The Divine Relationship of a Disciple and the Mentor In ‘The Cat and Shakespeare’: A Critical Approach

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Abstract: ‘The Cat and Shakespeare’ portrays Raja Rao’s utility of the myths and folklore for merely corroborating the spiritual reflections of the two main characters. Some critics argue that it is taciturn to state that in current time the characters while romanticised could be thoughtfull with religious thoughts. The reviewers opine that with an unexpected, delicate swing in the spotlight, Raja Rao endorsed the conflict amid avactive and spiritual quests and that the entire submission and acquiescence to the will of God is a nix answer to the numerous troubles come across by the present-day man. Now the question arises that why the contemporary human being is not made to comprehend the value and truth of his real-life form. The mortal human vessel and these limited days are merely a drama of conversion from the terminal to divine step, and Raja Rao has implied the feasibility and likelihood of a mortal to mount that peak of knowledge by inspiring him to be improved and judicious through constant effort.

Keywords: Braham, disciple, guru, dedication, benediction, transcendental discourse

I. Introduction

Raja Rao’s novel The Cat and Shakespeare illustrates the progress of a pilgrim to be the disciple of a Guru. A divine missionary looks for the eventual acquaintance concealed under the curtain of Maya, and a devotee trusts in entire submission before divinity. Once the seeker is successful in achieving total disconnection throughout the means of conviction and devotion, and his worship becomes entirely concerned in getting the Absolute Being, he is resurrected as a Brahamgyaani. The divine observance involves the deep connection with God. Cords of godly affection bind the mind of a spiritual aficionado to the divine. Its result is an absolute commitment and dedication. These blessed and transcendent sentiments amalgamate to the worshipper to the Ultimate. The instinctive temperament of all mortal beings is affection and craving for peripheral substance as intelligent discernment exhibits inclinations of variance. Innumerable events and concrete items of the world attract the isolated yearnings and desires. Divine devotion needs a stimulus to concentrate these peripatetic notion routes of the human mentality. Union does not mean an obsession with the material substance that traps and impounds the person into the succession of transience. In its place, it refers to the selfless and noble worship of God. The principal impediment in this esteemed ambition is human’s false pride. The Vedanta philosophy aspires to fetch out this artificial sentiment. The path of devotion is one such system of obliterating the perception of the free, personality’s nature. In contrast to the way of knowledge, this is an added gracious manner of getting the Ultimate. In the knowledge-path, the seeker has difficulty in concentrating the intellect on Braham who is beyond appearance and characteristics. Conversely, in the path of devotion, the disciple institutes a close association with the divinity by focusing his psyche on a pictogram of the Braham. Since sentiments administer an ordinary human being, the conduit of worship propers a suitable direction. If an individual’s attempt channelises its affection for coarse substance towards worship of the valuable, it will surely escort to immediate realisation.

II. Critical Analysis

Divine dedication may be categorised into two modes. The first represents reverence with an aspiration for acquisitive feats and physical ownership. These become an objective in them and counteract any desire for ultimate fulfilment, perpetual life and deliverance. This type of perseverance provides continuity to the human being. However, a different sorting of the dedication is ceremonial focusing on religious pretensions and rituals. The devotee of this article of faith embellishes the symbolising icon of divinity with flowers, chimes glockenspiels and undertakes fasting and religious ceremonies. The Initiator of the cosmos is considered as the ultimate authority apparent in the observable figure. This worship signifies the preliminary phase of a pilgrim’s journey. The divine image veneration outlines
the initial footstep in devotion-path. The figure is suffused with life and respected as the supernatural being. The evident picture works as an exterior emblem of divinity for the function of worship. The worshipper feels the charisma of the Almighty Lord in the idol and adores it with keenness. The idol of deity continues to be an icon, but the devotion is for the god. The subsequent effort internalises feelings and tries to find God within the seeker's mind. Considering that divinity is there in each fragment of life, the devotee is exhilarated by His extreme and celestial charisma. This comprehension is a superior type of devotion intended entirely for sages of exceptional mind. Dissolute and worldly brains fall short to attain this juncture. Their false sense of self and yearnings takes place as the most significant obstacle involving them and divinity. Ideal devotion entails total disconnection from every worldly obsession. The Vedanta philosophy declares that the spirit cannot be achieved by a reading of the scriptures or by cleverness. He whom the divine essence selects, through him the real self may be attained. Then, the soul discloses its correct temperament. In this stage, the disciple experiences the attendance of God. He understands the intellectual influence of the Absolute contiguous and all-encompassing his self. Worship and dedication of such a devotee is kind, selfless and whole, with total disinterest in any worldly incentive. The believer aims at amalgamation with the Supreme by saying, repeatedly, His right name, deliberating upon His powers and benedictions showered upon all.

This sort of contemplation commonly results in the devotee's communion with the intuitive and undeniable Brahm. The dedication towards Brahm should not be measured as merely a condition of poignant demonstration. It is painstaking order and total self-control of the mentality. This celestial devotion can be grown naturally through reorienting the personal understanding entirely. The sense of duality formed by self-worth and craving hinders the seeker Raja Rao upholds, "It is this undivided Consciousness that the mind and the senses seem to divide into subject and object, superimposing on the indivisible timeless and spaceless - division, time and form."

To achieve deliverance, it is a prerequisite that the prudent seeker should willingly eliminate the entire impediments. The individual can attain this position by pursuing the doctrines given by Vedanta philosophy as warmth, service, commitment, complete submission of mind-body-soul and the entire lot.

The distinction between Bhakti and Gyaana is that the previous has to be experienced and the second can be obtained during learning of scriptures. Divine worship stipulates somewhat imperative from the faithful devotee. It is effortless to accomplish innate wisdom than being motivated by dedication and reverence. A disciple may be a learned person, but a thinker devotee is infrequent. The glint of stimulation indispensable for commitment is an indication of God's blessings on the adulator. The Vedanta philosophy asserts that the believer should abstain from all his mundane obligations and acquire asylum in Brahm only to liberate himself from every vice undoubtedly. The rapport involving the devotee and the deity is present in different shapes, and the believer puts forward his whole life form before Brahm and discarding his split subsistence consecutively. The seeker stops to sense disturbed by hurting, regret and anguish. Bearing in mind the sense of Brahm himself, a Bhakta surrendering his body of elements and self-worth, the devotee does not believe in physical yearnings.

Raja Rao recognises his novel The Cat and Shakespeare as the culmination of his previous book The Serpent and the Rope. Though theme wise it follows the story, yet it shapes an additional milestone in the spiritual progress of a religious pilgrim as a novelist. In his own words, "The Cat and Shakespeare is a sequel to The Serpent and the Rope, and... it takes up the theme of the metaphysical quest at the point at which Rama's story has carried it, and shows the next step in this journey".

Raja Rao's novel The Serpent and the Rope supported Sankara's philosophy of unqualified non-dualism and The Cat and Shakespeare advocates Ramanuja's hypothesis of qualified monism. Ramanuja's distinguished scheme is described in this way since it verbalises the Brahm with oblique characteristics. We may consider it as non-dualism in the company of credentials. Sankara clings to the notion that unawareness is accountable for not perceiving the demonstrations of Brahm and the illusory materialises as authentic. Ramanuja considered qualities as genuine and eternal but subject to the control of the Absolute. Sankara's and Ramanuja's theories are different phases on the way to the Imperceptible. These are not conflicting but corresponding. United with Madhava's absolute dualism, they ultimately conclude in the comprehension of the Supreme. Sankara's viewpoint might be excessively delicate or intangible, but Ramanuja's discourse is appropriate for seekers attentive towards dedication.

The two principal characters of the novel are Govindan Nair and Ramakrishna Pai. They are neither persons of deeds like Moorthy nor thinkers like Ramaswamy. They are honest commonplace citizens for whom comprehension is possible only during works of devotion and submission. The first emblem of the cat symbolises the Godly-Mother belief. The perceptible reasonable creature is accorded unique traits and attributes. The reviewers have observed that the vital icon of the cat transporting the young ones by their neck to safe places becomes envoy of the feminine theory. The kitten just then believes protected in the world. The different space to which the cat-mother reallocates its kittens made adaptive and known them for fresh, new occurrences and conditions of threat. It constructs their toughness, patience, opinion, might and self-belief. This revelation is moreover an examination of their endurance of the intricacies of life.

The application of 'Shakespeare' in the heading has raised a debate among critics. A critic puts forward that Shakespeare symbolises the philosophical awareness and knowledge of all stratum of existence. Rao himself deems
the word Shakespeare as, "someone who has gone beyond duality, and as such he is a universal symbol". Rao's novel presents a practical warehouse of affluent thoughtful musings, language and themes, noticeably equivalent to the playwright. Shakespeare's dramas develop within a breathing and vibrant world. A different energetic internal vigour pervades the novel also. The thematic progress of a Shakespearean drama proceeds from confusion to the arrangement.

Similarly, the sense of uncertainty, confusion and disorder prevailed in the early life of Pai also. However, God's blessings in the appearance of Nair lessen his misery. Through the assistance of this teacher, he attains a controlled status of clean blamelessness.

The wall is another important motif in the novel. It divides the houses of Ramakrishna Pai and Govindan Nair and symbolises the veil of illusion, demarcating manifestation from authenticity. Rao emphasises that by crossing it, truth can be attained and the delusion of the marked barrier is surpassed. Considered a problematic obstacle the wall personifies the unawareness that hampers the spiritual pilgrim's progress. However, Nair's discernment of this impediment as an imaginary element annuls its value as an entity that hinders the spiritual growth. Hence, a persistent attempt is necessary from the seeker to conquer this scrupulous restraint. The earnest divine pilgrim has to make voluntary efforts to get blessings from celestial supremacy. The symbol of Garden in this particular novel of Raja Rao may indicate perpetuity. After prevailing over the temporary barricade, individual subsistence becomes a figurative expedition from the humanity to the infinity. The abode metaphorically embodies a unique spirit's transitory retreat in the companionship of the divine Master. The sea connotes perpetuity, always telling the character of religious conception or the celestial standard again, as a perspective on the ocean is a perspective on Brahman. Nonetheless, it also transmits the inestimable deepness of understanding, which matches up to philosophical and profound intelligence.

In The Cat and Shakespeare, the symbols utilised by Rao are atypical. The two indistinct symbols in the ‘serpent’ and the ‘rope’ and their profound, thoughtful significance in the preceding novel have been provided meta-corporeal permanence here in the shape of the ‘cat’ and ‘Shakespeare’. Their major task is to disband oppositions. Rao's metaphorical world advances in a second way. Some elements are subject to inestimable construal, and others have the competence to amalgamate or liquefy all peripheral disagreements.

Raja Rao's novels founded entirely on Vedanta philosophy, disclose two kinds of spiritual pilgrims - the dilettante and the initiated. In the previous books Konthapura and The Serpent and the Rope, Rao allowed the commenced characters to emerge. It is an essential truth that a seeker cannot accomplish consciousness unless he is ushered into the realm of the soul by a realised sage. The spiritual guide may accept the accountability of performing as a lighthouse to the lost travellers on the corridor of reality. It is assumed that the persona of the guide emanates power and an impenetrable type of blessing. The seeker feels animated, lofty and internally stimulated. Propinquity, dialogue and respect to such a sage grant poignant and divine contentment to the devotee.

It is observed that the philosophical substance of the novel surrounds the character of Govindan Nair who is an internally awakened soul. The protagonist of the story initiates his voyage with exploration for such a guide and counsellor. Overwhelmed by the contradictions of human subsistence, the extended space between delusion and actuality and the right intention of a seeker, Ramakrishna Pai, puts forward his ordinary perception at the religious teacher's feet. The troubles want answers, and the holy leader who is otherwise a mystery and inscrutable have to lower down and bend his standing to house the conception of the devotee. Profound facts are clarified in the course of correlatives, and the subtle is thus effortlessly seised in mentality.

The spiritual seeker has to pass through various stages before attaining the ultimate stage of realisation. This journey starts with the inclination for the search of life essence and afterwards the seeker is progressing on the divine path. There is a new revelation in this field of pilgrim's progress that there is no end to this journey. The Vedanta philosophy propounds that Brahman is endless in Himself. Similarly, the spiritual pilgrim is always in development even if he has realised his true self. The physical vessel is limited in capacities, characteristics, and the journey of the soul is very long. The soul has to change the robes of the body after some years or decades known as human life. However, this journey is perpetual. The sages or the enlightened spirits proclaim that the human experience is the golden chance to meet the Ultimate and bring a halt to the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. The time span of every life is limited, and the journey is unlimited. The pilgrim's progress occurs internally in his spirit until the day when the soul of the pilgrim is amalgamated into the Supreme Soul, and it becomes inextricable. That state of amalgamation with Brahman is the goal of the pilgrim of a guru and is attained only with His benediction. All the efforts of the seeker are merely minute endeavours to invoke divine grace that will ultimately merge the drop of water into the unfathomable ocean of divinity, which is an intuitive discourse.

Raja Rao's novel The Cat and Shakespeare accentuates the significance and inevitability of willing submission to the will of the Almighty. This principle is diligently incorporated into the structure of the narrative. The novel is almost entrenched in the devotion path of Vedanta philosophy as propounded by Ramanuja. This novel has revealed the importance of a guru, the intermediary to show the seeker the course of reality. Ramakrishna Pai has acknowledged the transience and nothingness of Maya and searches for assistance from an open-minded person like Govindan Nair. The relationship and profound acquaintance between the two permits the seeker to achieve his desired objective. The outstanding cryptograms of the novel are deeply evocative. Rao's decision to put down three
hundred clean and plain pages at the conclusion of this novel is liberated to new perspectives and different elucidations. The blank pages may submit the particular verse of sensed occurrences that Raja Rao deems, are away from articulation and required large domain for its clarification. "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."

Although the storyline of Rao's *The Cat and Shakespeare* seems mysterious and ambiguous, nonetheless an extensive evaluation divulges the secreted philosophy of Vedanta and condensed composition. Rao leaves the usual style by formulating his clandestine pictograms. As a result, different implications increase in the novel, and the gist transpires to be vague and intangible. Raja Rao has endowed the expressions similar to the cat, Shakespeare, house and ration shop with the stratum of secretive connections. Rao has been able to commune his unusual connotations and philosophical substance through correlations, propositions and perceptibly different notions. It is this, which makes Rao ambiguous. *The Cat and Shakespeare* is entitled as a metaphysical comedy since it has sober utterances of devotional practice merged with sketches of mirth. This novel emerges as a thoughtful parable with relevant and extraneous elements along with facts and flights of the imagination interspersed in the structure.

The protagonists of Raja Rao's novels are manifestations of his spiritual pilgrimage and move in line with the requirements of the writer. The character's efforts, predicaments, preferences and understanding indicate the author's struggle to accomplish spiritual aspirations and clarify the doubts of spiritual implications. The religious practice of a human being is an exceptionally delicate implementation. Rao's themes are very abstract, and its description in fiction is similarly complicated. The protagonists bear the weight of Rao's philosophical leanings. They provide essential stopovers managing the frill of the novelist's inventive and religious revelation. Rao's range of thoughts is enormous, and the themes are subtle.

**III. Conclusion**

The pilgrim has definite progress towards the realisation of self in the novel. On the path of progression self-sacrifice, purity and transparency are essential fundamentals. Therefore, the hero in *The Cat and Shakespeare* can attain his objective directly with the assistance of a holy, liberated guru. The Almighty sanctifies the seeker, and he achieves illumination when the spiritual guide educates him and escorts him along the divine path. Govindan Nair fits into this class of enigmatic citizens who are not a personification of divinity but usually rank higher than the ordinary human being is. They are persons with sensory perception and foresight not frequent amid ordinary mortals. We have observed that Rao's protagonists are severe and sacred scholars. They impress upon the understanding, contemplation and expose their spirits in every novel. The actors make the readers ready for self-assessment. They undoubtedly reveal spiritual development and ethical maturity. The cerebral consciousness includes their existence predominantly in the spiritual realm. It has been keenly examined that the array of Raja Rao's titles is considerable. They signify a subjective and philosophical succession. His first novel Kanthapura may be considered as the springboard in the expedition of the protagonist's divine being. *The Serpent and the Rope* presents stability amid delusion and truth. The convolution of images of this novel is effected in *The Cat and Shakespeare*. The contention and exciting anguish obtain its appropriate compensation in the illumination and discernment accomplished at the end of the book. 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 essential matters, comprehending *Maya*, discarding duality, the consciousness of the self and amalgamation with *Brahm* (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 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.

**References**