CHAPTER THREE

POSTCOLONIAL CRITICISM AND ITS INCORPORATION INTO MYTH CRITICISM

The beginning of the twentieth century saw the peak of the colonial empire. The characteristic feature of this empire was its vast overseas possessions under an exclusively European regime. This regime also included a vast range of social formations and a variety of ruling apparatuses. The world saw the ultimate power of colonization. However, the entire colonial relationship also brought in a variety of factors that paved the way for resistance and nationalistic passion among the colonized. The colonized societies set up a fierce confrontation and the colonizer had to struggle to retain power. The colonial empires were eventually overthrown by these innumerable struggles and the aftermath of colonial occupation saw the rise of a consciousness among the colonized for a 'new world order'. This 'new world order' is characterized in literature by the term 'postcolonial'. While a few critics invoke the hyphenated term 'post-colonial' as a decisive temporal marker of the decolonizing process, some other critics use the unbroken term 'postcolonial' as being more sensitive to the long history of colonial consciousness. In fact, the hyphenated term 'post-colonial' will restrict the studies to either 'after colonialism began' or 'after achieving independence', whereas the unhyphenated term 'postcolonial' gives flexibility to the reading practices. No strict historical periodisation need be followed if the term 'postcolonial' is used. Therefore, it can include a wide range of representations and reading practices, whether past or present, colonized literally or colonized in the mind. To suit the purposes of this thesis,
the hyphen is dropped. This chapter elaborates the several meanings of the term ‘postcolonial’ and studies the related concepts—otherness, orientalism, subaltern, resistance, hybridity, ambivalence, nationhood and so on. It also attempts to understand the relation between postcolonialism and other discursive practices, especially myth criticism and how postcolonial criticism can incorporate and can be incorporated into myth criticism.

The term ‘postcolonial’ is loaded with meaning. It reflects an emergence from the colonial. It brings into memory all the aspects of colonization and raises many questions. It also suggests a look into the past because without the past, the present holds no meaning. As the formal political power relations within the cultures were becoming independent of the colonizer, the intention to promote and celebrate the ‘new literatures’ had taken precedence over many other cultural concerns. This new wave of literature asserted the need to analyze and resist the prevailing colonial attitudes, because until the withdrawal of the colonial rule, the colonized seemed to accept that they were always objects of someone else’s story. However, after the colonizers were sent back to their own countries, the colonized felt the need to reject this assumption and regain their own identity. The term ‘postcolonial’ is variously applied to different kinds of historical moments, cultural, geographical and political identities and reading practices attached to the process of imperialism. Though a semanticist might suggest that the term ‘postcolonial’ has an insignificant association with the national culture after the departure of the imperial power, it does relate to the memories attached to constructing a national literary history and culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. Presently, the term describes a diverse set of subject
positions, professional fields and critical enterprises. In short, postcolonial theory focuses on the distortion of reality and the experience of the colonized due to the process of colonization. It also throws light upon the literature by the colonized that attempts to articulate their identity and reclaim their past.

However, the question of ‘postcolonial’ looms large in front of a third world academician. A fitting answer has been suggested by Stephen Slemon in “Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World”. According to Slemon, this question is found in the overlapping of three competing research fields. One, as an outgrowth of ‘Commonwealth literary studies’ which came up after ‘English’ had been widely accepted as a global language and literatures in English were being produced even by the colonies; two, in the form of subjectivity within the third and fourth world cultures, within black and ethnic and First World terrain; and three, as an analysis of the discourse of colonialism and neo-colonialism and identifying the kind of anti-colonialist writing in literature (quoted in Mongia 73-74). Thus, postcolonialism in literature is an attempt to scrutinize the past and present power relations in the world order.

Postcolonial theory is built on several concepts. One among them is the concept of ‘otherness’. The East is represented in terms of the ‘Orient’ as belonging to an inferior rank as against the West, which is regarded as universal. This concept of the Orient and the prejudices that go along with it were first discussed in detail by Edward Said in Orientalism (1978). The term “Orientalism” is derived from “Orientalist”, descriptively someone who studies the Orient. However, Said demonstrates that the West’s perception of the world, especially the Orient, was based on a set of dichotomies in terms of the East as chaotic, irrational and evil, and the West as ordered, rational and good. The West is the
Self and the East is the Other. He illustrates the manner in which the representation of Europe’s ‘Other’ has been institutionalized as a feature of cultural dominance. In fact, the very term ‘Oriental’ identifies the intellectual mastery of the Europeans over the ‘Others’. Said also emphasizes that ‘Orientalism’ became a set of strategies for the Europeans to dominate the East. However, as a group of related disciplines ‘Orientalism’ was about Europe itself and centred on arguments that circulated around the issue of national distinctiveness, and racial and linguistic origins. This is evident in the elaborate and detailed examinations of Oriental languages, histories and cultures done by European scholars from the early modern period, as pointed out by Said in *Orientalism*. For instance, Said refers to the French Orientalist and historian Ernest Renan (1823-1892) who remarked confidently that every person would see clearly the actual inferiority of Mohammedan countries. According to Said, such statements resulted in a continual and uncritical reproduction of various beliefs and assumptions. Said also gives the instance of Lord Cromer, England’s representative in Egypt, who relied a great deal on writers like Renan, who could say that while European’s ‘trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism’, the mind of the ‘Oriental’, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry (Said 1978, 38).

The West European nations like Britain and France consider ‘Orient’ their ‘Colony’—“it is the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest countries, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other” (Said 1978,1). Said illustrates Orientalism as a ‘complex web’ of the representation of the Orient. Orientalism shows its pervasive power over three areas—i) as an academic discipline, ii) as a style of thought, and iii) as a
corporate institution for dealing with the Orient. As an academic discipline, the Orient is shown as a topic of learning, discovery and practice and the ‘Orientalist’ is a person who teaches, writes about or researches the Orient. As a style of thought, it is based on the ‘versus formula’ as Said characterizes it: Colonizer versus Colonized; Occidental versus Oriental; Civilized versus Primitive; Scientific versus Superstitious; and Developed versus Developing. It includes the thoughts and writings of anyone who divided the world in the above-mentioned manner. As a corporate institution, Orientalism is based on the capacity demonstrated by the Occident as a structure to dominate and authorize the Orient, something synonymous to colonialism (Said 1978, 2-3). Thus, Said clearly emphasizes the theoretical power that the West claimed in the first and second definitions, and the practical power in the third definition. The three areas are interrelated, in the sense that all the three are European strategies to dominate over the East.

Another postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha asserts that colonial discourse itself depends on the ideological construction of ‘otherness’. This ‘otherness’ found in the imperial discourse demands a certain pressure on the part of the Europeans to both “delineate them as radically different from the Self, yet at the same time it must maintain sufficient identity with the Other to valorize control over it” (Ashcroft et al 1989, 103). The existence of ‘Others’ is crucial in defining the ‘Self’ and in locating the place of the ‘Self’ in the world. The ‘Other’ can be compared to the imperial discourse in two ways: “[…] firstly, it provides the terms in which the colonized subject gains a sense of his or her identity as somehow ‘Other’, dependent; secondly, it becomes […] the ideological framework in which the colonized subject may come to understand the world” (Ashcroft
et al 1998, 170-171). Thus, by considering the subject peoples as degenerate types due to their racial origins, by marking out a ‘subject nation’ and by employing a system of representation of the colonized as ‘other’, the colonial discourse proves itself to be an apparatus of power.

This concept of ‘otherness’ is linked to the idea of ‘subaltern’. The term ‘subaltern’ which means ‘of inferior rank’ was first adopted by the Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci to refer to those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes. Subaltern classes may include peasants, workers and other groups who are denied access to hegemonic power. Gramsci claimed that the history of the subaltern classes was just as complex as the history of the dominant classes. For him, the history of subaltern social groups is ‘fragmented and episodic’, since they are always subject to the activity of ruling groups even when they rebel. The term has been adapted to postcolonial studies to discuss the subordinate position of the colonized. Gayatri C. Spivak, a colonial discourse theorist, revitalized this notion by saying that the subaltern cannot speak. According to her, the subaltern is a group defined by difference from the elite. She believes that for the subaltern group, the identity itself lies in its difference and therefore there is no subaltern subject that can know and speak for it. She goes on to elaborate the problems of the category of the subaltern by looking at the situation of gendered subjects and of Indian women in particular who are victims of double colonization; one, at the hands of the imperial power and the other, at the hands of the dominant male. Spivak says, “If in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (quoted in Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 219). She concludes that there is no way in which the oppressed and marginalized groups
can voice their resistance. Thus, this concept of 'Subaltern' was a major breakthrough in postcolonial theory.

Postcolonial theory is also built around the concept of resistance; and it carries with it ideas about human freedom, liberty, identity and individuality. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said deals extensively with the historical experience of resistance against empire. He argues that a dialectical relationship very quickly characterized the engagement of colonial subjects with the empire. This resistance could be found in the non-European world and in most of the cases, the resistance finally won. According to Said, resistance can be seen as a two-fold process, which can be likened to the two phases of decolonization: the recovery of the geographical territory and the changing of the cultural territory. It becomes a process “in the rediscovery and repatriation of what had been suppressed in the natives’ past by the processes of imperialism” (Said 1993, 253). This resistance helped the colonized to 'write back' to the empire, a process that reconstructs the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.

Literary resistance can be seen as a part of literary writing which emerges as an organized struggle for national liberation. Therefore, the concept of resistance highlights the suppression of the colonized. The colonization process, in fact, forced the colonized to produce a literature that would help them reconstitute their identity, which may even be a hybrid identity—a combination of their local conceptions and western ideas. This results in an identity crisis, which has been a dominant theme in most of the postcolonial literatures. This idea of resistance itself becomes a therapy to elaborate the forgotten memories of the subjugation process and move into a process of self-understanding. This concept of resistance is linked to the concept of representation, which is seen in the form
of postcolonial literatures. The colonized feel the necessity to produce a national and cultural literature of their own because they have been accused of not having a literature of their own by the West which in turn suggests that they have no cultural identity of their own. This condition reminds one of Lord Macaulay’s “Minute on Indian Education” (1835) which played a decisive role in the transformation of the Indian cultural experience during the postcolonial era. According to him, the Indian languages “contain neither literary nor scientific information”, while English “abounds with works of imagination not inferior to the noblest which Greece has bequeathed on us; with models of every species of eloquence; with historical compositions [...] respecting every experimental science which tends to preserve the health, to increase the comfort or expand the intellect of man” (Macaulay 112). Thus, Macaulay, with his assertions, subordinates the Orient intellectually to the Occident. The very attempt to prove Macaulay wrong resulted in a great deal of revival of earlier literary genres/traditions as well as the creation of new ones.

It is instructive to trace the history of the terms used to label the literatures (including those in English) produced by colonial and postcolonial societies. The valorization of English literatures at the cost of indigenous literatures can be taken as an instance of canon formation during the era of colonization. The literature produced in English in India, for example, was first called Indo-Anglian Literature and then Indian Writing in English. Both these terms seemed to place the literature in question as a by-product of British English Literature whose canonical status was taken for granted and against whose standards the new Indian product was to be measured. In the next stage Indian Literature in English was regarded as part of a larger corpus called
"Commonwealth Literature", which again emphasized the relationship with Britain and British Literature even though there was a recognition of the commonalities among the various English literatures of that quasi-political, voluntary body called the Commonwealth (consisting of countries which had been, or were still, part of the British Empire). The term used still later was "Third World Literature", of which again Indian Literature in English and other languages was considered a part; it emphasized the commonalities among the literatures of underdeveloped countries in Asia and Africa and perhaps Latin America, whether these had been colonized or not. The most recent, and current, term "Postcolonial literatures" clearly refers to the literature (in any language) produced in and by colonized societies, whether colonized by Britain or any other European nation. The assumption here is that there are clearly distinguishable shared predicaments, dilemmas, themes, concerns and tendencies among these.

One main area of concern for the postcolonialists is language. Though the local literatures were written in their own languages, English also developed as a major language, studied and understood by the colonized, helping it to claim its throne of the 'universal'. Bill Ashcroft et al., in *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) consider three main types of linguistic groups in postcolonial societies: monoglossic, diglossic and polyglossic. Monoglossic groups have accepted English as their medium of communication while diglossic groups still hold on to their language apart from English and polyglossic groups have a multitude of linguistic communications. (Ashcroft et al 1989, 39). Ordinary words take on new meanings and thus a special language is created where the concepts are reorganized with different emphases and contents. Several terms provide a particular focus for sorting out the complex nature of colonial relations and
language itself is used as a tool for effective resistance by the postcolonial societies against their oppressors. Sometimes, the speaking habits of the various communities may enable a reconstruction of English. Thus, the language itself becomes diverse. According to the Kenyan writer and academic Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, the English language has itself ‘gone through a post-colonial phase’ in Africa. (quoted in Talib 2). He also believes that the act of using English is class-based because the audience is restricted to the educated African elite and does not include the peasants or the workers in Africa. However, in India, we find mixed reactions to the development of the English language. B. Rajan believes that English is “a language imposed upon India rather than nourished by its soil” (quoted in Talib 95). Nevertheless, according to Raja Rao, “English is not really an alien language to us [...] it is the language of our intellectual make up [...]” (Foreword to Kanthapura, v). R.K. Narayan believed that English is undergoing a process of Indianisation in India and slowly it is becoming the language of our emotional make up too. Thus, language plays a very important role in discussions on the aesthetic realization of postcolonial literatures. It helps or at any rate figures in a significant way in the attempt to realize a national identity.

“Hybridity” was another major area of study in postcolonial theory. It refers to the integration of cultural signs and practices from the colonizing and the colonized cultures. Bill Ashcroft et al define hybridity as “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization” (Ashcroft et al 1998, 118). It occurs when the colonized are forced to assimilate the new social patterns imposed or practised by the colonizers. Homi K. Bhabha in The Location of Culture (1994) gives an analysis of the colonizer-colonized relations and stresses their interdependence and the mutual
construction of their own subjectivities. Thus, hybridity has been used to mean the cross-cultural exchange between the colonizer and the colonized whose national identity becomes a hybrid owing to the cultural suppression and patterns of migration. However, later, it became a part of the colonialist discourse of racism. Racism was taken up in another concept that emphasized the heterogeneity of postcolonial cultural identity and its unstable nature. “Ethnicity” is a concept primarily based on race and colour and it tends to homogenize the experience of one particular community against the colonizer. The word ‘Ethnic’ comes from the Greek ‘ethnos’ which means ‘nation’. An ethnic group is a group that is socially distinguished or set apart, by others or by itself, based on cultural or national characteristics. Though the earliest English use of the word referred to culturally different ‘heathen’ nations, the contemporary use of the term is to identify the national groups in the colonized nations. However, recently, ethnic groups are not necessarily marginalized cultural groups; they have shown the capability of exerting a powerful political function.

“Ambivalence” is another term adapted into Colonial Discourse theory by Homi Bhabha. In psychoanalysis, ambivalence is used to describe a variation between desiring one thing and also its opposite. However, in colonial discourse theory, “it describes the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized” (Ashcroft et al 1998, 18). The relationship is ambivalent because the colonized is not completely opposed to the colonizer. The term itself suggests that complicity and resistance are like two sides of the same coin with regard to a postcolonial/colonial society. This concept is not very encouraging for the colonizer. Homi Bhabha gives the example of Charles Grant, who wanted to educate the Indians
with respect to the Christian religion, but then, he was also worried that such an act might help them think of achieving their own liberty. Therefore, he decided to mix Christianity with the local caste practice so that a ‘partial reform’ is achieved. Thus, Bhabha concludes that this shows the conflict/ambivalence within imperialism itself. According to Bill Ashcroft et al:

Ambivalence disrupts the clear-cut authority of colonial domination because it disturbs the simple relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Ambivalence is therefore, an unwelcome aspect of colonial discourse for the colonizer. The problem for colonial discourse is that it wants to produce compliant subjects who reproduce its assumptions, habits and values—that is, mimic the colonizer. Instead, it produces ambivalent subjects whose mimicry is never far from mockery. Ambivalence thus describes this fluctuating relationship between mimicry and mockery, an ambivalence that is fundamentally unsettling to colonial dominance. (Ashcroft et al 1998, 18)

A strong sense of nationhood is also suggested in postcolonial writings. Ernest Renan, in the 1882 lecture delivered at the Sorbonne “What is a nation?” clearly points out that a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle; something that cannot be determined by mere geography, language, ethnography or historical results. According to him, ‘nations’ are made by human will. Frantz Fanon, the psychiatrist from Martinique, author of The Wretched of the Earth (first published in French in 1961) develops an idea of ‘national consciousness’ which is a result of the colonization process. Fanon marks the processes undergone by the subject races to produce their own national literature in terms of
Assimilation; where the natives try to imbibe the attitudes of the Western culture,

Disturbance/Confusion; where the natives are disturbed when they try to think of their own experiences at the hands of the colonial power,

Revolutionary; where we notice a fighting tendency to discard the foreign literature and write about their own nation and culture. (Fanon 179-182)

Though Fanon believes that colonization was necessary for the growth of consciousness among the colonized, he is also aware of a condition wherein the natives attempt to adopt the Western culture, which in turn poses a threat to the national culture. In fact, a few critics strongly believe that the term ‘post-nationalism’ offers a more satisfactory reading of the colonial experience. According to Leela Gandhi, the term fulfils two objectives: “first, it seeks to show how the colonial encounter contributed to the mutual transformation of colonizer and colonized” (Gandhi 125), that is, the colonial encounter itself as a transaction, a complex negotiation and exchange. “Secondly, this gentler perusal of the colonial past produces a utopian manifesto for a post-colonial ethic, devoted to the task of imagining an inter-civilizational alliance against institutionalized suffering and oppression” (Gandhi 125). Frantz Fanon calls this combining “our muscles and our brains in a new direction [...] try(ing) to create the whole man [...]” (Fanon 252).

The American Marxist critic Fredric Jameson, in “Third World Literature in an Era of Multinational Capitalism” talked about ‘National Allegory’:

What all third-world cultural productions have in common, and what distinguishes them radically from analogous cultural forms in the first world (is that) all third world texts are necessarily [...] allegorical, and in a
very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call national allegories, even when or I should say particularly when, their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel. (quoted in Ashcroft et al 1998:156)

Several movements also emerged in the third world countries in the 1960s, which believed that nationalism could be a progressive force for revolutionary changes within their societies. Thus, cross-cultural patterns and interactions were found at the heart of the postcolonial theory whose main perspective was to reclaim one's own past.

Edward Said introduced the term 'discourse' in postcolonialism, an echo of the post-structuralist cultural historian Michel Foucault's 'discourse' that is, a manifestation of power and knowledge. Colonial Discourse describes that system within which the 'colonial' practices come into being. In Orientalism, Said explains the ways in which colonial discourse operated as an instrument of power. Colonial discourse is the complex of signs and practices that organize social existence and social reproduction within colonial relationships. Although it is generated within the society and cultures of the colonizers, it also becomes that discourse within which the colonized may come to see themselves. However, Homi Bhabha stressed the vulnerability of colonial discourse by positing several contradictions within colonial relationships in terms of hybridity, ambivalence and mimicry.

Postcolonial literatures can be defined as literature written by the colonized, which include those written in various native languages too, apart from the colonizer's language. One of the major themes found consistently in postcolonial literatures is 'identity crisis' at individual, social, political and cultural levels. The elite, by adopting
and adapting the white man’s tongue, knew how to speak up for themselves. However, the common folk had to confront their own self-contradiction and compromise with their own ideals, which they had been preserving for so many generations. This condition is also a reflection of the cultural identity crisis that the subject races have to tackle. Stuart Hall in his essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” talks about the two different ways of thinking about ‘cultural identity’:

The first position defines ‘cultural identity’ in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective ‘one true self’, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed ‘selves’, which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. (Hall 110-111)

From the Indian point of view, this cultural identity could be seen in the ‘Indian-ness’—the united country against their colonizers.

The second position recognizes that [...] there are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute ‘what we really are’; or rather—since history has intervened—‘what we have become’. (Hall 112)

This idea of cultural identity is quite different from the earlier one because it talks about both ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ that is; a positioning is done in the future too. For instance, as the circumstances vary, the culture also varies unconsciously. These cultural identities are the only points of identification within the discourses of history and culture.

Postcolonial literatures also focus on the theme of ‘loss’. They are intensely nostalgic in their attempt to project something that is not found in reality. David Punter views this ‘loss’ in terms of three interlinked levels. They are i) “the general psychoanalytic theory of loss [...] the inevitability of loss as a primary field on which
personality, individual or social, constructs itself, loss primarily of the mother, but also loss as a site for the scenario of repetition which will structure the psychic life” ii) “the literary in general is based on loss, that it is inherently nostalgic in its desirous attempt to bring into being something which is not there, although clearly it has in some sense once been there before, in the imagination of the writer, in the cultural tradition or repertoire, along the lost nervous system of the trace” iii) “the crowding memory of all that has been lost in the colonizing process, not only in the overt act of violent domination—the bullet—but also in the external and internal repetition of that act through the coercion of language” (Punter 26-27). Therefore, according to David Punter, all presentations are re-presentations and all writings are re-writings. The themes of ‘deterritorializations’ and ‘reterritorializations’ are always found along with an existentialist outlook of life. Such literatures are filled with rage, hatred, chaos and ruin. In addition, negotiation with anything seems to be impossible here.

Postcolonial literatures had to undergo several stages of development, which correspond to the stages both of national and regional consciousness and assert its variance from the imperial centre. Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory* (1995) discusses the stages of development in terms of three phases, *Adopt*, *Adapt* and *Adept* (Barry 195). When the colonial power was at its zenith, the literate elite produced their texts imitating the colonizer’s perspectives. These texts can never be regarded as a reflection of an indigenous culture because their objectivity hides the imperial discourse within which they were created. This is the ‘adopt’ phase, the early Toru Dutt is a good example of this phase. The next phase, that is, the ‘adapt’ phase marks the partial movement of the texts away from the colonizer’s perspective. The writers in this phase take the form alone from
the colonizer, but the subject matter is indigenous. Raja Rao is a good example of this stage. In fact Raja Rao adapts the form too. Next is the ‘adept’ phase, wherein the creative writer has completely moved away from the colonizer. The writer does not use either the form or the subject matter of the colonizer. He/she has evolved his/her own sophisticated form to convey a subject matter close to his/her heart. Salman Rushdie and Shashi Tharoor are good examples of this phase.

Postcolonial theory owes its origin and methodology to several other theories. One strong relationship can be established in the Marxist theory. Arif Dirlik in “The Post-colonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism” suggests that the Third World Theory holds both these disciplines together in a remarkable manner as they both point towards a globalism that operates with master-narratives highlighting Europe as its centre. He adds that some postcolonial critics claim to be Marxists themselves and both of them are victims of the First World Order (Dirlik 294-296). The issues of colony and empire are addressed in both these theories.

According to Bill Ashcroft, Postcolonial theory, post-modernism and post-structuralism “cover a wide range of overlapping literary and cultural practices” (Ashcroft et al 1998, 163). Similar to postcolonialism, post-modernism centres itself around a cultural authority “specifically of the authority vested in Western European culture and its institutions” (Ashcroft et al 1998, 164). It also talks about the ‘decentred’, ‘allegorical’, and ‘schizophrenic’ levels of individual casualties. Post-structuralism’s critique of western civilization is one point of adherence between postcolonialism and post-structuralism. This critique tends to characterize western rationality as racist and imperialist, which is also the major theme found in postcolonial texts. Postcolonial
literary theory also “seeks its anti-colonial counter-narrative in the written word” (Gandhi 159). Thus, it has a strong link with deconstruction too. This process of ‘deconstruction’ helps in investing the texts with meanings that cannot be located in a normal reading. Thus, the past is revisited, but in an ironical sense, with the help of these theories.

Postcolonialism and feminism also move on convergent lines. Both concern themselves with the study and defence of the marginalized ‘others’. In fact, the Third World women as victims of patriarchy and imperial conditions, project the ‘double colonization’ faced by them. They are also seen as ‘objects’—Spivak calls the postcolonial female ‘the gendered subaltern’, who never speaks for herself. Both these theories seek to reinstate the marginalized in the face of the dominant. They seek to expose the assumptions upon which several constructions are founded, moving first to make their hidden bases visible and then to destabilize them. For instance, the feminist theories reject the idea of male patriarchy by questioning its forms and modes and instead suggest a female tradition.

A better reading of a large number of postcolonial texts is rendered when myth criticism conjoins with postcolonial theory. Jacques Stephen Alexis, the Haitian writer who proposed “marvelous realism”, argued that mythic tradition “far from being alienated from the people, or mere mystifications, were the distinctive feature of their local and national cultures, and were the collective forms by which they gave expression to their identity and articulated their difference from the dominant colonial and racial oppressors. They were, in other words, the modes of expression of that culture’s reality” (quoted in Ashcroft et al 1998, 132-133). In fact, Alexis believes that the treasures of tales and legends would help the nation in accomplishing the tasks before it. Since myth,
in essence, is a necessary explanation of the human condition, it helps to structure a way of life and scheme of values in an organized society. Myth criticism merges with postcolonialism on these terms: the quest for identity, of the individual as well as the nation.

An echo of the three phases, the ‘adopt’, ‘adapt’ and ‘adept’ phases could be traced even among the myth critics; not as stages of development, but as different ways in which myths are being interpreted and re-interpreted. According to the first phase, for instance, the adoption of the classical myth, that is, a complete re-narration of a classical myth with the author naming his chosen mythological characters and settings according to the original ones. We can cite the instance of Frozen Fire (Pani-t-Thee), a play in the Tamil production enacted by Usha Rani, a traditional actor by profession, and directed by the playwright Mangai, the English translation rendered by the playwright herself and V.Geetha (taken from the book Staging Resistance: Plays by Women in Translation edited by Tuntun Mukherjee, 2005). The play is a re-visioning of the part of the Mahabharata that deals with the story of Amba. The original myth from the Mahabharata goes like this: Amba, Ambika and Ambalika are the princesses of Kashi. Their father arranges a swayamwara for them but does not send an invitation to Hastinapura. Bhishma is very angry at this and decides to teach the king a lesson. He goes to the swayamwara, much to the surprise of the king of Kashi and the young princes who had been invited to the ceremony (because Bhishma was sworn to celibacy). In his anger, Bhishma challenged the assembly, defeated them all and took the three princesses in his chariot to Hastinapura. Salva, the king of Saubala intercepted Bhishma, as he was in love with Amba. However, Bhishma, who was unaware of this love affair, in a bitter
fight with Salva, brought Salva down to his knees, but at the request of the princesses, he spared him. After reaching Hastinapura, Bhishma got ready with the arrangements of the marriage of the three princesses to Vichitravirya. It was then that Amba took courage to tell Bhishma that she had already imagined herself married to Salva. Now, Bhishma thought that it would only be proper to send Amba to Salva and he did so with utmost care. When Amba reached Salva's palace, Salva refused to take her because Bhishma had humiliated him and he argued that a Kshatriya could not accept a woman lost to another man in a war and sent her back to Bhishma. Amba blamed Bhishma for her misfortune, but Bhishma could do nothing to save her pride. Therefore, she takes a vow that she would not rest until she has avenged herself for Bhishma's indifference. She undergoes penance for twelve years on the banks of the Yamuna and gets the boon to be born as Shikhandi in the house of Drupada. She is born a girl, but undergoes a sex change to acquire a male body to be able to fight Bhishma.

The play Pani-t-Thee begins with Shikhandi in the battlefield with Bhishma mortally wounded in battle. Bhishma could not believe that Shikhandi's arrows had wounded him. Bhishma had known that Shikhandi had been born a female and according to the code of chivalry, he would not fight Shikhandi under any circumstances. As the arrows struck Bhishma in his last fight, he singled out those, which had pierced him and said, "This is Arjuna's arrow and not Shikhandi's" (Rajagopalachari 16-17). The play Pani-t-Thee begins with the same words, "This is Arjuna's arrow. And these—These too are his—they cannot be Shikhandi's" (Mangai 441). Bhishma's ego could not believe that a woman's arrows had wounded him. Shikhandi, then, goes on to narrate his misfortunes and how he had arrived at that point where he could avenge the person who
was the main cause of his (her) misfortunes. In between, he also voices the insults heaped on Draupadi by the royal family, which she never deserved in her life. When Draupadi cried out in the assembly if no one could save her from her misfortunes, the great Bhishma proclaimed:

   Woman! Your Yudhisthira gambled and lost you.

   By your speaking you damn his actions!

   Princess!

   What you speak makes no sense!

   There was a time when your words would have meant something—

   But that time is long past

   When men and women were held equal. (Mangai 450)

   Thus, Bhishma, though a great warrior and the patriarch of Hastinapura, turned a deaf ear to the pleadings of women. Theirs was a male-dominated society and justice was never bestowed upon women.

   Shikhandi goes on to say that, even other women like Gandhari, Ambika and Ambalika were victims of the male-dominated society in one way or the other. The play ends with a benediction wherein all the musicians join and praise the brave women who fought for their rights and even attained them, who strove for the world to reform,

   Let us praise

   Equality that is not sameness

   The differences that are yet equal

   Let us praise the thoughts
Which can make this happen. (Mangai 461)

It ends on a hopeful note:

Let us cheer the day

When, in friendship

We realize our deepest selves. (Mangai 462)

Thus, the playwright has meaningfully filled the silences in the mythical story by voicing it in the form of Amba's displeasure at the code of law of the royal family of Hastinapura.

The second phase, that is, a juxtaposition of sections narrating a myth and others concerned with contemporary world, that is, a part of mythology is dealt with explicitly and it is given a contemporary relevance. For example, Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem "Ulysses". The theme of "Ulysses" is borrowed from Homer and Dante. Ulysses was the king of Ithaca and one of the greatest heroes of Trojan War. He met with many misfortunes on the return voyage, but finally reached home safe after twenty years. However, there at home, neither the love for his wife nor for his only son or the country could keep him away from seeking new adventures. In Homer, there were no mariners and Ulysses had returned alone to his island. Ulysses' last voyage is only hinted at in the Odyssey, but Homer's Ulysses was an old, tired man, eager to reach home. Tennyson's "Ulysses" is more in conformity with Dante's description in the Inferno and has relevance to his times. From Dante's version, Tennyson has taken the doctrine of ever seeking new experience. But Dante had put Odysseus in hell for not being noble. In this respect, Tennyson is with Homer who has presented Odysseus as an admirable character. Though Tennyson has borrowed the myth from both Homer and Dante, he has modelled it in a way to suit the Victorian passion for knowledge, for the exploration of its limitless
fields, its kingdom of scientific and religious thought. Through this poem, Tennyson has also presented two ways of life—the way of infinite search and the way of monotonous obedience and observance of duty. His son represents the second way of life. Thus, Homer and Dante's Ulysses has been Tennysonized.

In the third phase we have the author who claims himself, or who is claimed by critics, to be creating a new myth. For instance, Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn as the epitome of the 'American Adam'. The mythological implications of the novel *Huckleberry Finn* gave it the status of the Great American Novel. The novel embodies myth that is both universal and national. The archetypal patterns found in this novel have been enlisted by Guerin et al in *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*:

1. The Quest: Huck is a wanderer, separated from his culture in search of an identity.

2. Water symbolism: The Mississippi River is considered an archetypal symbol of the mystery of life and creation. Huck's wanderings are in this river and he goes through several symbolic deaths, disguises and new identities in this river.

3. Shadow archetype: Huck's pap, with his sinister repulsiveness, is a classic representation of the devil figure designated by Jung as the Shadow.

4. Initiation: Huck undergoes a series of painful experiences in passing from ignorance and innocence into spiritual maturity; he comes of age—is morally reborn—when he decides to go to hell rather than turn Jim in to the authorities. (Guerin et al 189-190)
Apart from these universal archetypes, the novel contains a mythology that is distinctively American. Guerin et al add: “Huck himself is the symbolic American hero; he epitomizes conglomerate paradoxes that make up the American character. He has all the glibness and practical acuity (of) the business people and politicians; he is truly a self-made youth [...] he possesses the simple modesty, the quickness, the daring and the guts [...] he is mentally sharp but not intellectual. [...] he is, finally the good bad boy whom Americans have always idolized in one form or another” (Guerin et al 190-191). Thus, the novel creates a new myth in the name of its main character.

Sometimes, the theory of postcolonialism can be nailed on a particular text that has all along served as a mythological text. Thus in an essay entitled “Towards an Indian Theory of Postcolonialism” Avadesh Kumar Singh “nails the theory of postcolonialism on the very anvil of a very-Indian text Abhigyanshakuntalam” (Singh 43). According to him, Kalidasa’s Shakuntala is very docile, “[...] in a way [she] becomes a symbol of a colonized society” (Singh 53). In this view, the play opens itself up to the colonizer-colonized binary set that is a pre-requisite for postcolonialism. This binary set is fulfilled thus:

Dushyanta’s hunting expedition is the city’s invasion on nature and its societies for the sport of the former. Shakuntala’s story contains in it the story of the city (the capital or metro) trying to control and rule over the distant territories. There may not be a clear cut instance of accumulation and acquisition in the play but it suggests that colonialism in its larger sense existed in one form or the other in all societies before they took it upon themselves either to colonize or to be colonized. (Singh 54)
Another aspect of colonialism found in the play is the loss of innocence. Dushyanta had already lost his innocence and as he enters the ashram of sage Kanva and meets Shakuntala, Shakuntala loses her innocence too. Dushyanta exploits her innocence and her resources as a colonizer does. In fact “her colonization, exploitation and then rejection are legitimized and sustained by diverse discourses of polygamy, social sanction or the supernatural produced by the culture” (Singh 54).

Finally, the end of the play is also suggestive of the postcolonial paradigm. At the end of the play, Dushyanta repents for his misdeed and seeks Shakuntala’s forgiveness. She forgives him wholeheartedly. Avadhesh Singh remarks,

> The reconciliation between Dushyanta and Shakuntala is the post-colonial period not in its traditional but in a new positive sense in which the erstwhile colonizer and colonized societies forgive each other for the way they treated each other—an otherwise explosive reality which they think they are condemned to remember—and work together closely for the betterment of their worlds leading to a new world for a new generation, not of the reactionists, of the Bharatas (abha means ‘light’, and rat means ‘engaged’)—of those engaged in the pursuit of light. (Singh 55)

Thus, postcolonialism and mythology work together in the analysis of certain texts.

Stephanie Mackenzie in “Colonialism and Postcolonialism as Contemporary Mythologies” (2002), suggests that colonialism and postcolonialism are actually “contemporary mythologies.” She considers ‘discovery’, ‘conquest’ and ‘settlement’ as tropes found in national mythologies. Moreover, “post-colonialism is an adaptive stage in mythological ideation and this stage is really a mythical moment where colonialism
is recognized as mythology and where its defining characteristics are recognized as archetypes or tropes” (Mackenzie). According to her, a social revolution would force the people of the land to seek their identity in the myths of their land. They go back to their myths to deconstruct the colonizer’s ideologies and revitalize their strength for achieving freedom. She believes that there is a conscious attempt to re-write the past, especially the colonial past and de-construct the colonial framework. These postcolonial responses have an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage is that it becomes a “powerful new moment in mythological maturation” and the disadvantage is that “it is a moment when people are forced to relive their national trauma” (Mackenzie). Thus, the forgotten myths of the land get a new meaning in the postcolonial phase.

Eriks Uskalis in “Contextualizing Myth in Postcolonial Novels: Figures of Dissent and Disruption” points out that myths can be set negatively against the social and political order as narratives of dissent or they can be set positively to enhance certain critical issues that are waning from the society today like morality. He adds, “Stories of myths in novels are usually of a neutral nature, but once they are linked to some other element, at the level of plot, character or metaphor, they can be transformed into narratives of dissent” (Uskalis). Sometimes myths can act as a symbolic space through which this difference of opinion can be communicated and therefore myth is particularly useful in postcolonial societies that are dominated by repressive regimes.

The postcolonial societies are so much in want of an identity of their own, after having been stripped off their identity due to the colonial rule that they tend to take refuge in myths. These myths provided immense possibilities to overcome the problems faced by the indigenous people. For example, the colonial rule had catastrophic effects
on the Indian culture. Therefore, the Indian writers took refuge in the Indian myths to solve the identity crises that the people as well as the nation were going through. Mythological allusions were strengthened to drive home the point that virtue is rewarded and vice, punished. For instance, the *Ramayana* portrays the capture of Ravana by Rama, that is, the fight between good and evil and good triumphs over evil. The Indian political situation was an echo of this, that is, the British were evil and the Indians were good, and in their struggle, the Indians will triumph. Therefore, most postcolonial texts used the mythological narratives to illustrate imperialism’s effect on the Indian culture. The Indian culture was no longer dominant in the wake of the imperialist designs. Therefore, Indian authors, sometimes, translated a myth or even re-worked its form to undermine the authority of the colonialist discourse. Myths were also used to throw light upon the inhumanity of the colonial rule, which refused to acknowledge the basic rights of the Indians. Thus, what happened once in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* happens once again in modern India. These two epics have immense possibilities of interpretations from different perspectives. However, there is another aspect to the use of myth too. Myths may not retain the same message as was intended earlier. According to the changes in circumstances, myths may undergo changes in interpretations too, thus the process of demythification. Myths, in the hands of such writers are a way of expressing the contemporary world issues or the vast human experience. This characterizes the movement of the symbolic meaning of the myths from a mythical level to a historical level. In fact, it enhances the acquisition of new features and proportions, which might be inadequate in the original myth. However, the constant tension between conformity to the original meaning and the ingredient of change would inevitably remain. Sometimes, an
author might even blend the mythical character and its literary counterpart. In such cases, the author is consciously using the myth in its original form, yet bringing in the ingredient of change as it is used to portray a contemporary situation. The next two chapters of the thesis focus on selected Indian novels in which myths have been appropriated by the authors to suit the contemporary needs of the society. The two chapters attempt to show how myth criticism and postcolonial criticism simultaneously help in a better understanding of their intentions.