

## **THE GRADUAL DISINTEGRATION OF RAMASWAMY AND MADELEINE'S UNION LOVE MARRIAGE IN RAJA RAO'S NOVEL - THE SERPENT AND THE ROPE**

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The Serpent And The Rope is Raja Rao's most appreciated novel. This is Sahitya Academy Award-winning novel. Raja Rao has achieved high praise by this novel. The novel portrays the meeting of the east and the west on the most intimate plane through the story of Ramaswamy, an Indian Brahmin and Madeleine a French girl. As Denis De Rougemont remarks on the back cover of the 'Serpent And The Rope.'

"I know nothing in literature that confronts east and west more tenderly, more rigorously."

The union of Ramaswamy and Madeleine, and the gradual disintegration of their marriage is the central theme of the novel. As makrand Paranjape remarks;

"The main narrative, the gradual disintegration of Rama's marriage with his French wife Madeleine is thus only a single holding a voluminous and diverse book together."

Ramaswamy is a seeker of truth. He goes France to do research. As a research scholar, he takes the subject, Albigensian heresy for his thesis. And there, he marries with Madeline a French girl. He thinks that the Cather's were driven to heresy by the influence of Buddhism, which had left India.

Raja Rao's attempt is to end the gulf between the East and the West by a unique marriage of Ramaswamy and Madeleine. The novel suggests the failure of the marriage of Ramaswamy and Madeleine. The confrontation between East and West is confined to the Vedanta India of Rama and the compassionate and calculating France of Madeleine. Both of them are highly sensitive representatives of their countries cultural and the metaphysical approaches to life. This representative burden falls heavily upon their personal relationship. The marriage of Ramaswamy and Madeleine is a temporary meeting point of two contrary world views. Ramaswamy's behavior with Madeleine is typically Indian. As Ramaswamy says:

I knew she would unhappy first and then angry, knowing that Indians are so undependable." p.<sup>58</sup> (Raja Rao 'The Serpent And The Rope')

Madeleine complains to Ramaswamy that he does not understand her. As she oftenly says to him; ( Raja Rao 'The Serpent And The Rope')

"You will never understand us the French. There is piety, of course, and compassion." p.<sup>86</sup>

Raja Rao shows us a dramatic contrast between two different human beings of the different nations. Rama is unable to adjust himself with his French wife with all his attraction he is unable to attract her sensibility towards him. This novel is a unique tale of love. This unique love binds together true love of altogether different upbringing and cultural background.

Ramaswamy meets to Madeline in the Caen University of France. She is a lecturer of history. She is attracted towards Ramaswamy, a south Indian brahmin, and soon they get marriage. They passionately love to each other. Madeline is an extra-ordinary beautiful lady. At that time she was 26<sup>th</sup> years old and Ramaswamy was 21 years old boy. Firstly there was love between them which later changed in marriage. The Brahmanism of Rama attracted to Madeline. So that is why she did not deny touching herself to him before their marriage. As Ramaswamy says: (Raja Rao 'The Serpent And The Rope')

“It was the Brahmin in me she said, the sense that touch and untouched are so important which she sensed, and she would let me touch her.”<sup>13</sup>

Madeleine's love is even growing towards Ramaswamy in the beginning she emotionally and spiritually loves to Rama with the inner core of her heart. She cannot achieve the perfection of self unless her love. Her love towards Rama was personal and emotional, later developed into an intellectual and finally attained to spiritual perfection. She becomes a staunch Buddhist for the sake of her deep love for her husband.

Ramaswamy believes in Advaita Vedanta and Madeleine believes in the western materialistic dualism. This confrontation between Rama and Madeleine becomes inevitable. The death of their son is also an important factor to separate their marriage. After her child's death, Madeleine becomes a staunch Buddhist. Now she does not think that husband and wife are one like prakriti and purusa. As Ramaswamy describes about these views of Madeline; (Raja Rao 'The Serpent And The Rope')

“Madeleine does not love me she wants me to big and true that she may pour love on me, as some devotee would want her shiva or Krishna to be big and grand that she might make a grand Abhiseka with milk and honey and holy Ganges water.”<sup>80-1</sup>

The love between Ramaswamy and Madeleine is the spiritual, transcends the bounds of the body and the mind. Madeleine, a staunch Buddhist, does not believe in worldly existence. She does not remain bound to any of the worldly ties, even marriage. She develops into a staunch Buddhist and will have nothing to do with flesh. The physical separation of Madeleine bites him, he is breaved like lord Rama when Sita is exiled. As in the words of Ramaswamy: (Raja Rao 'The Serpent And The Rope')

“Madeleine let me touch you here by the waist from which rises birth, and Madeleine let me touch you on this the right breast that I like there as on my deathbed, Madeleine, dear Madeleine.”<sup>160-1</sup>

Her sainthood helps her to become as an ascetic. She is a religious lady; she does not like the physical touches. She observes her own religion Catholicism. Rama says that the Cathars hated mating and making of children. He says that Buddhism died in India because it became ascetic. They hated women so their existence had ended. As the cathars did fasten into death. According to Ramaswamy woman is the meaning of man's life. He sees the essence of life in woman. The death of their second child is another drift towards Buddhist penances. Thus we see that Madeleine spiritually loved very much to Ramaswamy but she could not give her physical touch to him. Now she is completely alinated from him. They meditate for a moment over the cause that made the disintegration inevitable before going in a formal divorce; (Raja Rao 'The Serpent And The Rope')

“What is Separated us Rama?”

“India”

“India? But I am a Buddhist.”?

“That is why Buddhist left India, India is impitoyable.”<sup>p.331</sup>

Madeleine never accepted this principle ‘the god of woman must be the god of her man’. So the union was not possible for Rama with Madeleine. Though she wanted to possess Rama wholly, yet she never merged her identity with that of his. She was a catholic, but she became a true Buddhist. Ramaswamy believed in the principle of non duality and Madeleine believed in duality. In the end of the novel, Ramaswamy surrenders himself to his guru.

I can say that the central theme of the novel is love and divorce between Ramaswamy, a south Indian Brahmin, and Madeleine.

This is in the form of an autobiography. It may be called the story of Raja Rao and Camille Mouly. Their marriage ended into divorce in 1949, and thus one can easily suggest it to be the thematic basis of the marriage and divorce between Rama and Madeleine in ‘The Serpent And The Rope’.

Raja Rao beautifully shows us the unity of Ramaswamy and Madeleine’s souls, and he portrays the gradual disintegration of Ramaswamy’s marriage with Madeleine. The novel ‘Serpent And The Rope’ is unique picturization of Ramaswamy and Madeleine’s union of love and the gradual disintegration in their marriage.

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