INTRODUCTION

This dissertation seeks to study fiction as spiritual space via examining characters (viewed as mystic-protagonists) from diverse socio-cultural and religious orientations in the Hermann Hesse’s *Siddhartha*, Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope*, Richard Bach’s *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, Paulo Coelho’s *The Alchemist* and Sujatha Vijayaraghavan’s *The Silent One*. After theorizing fiction as spiritual space, an attempt will be made to demonstrate how these writers employ the narrative space wherein spirituality can be performed/enacted. In fact, the quest journey of the mystic-protagonists have been analyzed in terms of stages as most of them start as seekers for truth and end up attaining enlightenment/self-realization. That is the reason why these characters have been viewed as mystic-protagonists who have had fair share of existential angst/dilemma and challenges in their respective quest processes. Nevertheless, they resolve/overcome them with the help of acumen/wisdom achieved after undergoing rigorous quest journey in their life. The eventual arrival, which has been viewed as comprehension of the essence of being rather than a static state of being, the mystic-protagonists stage a “return” to their roots with a view to serve their community at large *a la* Joseph Campbell as enunciated in *The Hero with A Thousand Faces*.

Despite the fact that the novels viz., *Siddhartha*, *The Serpent and the Rope*, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, *The Alchemist* and *The Silent One* have been set in various socio-cultural backdrops, and that each mystic-protagonist has different mindset and psycho-spiritual flight, it is notable that there obtains identical and subliminal spiritual current in each of these fictional narratives. This, in fact, serves as the basis of the entire narrative framework of all these novels, and lends authenticity for their appropriation as spiritual space. Each novel portrays a mystic-protagonist who undertakes spiritual quest and passes through several stages before attaining self-realization viewed as *Mukti, Moksa*,
salvation/ self-realization/ or self-actualization. All mystic-protagonists have been portrayed as awakened/conscious beings who occupy the spiritual space of different fictional narratives thereby imparting meaning to the philosophical and spiritual vision of the author rooted in a particular cultural ethos.

The thrust of the dissertation, therefore, has been to show how despite cross-cultural distinctness, all mystic-protagonists namely Siddhartha, Ramaswamy, Santiago, Jonathan Livingston Seagull and the silent Pichaikuppan intersect one another’s path to such an extent that one observes a certain pattern emerging in respective journeys of their lives. Moreover, the symbols, images, myths and metaphors used by various novelists to represent spiritual journeys of their mystical-protagonists lend a sense of uniqueness to each text which is culture-specific, thereby according distinct status to spiritual flight of each mystic-protagonist portrayed therein.

I

The human quest for knowledge, urge to know the unknown, restlessness to fathom mysteries of the universe and struggle to understand the reality behind appearances has made man a conscious being. This conscious awareness of himself along with his capacity to love human beings has led him on the path of experiencing higher state of awareness/ consciousness to eventually find his own way towards perfection of being. A.N. Dhar explains the reason behind this enquiry into self by mankind: “This is because he is not merely a creature of reason, gifted with a soul; he is a conscious being—as is evident from his natural inclination towards reflection and introspection and also from his unbounded capacity for love” (Mysticism Across, 1).

This urge to experience higher state of consciousness has found varied expression in art. In fact, it is through art that the artist-quester creatively expresses himself thereby
expanding his consciousness. Yaw Adu-Gyamfi establishes a relationship between art and spirituality and observes thus:

Both art and spiritual draw us into new connections with the world and with ourselves. They help us move from our immediate experiences with the physical world to a new awareness of a deeper reality. With the intangible, creative energy of our minds and hearts, we make pieces of art that are very physical. Yet those physical things (e.g., novels, poems, paintings) often point us toward the ultimate—the spiritual. In the same way, our spiritual longings, question and experiences lead us to write religious textbooks and perform religious rites that are very physical. Yet, those physical books and religious actions point to the spiritual. In both art and religion, an intangible dimension of life becomes physical, yet that very physical thing points us back to the intangible again. (2)

This seeking and artistic expansion of the self finds expression through painting, music and literature. Of all arts, it is storytelling that has provided powerful insights since the most ancient times. The aim of literature is to help mankind via moving beyond the immediate experiences to seek the soul and explore the spiritual. The principal concern of literature is dealing not with the “questions of empirical fact but with questions that lie outside the realm of reason” (Krutzen 5). Thus, literature provides mankind with an insight into the mysteries of unknown and discovers unique connections through representing “history of human soul and our quest for meaning in this world . . . [T]he study of literature is part of our spiritual quest as human beings” (Millar).

The concept of spirituality in literature is as old as literature itself. The early carrier of spirituality is the works that have their roots in oral cultures prior to the printed word/narrative. Lengthy narratives of heroic action have emerged in many cultures over the
time. *The epic of Gilgamesh* is known as the earliest work of literary fiction, having a strong oral tradition at its base. The epic is a tale of spiritual quest for enlightenment, the revelation of divine mysteries and eventful unfolding of his spiritual nature. It mostly deal with themes such as conflict between gods and superhuman with thrust on adventure and quest for immortality undergoing loss and friendship, and ultimately to attaining wisdom. The literary themes of these works indicate that the basis of early literature remains rooted in human experience and the desire on the part of writer to make that experience meaningful.

Likewise in India, the land of mystic knowledge, the *Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas* and the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are considered important texts of Hinduism. These were originally transmitted by a human chain of memory orally and written down centuries after their actual compilation. These epics have spiritual themes that underlie the thrilling narrative. The *Ramayana* delineate themes of adventure, spirituality, philosophy, family and love. The morality in the epic is presented via making the hero face difficult situations and challenges, and the choices that he has to make in order to overcome the evil. The *Mahabharata*, on the other hand, brings out a constant struggle between good and evil and it is only by walking on the path of *dharma* that one can differentiate between the two.

In Christianity, the parables were used by Christ because of their simple narrative surface to teach spiritual values. They became the carrier of spiritual message of Christ to the people: “[The] parables [were] allegories wherein every detail of the story could be extracted and given a particular spiritual significance” (Fowler). *The Epic of Gesar* written by Tibetan monks is a Buddhist work that expounds on Buddhist teachings and presents a Buddhist worldview to take seekers on the path of self-realization. The western epic tradition is traceable in Virgil’s *Aenied* and Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. These works uphold the moral values such as piety and duty. According to Charles F. Thwing, “The Homeric poems are pervaded with religious atmosphere of wonder and obedience to the eternal and of the
recognition of the interest of gods in human affairs." The Divine Comedy by Dante deals with the journey of Dante through hell, purgatory and heaven. But at deeper level, it represents the journey of the soul towards god and to attain salvation becomes the major thrust of Dante’s epic.

The oral literature has often dealt with the theme of good and evil and the term spirituality has been associated with everything that was considered godly, hence good. Spirituality in oral literature too implied living in accord with the promptings of the spirit of god. The theme of spirituality in the same sense, later on was taken up by drama that too had its origins in religion. The Greek drama had sprung out of the ceremonial worship of Dionysus and “the plot of a tragedy was almost always inspired by episodes from Greek mythology, which . . . were often a part of Greek religion [and the] subject matter . . . often dealt with moral right and wrongs” (Mark).

The tragedies of the time depicted the moral predicament of the hero and how the he would overcome it. And in this way, the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles delineate the hero’s journey demonstrating how the journey leads the hero to moral awareness of his situation. In England, drama dealt with the major events of Christ’s life and later on took the form of miracle plays dealing with “real or fictitious account of the life, miracles, or martyrdom of a saint” (“Miracle Play”). Mystery plays, on the other hand, were “developed from plays presented in Latin by churchmen on church premises and depicted such subjects as the Creation, Adam and Eve, the murder of Abel, and the Last Judgment” (“Mystery Play”). In Medieval times, however, secular elements started creeping in drama but the glorification of God and redemption of humanity remained the prime concern (“Medieval Drama”). It was the romantic rebellion in the 19th century that concentrated on the spirituality that would allow “humankind to transcend the limitations of the physical world and body to find an ideal truth. Subject matter was drawn from nature and “natural man” (Dramas).
Goethe’s *Faust* and Victor Hugo’s *Hernani* too were written in this tradition. In the modern context, on account of growing disillusionment with religion, spirituality became engaged with the quest for self. It was being used as a broad understanding of the undefined depths of human existence and boundless mysteries of the cosmos. The pointlessness of human existence was portrayed by the playwrights such as Eugene Ionesco, Edward Albee, and Pinter. Jean Paul Sartre’s *No Exit* and Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, deal with the theme of meaning of human existence. Nevertheless, drama being more objective presents externalized conflict between the individual protagonist and a meaningless universe, and it has been replaced by the genre of poetry and fiction that “afford better scope for subjective consciousness, interiorization of experience and the confessional mode” (Chatterji 12).

Spirituality is one of the deepest and most layered concepts in literature. The genre of poetry is deeply influenced by the notion of the beyond and has found an expression in diverse literary traditions. The desire for union with the divine is expressed beautifully in the verse of Persian mystic poets such as Rumi, Hafiz, and Omar Khayyam (Fredman 192). The poems of Lao Tzu, an ancient Chinese poet, give mystical insight into the ultimate reality. St. Teresa of Alva, St. John of the Cross are also mystical in their expression and “have given rapturous accounts of divine love in a voluptuous vein, using erotic and Christian vocabularies in the same breath” (Dhar, *Mysticism Across* 45). The presence of divine and the desire to dissolve into the divine is deeply rooted in the works of Indian writers such as Kabir, Sri Aurobindo, Kalidas, Tagore, and Sri Chinmoy. The devotional verses of Tulsidas and Mira Bai are still revered by cross-sections of the society. A. N. Dhar observes that “Mira’s songs are inimitable as sober and sincere expressions of deep love that is thoroughly spiritual in character” (*Mysticism Across*, 43). In Aurobindo’s poetry, a new and greater self-vision of man, nature and existence can be found while Tagore’s poetry emerges as an authentic expression of romanticism, profound love and spirituality.
The deep mystical strains can be found in the works of American poets such as Walt Whitman, Khalil Gibran, Emerson, Thoreau, Adrienne Rich, William Carlos Williams, Emily Dickinson, T.S. Eliot, Phillis Wheatley, Edward Taylor, etc. Regarding the mystical nature of American poetry, Stephen Fredman states:

Doctrines like Ezra Pound’s Vorticism, Louis Zukofsky’s Objectivism, Charles Olson’s Projectivism, Robert Bly’s Deep Image and Charles Bernstein’s Language Poetry are purposefully obscure, asking fellow poets or readers to make a mystical leap by accepting a set of intuitive or non-rational propositions. (193)

Spiritual strains can also be traced in haiku poets like Matsuo Basho, Yosa Buson, Kobayshi Issa and Masaoka Shiki. It is a Japanese form of poetry known for its brevity and a world of meanings ranging from sudden spiritual revelation, enlightenment to realizing the reality. It is poetry of life through communion with nature.

The concept of spirituality in English literature seems to have a closer relationship with institutionalized religion. A huge chunk of literature has been written with the primary intention to illuminate for the readers the kind of spirituality already established by the Bible. Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*, John Milton’s *The Paradise Lost* was written to vindicate the ways of God to man. Milton tried to celebrate and illustrate further Christianity’s spiritual and religious outlook according to what had already been defined through the Bible (Keshavarzi). Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* is a spiritual allegory that is, by way of its contribution to present Christianity, a major religious document. Most of the metaphysical poets wrote on spiritual themes. Herbert, Donne, Vaughan, Crashaw and Terence are the most important among the religious English poets of all times. Their poems have a touch of introspection and mysticism that is expressed through unconventional and bold imagery.
By the 19th century the chief writers of English romanticism, in reaction to the conventional institutionalized spirituality, created their own system of beliefs that was based on secular morality and individual freedom. The writers like William Blake, William Wordsworth, Keats, Coleridge, Byron and Shelley were more inclined towards mysticism and internal spirituality with free play of imagination in their works. The romantics brought spirituality into earthly experience (Keshavarzi). A.N. Dhar has listed major religious poets of the restless Victorian age as he writes: “Coventry Patmore, G.M. Hopkins and Francis Thompson, linked by their Catholic faith, and Christina Rossetti influenced more specifically by the Oxford movement, could be singled out as the poets who made a significant contribution to the religious poetry of the Victorian age” (Mysticism, 20).

But it is the genre of fiction wherein theme of spiritual quest/ enlightenment alongside that of uncertainty of modern times has been delineated substantively. The novel as an art form originally came into being as bourgeois entertainment concerned with everyday matters such as money, success and ambition. It is a secular art form dealing with secular matters. Its concreteness that requires the novelists to create plausible characters operating in a credible world makes the novel an ideal vehicle for exploring spiritual themes and presenting unorthodox world views. Great works of fiction, dealing with the existential and spiritual dilemma has been written across various literary traditions. Existentialism in literature is a movement or tendency that emphasizes individual existence, freedom, and choice. While Existentialism was never an organized literary movement; the tenets of this philosophy have influenced diverse writers around the world. The reason for this wide influence on writers can be explained through Ruby Chatterji’s observation: “Existentialism by its emphasis on the individual consciousness, personalized values and subjective ethics can claim to offer modern man a modern form of salvation” (14).
Friedrich Nietzsche is considered the “most influential of all modern thinkers” (“Existentialism”). Novelists like Thomas Mann, Hermann Hesse, André Gide, and John Gardner were inspired by him and wrote about him, as did the poets and playwrights George Bernard Shaw, Rainer Maria Rilke, Stefan George, and William Butler Yeats, among others. Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain*, Hermann Hesse’s *Steppenwolf* and *Siddhartha* were greatly influenced by the philosophy of Nietzsche, “who exalted life in its most irrational and cruel features and made this exaltation the proper task of the “higher man who exists beyond good and evil” (“Existentialism”). Gene Edward Veith calls existentialism to be “the philosophical basis for Post-modernism” (38). The basic themes that became popular with modern fiction writers were an individual’s freedom, assertion of his subjective self, his flouting of reason and rationality, his denial of traditional values, institutions and philosophy, his exercise of will and freedom, his experience of absurdity, pointlessness and nothingness in life.

In American tradition the towering figure of spiritual literature has been R.W. Emerson. He was the most influential figure of Transcendentalism in America and his influence has been profound and far reaching. His ideas further found an extension in Thoreau. His complex work *Walden* discusses the importance of solitude, contemplation, and closeness to nature in order to transcend the “desperate” existence. Americans writers like William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway John Steinbeck, Jack Kerouac reveal existential elements in their writing. Writers like Hermann Melville, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Salinger, O’Conner, Kurt Vonnegut and Richard Bach have also contributed considerably to the relationship between literature and spirituality through their works such as *Moby Dick*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, etc.

The problem and dilemma of human existence has also been taken up by French authors such as Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and Marcel Proust, who have used fiction to
convey their philosophical views. Sartre’s *Nausea* and Camus’ *The Fall*, and Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* deal with individual problem of existence and thus investigates the meaning of being. The strain of spiritual and existential dilemmas in literature has been further carried on by Russian writer, Fyodor Dostoyevsky. His works are a study of human psyche in the context of spiritual and political atmosphere in the 19th century Russia. His novel *The Brother Karamazov* is considered the greatest novel ever written. On the surface level, it is a tale of family feuding and parricide but underneath it is a philosophical quest for spiritual future for humanity as well as for Russia. Dostoyevsky “in his novels presented human beings as continually defeated as a result of their choices and as continually placed before the insoluble enigma of themselves” (“Existentialism”). Another spiritual classic in Russian tradition is Leo Tolstoy’s novella, *Death of Ivan Ilyich*. Ivan is filled with existential dilemma as he is approaching death due to a small injury. But with the devotion and faith of his peasant servant, he regains his faith in fellow people and a vision in which death is superseded by spiritual awakening. Patrick White is foremost Australian novelist, who deals with the theme of existential dilemmas and vicissitudes in human life. In Indian English fiction, the exploration of the unavoidable conflicts between inner needs and external social and moral norms is presented through the works of writers such as Arun Joshi, Kamala Markandya, and Anita Desai.

Another school of thought that gives importance to man’s desire to attain self-realization is the New Age Movement. According to Russell Chandler, “In New Age and Eastern worldviews, intuition and mystical experience become the supreme way of knowing God, or Ultimate Reality, which is an immanent, impersonal Absolute — even Nothingness — rather than a personal Creator” (275-276). Though New Age as a literary genre is still not well-defined—it seems to include anything from other realms, different states of being, space/time, to spiritual entities—what seems obvious is a desire to explore the higher reaches
of human potential. Michael Cook explains: “With its focus on personal feelings and its skepticism about truth, it fosters a culture of individualism and selfishness. . . . [I]ndividual success and self-satisfaction are its goal” (Cook).

New Age authors such as Richard Bach, Paulo Coelho, James Redfield, and Robert Pirsig aim at simplifying wisdom so that it is accessible to everyone. Redfield’s *The Celestine Prophecy*, Paulo Coelho’s *The Alchemist* and *The Valkyries*, Robert Pirsig’s *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Jostein Gaarder’s *Sophie’s World* and *The Solitaire Mystery* fall into this category. Thus, one may observe that human condition of existence throws almost similar challenges, and the literature of all times and climes represents the struggle of rationalization or moralization in human being and race underscoring how man may attain perfection (bordering on divinity) by mastering fate and conforming to his destiny.

II

The literary writer as a quester is able to bridge the gap between the personal and the communal, the body and the spirit, and beauty and tragedy. It is primarily through extending the imagination that a writer posits spiritual insights that points beyond dogmatism. As mentioned above, the writers selected for critical discussion in the thesis are Hermann Hesse, Raja Rao, Richard Bach, Paulo Coelho and Sujatha Vijayaraghavan. There is an obvious and definite focus on spiritual quest and overt attempt to explore human existence in the works of these writers. These novelists hail from different cultures, having different mental, intellectual, and spiritual makeup. The novelists as well as their mystic-protagonists vary in their individuality along with subjectivity as well as on account of the cultural contexts that they come from.
The novels namely *Siddhartha*, *The Serpent and the Rope*, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, *The Alchemist* and *The Silent One* taken up for critical analyses in this dissertation portray their protagonists as questers/seekers in search of truth. They all are awakened characters conscious of their ultimate goal. But interestingly, the novelists too are questers in search of truth and the quest of their protagonists represent their own quest. Thus, we see that the characters of Hesse have “faced the most complex questions of life, coming from different places and times, different backgrounds and ambitions, but all of them represented Hesse, and all of them wrestled with questions of self and soul that haunted their author throughout his life” (Saloman).

Hermann Hesse’s protagonists in works such as *Demian*, *Steppenwolf* and *Siddhartha* are highly marked with psycho-duality. The interest has probably been due to his need to cope with depression. At one point of his life, Hesse received highly effective psychotherapy sessions from none other than Carl Jung, to help him to deal with his personal trials:

In 1916, Hesse’s emotional state was further undermined by the death of his father; his wife’s worsening mental state, and his son’s severe illness. Hermann Hesse became a believer in psychotherapy and eventually formed a personal relationship with Carl Jung. (“Hermann Hesse”)

From that experience, Hesse was able to channelize his new found writing energy into a highly successful novel, *Demian*. Hesse also identified with theosophy and philosophy of Schopenhauer (Mileck 28) which influenced especially his later works. Hermann Hesse turned to eastern philosophy after his disillusionment with traditional Christianity, its theory and practice, and his parents’ narrow-mindedness.

Apart from the eastern philosophies, he was deeply influenced by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, who were fashionable authors during that time and like the young Thomas Mann,
Hermann Hesse was much attracted by this intellectual world (Baumann). He believed that it was an intellectual and spiritual development with which man should find his personal way. Personal problems and stress of war led to Hesse’s intensive study of psycho-analysis. Joseph Mileck observes thus:

Psychoanalysis not only changed Hesse’s way of life, it also lent new dimensions to his art. His prose which had been more or less traditional in both matter and manner, now became highly original and distinctly modern . . . self observation in his art assumed an unmistakable psychoanalytic character, the psychoanalyst’s preoccupation with the conscious and unconscious and with psychological complexes and processes became Hesse’s concern, and . . . new literary devices were fashioned. (99)

But Hesse had an individual and critical attitude towards everything he read and felt and believed that spirituality is not limited to any specific time, culture or religion as “he was too independent a thinker to become either a Jungian or a Freudian and too much an artist merely to write psychological tracts” (Mileck 100). Hesse’s maternal grandfather, Hermann Gundert, was a doctor of philosophy and a polyglot and he became the shaping influence in Hesse’s taste for international literature as he wanted Hesse to have an open mind for every culture.

A trip to Asia in 1911 renewed his interests in spirituality of the East. Hesse was able to find literary inspiration from his journey. He felt new insight in eastern and western philosophies. This sense of unity of eastern and western thinking gets reflected in all his works and it was *Siddhartha* that became an expression of his preoccupation with eastern philosophy and spirituality and is marked with the duality of spirit and nature, body and
mind, and ultimately the individual’s search for self via moving beyond the conventions of the society.

Thus, most of the narrators and protagonists in his novels are obviously the voices of Hesse. It is clear that Hesse’s personal life experiences do provide the basis of much of the characterizations, plots and human dilemmas depicted in his novels. His “popularity was rooted in the fact that the countercultures were seeking the same enlightenment as many of Hesse’s characters” (“Hermann Hesse”).

**Raja Rao’s** protagonists are shown in search for self-realization and ultimate union with the divine: “Rao’s works are profoundly serious, reflecting his abiding concern with the potential clashes between pragmatism and ideals” (“Raja Rao”). Rao’s novels have a strong Advait Vedantic strain and believe in the importance of Guru to realize the ultimate truth. Rao’s fiction is rooted in Indian tradition, thought and sensibility. His narratives offer various glimpses of spirituality:

Departing boldly from the European tradition of the novel he has indigenized it in the process of assimilating material from the Indian literary tradition. He explores the metaphysical basis of writing itself, and of the world, through his works of fiction. His concern is with the human condition rather than with a particular nation or people. Writing to him is *sadhana*, a form of spiritual growth. (Murthy 173)

Being born in a Brahmin family, Raja Rao was considerably influenced by the traditional, religious, spiritual and intellectual environment of his family. His family tradition comprises scholars “like Vidyanaraya Swami, an eminent propounder of Advaita Vedanta, after Sankracharya” (Sharma, *Raja* 34) and his own grandfather who was an erudite scholar, “who initiated the young Rao into Hindu philosophy, the profound knowledge of which permeates all of his writing” (Alterno1). His family exercised a deep influence on him. It was
his spiritual Guru, Atmananda, (Sharma, Raja 34) who Litizia Alterno calls “the single greatest influence on the author especially with regard to the ideology underlying his writing and themes addressed in his works” (5). Atmananda had profound influence on him as he advised Rao to continue writing as it was the way to realize his true being. Apart from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, Tantra, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, Romain Rolland, Gandhi, Paul Valery, Andre Malroux, Andre Gide, Gorky, Yeats, Kafka, Whitman, Coomarswamy and Nietzsche had deep impact on him (Patil 2).

After his education in India, Raja Rao went to France to pursue Doctoral studies on the impact of Indian thinking on the West. Thus having acquired the knowledge of French and Indian philosophies, he could talk about both authentically. His depth in Indian philosophy is revealed in his works. Raja Rao’s novels, hence, should be considered as an expression of his quest for Truth and in them the readers get the essence of his philosophical knowledge. Raja Rao’s novels are enigmatic and complex for a reader who is not acquainted with the abstruse philosophical concepts. He frequently quotes from almost all the Hindu philosophical and religious texts such as the Upanishads, the texts on Samkhya philosophy, Advaita Vedanta, Sankara’s works and Buddhist texts, and also from the great Hindu epics namely the Ramayana and the Mahabharata to support his arguments. In his works, there is an exposition of the Advaitic, Visishtadvaitic and Tantric doctrines. Raja Rao’s fiction is a reflection of his deep-rooted Indian Vedantic philosophy. His protagonists are just a reflection of his own personality. Regarding his fictional characters, Litizia Alterno aptly observes:

Everyone of them [protagonists] seems lost in the chakra of their existential pondering . . . . Rao’s fictional creations are a full reflection of author’s entire psyche. Nonetheless, in their being intertwined with it may be said to embody insights into
its inner development and functioning, hence providing access to some relevant aspects of the psychological realm of 'Indian' mind. (19)

In fact, the protagonists in his novels are most often questers and represent the different stages a sadhaka undergoes in his spiritual journey. The novels are to be considered autobiographical in that sense, since they exhibit the writer's own spiritual yearnings and his quest.

Ramaswami, the protagonist of his magnum opus, *The Serpent and the Rope*, is fictionalized self of Raja Rao himself. Like Rao, Rama too is a born Brahmin who is soaked in Indian philosophy and often repeats mantras, prayers and refers to the Holy Scriptures and is in quest of self-realization. Rao’s metaphysical novel *The Serpent and the Rope* is the outcome of his spiritual conflict that was going in his mind on his return to India in 1940. And “it was his spiritual guide, Guru who made him discover himself and realize his real aptitude as a creative writer” (Sharma, *Raja* 35). In the final phase of the novel, the need of a Guru to overcome the illusions of the world becomes evident. Thus, Rao’s fiction “presents a spiritual problem of man and also its worthwhile solution through an imaginative and emotional exploration of a particular metaphysical system” (Ahlawat).

**Richard Bach** on the other hand believes that restrictions lie in the mind and by breaking them one can attain perfection. Bach’s narrative has spiritual overtones putting emphasis on inner path to attain one’s goal. Bach himself was a non-conformist and remained so throughout his life. Bach lived in the cultural atmosphere of 1970s with its Civil Rights Movement, Women’s Liberation, Sexual Revolutions and Hippie Culture. The carnage and savagery of Vietnam War oppressed American society. The young generation lost faith in traditional Christianity. They looked towards the East in search of solace: “Young people searching for answers found solace in the religious philosophies of
the east and many of these philosophies could be found in *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* (Sloggie).

The widespread success of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* lies in its simple but inspiring allegory, with spiritual and psychic overtones. It embodies Bach's own philosophy: "Find what it is you want in the world to do, and then do it." (Bach, *Gale Encyclopedia*). Bach’s *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, like himself is breaker of rules and chooses the road less travelled. Bach brings in play the religious philosophies of the East along with undercurrents of the traditional Christianity to fill his narrative with strong spiritual overtones.

**Paulo Coelho**, a universally acknowledged novelist, deals with the journey of body, mind and soul of his characters in most of his novels. The ideas, philosophy and subject-matter delineated in his fictional narratives touch aspirations of millions of readers searching for their own path and for new ways of understanding the world. Coelho had a troubled childhood along with an artistic bent of mind, which was against what his parents had wished for him. They sent him to Jesuit school, Colegio de Sain Ignacio in Rio de Janerio (Arias ix) to discipline him. Nevertheless, it had a negative effect on the young mind and Coelho lost his faith in religion. He remained a rebel during his youth too. Juan Arias calls him a “loyal son of 1968, a time of openness and madness, always in search of something that would fill him from within never allowing himself to be dominated by familial or social conventions” (31).

Coelho went in search of new spiritual experiences, resorting to drugs primarily “because they were forbidden and everything forbidden fascinated [him]” (Arias 127). He worked as a theatre artist, dabbled in journalism, became a lyricist, had most intense experience with black magic besides penetrating “the very abysses of Evil” (104). He was
kidnapped and tortured by a group of paramilitary troop during Brazilian dictatorship (Arias 31), but escaped miraculously.

He again took to journalism and wrote for various magazines. The major turning point came in his life when he met a stranger in an Amsterdam café who told him to make the traditional Roman Catholic pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in Northern Spain. During this journey of seven hundred kilometers, Coelho underwent an intense spiritual experience bringing him back to the catholic beliefs of his parents (Arias xi). After this awakening trip, he took to writing as a full time profession as he believed that writing was something that he seriously wanted to take to. In one of his interviews he has said: “Writing was the best way found in order to connect with my soul and others. Therefore, instead of being transcendental, I need to live fully my human condition.” Coelho strongly believes that most of his characters are searching for their souls, and that mirror him. In fact, he is someone who is constantly trying to fathom his place in the world and literature is the best way that he has found in order to see/realize his self (Coelho, E mail Interview).

Coelho’s life experiences have deeply affected him in shaping his creative writings. His protagonists are clearly a reflection of him and their experiences are what Coelho himself has undergone, as he himself says: “I am all the characters in my books” and “they are actual things I’ve experienced” (Arias 172-73). Santiago in *The Alchemist* follows his personal legend believing in his dreams and ultimately achieves his goal by merging with the soul of the world. His journey is replica of Coelho’s own journey to find his true self. His native country, Brazil has deeply influenced him. He says that “being Brazilian greatly influences my artistic creative process, because here people are very intuitive not ashamed of experimenting with spiritual or the magical” (Arias 157). He is deeply influenced by George Luis Borges and Henry Miller for his heartfelt writing ability (Arias viii). He often quotes from the Bible. He believes in William Blake’s quote, “the road of excess leads to the palace
of wisdom.” (qtd. in Arias 158). His faith in this dictum is obvious from the kind of life he has led.

Sujatha Vijayaraghavan, like all the select novelists has been spiritually inclined all through her life. Besides her scholarly profundity, Vijayaraghavan too is steeped in Vedantic tradition of Indian philosophic thought as evident from her portrayal of mystic-protagonist, Pichaikuppan in her debut novel The Silent One, who undertakes an inward journey to reach the truth and his silence becomes a means to realize the truth and becomes immune to the concepts of time and place. The mystic-protagonist’s brooding silence has a profound impact on the people around him. He serves as a mystical thread that strings together several tales as an enigmatic figure. From the beginning, Pichai turns out to be clever, mature and good at Vedic studies. After becoming the master of the three Vedas, he undertakes the journey to realize the truth. He becomes immune to the all feelings and emotions and transcends time to eventually emerge as divinity personified.

III

Writers and their works

Hermann Hesse (1887-1967), a German novelist, poet and one of the greatest literary figures of the twentieth century was born in Calw in 1877 in a staunch Pietist missionary family. He was a rebellious boy who rebelled against the classical education that he received in Swabian monastery school (Mileck 7). He disliked “the severity of his parental Pietism” as he was bored with its theory and practice. And his parents’ narrow-mindedness made him search for the deeper and personal spirituality which he found in the eastern philosophy (160). He inherited his interest in India, as his grandfather, father and mother lived in India for many years as missionaries. His grandfather Dr. Hermann Gundert was a famous scholar who was preoccupied with the Sanskrit (3). Being an extremely sensitive boy, this early confrontation led to lifelong preoccupation with Indian religion and philosophy. But he was
sceptical towards any kind of salvation, whether it is based on Buddhism, Hinduism or Christianity.

Hesse was working as a freelance writer in 1904 when his first novels *Peter Camenzind* (1904) gained literary success. *Peter Camenzind*, a young man from a Swiss mountain village, leaves his home in search of new experience. Traveling through Italy and France, Camenzind is increasingly disillusioned by the suffering he finds around him; after failed romances and a tragic friendship, his idealism fades into crushing hopelessness. He finds peace again only when he cares for Boppi, an invalid who renews Camenzind’s love for humanity and inspires him once again to find joy in the smallest details of everyday life. This book foreshadows a number of themes that are intrinsic part of Hesse’s later works. The novel is a first person account of the eponymous character, who struggles through his youth to find his identity as an artist, and at another level trying to come to terms with his other identity as a human being who loves nature. This struggle takes him to different places as his life gets entwined with different people — falling in and out of love, finding and losing cherished friendships.

It was followed by the publication of *Beneath the Wheel* (1906) which reflected Hesse’s disgust with traditional education system. It severely criticizes education that focuses only on students’ academic performance. There are also autobiographical elements in the story, as Hesse himself underwent the same experience in his school days and was expelled from the school. His next novel *Gertrud* (1910) was styled as the memoir of a famous composer named Kuhn. *Gertrud* tells of his childhood and young adult years before it comes to the heart of the story; his relationships to two troubled artists, the eponymous Gertrud Imthor, and the opera singer Heinrich Muoth. Kuhn is drawn to Gertrud upon their first encounter, but she falls in love with and marries Muoth, whom the composer befriended as
well some years before. The two are hopelessly ill-matched, and their destructive relationship provides the basis for Kuhn's magnum opus.

Hermann Hesse's *Rosshalde* (1914) is the classic story of a man torn between obligations to his family and his longing for a spiritual fulfillment that can only be found outside the confines of conventional society. Johann Veraguth, a wealthy, successful artist, is estranged from his wife and stifled by the unhappy union. Veraguth’s love for his young son and his fear of drifting rootlessly keep him bound within the walls of his opulent estate, Rosshalde. Yet, when he is shaken by an unexpected tragedy, Veraguth finally finds the courage to leave the desolate safety of Rosshalde and travels to India to discover himself anew.

The First World War brought a profound change in Hesse. During this time he was in Switzerland and was making a scathing attack on prevailing moods of militarism and nationalism. It was during this time the novel *Demian* was written. *Demian* (1919) became his first novel that created waves in literary circles. *Demian* is the story of the boy, Emil Sinclair, and his search for himself. Emil was raised in a good traditional home. As a boy Sinclair views the world with in the walls of the home as representing all that is good, pure, innocent. But starting at the young age he feels a constant inner conflict between this world, which he refers to as the world of light and the outside world which represents sin, loneliness, deceit and insecurity. He constantly feels drawn towards the outside realm and is in this way somewhat estranged from his family and their sphere of security. He ends up vacillating between both and not belonging to either.

A visit to India in 1911 aroused his interest in pursuing eastern religion. He was greatly influenced by the culture of ancient Hindus and Chinese and had a strong impact on his work (Mileck 161). His three novels entitled *Siddhartha* (1922), *Journey to the East* (1932) and *The Glass Bead Game* (1943) testify to this assumption. All three works represent
the poeticized translation of his image of the East into his personal world. His later works deal with the individual’s search for spiritual fulfillment through mysticism. *Siddhartha* (1922) originally published in German under the title *Siddhartha: Eine Indische Dichtung*.

*Siddhartha* is a story of a young Brahmin’s quest for the ultimate reality. His quest takes him from the extremes of indulgent sensuality to the rigours of asceticism and self denial. Despairing of his condition, he goes to the river bank, sitting there silently he hears his inner self. He grasps the wholeness of life and experiences the sense of fulfillment and wisdom which comes with it. Siddhartha becomes epitome of his preoccupation with Indian philosophy and his personal development. It is not just the journey of the protagonist Siddhartha for salvation but also a journey of Hermann Hesse’s spiritual development. It is a reflection of thoughts that occupied his mind during this period. His disappointment with the hollowness of the West, led him to find some hope in the East, in its philosophies. Thus *Siddhartha* becomes a manifestation of Hesse’s inner journey towards spiritual development.

*Steppenwolf* (1927), which examines the conflict between bourgeois acceptance and spiritual self-realization, was highly influential in its time and brought him cult status among the young. The most popular, most innovative, most influential, and most controversial work grew out of a personal and artistic crisis. Just before Hesse started composing the novel, his short-lived second marriage to mentally unbalanced Ruth Wenger collapsed, his health deteriorated, and, approaching his 50th birthday, he suffered a severe midlife crisis (Temple 562). In order to overcome this crisis Hesse underwent psychoanalysis, meeting with Dr. Josef B. Lang, one of Carl Gustav Jung’s disciples, (Mileck 67) numerous times.

Hesse also wrote a cycle of poems, entitled *Krisis* (1928), which served as a palliative and which is closely linked with *Steppenwolf*. One of the poems, entitled “Steppenwolf,” eventually became part of the novel, with Harry Haller as its fictional author. Considering the novel’s genesis, it is not surprising that it is Hesse’s most autobiographical work. The book’s
protagonist shares his initials with the author and many of the locations and characters are based on those known by Hesse. Harry Haller’s existential crisis and his attempts at anesthetizing his pain by drowning it in alcohol, drugs, and sex mirror Hesse’s life between 1924 and 1926. Moreover, the riveting depiction of the protagonist as an outsider who despises war and technology and who rejects middle-class values, struck a chord with large parts of the American youth in the 1960s and the book became a best seller in the United States.

*The Journey to the East* (1932) is an attempt at reaching and embracing a timeless, non-geographic concept of unified existence. His goal is again the realization of the self. Neither space nor time exists on this journey whose goal is not only the East in the sense of geographical entity but it encompasses “everywhere” and “nowhere”. *Narcissus and Goldmund* (1930) is the story of a young man, Goldmund, who wanders around aimlessly throughout Medieval German after leaving a Catholic monastery school in search of meaning for his life. Narcissus, a gifted young teacher at the cloister school, quickly makes friends with Goldmund, as they are only a few years apart, and Goldmund is naturally bright. Goldmund looks up to Narcissus, and Narcissus has much fondness for him in return. After straying too far in the fields one day, on an errand gathering herbs, Goldmund comes across a beautiful gypsy woman, who kisses him and invites him to make love. This encounter becomes his epiphany; he now knows he was never meant to be a monk. With Narcissus’ help, he leaves the monastery and embarks on a wandering existence. Goldmund finds he is very attractive to women, and has numerous love affairs. After seeing a particularly beautiful carved Madonna in a church, he feels his own artistic talent awakening and seeks out the master carver, with whom he studies for several years. However, in the end Goldmund refuses an offer of guild membership, preferring the freedom of the road. When the Black Death devastates the region, Goldmund encounters human existence at its ugliest. Finally he
is reunited with his friend Narcissus, now an abbot, and the two reflect upon the different paths their lives have taken, contrasting the artist with the thinker. *The Glass Bead Game* (1943) also published as *Magister Ludi*, concerns duality and the conflict between contemplative and active life.

*The Glass Bead Game* is the last full-length novel of the German author. It was written during the period when Nazism poisoned the German mind and threatened to destroy all cultures. Hence, the work originated as a protest against the Teutonic furore and danger of destruction of all spiritual values of the past. Apart from the major works mentioned above he also wrote *Poems: Autobiographical writings* (1910-1932), *Reflections; Crises; Stories of Five Decades; A Pictorial Biography and Pictor’s Metamorphoses*. Hesse has many accolades to his credit—he was awarded the Bauernfeld Prize in 1904, Theodor Fontane Prize in 1919, Gottfried Keller Prize in 1936, Goethe Prize gave him long awaited national acclaim, and finally the Noble Prize in 1946 (Mileck 356) that brought him international fame.

He died of cerebral hemorrhage in his sleep on August 9, 1962 at the age of 85. Hermann Hesse was not appreciated much by the Anglo-Saxons during his long life. But he remained a popular writer on European continent and even in Japan for many decades. “He is considered the most widely-read author of German literature of this century” (Below).

Equally important novelist in Indian English fictional scenario has been Raja Rao, whose “advent on the literary scene has been described as the appearance of a new star shining bright” (Azam 34) was eldest of the ten children. Being born in a Brahmin family, he imbibed the religious, spiritual and intellectual environment of the family. He was familiar with various religious and philosophical traditions. He became a writer to express his vision of life. He is a confirm Advaita Vedantin, for whom there is hardly any distinction between the Braham and the universe. For him his writing is means of achieving enlightenment. Raja
Rao is one of the greatest of Indian novelists writing in English. Though the bulk of his published work is small, yet he has placed the Indo-Anglican novel on the world map and has achieved international fame and recognition.

Raja Rao won the Sahitya Akademi Award for literature in 1963 and the prestigious Padma Bhusan, awarded in 1969 by the government of India which officially stated Rao’s “valuable contribution as a writer to Indian nation”. In 2007 he was awarded the second highest civilian award, Padam Vibhushan posthumously (Alterno 7-8). He has been one of the most significant writers of modern India. Raja Rao has not been a prolific novelist, having written just four novels beginning with Kanthapura (1938) which is perhaps the finest evocation of the Gandhian age in Indian English Fiction. It describes the daily life of Indian villages during a revolt against an overbearing plantation owner. It presents realistic portrayal of the Gandhian struggle for the freedom of the country. It is a vivid, graphic and realistic picture of village life of a typical Indian village. This is artistically the best of his novels.

Raja Rao published his second novel The Serpent and the Rope in 1960, after a gap of 22 years. This novel, which took ten years in shaping itself, is a highly complex novel. Being at once the tragic story of a marriage of minds which drift apart; the spiritual autobiography of a learned, sensitive and imaginative modern Indian intellectual, as also a saga of this quest of self knowledge and self-fulfillment. Through this novel he founded a new genre- the philosophical novel. The novel is also regarded as the spiritual autobiography of the novelist. Raja Rao’s fiction is a reflection of his deep rooted Indian Vedantic philosophy.

Rao’s fiction is rooted in Indian tradition, thought and sensibility. His narrative offers various glimpses of spirituality. His protagonists are just a reflection of his own personality. Ramaswami, the protagonist of his magnum opus, The Serpent and the Rope, is fictionalized self of Raja Rao himself. The Serpent and the Rope is the outcome of his spiritual conflict that was going in his mind on his return to India in 1940. It was his Guru who showed him
light to follow the path of writing and which was part of his journey towards enlightenment. This novel is truly philosophical as the philosophical musing of Ramaswamy forms the core of the narrative.

His metaphysical novel *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965) is a tale of individual destiny. It is sub titled as *A Tale of Modern India*. *The Cat and Shakespeare* is the author's own statement as a sequel to *The Serpent and the Rope*. In *The Cat and Shakespeare* Ramakrishna Pai finds his Guru in Govindan Nair. Govindan Nair teaches absolute faith to Ramakrishna Pai. In *Comrade Kirillov* (1976), a quest of a different level can be perceived in Padmanabha Iyer, the central character of the novel. He is torn between the admiration for Communism and for Gandhian principles of non-violence. He believes that the principle of non-violence will not help the Indians. He is unhappy that the Indians are passive and feels that they cannot succeed in getting freedom mainly because of these principles.

At the same time, he is not able to forget his Vedantic past, and in *The Chessmaster and His Moves* (1988) he treats the quest for identity in various cultural contexts. *The Chessmaster and His Moves* is characterized by an array of meaningful symbols. In *The Chess Master and His Moves* also, the protagonist Sivarama, the mathematician is in search of the Absolute and Self-identity. He questions and analyses himself. He, through mathematical analogies tries to interpret life, tries to grasp the nature of the Absolute. In his journey of life, Sivarama comes across many people-Michael, Ratilal, Mireille, Suzanne, Jayalakshmi and others and his encounter with them results in his self evaluation.

Thus, his novels *Kanthapura, Comrade Kirillov, The Serpent and the Rope, The Cat and Shakespeare* and, *The Chessmaster and his Moves* represent the different stages in the spiritual evolution of the writer and they present different approaches to the Ultimate Reality. Thus, from Gandhism to Communism from Communism to religion, from the physical to the metaphysical, the Sadhaka moves on to the Ultimate Truth.
This quest for Truth is discernible even in his short stories. He published two collections of short stories, *The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories* (1947). A careful reader could notice metaphysical overtones even in casual conversations as in “The cow of the Barricades.” A greater depth can be found in the short stories “India-A Fable” and “The Policeman and The Rose,” which are symbolic. In “India --A Fable,” there is a fusion of fact and fantasy. *The Policeman and the Rose* (1978), is highly symbolic and the changing identity of symbols result in obscurity. The main theme however is realization of self. *On the Ganga Ghat* (1989), is a collection of short stories where he ponders over the mysterious nature of life and expresses his feeling through different characters and several works of nonfiction, including a biography of Gandhi (1998). Raja Rao’s place in the realm of Indian English fiction is secured as the most Indian of novelists in English, as stylist, symbolist, myth-maker, the finest painter of the East-Western encounter and as a philosophical novelist.

**Richard Bach** was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1936. His first love was flying. He attended Long Beach State College (now California State University, Long Beach) in 1955. Though flying was his passion, he always wanted to write. During his financial struggle he did all sorts of odd jobs from a mailman to freelance aviation writer. At the age of 23 in 1959, he wrote the first part of his highly successful novella *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, as he claims that a voice in his dream gave him a cinematic vision of the story. He was unable to complete the book as the vision has ended. Bach’s vision returned in 1967 and he finished the novel as he had begun it. Bach narrative is a fable, with Jonathan Livingston Seagull, its main character. The fable is all about seagull’s learning of self perfection. Due to his non-conformist attitude he is thrown out of the flock.

Bach’s narrative has spiritual overtones putting emphasis on inner path to attain one’s goal. Bach himself was a non-conformist and remained so throughout his life and “his books are mainly autobiographies inspired from his life events” (“Richard Bach”). Bach lived in the
troubled atmosphere of 1970s. People had lost faith in traditional religious values and morality. They wanted something to hold on to and stuck to eastern philosophies to find solace. Jonathan Livingston Seagull was a product of that troubled period.

Bach’s Jonathan Livingston Seagull like himself is breaker of rules and chooses the path of nonconformation. Bach’s narrative is an amalgamation of various religious philosophies of the east and west that gives the narrative strong spiritual overtones. “Bach’s simple allegory with spiritual and philosophical overtones received little critical recognition but captured the mood of the 1970s, becoming popular with a wide range of readers, from members of the drug culture to mainstream Christian denominations” (“Richard Bach”).

Jonathan Livingston Seagull (1970), the novella that made him popular world over, is a rendering of his experiences which he expresses through a seagull, Jonathan. He builds the plot around a seagull that is innovative and loved novelties in life. He has a dying thirst to attain higher levels of perfection in flying. On account of his new way of looking at things, he hurts the inflated egos and rigidities of his fellow seagulls. His new ideas are scorned. In order to live a different life and somewhat better life, Jonathan defies many established norms of the gull society. He has to pay the price for his individualism in form of social ostracism and left alone to die or repent for his blasphemy. Jonathan gets disheartened but he does not make any compromise as he values the mission of his life. He kept his spirit alive and enjoyed the freedom from control and restraint. He freely experiments with great ideas and daily tried new methods to dive and catch the prey. After strenuous efforts, he is able to master the art of diving and capturing prey from deep waters. The law-abiding members of the seagull society watched with disbelief how Jonathan has devised new ways to catch more food by straight diving. The story of his success reaches the leaders who now regretted their decision and felt the need of Jonathan’s methods for their own survival. Finally, the entire seagull society recognized Jonathan’s mastery and welcomed him back in the society.
Jonathan is a spark that departed from tradition and ignited the whole world. “It is not only about chasing dreams to soar, but about making your heaven through reaching higher states of consciousness. It is truly a book of all time” (Kumaraswamy).

His next novel, *Illusions: the Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah* (1977) is a book about the capacity to believe, philosophy of life filled with magic and faith, that every man has to do whatever he wants and be whoever he wants to be. Richard Bach tells us the story of a man like any other who meets a Messiah, himself a man like any other as well. And through the adventure that both share, flying from city to city, in their beloved biplanes, selling trips at three dollars for ten minutes in the air, Bach takes us from one ideal to the other, makes us believe in the impossible.

Written in a simple and unpretentious way, *Illusions* appeals to the heart of all. The author stays true to his very unique style of writing that appeals to the greatness of the soul and to a philosophy of life that is often lost in the day today reality. Bach’s novels are written in the first person, supposedly from his life. They are metaphysical exercises and all follow as a sort of sequel of ideas. *The Bridge Across Forever: A Love story* (1984), in which Bach falls in love with Leslie Parrish, may be thought of as a prequel to *One* (1988), which is written with her help. The book, with the bending of time and space, is about their relationship before and after they met each other. *One* explores the possibility of Bach’s life without Parrish. It is an interesting book that illustrates the importance of choice in the determination of the path that an individual’s life follows. Reality is determined by choices and individuals create their own reality by the choices they make. The individual is responsible for his own choices and different choices lead to different life paths. Other works of Bach includes *A Gift of Wings* (1989), *Air Ferrets Aloft* (2002), *Writer Ferrets: Chasing the Muse* (2002), *Rescue Ferrets at Sea* (2002), *The Last War: Detective Ferrets*

The novels of Paulo Coelho fascinate the readers with their long, twisting, often circuitous journeys to the core of existence, depicting human destiny and divine interventions. He tries to find answers to such question as to the reason why we are born, the purpose of our life, the identity of the entity that guides us, and whether we have the power to shape our destiny. He posits such question and leads the readers to answers that they themselves seem to derive with his assistance.

He is considered the propagator of New Age Christianity as his works are amalgamation of various philosophies of the east and the west that he came in contact with. In his youth as Coelho admits that he “started to experiment with all the other religions and sects, especially the Eastern ones…Hare Krishna, Buddhism, Yogic philosophy, everything” (Arias 34). His works gives the message that everyday life has a meaning and we are moving towards destinies. In total Coelho has sold more than 100 million books in over 150 countries worldwide, and his works have been translated into 67 languages. He is the all-time bestselling author of Portuguese language (“Paolo Coelho”).

He was born in on 24 August, 1947 in a middle class family, in the Botafogo neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro. His father was an engineer and his mother a housewife (Arias viii). During his school, Paulo detested the obligatory nature of religious practices. It was in school only that he took to writing. But that was not his ‘personal legend.’ He followed his dream and became a fiction writer. He started his career as a fiction writer with Pilgrimage. It is an autobiographical account of his journey to Santiago after having led a life of waywardness.

His most renowned novel, The Alchemist is a realisation of the personal legend of the protagonist Santiago. It is a quest novel. There are two quests going on simultaneously. On
the surface level, it is the quest for the treasure only by the main protagonist Santiago. But there is another deeper quest going on metaphorically and that is the quest to discover Santiago’s personal legend. Santiago the protagonist undertakes the journey to find a treasure, overcoming obstacles coming on the way. During his journey he meets an Englishman who tells him that the goal of alchemists is to purify metal by heating it for many years until its entire individual properties are burned. While travelling he meets an Alchemist, with whom he learns many things to grow in spirit, is a day to day encounter. And, he overcomes his last obstacle on his way when he talks to elements: the desert, the wind the sun and finally the soul of the world. Recognising his connection to all things makes him more humble and respectful of people animal plants and nature. In this journey to find a personal legend he wins something and loosen something but the knowledge he gains, it makes his spiritual growth possible. Santiago is overwhelmed with joy as he realises that he has got his real treasure. That is the wisdom he got during his journey.

Since publishing *The Alchemist*, Coelho has gone on to publish other titles including *Brida* (1990), the protagonist Brida, is a young Irish girl and the novel deals with her quest for knowledge. She has always been interested in various aspects of magic but is not satisfied what she knows and yearns for more. The themes of love, passion, mystery and spirituality have been woven into the fabric of this novel. Finding herself leaning towards magic and mysticism, she embarks on a journey to have the secrets of life and existence taught to her by a willing and knowledgeable teacher. The story is a mixture of magic, enlightenment, reincarnation, self-purpose, and the quest for Love. Like most of his books, this novel is steeped in mysticism and spirituality, a combination with continuous revelations. Discussing various rituals that lay within the Wiccan religion, Coelho offers an intimate insight into a taboo subject and Religion. The story manages to lead the reader to consider the idea of reincarnation, which plays a key role in the Wiccan religion. He also introduces the idea
and/or possibility of finding and loving two soul mates in the same lifetime, leaving the reader questioning the possibility that perhaps Love or the idea of it, is far beyond grasp and simple comprehension.

_The Valkyries_ (1992), a story that is more biographical than it is fiction. In his quest to speak with angels, Paulo indulges himself by heading out to California to the Mojave Desert, where he will meet a boy named Gene, whom can help him try to find out the way he could learn to speak with his Angel. _By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept (1994)_ This is a story about a journey symbolizing the path to self realization. The story deals with the theme of love and how love is not an obstacle but a force to conquer the dreams and thus find God.

_The Fifth Mountain_ by Paulo Coelho was published in 1996 and was his fourth major publication. It underlines the message that at times it is best to make our destinies and fight for what we believe rather than to accept our fates. In this path we would find great obstacles and may be defeated many times, but from each disaster we find the strength to rebuild. This story may be considered religious in focus, despite a strong focus on the theme of rebellion against God. In this book, Coelho has explored the manner in which the prophetic questioning of authority, rebellion and liberation and thinking for oneself are important in one’s relationship with God and one's life work. At the same time the novel is a powerful metaphor of human self-confidence and strong desire for self-fulfillment by helping other humans. The protagonist finds ultimately the strength to overcome all misfortunes in him, in his deeply human desire to help the others and to be creative. And he finds out that God is in his own heart. _Manual of a Warrior of Light (1997)_ is a 1997 collection of Paulo Coelho’s teachings summed up into one volume. It includes proverbs, extracts from the Tao Te Ching, _the Bible_, the book of Chuang Tzu, the Talmud and various other sources, and is written in the form of short philosophical passages.
Coelho has published 29 books. Two of them – *The Pilgrimage* and *The Valkyries* – are autobiographical, while the majority of the rest are fictional, although rooted in his life experiences. Coelho is most read novelist of contemporary world and his fictional output is profuse. His other popular works include *Veronika decides to Die* (1998), *The Devil and Miss Prym* (2000), *Eleven Minutes* (2003), *The Zahir* (2005). The book touches on themes of love, loss and obsession. The Zahir is again a quest novel dealing with the theme of journey of the protagonist, that is physical as well as spiritual and in the process discovers his own self and reborn as new person with new understanding of the nature of love and power of destiny. *The Witch of Portobello* was published in 2006 followed by *The Winner Stands Alone* in 2008. In addition to his books, Coelho also has a weekly column which is published in several Brazilian newspapers and is syndicated internationally.

Sujatha Vijayraghavan, a Professor in Pondicherry University, India specializes in translation, folklore studies. Her translated book, *Hundred Tamil Folk and Tribal Tales* consists of translation from several dialects of Tamil. Her book *In The Presence of Divine: Narratives of Experience with Mahaperiyal*, is a translated version of Tamil book, *Darisana Anubhavangal*, which is a compilation by the Sri Matha of devotees’ experiences, written by Sri Kothandarama Sastri. Her forthcoming translation includes *Adisankra's Short Philosophical Hymns of Prakarna Granthas* which will be published by the Sahitya Academy and an edited volume of *The Commentary on Sri Krishnakarnamruthian*, a thirteen century text on devotional love. She was awarded Sahitya Akademi citation for translation of Mudra Tribal Folksongs. *Pichaikuppan* is her debut novel that was long listed for the 2007 Man Asian Literary Prize. It was published as *The Silent One* in 2009.
III

Critical Survey

Even though the writings of the select novelists in this dissertation may have received considerable critical attention, but a comparative analyses such as the present one from the viewpoint of their philosophical orientations, craftsmanship, cultural contexts, subjectivities in modern context and various influences on their works, have not been attempted as yet. Theodore J. Zilkowski’s *The Novels of Hermann Hesse: A Study in Theme and Structure* 1971 focuses on Hesse’s craftsmanship and locates him in the context of twentieth century literature and thought. His essay “*Siddhartha: The Landscape of the Soul*” discusses the influence of Eastern thought and religion on Hesse’s writing of *Siddhartha* and finds parallels between the life of Buddha and that of Siddhartha. Mark Boulby in his essay, “*Siddhartha*” describes Hesse’s familiarity with the East as evident in *Siddhartha* and many of author’s writings. Earnst Rose in *Faith from Abyss: Hermann Hesse’s Way from Romanticism to Modernity*, reflects on the facts of life that surrounds Hermann Hesse. Rose comments on the artistic logic that prompted Hesse to use the influence of his own life experience in writing *Siddhartha*. Robert Donald Spector in his essay “*Artist against himself: Hesse’s *Siddhartha*” comments on Hesse’s belief that the communication of essential truth can take place only in person’s own experiential circumstances and the effect of this belief on literary art. Bryne A. Bardine explains in his essay “*Hermann Hesse’s *Siddhartha* as Divine Comedy*” that Hesse’s *Siddhartha* should be categorized as a divine comedy, as it fully validates all eight characteristics of divine comedy suggested by Eugene R. August.

David. G. Richard examines Hesse’s idea of unity in *Siddhartha*, and asserts that it is an intellectual construct not based on personal experience. Sanjay Narsimhaiah criticises various shortcomings in *Siddhartha* stating that the novel is deficient in enactment, frequently
confusing, and that the novelist uses his characters as puppets rather than letting the characters define themselves. Madison Brown brings out the Indian elements in *Siddhartha* in her essay “Toward a Perspective for the Indian Element in Hermann Hesse’s *Siddhartha,*” Colin Butler on the other hand finds Siddhartha a fictitious biography of the author and finds it unconvincing. In his essay “Hesse’s Use of *Gilgamesh*-motifs in the Humanization of Siddhartha and Harry Haller,” Kenneth Hughes strives to illuminate *Siddhartha* in light of motifs important in the Babylonian *Gilgamesh* epic. Hans Beerman’s research article on “Hermann Hesse and the *Bhagavad-Gita*” traces the influence of the the *Gita* on Hesse’s writings and life.

Leroy R. Shaw through his essay “Time and structure of Hermann Hesse’s *Siddhartha*” assesses Hesse’s attempt in *Siddhartha* to transcend the limitation of time and space to experience temporal unity. Eugene I. Stelzig’s essay “Ticino legends of saints and sinners” in *Hermann Hesse’s fiction of Self: Autobiography and Confessional Imagination* discusses *Siddhartha* in terms of autobiography, biography, life and art and subjectivity evident in modern literature. Johannes Malthaner’s essay entitled “Hermann Hesse: *Siddhartha*” deals with the relative unpopularity of Hesse’s writing in the United States before 1950s due to Hesse’s preoccupation with autobiography. Gunter Baumann in “Hermann Hesse and India” traces three stages of Hesse’s preoccupation with India and how *Siddhartha* is influenced by this confrontation with Indian way of life.

Raja Rao holds a significant position Indian writings in English. Nevertheless, he could receive meaningful critical attention only after about ten years of his writing career. It was *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) his masterpiece, that established him as a great Indian English writer. This metaphysical novel, because of its depth has attracted a number of critics. The earliest critics of Raja Rao include K. R. Srinivasa Iynegar, C. D. Narsimhaiah
and M. K. Naik. Prof. Iyengar in his *Indian Writing in English* throws light on the salient features of his works, like the Gandhian impact, the metaphysical and the mythical aspects and his accomplishments as a fictional artist. C. D. Narsimhaiah, in his book *Raja Rao* has critically analyzed his short stories as well as novels. Narsimhaiah’s criticism reveals his closer reading of Raja Rao’s works. Paul Sharad’s *Raja Rao and Cultural Tradition* focuses on Indian tradition and western influence. M. K. Naik’s *Raja Rao* is full length study of Raja Rao’s works. He has dealt with the Advaitic strain in *The Serpent and the Rope*. Shiva Niranjan in his *Novelist as Sadhaka* focuses on the spiritual consciousness of the author and analyses how it is manifested in each of his novels. He brings out the Advaitic and Vashist Advaitic strains in his novels.

P. Dayal in his book *Raja Rao - A Study of His Novels* discusses the philosophical consciousness of Rao while stressing upon the tantric elements in his works. He also discusses western influence on Raja Rao. Shyamala Narayan’s *Man and his Works* is an extensive analysis of his novels and structural aspects like plot, characterization, narrative, technique, style and the philosophical messages. Nivedita Nanda in her *Raja Rao and Religious Tradition* shows that it is the influence of the Hindu religious tradition that is more dominant in his works than Hindu philosophies. Esha Day has analyzed the works of Raja Rao with an aim to trace the growth of Raja Rao as a novelist. She has analyzed Raja Rao’s novels as a quest for identity while showing the impact of western literary tradition and western philosophies. Anu Celly’s *Women in Raja Rao’s Novel—A Feminist Reading of The Serpent and the Rope*, throws light on women characters of Raja Rao. She feels that the portrayal of women characters is traditional and male-centered.

Paulo Coelho’s *The Alchemist* has been immensely popular as innumerable reviews have been written on this inspirational fable discussing various aspects of the book such as New Age Spirituality, use of archetypes, symbols and nature of truth. *The Guardian* rates
him as one of the biggest selling authors today, who uses symbols, dreams and archetypes to convey simple but universal truth. Alan Riding in the article “Paulo Coelho: Writing in Global Language” talks about the universal appeal of his works. According to him, “[. . .] through their portrayals of more generic spiritual searches or inner journeys, many of his books have spoken to readers in countries with cultures and beliefs as different as Egypt and Israel, India and Japan.” Elizabeth Day states that the universal language we find in *The Alchemist* is an intrinsic part of the life of the writer as he himself pays attention to the omens in daily life. Jyoti Mishra’s *Paulo Coelho’s Fiction Existential and Spiritual Preoccupation: Select Study of Seven Novels* is a full length study of Coelho’s first seven novels. It brings out the spirituality shrouded in the veil of existential predicament of the protagonists.

Likewise, various book reviews have been written on *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. Early reviews made scathing attack on this allegorical book. *Publishers Weekly* considered the photographs to be the best part of the novel otherwise having a strange storyline. Jean Caffey Lyles observes that the success of the book lies in its ambiguity as anyone can interpret it the way they want and calls it the only merit of the book. Richard R. Lingeman and Andrew M. Greeley also made pungent remarks on the novel finding it without true soul. In 1972, Timothy Foote in *Time* magazine threw some light on the cultural phenomena surrounding it. Most of the Christians denounced the book. But the book and its writer was popular among youngsters of 1970s due to its open ended spiritual message which lets the readers to decide for themselves their purpose of life. Averamenko in his article calls *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* a parable as it alludes “to the Bible, the main concepts of Buddhism, Zen and anthroposophy. Among the biblical facts which are most often alluded to in the text of parable is the life of Jesus Christ on Earth in human incarnation, his spreading the ideas of love kindness and all forgiveness while preaching to his apostles, his working miracles, his banishment, his divine genesis and hence his electiveness” (1). Whereas B. K.
Mishra calls it “a story of flight in various levels of consciousness,” Michel Clasquin explores the text from Mahayana Buddhist perspective. However, Beverly Byrne made a scathing attack on Jonathan Livingston Seagull as he observes: “One hopes that this is not the parable for our time, popular as it is . . . [it] opens up into almost nothing” (Byrne).

Sujatha Vijayaraghavan’s The Silent One, since its publication has drawn the attention of readers with its simplicity of language, gripping narrative and brooding spirituality. Chethana Dinesh in a book review observes: “The book allows a glimpse of a world that is not bound by our ideas of logic and reasoning” (Dinesh). Though long-listed for the 2007 Man Asian Literary Prize, it has not attracted much critical attention so far. Hence, its textual potential is yet to be explored and the present researcher has some fresh ground to tread by way of textual analyses of Vijayaraghavan’s The Silent One.

From the above critical survey, it becomes evident that there is hardly any book or article exclusively devoted to cross-culturally exploring fiction as spiritual space via analyzing mystic-protagonists hailing from diverse socio-cultural climes. Thus, the present work seeks to undertake a cross-cultural, comparative critique with a view to establish inter-cultural dialogue via critically appreciating texts from various cultural backgrounds portraying mystic-protagonists having remarkable points of convergence and divergence.

The dissertation has been divided into four chapters preceded by an exhaustive Introduction and followed by a Conclusion. Introduction presents a brief overview of world fiction with a clear spiritual/ mystical slant from diverse literary traditions of the world. It is followed by discussion of the mystical orientation of the select fiction writers who have portrayed mystic-protagonists in their novels. Thereafter, resume of their life and works has been given followed by an exhaustive survey of the criticism available on these novelists to eventually demonstrate that no such work as the present dissertation has been done till date.
which discusses fiction as spiritual space and which brings in five novelists from diverse socio-cultural climes to comparatively analyze the portrayal of their mystic-protagonists.

Chapter 1, “Theorizing Fiction as Spiritual Space” presents a conceptual overview of the theoretical framework within which the present research project will operate. An attempt has been made to theorise fiction as spiritual space with a view to demonstrate as to how it has been used by the novelists undertaken for critical analysis to portray their mystic-protagonists. The strategies adopted by each novelist to portray mystic as protagonist shall be examined separately thereby evidencing as to how the five novels make an interesting case for a cross-cultural analysis.

The novels, Siddhartha and The Serpent and the Rope have been taken up for critical analyses in the first unit, which aims at analyzing Hesse and Raja Rao’s spiritual space created by Hesse and Raja Rao through their novels for their mystic-protagonists to propound their philosophy of life. Coelho’s The Alchemist, Bach’s Jonathan Livingston Seagull and Vijayaraghavan’s The Silent One have been analyzed in the second unit to bring out the uniqueness in their fictional spiritual space by placing emphasis on various philosophies, symbols, metaphors and theme of spiritual quest that enrich their fictional framework. The final unit takes up the points of convergence and divergence of the writers during the analyses of these texts to offer summation.

The second chapter entitled “The Existential Preoccupation of the Mystic Protagonist” brings to light the existential preoccupation in the form of angst and anxiety of the mystics/protagonists/questers encounter on their path to actualization of their spiritual potentials. The first unit brings out the analysis of stages of quest of the protagonists in terms of Campbellian quest cycle and Carl Gustav Jung’s process of individuation. Siddhartha and The Serpent and the Rope have been taken up for analysis to bring out the necessity of angst
and anxiety to make the protagonists aware of their inauthentic existence so that they are propelled in their quest for authentic existence. *The Alchemist, Jonathan Livingston Seagull* and *The Silent One* have been analyzed with the aim to bring out the existential anxiety that the protagonists have to face in their first stage of quest. The last unit analyses mystic-protagonists by comparing them to highlight the points of divergence and convergence from the viewpoint of their cultural conditioning in diverse cultural setups.

**The third chapter** entitled “Transcending Existential Dilemma” demonstrates through textual analyses as to how the mystic-protagonists transcend existential and spiritual dilemma to actualize their dream in life. The unit one like in the foregoing chapters analyses *Siddhartha* and *The Serpent and the Rope* with the aim to demonstrate as to how mystic protagonists/seekers don’t get stuck with existential dilemma. They are able to negotiate/resolve it successfully, and transcend it thereby attaining enlightenment. The second unit analyses *The Alchemist, Jonathan Livingston Seagull* and *The Silent One* in order to bring out their spiritual awakening and thereby progress towards their spiritual enlightenment. The points of convergence and divergence in all protagonists have been taken up in the final unit of the chapter to offer a summation.

**The fourth and last chapter** entitled “The Arrival” analyses the last stage of quest ending in self realization. The first unit takes up the analysis of the concept of enlightenment/self realization as a dynamic concept that doesn’t end with the attainment of perfect state of being. *Siddhartha* and *The Serpent and the Rope* have been analyzed to bring out the different nature of enlightenment attained by Siddhartha and Ramaswamy. The second unit takes up the analysis of *The Alchemist, Jonathan Livingston Seagull* and *The Silent One*. While Santiago and Jonathan have been analyzed as self actualized being, the silent one has been portrayed as having attained *Moksha*, thus liberating himself from the cycle of birth and death. The third unit views the salvation or self realization as Campbellian
“return” as enunciated in The Hero with A Thousand Faces for the betterment of the society. The comparative analysis of the various mystic protagonists in order to bring out the uniqueness of each spiritual space has been done in the last unit of the chapter.

**Conclusion** will offer summation of the ideas dealt with in the foregoing chapters. Besides encapsulating textual analyses and observations in the foregoing chapters, it will also attempt to enlarge the scope of the thesis via pointing out further scope of research.