takes the characters from real life and present realistic situations which are the best possible way to study and understand the ancient literature and civilizations. The writings of these two novelists had all such characteristics of folklore – moralistic lessons, real life characters and situations, sugarcoated lessons of hard life, focus on small villages and towns, isolated regional settings, self-reflection, the psychological development of the characters etc. The writings of Rao and Narayan remind us of the significant roles that oral narratives once played in the human story and they offer their fictions as means of filling the void and of perpetuating the continuity of human communication.

There has been a continuum in knowledge and learning in folklore as it is a continuous process through which the ancient wealth is transferred from ancestry to posterity. The present Global world where the world is shrunk into a global village with the advancement of technology and communication the barriers of place are also losing existence and the folk wisdom is intermingling from one place to another. Acceptance, Perpetuation, Integration and Contextualization of folklore in fiction and other genres of literature has emerged as a relevant and modern field of literature which will provide new heights to the realm of literature. Nowadays, when mobility of man and culture is increased manifold, the two interesting pictures can be visible – one situation where some members of the community move out of the native place carrying with them the folklore to the new environment and continue to follow the inherent practices of their culture.

In situation two the members who have not moved to a new place, bring alterations under the influence of the changing environment. Ramaswamy, the protagonist of Rao's novel *The Serpent and the Rope*, belongs to situation one as he was an expatriate in France and carried his India with him where so ever he went. Raju in *The Guide* falls under the situation two who brought alterations into the changing environment. We can employ these situations to Rao and Narayan too as an individual; Rao belonged to situation one as he was an expatriate and lived many years in foreign countries but kept alive the Indian tradition with him while Narayan belongs to situation two who was truly an Indian but brought alterations in his surroundings through his writings.

Vladimir Propp, a famous Russian folklorist, says that, “Problems of folklore are acquiring more and more importance nowadays. None of the humanities; be it ethnographic, historic, linguistic or the history of literature, can do without folklore” (*Theory and History of Folklore* 3). After such technological development we are not finding any respite anywhere and returning towards the roots again i.e. Our Spiritual Culture and Our Oral Tradition.



As it is observed by Dr. Trilochan Pandey in the article "Folklore as Mass Media", "Through various legends and myth, through various heroic tales and balladry composed on various occasions it presents older truths in new way which makes the people aware of their nation's changing outlook and cultural legacy " (122). Folklore is a powerful means of propaganda as it entertains the literates as well the illiterates. Though Oral Traditions have the history of thousand years but still they are relevant. Ramanujan observes, "In a culture like the Indian, however, and certainly in villages and certain communities to this day writing lives within the context of oral traditions. Even newspapers are read aloud . . . every major religious or literary text like the *Ramayana* is memorized and chanted aloud"(Who Needs Folklore? 23). Thus folklore enlarges the expanse and purview of the text to which it is concorded and in turn illuminates the textual conceptions. Even in the folk performances of *Kathakali*, *Bharat-Natyam*, *Mohiniattam* the episodes of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are enacted. All the nine *rasās* are present in the tales and myths of Indian Literature.

Henrich Zimmer says,

The whole edifice of Indian civilization is imbued with spiritual meaning. The close interdependence and perfect harmonization of the two serve to counteract the natural tendency of Indian philosophy to become recondite and esoteric, removed from life and the task of the education of the society. In the Hindu world, the folklore and popular mythology carry the truths and teachings of the philosophers to the masses. In this symbolic form the ideas do not have to be watered down to be popularized. The vivid, perfectly appropriate, pictorial script preserves the doctrines without the slightest damage to their sense. (*Philosophies of India* 27)

Literature is the repository of achievements of man in the field of letters recorded and documented over the centuries of human existence. The great epics, the mythologies, the religious doctrines and philosophies, the scriptural preaching, the legendary history, the unlettered folk-songs of the bards – the *Charans* and the *Bhats*, the rock cut paintings and sculptures in the sequestered caves, the folktales and the fairytales emerging from ‘ranches of isolation and busy griefs’ (in terms of W.H. Auden *In Memory of W.B. Yeats*), the palm leaf (*Bhoja Patra*) preservations before the invention of press – all these form the integral part of a nations literature and in turn share with the World Literature.

Literature is a documentation of life seen, known and recorded in an artistic way. It is a door through which the faculty of imagination enters into the golden precinct of love, beauty, daring heroism, adventurism and acts of bravery and prudence. If we look at the primordial state of history of English literature it was in a form of folklore where stories of *Beowulf*, *Grendel* and other monsters and the chivalrous heroes were the main concerns for writers and they listened to it from their forefathers. In the Indian context the very concept of Folk Literature, the *Lok-Sahitya* is at once sacred and secular. It is indeed, for the welfare of the masses and helps them to know the true nature of Ultimate Reality or the *Brahma*. *Ekam Advithiyam* is an *upanishadic* precept that pleads for the oneness of all. The *Kavya* of Rao and Narayan has acquired this oneness with *Brahma* – the Supreme Soul. Their writing fulfills the twofold purpose of *Lok-Sahitya* – The Folk Literature i.e. *Upadeśa* and *Ananda* – Instruction and Delight.

To explore this folkloric exaltation – an overpowering delight of tales in the novels of Rao and Narayan, many incidents, episodes, rituals and proverbs in their writings have been compared, interpreted and decoded from the stories and verses of *Hitopadeśa*. It is one of the best known and most widely translated works of Sanskrit Literature. It is a collection of animal and human fables in prose, illustrated with numerous maxims and sayings in verse, both intended to impart instruction in worldly wisdom. The structure of the book is similar to the *Panćatantra*, the more

ancient collection of tales. Both the works have some identical framework of stories – each with its own mix of stories within stories illustrated with epigrammatic verses. Both the works expounded *Nīti* – the moral codes through fables and gnomic stanzas.

These two books of folk wisdom are a part of common stock of humanity and are closer to mankind than any written word. They have the annals of thousand years ago when they were the media of teaching morals and customs to the young generation. Similarly, other writings on folktales, fables, myths and mythology got transmitted from oral literature to print literature and acquired the mnemonic quality too. Rao and Narayan contextualized this mesmerizing corpus of Indian Literature in their writings. The social laws, moral values, beast fables, comical and satirical anecdotes, tales of adventure and romance, legends and legendary figures like Gandhi, myths and mythological figures like *Rama, Sita, Harishchandra, Yagnyavalkya, Maitreyi, Krishna, Radha, Durvasa*, the demons and *mlecchas* like *Bhasmasura & Ravana* have lent a mythical and folkloric aura to their novels. As the folklore mirrors the history, religion, socio-cultural condition of the contemporary society, the novels of Rao and Narayan too, were threadbare presentation of socio-cultural fabric of society.

They reconstituted the myth and mythology into the fabric of the contemporary time. Mythologies may become ancient but their mythical relevance will live on. They will always survive in the psyche of the people. Myth has been used as an aesthetic channel to ventilate, to explore and recreate experience to transport us to primordial time. The use of myths imparted an additional dimension to his novels and contributed to make them a significant whole. Myth does not obscure the real life; rather the myth motif lends an aura of timelessness and perpetuity. The mythical characters are prototypes that are valid for all times. The literary treatment of myths, broadly speaking, falls into three categories: **First**, the recording of an oral story either by someone who believes it or interested observes; **Second**, the elaboration of the original story by later litterateurs and the **Third**, the use of the story as the material for a work of art without being bothered about its truth.

While Valmiki's *Ramayana* is the illustration of the first, Tulsidas's *Ramacharita Manas* that of the second, Jaishankar Prasad's *Kamayani* and Toru Dutt's poems on *Lakshmana*, *Savitri* may be said to represent the third category. Mythology pertains to gods and goddesses, if the protagonist is a man rather than a supernatural being the story is usually not called mythology but legend; if the story concerns supernatural beings but is not a part of any systematic mythology, it is usually classified as a folktale. Rao and Narayan have taken some incidents, episodes and characters from mythical world and woven them into the frame-work of their stories and plots so as to make it more clear and precise to Indian psyche. It was the effect of childhood reading and reciting of epics and scriptures which imbued their writings in mythological colours. It lent a seriousness and weight to their novels and at once made them local, regional and universal.

Myth is the basis of literature. The classical literature is informed by myth, the romantic literature is a search for myth, and the ancient literature is an embodiment of myth. Indian psyche is moulded and transformed by Indian mythological and legendary tales. It is conditioned by the stories from the *Panćatantra*, the *Ramayana* & the *Mahabharata*.

Pt. Nehru aptly observed, "I don't know of any books anywhere which have exercised such a continuous and pervasive influence on the minds as *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. They are still a living force in the life of the Indian people" (*The Discovery of India* 99). *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have been part of Indian souls and minds for more than two millennia; it is but natural and inevitable that these two epics continue to be retold, reinterpreted and revalued time and again in digressions and mythopoeia. They are a compendium of history, politics, religion, moral values, ethics and poetry, the part and parcel of Indian Collective Conscience. This is the reason why each age has found itself compelled to return to those myths and re-read them so as to make them contemporaneous. The stories and episodes of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have been internalized even by people who are illiterates; the myths circulate among the community even when unread, hence alive in the

consciousness of the community. They have been translated in almost all the major languages of India.

*Bhagavad Gita* and its teachings have also been incorporated by these two novelists in their writings. Many incidents, events, phenomena of their fictional stories have been profusely interpreted through the verses of *Bhagavad Gita* in this research work. *Bhagavad Gita* is the essence of all scriptures and moral teachings. The essence of the *Bhagavad Gita* is the vision of God in all things and of all things in God.

The traditional Indian writings are rooted in religion and spirituality. Literature has been *Sadhana* for an Indian classical writer and he himself executed it as a true *Upasaka*. Rao and Narayan both have been *Sadhaka* and *Upasaka* during their writing career; they turned literature into an effective vehicle for the expression of contemporary reality and human experience. They presented this reality in the background of ancient mythology and folklore.

All the social, political and economic issues which have been presented in the novels of R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao are closely knit with religion. Religion is a binding force, an instrument of integration. They did spell-bound the readers with this jugglery of amalgamating common with the uncommon, religious with the secularism, real with the unreal and fancy with the fantasy. They bring the readers, at once, into the world of phantasmagoria through the magic of their pen. Rao and Narayan are the seer and revealer of Truth, behind this unreal world, which is manifested in their novels. All great literature preserves instinctively something of that high truth of its own aim and significance. A writer sees and makes us see the enlightening territory of Truth since he addresses the inner sense of the readers. Mythology and Folklore, in the context of Rao and Narayan, have become the media of bringing out the Truth, a powerful interpretative and intuitive vision of nature, life and man and a powerful instrument of preservation of both history and culture.

Francis C. Assisi in his article "Breathing India in America: A Tribute to Raja Rao" exclaims, "India, Raja Rao implied, is open to whoever can attain it, wherever they may be. And reading his works was an invitation to taste that Eternal India – of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, of the *Upanishads*, of *Śankara*, of Aurobindo, of Tagore of Vivekananda and of Gandhi". India was a "nameless magnanimity" (SR 98) for Rao. It was beautiful and sacred for him to live in India and be an Indian. "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 – juice of rare jasmine or golden myrobalan, brought from the nether world by a hero or dark mermaid. It gave me sweetness and délire of immortality" (SR 8). Rao was an expatriate like the protagonist of *The Serpent and the Rope* – Ramaswamy but he was a true Indian from his mind, soul and heart. Though the corpus of his writing is meager but it is more than adequate to reveal the world his affection and attachment to India – his motherland.

*Kanthapura* recalls the past oral traditions. It is a chronicle of an Indian village during the period of Gandhi's political activism. The tale is narrated in the flavor of folktale with many *ands* and *ors*. It is a tale narrated by a magician like person who enthuses the peasants, the men, the women, the youngsters to be an eternal part of Indian Freedom Struggle. It hypnotized them so as to do as instructed by the teller. There is a clever blend of traditional storytelling and modern nationalist propaganda. The old woman vividly evokes the rhythms, characters and beliefs of rural life. In her folk traditions, the combination of internal social revolution and national political rebellion takes on mythic status. The language of Achakka in *Kanthapura* is loaded with images, metaphors and mythic allusions which pertain to the mythopoeic space in a mythic time frame. The figure of Gandhi is directly carved into the tableau of unbroken lore and literature. Although *Kanthapura*, the village becomes *Waste Land* at the end of the story but this destruction is like phoenix that arises from its own ashes and lives eternally. Thus *Kanthapura*, through its legendary history, *Sthalapuranas*, folktale narrations, folk songs, folkloric idioms and proverbs and

mythic presence of Goddess Kenchamma and Mahatma Gandhi binds the mythical past and present reality and pass into the cadre of Indian Folk Tradition. Religion is the master key to the Indian mind and hence he "put the new Gandhian wine into the age old bottle of traditional *Harikatha* to indoctrinate the Kanthapurians" (A.K.Jha *R.K.Narayan: Myths and Archetypes in His Novels* 7). C. Paul Verghese in *Problems of the Indian Creative Writer in English* remarked "The sense of continuity with ancient traditions and the experiment with using English to convey Indian styles of thought and expression are hallmarks of Rao's oeuvre" (142). Rao's fictional adventure fused the folk idiom and myth, the aural and visual with a certain amount of levity and understanding.

Som Deva in *Raja Rao: The Serpent and the Rope* remarks, "On the other hand, *The Serpent and the Rope* furnished us with the high information. This novel dwells on the summit of the snows soaring high into the skies whereas *Kanthapura* remains riveted to the bare earth "(30). *The Serpent and the Rope* is not only a metaphysical and spiritual novel but deals with eternal concerns of humanity. It made it earn the highest encomium of being "fictional marvel" (C.D. Narasimhaiah "Novel as Magic Casement" 39).

With his Midas touch, Raja Rao exalted the Ganga, the Benares, and the Indian philosophy to the state of a metaphorical symbol. Benares to him was like Byzantium to Yeats, Ganga was the ultimate resting place where one reaches eternity. He dealt with Indian Philosophy as the Panacea to all human sufferings. The theory of Self – Realization & the meaning of *Brahma* as propounded in *Bhagavad Gita* are the main constituent of this novel. Guru was the ultimate quest for him.

The novel with its allusions to the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the philosophy of Buddha and Nagarjuna, the teachings and preaching of *Śankara* and *Madhava*, the theory of *Advaita*, the scriptural dialogues – *Śastrartha* of *Maitreyi* and *Yagnyavalkya* and Savithri and Ramaswamy, the writings of *Bhartrahari*, the poetry of Mallarme and Valery promises to provide a window on eternity or to be more exact, a window

on the eternal meaning of India. It must be acknowledged that he, along with Narayan, put India and Indian Philosophy on the World Map.

It would be safe “to assert that there is no one else who has even attempted to do what Rao has accomplished to portray and justify the wisdom of traditional India to the modern world” (Paranjape *The Best of Raja Rao* iii). Rao glorified Sanskrit and Indian English through his novels. He indigenized and Sanskritized the genre by assimilating materials from the Indian Literary Tradition. The folk narration of the stories of *Budumekaye*, *Sri-Rama Katha*, story of *King Mark* and *Iseult* lent the folkloric flavor to the novel. Rao’s aesthetic is entirely rooted in traditional Hindu literature. He asserted it in an Interview with Shiva Nirranjan:

I like the *Puranic* conception. That is the only conception of novel for me. I don’t want to compare my novel with any foreign novel. I don’t like to write like a foreign novelist. I am very much an Indian and the Indian form is the *Puranic* form. Form comes naturally to me. Hence it is wrong to study my novels in the light of the Western conception of a well – made novel. ("An Interview with Raja Rao" 20)

Rao made India known not only to the people of the West, but also, to many Indians who by getting dazzled to the glitter of West forgot their own roots. The use of the Savitri myth in the inner structure of the novel, the *puranic* structure of blending story within story, digressional method of knitting plot as done in *Panćatantra* and *Hitopadésa*, blend of philosophy, religion and mythology, interspersing of narrative with verses, pithy dialogues, interior monologues, retrospective narration and symbolism, *Upanishadic* conversation converts the novel itself into a master piece of Indian Folklore and Mythology.

Rao’s oeuvre is the product of a multi – ethnically charged and Trans – culturally Indian mind who though came into contact with plethora of alien cultures but remained deeply imbued in the sacred water of Ganges, spiritual aura of Benares and



metaphysical air of Indian Philosophy. The novel *The Serpent and the Rope* started with “Life is a pilgrimage, I know, but a pilgrimage to where – and of what?” (SR 13) and ended with “Now, I think, I know, but I must go, I must go to Travancore. I have no Benares now, no Ganga, no Jamuna; Travancore is my country, Travancore my name. Lord accept me, vouch that I be where I should” (SR 232-33). Thus the novel is a pilgrimage to achieve self-realization.

The incense of Rao’s novels was like lily flower which lives for few hours but bewitches everyone with its beauty and splendor. Rao's oeuvre was, too, meager but in the span of that scanty work he amazed everyone. The Indian Philosophy, Indian Folklore and Mythology are the crux of his novels which he has depicted through his novels very passionately.

R.K. Narayan was also a great story-teller with one foot firmly rooted in the folk-tradition and the other solidly in the comic-satirist tradition. He was so prolific for so long that besides his novels, coming at fairly regular intervals over nearly 60 years, the volumes of short-stories, the translation of the epics, the retelling of other traditional myths and tales, the autobiography and the personal and travel essays, the number of letters that Narayan wrote were an adequate evidence to his love for traditional myths, folklore and story writing.

He engaged readers with his simple realistic narratives and at the same time made them worldly wise with his ethical teachings. The plots of his novels served as a stimulant for the young readers. Story-telling is not only a vehicle for passing the history from one generation to the next but also the means by which the community gives itself a continuity, conformity and congruity. The tale or oral story is the crude yet vigorous stem of R.K. Narayan’s fiction which combines traditional forms with local and folklore materials. Narayan represents what C.D. Narasimhaiah has defined him as a man who writes “not merely with an intense social awareness of his own age but with the past of India in his bones” (“R.K.Narayan: The Guide”91).

The legends, myths and folktales implicitly affirm certain values of Indian traditional life and confer on Narayan's novels an artistic uniqueness. The nature and texture of Indian traditional life is created by the author's apt employment of mythological parables, philosophical symbols, rituals and religious traditions of Indian people.

The people of Malgudi are the God-fearing people like the ritualistic, orthodox people of India. Narayan held the pulses of Indians and made frequent use of Indian mythology and Folklore in his novels to depict the characters and situations life-like. Myth is neither religion nor science; it is a distinct class that provides solace to both the heart and the mind and works as a bridge between intellect and emotion, fact and ideal, the human and non-human. The novels of Narayan bear perfect testimony to this fact. Malgudi with its realistic landmarks gets an ambience of folklore. The Nallappa grove, the Albert Mission School, the Printing Press, the Sarayu River and Banyan Tree – all lend a mythical aura to Malgudi rather than making it appear real. It appears like a painted town of folktales. It is a jugglery of the novelist that the real is made mythical and then myth of Malgudi has been used as a back drop for the play of real common men, women and children.

The propitiation of God and Rain in *The Guide* is an archetypal motif which is found in *Vedas* and *Puranas* when the men with ordinary powers propitiated God and became extra-ordinary with boons and super powers. The scriptural doctrine of sinner turning into a sage has been one of the mythological motifs in the novels. Raju's mother is an archetypal figure of Indian woman who is well – versed with Indian scriptures, mythological parables and all the *dharmas* (duties) of Indian woman as a wife, as a daughter & sister and as a mother.

*Devadasi* system which is still prevalent in some parts of country is widely discussed in reference to Rosie. The themes, motifs and plot of the novel have been analysed in this research in the light of application of myth and folklore. The novel is a representation of *Karma Yoga* philosophy as illustrated in *Bhagavad Gita*.

*The Maneater of Malgudi* presents the structural method of applying myth and folklore in the novel. The entire plot construction is based on the myth of *Bhasmasura* and *Puranic* episode of *Gajendra-Moksha*. Nataraj – the protagonist and Vasu- the taxidermist are the perfect emblems of *devas* and *asuras* of ancient mythological lore. The inclinations, eating and living habits, discourse and way of dealing with the people of Vasu and Nataraj are akin to *rakshasas* and *devas* of Indian epics. Vasu is a *rakshasa* who can never avoid his destruction. Here the temple dancer Rangī is representing the *devadasis* of ancient times. The belief of Nataraj in God's mysterious and just ways, his religious mind and belief in Goddess *Lakshmi*, Vasu's dominating spirit in every matter and eventual end of Vasu by a tiny creature mosquito; all make the novel a marvelous piece of mythology and folklore.

When one reads the novel it appears like one is reading a mythical parable of *Rama* and ten headed *Ravana* where Achilles heel of the *rakshasa* is a mosquito which makes the piece comic and satiric. Thus the novel is *puranic* recreation of the doctrine *Satyamev Jayate*; here the novelist has presented the conflict resolution between good and evil where the truth, the good always emerge as victorious and evil falls to his doom eternally.

*A Tiger for Malgudi* represents the most exquisite part of Indian folklore i.e. beast fable or animal lore. The story of this novel is based on the life-journey of a tiger – Raja. His anecdotes, his philosophical dialogues, his discourse with his Master – his Guru and the melodrama of proceeding in life from jungle to village, village to circus, circus to films, films to a school and then from a school to ultimate destination of his life – the lotus feet of his Guru and at the last juncture the separation from his master and reaching into the zoo lent a mythical and folkloric hue to the novel. The philosophical teachings and preaching of Master seems the reinterpretation of *Puranic* and scriptural wisdom. The beast like Raja – the tiger is speaking, crying, and feeling nostalgic for his family, craving for liberation of soul. He is attributed with the humanly qualities. This is the method of *Panćatantra* where *Nīti* – the ethical codes are interpreted to the readers by animal characters. One story from

*Hitopadésa*, *The tiger and the traveler* also resembles to the story of the novel. The Master made a beast, like tiger, a tamed, sensible, religious soul. Raja has been following his master with his head and paws down. This incident lends a supernatural touch to the story when it becomes unbelievable for one that a wild animal tiger could tear apart the Master but instead he was following him. Raja drew his own image of God and became an ascetic like his Master.

The stories in the novels of R.K. Narayan, if published in abridged form like *Tales from Shakespeare* by Lamb, can itself be named as *Tales from Narayan* as they illustrate the moral and spiritual vision as enunciated in the Puranic stories and the stories of *Panćatantra*, *Hitopadésa* and *Kathasaritsagara*. They talk about *Nīti* – moral ethics and *Hita* – the welfare of the people and the society in a parlance. The imaginative forcefulness of gods and demons and others are the constant sources of inspiration for Narayan and hence for the people of his imaginary town of Malgudi. He does not disfigure or mutilate the myths by giving a modern tinge to them rather he stresses their timeless relevance as stories. He cherished the heritage of faith and values, customs and traditions of the past in his writings.

Thus Rao and Narayan; both have attempted to share cultural resources rooted in myth and folklore. They informed and transformed the consciousness of the reader by transmitting the Truth with the help of them. Deeply rooted in folklore and mythology, Rao's and Narayan's works resonate with mixtures of pleasure and pain, wonder and horror, natural and supernatural, ancient and modern, past and present. Their novels are the repository of Indian folklore as they represent the myriads of motifs from the realm of folklore. Some of them may be enumerated as *pralaya* – doom's day, Theft and Trickery, A heroic figure's exile and rightful reunification with position of powers, sinner turning into a sage, magical waters and places, loyalty and staunch faith in gods and goddesses, animals embodying human trait, reaching at truth after a series of obstacles, self realization etc. Thus the corpus of the writings of Rao and Narayan is impregnated with mythological and folkloric elements and can be termed as the treatise of Indian mythology and folklore.

The plurality of Indian Oral Tradition makes it unique. Another aspect of Indian stories, that is seen virtually nowhere else in the world, is the fact that our oldest tales, dating back a couple of thousand years are still in circulation, in prose, in verse, in street theatre, television, the movies and in online forums of storytelling. The reason behind it may be their deep rootedness in classical Indian forms of storytelling and unconscious or self conscious use of Indian myths and legends in the narratives. They possess in great abundance the Indian sensibility. They present the real India which beams with life and leaps about with vitality.

India, the land of four Vedas, eighteen *puranas* and mother of all languages i.e. Sanskrit has been acclaimed as *Vishwa – Guru*. It is the impact of perennial Indian Philosophy which set India on highest pedestal in divinity and spirituality. Many religions sprouted and flourished on its fertile land. It is the land of diverse religions, folktales, fables, myths, rituals and festivals where every nook and corner reverberates with mythical and folkloric mesmerism which have magnetized the Indians and non-Indians for so long. They find peace of mind and soul on this religious land and quench their spiritual thirst by quaffing the divine ambrosia of Indian Eternal Philosophy and moral teachings. It has been discovered during this research that the writings of Narayan and Rao carry an incense of Eternal Philosophy, an exuberance of spirituality and mythology; simplicity and charm of folktales through which they weave their every tale with truth, holiness and enchanting imaginations; and take us into the world of fantasy.

The findings of this research show that the writings of Raja Rao and Narayan are truly characteristic of Folklore as the main features of Folklore have been found in their writings. Folklore explains the mysteries of the world, articulates our fears and dreams, imposes order on the apparent random, even chaotic nature of life, entertains and educates. All the representative elements of Folklore characterize the writings of Rao and Narayan. As the Folklore is the living history of the people of a particular time and place, the novels of Narayan and Rao too, give an account of the living history of the people of Post – Colonial India. As Folklore serves as a best medium to

pass on living culture or traditions to the posterity, the works of Rao and Narayan have also been found as the repository of Folklore and vehicle of transmitting this wealth to the next generation. Many writers like Rudyard Kipling and T.S.Eliot, Toru Dutt and A.K. Ramanujan have enchanted the readers with the magic encasement of their works in folklore. Some modern writers have also paved the way to the revival of oral tradition like Amish Tripathi, Vijaydan Detha and Devdutta Pattanaik. The present era is the era of multi – culturalism and multi – ethnicity where the folk culture of one place is intermingling with another. The present study is relevant in the above context as it brings out the revival and resurgence of Oral Traditions, Mythology and Folklore.

The study may prove helpful for those who pursue research in trans-disciplinary subjects such as Ethnography, Migration Studies and Marginal Studies. Folklore is a scholastic discipline which merges many areas and may prove relevant for the fields of sociology, anthropology, culture studies, philosophy, museum studies, art, history and communication.

The proverbs, phrases, idioms used by Narayan and Rao in their novels are a part of folklore or folk-text. By analyzing them minutely we can also evaluate the linguistic aspect of the contemporary times. The Folklore or Oral Traditions emerge from and belong to the field of illiterate and marginalized people. It is a tool by which the people of subaltern groups can give voice to their predicaments. Keeping in view the growing interests in subaltern literature, the present research would be pertinent. Hence the study brings together past, present and future by eliciting the resurgence, relevance and significance of folklore and mythology in the modern world in relation to the novels of Rao and Narayan and contributes to the field of Folklore as well as to the literature. The topic of Folklore will always remain pertinent because it pertains to perpetuity and infinity, wherever people live folklore grows and will grow forever.

The realm of Indian Folklore and Mythology is the realm of gold through which Indian writers like Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan have been enamored since the

beginning of their career. It is here that the Indian writer more than most writers elsewhere has the advantages of abundance of resources for his writing. Their language and style imparted the dazzling brilliance of mythical and folkloric aura to their novels. Their writings provided us the aesthetic as well as the ethical pleasures. There is aesthetic goodness as well as the intellectual goodness in the writings of Rao and Narayan. This is the contribution of the study that the corpus of writing of Rao and Narayan has been presented through the spectacles of Folklore and the function of folklore in enriching the text has been analysed in detail.

The incorporation of mythology and folklore in their writings gave them a magnanimous stand amidst the other luminaries of Indian writing in English. They integrated life, truth, love and god by needling them into the garland of mythology and folklore, whose fragrance will never be mitigated, instead will spread manifold and captivate everyone for eternity. The following quote from *Kanthapura* can be stated for Rao and Narayan and their immortal pen:

“There is but one force in life and that is Truth, and there is but one love in life and that is love of mankind, and there is but one God in life that is the God of all” (*KP* 120).

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# *Appendix*

