

**(AGYAANA TO ANANDA) THE JOURNEY FROM IGNORANCE TO TRANSCENDENTAL  
BLISS: A METAPHYSICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION  
NARRATIVES**

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**Received: 03 Sep 2018**

**Accepted: 07 Sep 2018**

**Published: 15 Sep 2018**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Human life is a solemn stage of the soul's perpetual voyage where the later attempts to shed its false impositions of gone lives and their resulting consequences. The individual soul has been separated from its source since times immemorial and has seen the various shades of grieve and gaiety. However, the internal thirst is not quenched, and the individual soul is attaining different attires of assorted colors materialised in the forms of gender, color, race, faith, and places of nativity. The end of this endless journey is assumed in Indian philosophy as the attainment of transcendental bliss (Ananda). The standard stage of human life is the state of internal darkness. This darkness is the manifestation of widespread ignorance (Agyaana) in the mental and spiritual spheres of an ordinary person.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Ignorance, Enlightenment, Transcendence, Mysticism, and Fiction*

**INTRODUCTION**

Indian philosophy is one of the oldest thriving mystical practices, and it wields considerable influence over the Indian people. The research paper attempts to study philosophical perceptions in the Indian English fiction narratives, which reveal a similarity of theme and a concern with specific traditional Indian motifs. The investigation involves not just the legends and stories of the ancient texts, but an allied philosophy and their entire social attitudes. The study has strived to bring to light certain familiar preoccupations, which the Indian novelists share concerning their tradition. "What we find so significant about Raja Rao's novels is that like classical Indian myths, his novels also seem to exist on all levels. Whether they are in the extended discursive vein of *The Serpent and the Rope*, or the brief epigrammatic mode of *The Cat and Shakespeare*, or indeed even in the manifestly political evocation of *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao's complex works, provide an interest to the intellectual; the philosophical, the spiritual and the emotional aspects of the human psyche. Thus, the works of R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao hold universal appeal in their presentation of the traditional Indian world-view." <sup>1</sup> In the words of Rajesh K. Pallan: "The Indian myth of Time and Chronology has been employed in the novel. An extraordinary vision of the passage of time from the smallest wink of an eye to the vast length of the Creator God Brahma is depicted in the Puranas... A complete cycle of Mahayuga is composed of our ages of unequal distribution: Krita, Treta, Dvapara, and Kali. The most significant in the scheme of Ages is the progressively decreasing length of years, which corresponds to a decrease in excellence and virtue among men and in the quality of human life." <sup>2</sup>

## CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Raja Rao's novels are acutely absorbed in philosophy, and the writer noticeably has chosen the way of creative writing to convey the spiritual understanding. Rao gradually constructs the holy precincts choosing India as the key backdrop. Traditions, legends, mythology, philosophical values and the contemporary social and political circumstances of his motherland make the ground of his novels. The mechanism of original writing color and augment his commitment. Rao feels that the Indian work of fiction might not subsist in an insignificant emptiness. Therefore, he has intermingled Indian mythology and philosophy within a fantastic structure, and the genre of fiction provides the function of beautifying a challenging and theoretical subject. In the words of MedhaSachdev, "Metaphysics and fiction narrative, therefore, cannot be examined in isolation. They are extremely linked to each other... Fiction and metaphysics complement each other. Had the novelist chosen to proceed with his sadhana in a decidedly conventional manner, the texts would have been designated philosophical treatises rather than literary creations."<sup>3</sup>

The philosophical standards are composed within a story bound configuration consisting of legends, reflective ideas, and mysterious protagonists. Rao's approach is distinctive as he attempts to intertwine the Vedanta philosophy, mythology and religious convictions with mundane existence simultaneously.

"Rao is essentially a thinker living in his private world of religious ideologies. A true sadhaka, his entire work traces his spiritual wandering. The sadhana is no mere collection of words, but an act and a process of growth within him to attain the state of oneness with Brahm. The journey is herculean, and Rao takes years to reach a milestone that each novel becomes."<sup>4</sup> This quest is a cognizant and focused individual progress, which concludes in the discovery of the Impersonal One. For an Indian author like Raja Rao, fiction is not only a mode of journeying into societal realism. Rather, it turns out to be a standard to communicate an abstract element outside and exceeding material subsistence. Rao has admitted that his novels are silent, profoundly private and philosophical deliberations. He makes it clear on various places that writing novel for him is a mode of prayer. His mission is the search for life essence. He vows in an interview: "I take writing as a Sadhana, a spiritual Sadhana. That is why I write so little and take a long time to complete my text".<sup>5</sup>

The quest for true identity in Kanthapura is personal in addition to combined success. The novel echoes a forceful and combined attempt to achieve triumph above physical components. "For the novel begins in myth and seemingly moves towards rationalism and reform, but though it is definitely a movement outward- a positive movement, yet at the end, the archetypal community folds back into the cocoon of the myth that sustains and nourishes it. This does not leave a negative feeling. On the contrary, it seems to be the only natural course the community can adopt."<sup>6</sup>

In *The Serpent and the Rope*, the theme of the spiritual mission is sustained. Raja Rao has declared about the novel: "The main theme is the futility and barrenness of man in human existence when man or woman has no deep quest, a thirst for the ultimate. Man's life here in samsara is a noble mission to find the Absolute. The Absolute according to the Indian tradition being incarnated in the Guru."<sup>7</sup>

Undoubtedly, this continuous progression is a major theme in the novel. Throughout, the story Ramaswamy perceives himself as a spiritual pilgrim as, "...sitting sometimes, my hand against my face, I wondered where all this wandering would lead to. Life is a pilgrimage I know, but a pilgrimage to where – and of what? ...Everyone feels that something is just being missed."<sup>8</sup> Rama in search for the Ultimate also includes false cults to help him reach his goal. "Rama's deep feeling for mythology is evident in the beauty of his prose when he describes myths.

The mythical allusions start in the very first pages when he talks of the monster that ate the moon... Consistently, through the text, we are kept in touch with this panoramic world of myths." <sup>9</sup>

The blank pages of Rao's novel *Kanthapura* may submit the particular verve of sensed occurrences that Raja Rao deems, are away from articulation and required large domain for its elucidation. "More like an extended metaphor and less like an objective – correlative, the novel is just like an Upanishad; part narrative, part speculation, part dialogue or discussion. Various myths and symbols have been employed as a creative mode for establishing the identity of characters and elucidating a point of view, the deep truth of total surrender for achieving the divine grace of the Ultimate Reality." <sup>10</sup> The transcendental bliss lies within the realms of mind and spirit. Our ancient mythical emblems and philosophical discourses guide us on the right path to unveil the hidden treasure. In the words of Heinrich Zimmer: "Now the real treasure, to end our misery and trials, is never far away... But there is the odd and persistent fact that it is only after a faithful journey to a distant region, a foreign country, a strange land, that the meaning of the inner voice that is to guide our quest can be revealed to us." <sup>11</sup>

The myths and legends of the ancient era pursued by the narratives of the Puranas and epics merge into history and distort the boundaries between mythology and the past. Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan reveal, in their writings, the traits of the myths appealing to different areas of human interest. "By the use of these myths, these two writers subtly integrate many abstruse philosophies, and subjective theologies present within Hinduism into their novels, thus presenting an opportunity to comprehend the whole way of life of an ancient race of people." <sup>12</sup> R.K. Narayan belongs to the great Indian tradition that has been revived by the pioneer writers of the twentieth century. Narayan inscribes with an active societal consciousness of his epoch together with the ancient times of India. The mythical elements and legends of the earlier period in Narayan's elucidation must not be observed as a getaway from the current day existence rather conversely, he transports antique mythical elements to our contemporary authenticity. These mythical elements are the basis of Narayan's complacency drawn from the ancient Indian wisdom and great philosophical legacy of his motherland. "Ancient legends and myths of India have grown a new interpretation in Narayan's works. He brings down to earth both gods, kings from heaven and thrones, and shows them as common sinners with their feelings and troubles... Speaking about Narayan's devotion to Indian mythology one cannot overlook such vivid and significant phenomenon in his creative work as an associative representation of ancient legends and myths." <sup>13</sup>

We have observed the characters implicated in the superior wonder of human life. In the words of Ashok Kumar Kundu: "This philosophy, the author talks about is the Vedanta philosophy which probes areas of unknown, raises the characters from the mundane level of existence, makes them accept life as it is and sets out on the path of self-realization which liberates the soul." <sup>14</sup>

It has been detected that the philosophical and internal voyage from Moorthy to Ramakrishna Pai is in truth the evolution that Rao himself the real seeker has made. The spiritual path undertaken by Raja Rao comprises the impasse of belief, hard work to understand important matters, comprehending Maya, discarding duality, the consciousness of the self and amalgamation with Braham (Absolute Reality). His characters are a manifestation of his real disposition. His works describe the gloomy phase of suspicion and uncertainty and eventually the magnification of revelation and spiritual contentment attained after the long journey started from the search for life essence and concluded in the discovery of self. The darkness of unawareness is called *agyaan* that implies artificial comprehension. Due to this darkness, a simple

article like rope appears to be dangerous and the cause of an individual's superimposed fear. In the words of A.C. Mukerji: "The world of plurality is perfectly real from the standpoint of finite experience, but when we looked at from that of the infinite experience, it is even less than a dream or illusion, because it has never existed in the past, does not exist at present and will never exist in the future." <sup>15</sup>

According to the philosophy, the attainment of this stage and transcendental bliss is the last enterprise and the intention of human life. The unawareness of the substantial identity gives birth to the feelings of insufficiency. Therefore, the comprehension of the spirit may only eradicate the sagacity of meagerness. There are various traditions to recognize the eventual reality. The human being may espouse GyaanMarag (the path of spiritual awareness), the system of non-dualism expressed by Sankara, for the consciousness of spiritual light. The other is the Bhakti Marga (way of devotion) where the human being discerns his spirit to be filled with bliss and entire clash, anguish disappears, and contentment befalls innate and graceful. According to the philosophy, the attainment of this stage and transcendental bliss is the last enterprise and the intention of human life. Dr. Karan Singh has rightly said, "Within each religious tradition there is the concept of inner light, the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, as the Bible says, or the Roohani Noor of the Sufi mystics, or the EkOnkar of the great Gurus... The many splendors lights of the Atman is not the preserve of any priest or any functionary; it resides within each human being." <sup>16</sup>

More or less all the protagonists of R.K. Narayan's novels achieve the first echelon of thoughtfulness and consciousness in their lives. Initially, they have to bear the outcomes of their deeds as the theory of Karma functions in their subsistence. "And so Vedanta is the greatest declaration of independence ever made, because it is our karma, it is our actions, it is the way in which we perceive the divine, it is the way in which we act out the drama of our lives that will determine how our consciousness develops and evolves." <sup>17</sup> Subsequently, the Jivatma can eliminate the worldly wishes, and there is sunrise of a new consciousness in mind.

## CONCLUSIONS

The journey from the stage of darkness to enlightenment is a tedious task, and this voyage may be completed in the period of countless lives. The process of purification is not natural as the mind is subject to the temptations of Maya's objects. Maya has the magnetic power to attract the typical iron made the mind of a human being. Only the enlightened sages with a heart of gold are beyond the reach of this magnetic effect of Maya. The transformation of consciousness from the iron state to golden state is possible in the ways of Gyaana or Bhakti (Knowledge or dedication) only. The universe we observe is only Maya (illusion). The obscurity of unawareness is the reason for the deceptive appearance of assortment. Consistently, the diversity is professed but it is not in reality at hand, and the solitary wakefulness had continued to be unmoved. When the luminosity of acquaintance takes place, the deceptive appearance evaporates with no elements left behind. The darkness of unawareness is called agyaan that implies artificial comprehension. Due to this darkness, a simple article like a rope appears to be dangerous and the cause of an individual's superimposed fear. In the words of Dr. Karan Singh: "It is not an easy path. Indeed, it is path beset with challenges and difficulties. But the Upanishads themselves remind us that we need a great deal of courage and compassion to reach the goal. It is not something that will come automatically. We have got to act – charaiveti - charaiveti – to move against the current as it were, to move upwards." <sup>18</sup> We may sum up the relevance of philosophy for an individual and the contemporary world as: "In the course of that extraordinary dialogue there is a verse which exhorts us to be awake and to arise to find out what the great seers in the past

have taught and to move onwards across the razor-edged path. It is a difficult path beset with dangers, not simply the path of least resistance. There are no soft options left, either for individual greatness or for collective emancipation. But across the razor-edged path, endowed with the courage and compassion that Vedanta gives us, we can and must move towards the goal of the regenerated individual, of a regenerated society and a compassionate and caring global society." <sup>19</sup> Literature has always provided a canvass to the philosophy of painting its colors in different shades. Indian literary field is no exception to this notion, and it has presented a strong foundation to the structure of metaphysical studies. Keeping the tradition intact, the Indian English writers have magnificently embroidered their writings with the golden threads of mysticism and metaphysics.

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