

# Cultural, Philosophical, Thematic Diversity and Sensitivity in Raja Rao's Short Stories

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**Abstract:** Cultural, Philosophical and Thematic diversity is focuses on examining cultural themes or patterns of meaning within data flexibly which give importance to special data set description, organization and theoretical interpretation of meaning. This analysis checks implicit and explicit details of the data. Rao's short stories often focus on novelty of identity, spirituality, and the clash between tradition and modernity. Many of his stories are set in rural India and explore the impact of colonization and the struggle for independence. His works also often delve into cultural, philosophical and existential questions, examining the nature of existence and the search for meaning.

In “The Policeman and the Rose”, the policeman described as egoistic who create uneasy situation. He thinks what does he stand for? In advaitic philosophy the policeman holding „I“ in arrest suggests the ego overpowering in „Jiva“ and thereby hampering its attempts at self-realization. The „Policeman“ is one become many. His account of the past includes his incarnation in the think of Rama. Characters grapple with questions of who they are and where they belong. As in “On the Ganga Ghat” Rajiv, Jaya, Yeshwant, Usha, Aai and Doctor are struggling to emerge and try to be noticed but they remain alienated. Bholu has a meaningful connection with Indian mythology especially with reference to the importance of 'Gangajal'. Rani Rasomani's devotion to Shiva is marked by frenzied religious spiritual ecstasy she still recognizes Ma Anand Mayee, a great saint. Sudha, who worships Rama since her life in the previous birth, comes across three gurus.

Spirituality is another recurring theme in Rao's works. In “The Cow of the Barricades” the holy cow named after the goddess Gauri is an expressive symbol of the Indian synthesis of tradition and modernity. A symbol of deity, „elephant“ becomes a symbol of Vigneswara who wards of all evils in the beginning and brings prosperity.

*Index-Terms: implicit, colonization, advaitic, Jiva and Vigneswara*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Cultural, Philosophical and Thematic diversity can be used to explore questions about participants' lived experiences, perspectives, behavior and practices, the factors and social processes that influence and shape particular phenomena and society. Raja Rao is one of the most famous Indian English novelists and story writer whose popularity is due to his broad intellectual, spiritual, national, political and social thought subjects. Raja Rao was the youngest Indian English fiction writer and his short story writing was distinctive and noteworthy. His first short story collections was *The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories* (1947) written in the transitional period. His second short story collections were *The Policeman and the Rose* (1977) which includes nearly seven of the first short story collection. It had three new stories which separates philosophy and symbols in fiction.

Raja Rao (08/11/1908-8/7/2006), from a distinguished Brahman family in southern India, Rao studied English at Nizam College, Hyderabad, and then at the University of Madras, where he received a bachelor's degree in 1929. To study history and literature he went to France at the University of Sorbonne and the Montpellier. In France he had married with Camille Mouly (1931). He came in India in 1933 and published his starting short stories in U.S. and Europe. He had taken part in the Indian independence movement and fought against the British from the backside. Rao returned to France in 1948 and subsequently alternated for a time between India and Europe. Raja Rao first goes to the U.S. in 1950 and in 1966 where at Austin at the University of Texas, he became a philosophy professor. He had travelled very much and retired in 1980. He was married in 1965 with Catherine Jones and in 1986 with Susan Vaught.

Raja Rao got varied Awards and recognition as Fellowship in the Sahitya Academy, The Padma Bhushan (1969), India's national academy of letters (1997), The Padma Vibhushan, awarded posthumously (2007) and The Neustadt Prize (1988). Rao's short stories, has the incidents of Indian culture and life on personal, social, political, and metaphysical themes, and they give special instincts of Indian thought and personality.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Agnihotri, Bahadur, 2003, "A Study of Raja Rao's Short Fiction" this study shows that the interactions of the characters, Rao emphasizes the symbolism and importance of the cow, policeman as a representation of divinity, duty and the interconnectedness of all life. Indian cultural traditions and rituals are another significant aspect of Rao's works.
2. Ahmed, Ali, "Illusion and Reality: The Art and Philosophy of Raja Rao", (1968) examine the themes, motifs, and philosophical underpinnings of Raja Rao's short stories and their connection to Indian ethos and philosophy.
3. Bali, Krishan Kumar, 1991, "Symbolism and Myth in Raja Rao's Fiction: A New Interpretation" highlights various rituals, such as puja (worship) and the significance of flowers, showcasing their symbolic meaning and deep-rooted presence in Indian society.

4. Maini, Das, 1981 “Raja Rao’s Vision, Values and Aesthetic”, shows that Raja Rao’s stories revolves around the beliefs and customs associated with the holy cow in Hindu society. The philosophical underpinnings of Raja Rao’s short stories are deeply intertwined with Indian ethos.
5. Raj N, Newton, 2016 “The short stories of Raja Rao: A study”, shows Rao’s short stories often tackle issues of social inequality and injustice, reflecting his concern for the marginalized sections of society. Rao’s short stories have the theme of spirituality and the search for self-realization form the core of the narrative.
6. Singh, Madhulika, 2020 “Indian ethos and western encounter a study in Raja Rao’s fictional vision” this study shows that Raja Rao had combined unforgettable east-west combination, confusion and variety of themes and techniques founded in the contemporary writers and novelists. In conclusion, Raja Rao’s short stories effectively capture Philosophical and thematic basis of Rao's short stories.

### III.AIMS, OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

1. To study the life, literary career and influences resulted in the making of the short story writing.
2. To study cultural, philosophical and thematic analysis in the light of Rao's short stories.
3. To study, understand and explain the major aspects of Indianans, Indian culture, castes, and to explore their social relevance and importance.
4. To present a synthesis of different type of quest (e.g. Vedantic, Tantric and Sufic), thereby underlining their essential oneness.
5. To define the philosophical importance of Guru in the life.

#### Limitations:

The study will be restricted to the short stories of Raja Rao will be studied and analyzed thoroughly. Other plays or short story collection and lecture will not be taken into consideration in addition to it, only the aspects of thematic analysis will be considered.

### IV.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

During the course of the study, the researcher employed the Descriptive and Analytical research methodology. Collected library material in the form of Primary, Secondary and other sources enlisted in bibliography, available comparative and critical analysis of the short stories through the thematic point of view studied as basic support while conducting the research. Additional online sources downloaded from the websites will be also taken into consideration as per requirement. MLA style had followed for the study.

#### Hypothesis:

On the basis of general survey of the short stories of Raja Rao, it is observed that:

1. Rao's world views are from the canvass of contemporary Indian culture, societies ignoring fashionable life.
2. He incorporated the events, situations from mediocre society.
3. He juxtaposes the meanings and value of life through his miserable characters and gave new dimension to new generation. Through his all short stories reflect the common themes.
4. His common themes, their situation, social context, devices are different to materialize the objectives of the author.

The study endeavors to search the aspects of cultural, philosophical and thematic diversity and sensitivity reflected in his short stories. The major concepts that form the core part of the study had explained. Raja Rao who was inspired by European thinkers and it reflected through their writings again in this part how Raja Rao turned to thematic way of writing due to the love for Indians.

#### Major Aspects of Cultural, Philosophical, Thematic Diversity and Sensitivity

Cultural, Philosophical and Thematic aspects are many aspects such as: Freedom, Responsibility, Bad faith, Humanism, Anguish, Authenticity, Despair, Reason, The Absurdity, Isolation, Death, Guilt, and Uncertainty. These above aspects will be studied in the context of the short stories discussed. Short story is always interwoven with literary devices.

#### Relationships between Indian and Western culture, philosophy and themes

In the first short story *The Cow of the Barricades* (1947) the holy cow named after the goddess Gauri is an expressive symbol of the Indian synthesis of tradition and modernity. Ancient Indian tradition suggests the holy cow is a god but British officers shoot it in the freedom movement. So, here Gauri is a modern Indian nationalism protagonist. Gauri the cow in 'The Cow of the Barricades' becomes a symbol of deity, 'elephant' becomes a symbol of Vigneswara who wards off all evils in the beginning and brings prosperity. In a traditional and methodological society like India elephant is conceived as an Airavatha, the one that gives everything that one asks for. Similarly elephant is God manifest in terrestrial form. Naturally any one in search of Jnana is asked to offer obeisance to Vigneswara, the elephant God.

His Second short story "The Policeman and the Rose" (1978) show how in his later work Rao's interest shifted from the social and political planes to a metaphysical apprehension of life brought with the quotations from scriptures and other sacred writings of India. Birth, growth, death and rebirth action is universal and individual in the limits of space and time.

#### Advaita Philosophy:

The policeman holding men and women assist are briefly described and the described the rose is natural, mixed and unavoidable. The policeman remains as a private symbol. To have a grasp of the story one is supposed to have knowledge of advaita philosophy. They have apparent contradictions in their distinctive identities. The policeman described is egoistic who create uneasy situation. He thinks what does he stand for? In advaitic philosophy the policeman holding 'I' in

arrest suggests the ego overpowering in 'Jiva' and thereby hampering its attempts at self-realization. It is the process of advaita philosophy. 'I' in the story symbolizes 'Jiva' in its empirical outfit. Other details like the upbringing, his illness as a child, and the gifts given to him by his grand-mother, his several travels in France and India are very graphically described. The policeman arrests the new born child. He requested for his freedom due to his poor condition. The protagonist in his experience of journey married woman and learns the „Self“. In a bid to free himself from this bondage, he “jumps the wall”, flees his country India and goes to 'the western world - world of honor and liberty'. His self enquiry begins. He comfortably reaches France, the crown of flowers, on the Queen of Reason dear France of liberty. The policeman accompanies the protagonist in Paris. The protagonist experiences his dualities when he marries a woman. In self inquiry, he goes to France. With the growing of the policeman two inches small, he feels that the policeman lost his hold on the protagonist. He becomes a divine person receiving recognition from all. Suddenly he grows bigger than the narrator and goes back to India. The protagonist's journey to Travancore is no ordinary travel but a pilgrimage earnestly undertaken. Towards his journey's end he grows 'Two-Feet', not as a mere intellectual inquirer or a miracle man as he was at one time, but as one who would surrender himself in humility to his mentor. The need for a guru felt with an extraordinary urgency brings him to Travancore. Appropriately, he places the rose he has brought along with him at the 'Feet' in 'worship' which suggests his surrender to 'the Lord', through meditation to come out of ego and get the soul. At one level the red rose is the medieval symbol of romance and its chivalric aspects of passion and compassion. Indian Aestheticism, love, truth shows by the symbol of the 'white rose'. For an aesthetic enjoyment of the story it is not necessary to fix any single meaning to the story. Though the story has numerous advaitic echoes, we can enjoy it even without the advaitic matrix. Philosophically, the dual narration the 'I' and the 'Policeman' is a cultural specimen of an Indian kind. The 'I' is a confident adviser of God. The 'Policeman' is one become many. His account of the past includes his incarnation in the think of Rama. So 'I' is the eternal self and the policeman is the self as ego. Thus the story is very good narrative that illustrate the victory of ideal truth over impermanent beauty. In "The Policeman and the Rose" the narrator-quest is an intellectual. He realizes the essence of Truth in the kingdom of Travancore, the abode of his guru. But here the stage of return is absent. As such, he may be seen as the one who has been through the second stage of initiation and is yet to accomplish traumatic return with his hard-acquired insight, wisdom, and existence of human existence.

#### V.CYCLICAL PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE AND DEATH

In Raja Rao third short story “On the Ganga Ghat”, 1989 Rajiv, Jaya, Yeshwant, Usha, Aai & Doctor are the prominent characters. All these characters are struggling to emerge and try to be noticed but they remain alienated. This play is trying to focus on human relationships, Search for existence, inevitability, human suffering, mental – social tensions reflected in this play. This short story gives importance to intellect than heart.

Rao a traditionalist defines guru as the one who brings the lantern of knowledge in order to dispel the darkness of ignorance, thereby illuminating the disciple's path to enlightenment. The character of Moti Ram has been drawn with great depth and finesse. Moti Ram is illiterate and poverty-stricken; he is a "good man", a wonderful drummer, and an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva. Bholanath, a wheelwright's son from Rajgarh, a rustic and illiterate, an expert mechanic, has a strong and deep bond with his nephew, Bhim. Bholanath, An enthusiastic singer of Bhajans (songs of God), a dogmatically honest man, also embodies the virtues of persistence and devotion for the Lord. His relationship with Vishwanath brings about a quantum jump in his spiritual consciousness. Bholanath has a meaningful connection with Indian mythology especially with reference to the importance of 'Gangajal'. He looks a true disciple and a true seeker of truth. In the ninth story in *On the Ganga Ghat*, the protagonist, Rani Rasomani, a "husk-skinned aged woman in white sari, white hair sparse over her forehead with a fixed stare and saying, her beads". Her husband, Raja Pratap Chandra Majumdar of Bankipura, was a Brahmo-Samaji. After his death she gave birth to her daughter in Banaras. Her devotion to Shiva is marked by frenzied religious spiritual ecstasy she still recognizes Ma Anand Mayee, a great saint. The tenth story in *On the Ganga Ghat* is an account of Sudha, a student of St. Mary's convent school, hates marriage. She worships Rama. Sudha, since her life in the previous birth, comes across three gurus- inheritor of her husband's Guru, Sadhu Sunderanandji and Ranchoddoss. The 'Sthithaprajna' sensibility which is evident in Rao's stories with respect to his attitude and orientation imparts them depth and authenticity. This sensibility comes to life in the creation of characters such as Jhaveri Bai, Bhedia, Bhim, Rani Rasomani, Kanakapala and Gauri.

In *On the Ganga Ghat*, all the protagonists are seekers of salvation who have reached the last phase of their quest journey, Muthradas from Vrindavan, for example, have not yet attained enlightenment though he has already been initiated on this path of self-realization by his guru Sankaranandji. Nanna, the Panjabi prostitute in the ninth story, like Ranchoddoss Sunderdoss in the tenth, has just begun her quest journey, whereas Sudha, on the contrary, has completed her quest cycle and has now returned to make a meaningful contribution.

## VI. SYMBOLISM AND MYTHOLOGY

Raja Rao's short stories often incorporate symbolism and mythology to convey deeper themes and insights into human nature and the world. His use of symbolism and mythology helps to create rich, multi-layered narratives that engage readers and encourage them to reflect on the deeper meaning of the stories. The rose in the story, *"The Policeman and the Rose"*, represents beauty and purity. It is described as *"a great crimson rose, hanging from its branch like a fruit."* The rose also symbolizes love and desire. It triggers a sense of longing and fascination in the policeman, who is mesmerized by its beauty.

One example of this is seen in Rao's short story, *"The Cow of the Barricades"*, where he uses the symbolism of the cow to represent the struggle for freedom and independence. The cow becomes a powerful symbol of resistance and defiance against the British colonial rule. By incorporating

this symbolism, Rao's story becomes a powerful commentary on the struggle for independence and the resilience of the Indian people. The policeman symbolizes duty, order, and societal expectations. He is described as a disciplined man following a set path, representing the rigid structure and rules of society.

Mythology also plays a significant role in Rao's short stories, as he often draws on Hindu mythology to enrich his narratives. In *"The Policeman and the Rose"*, for example, the story references the Hindu mythological figures of Rama and Sita, portraying them as existential archetypes. By drawing on indigenous storytelling traditions, *"Narsiga"* describes the culture of heroism and offers a more holistic and interconnected mythological aspects.

Overall, Raja Rao's use of symbolism and mythology in his short stories adds layers of depth and complexity to his narratives, allowing readers to engage with the stories on multiple levels and derive greater meaning from them. His exploration of these themes serves as a powerful tool for conveying profound insights into human experience and the world at large.

## VII.CONCLUSION

This study will contribute new aspects which were unexplored, untouched. What were the cultural, thematic inspirations of the writer had studied minutely and the devices he used taken into consideration. It concretizes the hypothetical and concluding remarks about which no substantial has so far been articulately explored and expressed. His stories are lucid and effective, well-delineated parabolic expressions focusing on various dimensions of the quests.

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