CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION
THE WRITER AS A HERO AND THE HERO AS A WRITER
Introduction

Literature, as one of the highest forms of development of human sensibility, is also a social phenomenon which is inspired by socio-political events, wherein writers create a world of make-belief which is a living document not only of contemporary happenings but also of the historical processes underlying them. Literature is a reflection of life and no writer has ever written in isolation from his socio-cultural, political and economic environment. A writer does not only portray reality but also persuades us to view it from a certain point of view. Ostensibly, all writers are heroes because they always inspire people to strive for egalitarianism, to question the status quo and to raise their voice against any form of oppression. They teach people how to live, how to survive through hard times, and how to die. They serve as society’s mirror and conscience simultaneously. Above all, writers are always looking for ways to make their fictional heroes of world come alive, to make them real to get inside the characters’ head.

The ultimate mission of every writer is to liberate the minds of the oppressed and the oppressor in order to cultivate a harmonious society. The message for every credible writer is the same; it is the style that may make the difference. A writer provides in his writings a certain articulate vision, which maintains order in society in the absence of which social life will be sterile and futile as resonated in the words of Sartre, “Literature must be made to serve a political purpose, since literature, truth, democracy and other human values are bound up in a kind of program” (The Power, 3).

In Marxist terms, the dialectical materialism of Marx and his followers who believe that literature and art, along with other “ideologies”, are determined by “the mode of production in material life” (Literature and Art, 1) and by “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas” (The German Ideology, 64), writers are the representative of a particular class whether the ruling or the ruled. However, in the dialectical process, manifested in the class struggle, “art expresses the tendencies of a rising and therefore revolutionary class” (Literature and Art, 25). Other Marxist critics, like Spengler, regard Literature as a ‘prime phenomena’ while Sorokin includes other cultural aspects, all of which show essentially the same trends. In 1934 Elliott and
Merrill regarded literature as probably “the most significant index” of social disorganization, but the latest edition of their text fails to mention literary indexes (Social Disorganization, 45).

The appearance of heroes in literature marks a revolution in thought that occurred when writers and their audiences turned their attention away from immortal gods to mortal men. The hero has always been an image of the mysteries in the literary creativity, both of writing and reading. Heroes like Odysseus, Gilgamesh, the Ancient Mariner, Marlow, the Knights of Arms, and the woman in ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’ tell their stories themselves and reveal the world by their heroic journey. The heroic journey is performed through the path of mythological adventure, Joseph Campbell held that during his journey, the hero undergoes various phases when he leaves his place and proceeds on his mythological path, meets helpers, faces tests and finally returns as a hero. Campbell calls these phases, “Separation, Initiation and Return which might be named the nuclear unit of Monomyth” (The Hero, 30). Similarly, their audiences undertake the journey too, which becomes a symbolic allegory of the intricacies of reading and interpretation.

The hero of The Epic of Gilgamesh is the first hero in the Western epic tradition to have a human component. Gilgamesh is two-thirds god and one-third human. He is portrayed as a hero whose pride in his divine nature is a danger to himself as well as to others. He represents the quest of the hero as found in the epics of search. The one-third human hero here goes in search of adventures with his half-animal companion. Here the semi divine hero’s failure in his quest makes him acknowledge his humanity and he becomes the forerunner of the heroes of the epics of warfare. The character and destiny of Gilgamesh is of the human hero where defeat is a dramatic necessity (Levy, 15). The Odyssey is very similar to The Epic of Gilgamesh as far as the structure is concerned. In Odyssey the experience of the hero such as ritual segregation, blind wanderings and recognition are almost identical as that in The Epic of Gilgamesh. The struggle that Odysseus has to face is with the elements of physical nature such as, the wind, the stone and the sea. Odysseus forsakes immortality and eternal youth- the two eternal youth-the two essential desires of any hero-for his return to his own land.
According to Leslie Paul, the hero’s foremost mission has always been to bring new lease of life to an ailing culture. The hero has always been an image of the mysteries in the literary creativity, both of writing and reading. Commenting on the intrinsic and symbiotic relationship between hero and literary creativity, Evans Lansing Smith opines:

The hero can be approached as a metaphor not only for the transformation of the society and the self but also as a metaphor for the processes by which stories are created and interpreted…the fact that the hero journey has always been an image of the mysteries of the processes of literary creativity, both of writing (poesis) and reading (hermeneutics).

(The Hero Journey, XVI)

Ostensibly, the hero’s journey is reflected in different shades and contours in literature. Shaped and molded by society, the hero is also a representative of the society and his action is centred on various socio-political events. The genesis of the great men depends on the long series of complex influences which has produced the community in which he appears, and the social state into which community has slowly grown. It is the dual process of interaction between society and hero where the hero remakes his society and his society also shapes him.

In the process of literary creativity, the hero is an alter-ego, a mouth-piece and a reflection of the writer himself. Writer’s philosophy, ideology and vision are conveyed through the hero be it Demoke in *A Dance of the Forests*, Feste in *Twelfth Night*, Nikhil in *The Home and the World*, Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger* and Lucky Jim in *Lucky Jim*.

Writers worldwide have been creating heroes epitomised as the master of conflicts striving to understand the competing forces. The conviction of hero within the fictional world recreates and redefines the society by means of his action which is the
conviction of the writer himself. As pointed out by Robert Scholes there exists, “three possible relations between any fictional world and the world of experience. A fictional world can be better than the world of experience, worse than it, or equal to it” (*Northrop Frye and Critical Method*, 24). This dialectical relationship between the fictional world and the world of experience makes the hero an ever evolving entity.

In post colonial societies, the role of writers has always been more significant and challenging. Both India and Nigeria as a post colonial nation have been grappling with the legacy of colonial aftermath marked by materialism, inhumanity and socio-political instability. Rabindranath Tagore and Wole Soyinka represent the two most radical and powerful voices from India and Nigeria respectively, voices who have made an indelible impression on Indian and Nigerian mind. They both delved deep into the surface reality to explore the deeper social and moral truths of their epoch. Both represent the intellectual movement of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century where writers had been grappling with outrage and disenchantment of the societies undergoing the pangs of colonialism. Wole Soyinka has always refused to be a mere chronicler of his times and has always believed in writer’s role and responsibility much beyond a mere chronicler as reflected in his ever resonating words:

> When the writer in his own society can no longer function as conscience, he must recognize that his choice lies between denying himself totally or withdrawing to the position of chronicler and post-mortem.  

*(The Writer, 21)*

I

I.1. Rabindranath Tagore and Wole Soyinka as Men of Letters

Rabindranath Tagore represents nineteenth century Indian literary revival. Born in the year of 1861 in Calcutta, Bengal Presidency of British India, he is the iconic figure and a universal voice of colonial India and the literature produced in it. Writing
during the times of intense socio-political turmoil in the country, Tagore always raised his voice against meaningless superstition and life stifling practices prevalent in the Indian society. He was prominently known for awakening the Indians in particular and the world in general from a somnambulistic state by his creative writings. He believed in the eternal truth of humanism and instinctive knowledge of the essential good. He supported human values, compassionate love and non-violence instead of religiosity, traditional practices and violence. Tagore made these pronouncements in the 1890s when the winds of Neo-Hinduism were blowing strongly, and he himself was influenced by the current. He derived his impetus from negation, i.e. rejection of Western superiority by posing spiritualism against materialism. His subsequent thinking progressed by the negation of this negation and only then he arrived at a true synthesis of manhood. Just weeks before Tagore’s death, he summed up his experience:

This world, I knew/ is not a dream./ My own being I
saw/ written in blood./ through hurt after hurt, pain
after pain./ I came to know myself./ truth is hard/ that
hardness I loved/ it never deceives.

(Kripalani, 207)

Tagore’s demise in the year 1941 brought an end to a great period of intellectual renaissance in Indian literature. Commenting on Tagore’s humanism, Humanyun Kabir, one of the eminent writers and thinkers of modern India avers:

Rabindranath Tagore was one of the greatest humanists that the world has known. The keynote of his life was resistance to tyranny in all forms. He struggled against economic exploitation, political subjugation, social inertia and injustice and religious intolerance and insensitiveness.

(Rabindranath on Religion, 32)
Wole Soyinka represents the late nineteenth and early twentieth century revival of consciousness in Nigeria during the times when Nigeria as a nation was undergoing the pangs of slavery, colonization, corruption, inhumanity and the bourgeoisie. Born in the year of 1934 in Abeokuta Nigeria Protectorate now Ogun State in Nigeria, he is one of the sternest and most revolutionary writers of the present age, endowed with a powerful social vision. The most significant aspect of Soyinka’s work lies in his approach to literature as a serious agent of social change and his radical commitment to promoting human rights in Nigeria. To him, the artist should be the vision of his people, and through his powerful writings, he believes transformation can be achieved and intends to make his society come to terms with the nature of their problems which is an indispensable step towards solving them. He exposes and negates the ills and vices of his society such as the lust for materialism, moral and spiritual bankruptcy, exploitation, snobbery, corruption, bureaucracy and hypocrisy in modern urban life. He is greatly concerned about the wellbeing of common man and his works constitute a keen dissection of his own society. To him, human life is an act of sacrifice and an individual is engaged in an incessant struggle to be absorbed into the cosmic oneness despite the fact that there exists a vast abyss in which human endeavors for transition, often ends. The heroism of an individual depends on the ability to exercise individual will and Soyinka’s use of theatre is a platform for the salvation of the society through the exercise of individual will by the hero as Eldred Jones aptly analyzed:

Soyinka sees society as being in continual need of salvation for itself. This act of salvation is not a mass act. It comes about through the vision and dedication of individuals who doggedly pursue their vision. In spite of the opposition of the very society they seek to save. They frequently end up as the victims of the society which benefits from their vision. The salvation of the society then depends on exercise of the individual will.

(African Theatre Today, 76)
Nationalism brought a new change in Soyinka’s thinking, and like Achebe, he criticizes the colonial intervention, and raises his voice in favor of his own lost values and traditions, which marks their culture identity and heritage. He is clear about the economic progress and material benefits ushered in by the colonialists but, at the same time, he is more interested in Africa’s past, her history and her archaeology. His works reveal the vital role this Nobel Laureate of 1986 has played in the socio-political consciousness of the Nigerian people and also in exposing the British imperialism, without reducing his art to mere propaganda. Isidore Okpewho, a professor of English at the University of Ibadan who specializes in oral literature but writes novels as well, examines Soyinka’s achievements in different light:

On the aesthetic side of things, I think that Soyinka has demonstrated—much more than any African writer has done to date—the essential *mythic* foundations of the creative activity. By this I mean that he has thought his work, revealed quite convincingly the stress between a loyalty to life as it starkly and (in the peculiar case of Africa’s socio-political conditions) painfully presents itself to us and the urge to construct a scale of reality towards which we ought constantly to strive. In this regard, he has plumbed the mythology of his people (the Yoruba) and identified a figure who for him captures the essence of this stress; the god Ogun, a patron of metal and of the arts and occupations derived there from…it is therefore fair to say that, more than any writer on this continent, Soyinka has subjected his indigenous traditions to true creative alchemy and derived a symbolic essence which has served him well in an examination of the large issues of human existence.

*(Literary Criterion, 53)*
As highlighted, both Tagore and Soyinka were entrenched in their roots, while at the same time possessed an unflinching faith in the power of advancement and progression. Rabindranath Tagore came from a Brahmin family of writers and thinkers, inherited the divided consciousness of colonial India and during Bengali renaissance attempted an East/West synthesis into a global culture of “the Universal human spirit” (Smith, 258-259). Soyinka, on the other hand, asserted his Yoruba tribe’s identity and rituals as reflected in his literary works and at the same time comprehends the relevance of such rituals in modern times due to his nearness to the West. The grip of traditional rituals is as strong on the Yoruba mind as it is on the Indian mind. It is a Herculean task to free the mind from such rituals and Tagore and Soyinka stresses upon the power of human will, which has the power to bring about change.

Both Tagore and Soyinka intend to make the society come to terms with the nature of their problems which is an indispensable step towards solving the problem. They explored in depth the socio-political situation of the Indian and Nigerian society. They tried to point out and unravel the society’s lack of awareness and raise the spirit of nationalism. The strong socio-political overtones in the writings of Wole Soyinka make him an extremely relevant writer particularly in Nigerian context in view of the fact that writing has been a mission for African writers as has been highlighted by Chinua Achebe:

An African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issue of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant.

(*Politics and Aesthetics*, 32)

In the same way, all dramas of Rabindranath Tagore are vehicles of thought rather than an expression of action. In his writing from youth to middle age, Tagore explored the “contours of the fractured Indian psyche, identified its various complex components and searched for a resolution to the problems of manhood and feminine identity in colonial India” (Chaudhuri and Subramanyam, 247-248). By his experiment
at Santiniketan, he sought to teach his countrymen how to build the nation by constructive self-help, eschewing reliance on the white ruling power.

The unflinching humanistic outlook of Tagore and Soyinka makes them a powerful voice of humanity which has been betrayed and mutilated since time immemorial and the deep concern of these writers is reflected in the portrayal of their heroes who are an embodiment of their creative and literary sensibilities. Both Rabindranath Tagore and Wole Soyinka negated the theory of “White Man’s Burden” and worked to re-construct and re-build their respective societies. Being progressive in outlook and optimistic in vision, both these writers portrayed a hero, who is an embodiment of their own spirit and vision. Interestingly, the heroes of their plays were mostly common members of the society who worked for the welfare of the fellow members. At the same time, he also represents the innate nature of the dramatists either Tagore or Soyinka. Thus, the revolutionary literature of Tagore and Soyinka awaken the masses and impelled them to unite as has been explicated by Mao Tse-Tung:

Revolutionary literature and art should create a variety of characters out of real life and help the masses to propel history forward. For example, there is suffering from hunger, cold and oppression on the one hand, and exploitation and oppression of man by man on the other. These facts exist everywhere and people look upon them as common-place. Writers and artists concentrate such everyday phenomena, typify the contradictions and struggles within them and produce works which awaken the masses, fire them with enthusiasm and impel them to unite and struggle to transform their environment.

(Interlude-Talks at the Yenan Forum, 25)
I.1.a Writer as a Hero and Hero as a Writer

Drama being an objective genre imparts liberty to a writer to impersonally present his views and ideals through his hero. The writer’s heroic resistance to the evils in the society is iconised through the brave challenges of the hero who is created for a play. All writers persuade us to see their fictional heroes as the incarnation of their own ideas which they want to celebrate. They stand for the conscience of the society. They play as the role model for the society in which they live. The hero is also a symbolic representation of the person who is experiencing the story while reading, listening or watching. The relevance of the hero to the individual relies a great deal on how much similarity there is between the two. The most compelling reason for the hero as writer of stories and myths is the human inability to view the world from any perspective but a personal one. The almost universal notion of the protagonist and its resulting hero identification allows us to experience stories in the only way we know how as ourselves. The hero shapes and frames the parts of the story according to different roles and in this way, the hero acts like the writer, who also decides the roles of other characters.

A hero like the writer himself cannot be seen in isolation from the socio-cultural and economic environment. He is created out of the complex social situation that needs him for rejuvenation. The hero epitomized as the icon for the redefinition of the society which he represents can be called the very embodiment of the socio-political ideology of the writer himself as can be seen in the plays of Rabindranath Tagore and Wole Soyinka. As analyzed in the plays of Tagore and Soyinka, there exist vicarious presence of writer as the hero both in the internal and the external world. Their hero challenges the tradition of suffering and exploitation and being a most common member of the society shares the pains and sorrows of their fellow people. They sacrifice their individual happiness for the welfare of the nation. The writers attempt to find a proper objective correlative for their subjective thought process and ideals in their plays. Their heroes reflect the true nature of the social reality of their age. Their heroes besides reflecting the true nature of modern society exhibit their creator’s faith in human endeavor or the philosophy of Karma as expounded in the Bhagwat Gita by Shri Krishna when He says:
Karmany evadhikaras te ma phalesu kadachana ma
karma-phala-hetur bhur ma te sango ‘stv akarmani’

(Bhagwat Gita: Chapter Two verse 47)

‘You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty’.

(Bhagwat-gita As It Is, 121)

It is action which makes a man and not reducing him to a mere cog in a mechanistic society. The nature of Tagorean and Soyinkan hero thus reflects the social vision of Tagore and Soyinka which is affirmative, liberal and humanistic. The duties of the true and iconic hero as prescribed in the great Indian epic Mahabharata hold universal relevance:

sacrifice, learning, exertion, ambition, wielding ‘the rod of punishment’, fierceness, protection of subjects, knowledge of the Vedas, practice of all kinds of penances, goodness of conduct, acquisition of wealth, and gifts to deserving persons…

(Mahabharata, 12.23.911)

It is significant to note that literary heroes dramatize the moral texture of a country-its unspoken ideals, dreams and undesired fears. They represent people and by discovering the meaning of their character we discern the pattern of values in the tapestry of a nation. This accounts for changing visages of literary heroes corresponding to different periods of history of a nation. Each period in history is marked by a different set of values or ideology that is reflected through the nature of the protagonist in a work of art. Nayar aptly remarks in this context:
The system of thought that helps implement, reinforce, legitimize and naturalize inequality and oppression is termed ideology…the ideology is therefore the “ruling ideas” of the dominant class, it is essentially an instrument of power.

(Literary Theory, 108)

I.1.b. The Hero in Literature: An Overview

Etymologically, the word hero in English is derived from the ancient Greek “heros”, “hero, warrior” literally “protector” or “defender”. Coined in 1387 (A Greek-English Lexicon), According to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, the Indo-European meaning of hero is “to protect”. According to Eric Partridge in Origins, the Greek word Hērōs “is akin to” the Latin seruāre, meaning to safeguard. Partridge concludes that the basic sense of both Hera and hero would therefore be ‘protector’. The word hero apparently came into usage both in France and England during the Renaissance, and was first employed in the sense, in which it had been known or was thought to have been known to the Greeks and the Romans. The New English Dictionary quotes from 1955, “Goddess made of men and whom the antiquity called heroes” (Edith Kern, 33). The hero and the mythical tales associated with the hero’s conception, birth, upbringing, divinity and the like concepts, all underwent radical changes. The most important development during the Renaissance regarding mythological heroism was the detachment of divinity and attachment of humanity of the hero.

Heroism in English Literature goes to great heroes like ones in Virgil’s epic Aeneid or Homer’s Iliad. In the Homeric epics, the word hero is associated with man of superhuman courage and ability. The ideal hero was a man who could combine wisdom and valour. According to Homer, the image of the hero is that of a physically powerful young man “dying for fame and maturation (and thus the ‘bad death’ of an impotent and ugly old age) by achieving a good death that ends his physical history in combat” (Miller, 1990). The Homer epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey, make use of the oral epic
songs that were about the deeds of the Greek heroes of the Trojan War. Around this historical Trojan War was a group of tales with the theme of journey, wanderings and return and this triple theme is termed as “monomyth” propounded by Joseph Campbell in his famous book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. In the Homeric epic, there is distinct breaking away from the earlier tradition. The heroes of the Homeric epics are not gods or demi-gods; they are depicted as ordinary human beings with heroic energy and power as has been pointed out by a critic:

Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are versions of the heroic temper from an individualistic age in which the glory and sacrifice involved in chosen exploits bring honor to the hero and redeem the brevity of life…both are profound and yet sharply delineated figures spontaneous and natural.

(Cesare, 500-502)

Unlike Homer, Virgil is concerned with the nation rather than the individual. Aeneas stands as a symbol of Rome. Virgil, in his epic, created a new vision of the heroic nature and heroic virtue. Virgil concentrates not on the destiny of a single individual—the hero—but on the destiny of the nation which will be the future Rome. Thus in Aeneas, Virgil creates “an individual who stands for the totality of his people. He becomes the first synecdochic hero” (Bowra, 1965). Like the Homeric heroes, Aeneas is also represented as a great warrior. Virgil modeled his hero on those qualities that were most important to the contemporary Rome “based on the moral views of the Augustan age but modified by his own beliefs and admirations” (Bowra, 1965).

Achilles was a Greek hero of the Trojan War and the central character and greatest warrior of Homer’s *Iliad*. Achilles reflects a paradigm of the hero that has fallen in deep love with honor and glory. Though Virgil followed Homer in his structure, episodes and Phraseology, his conceptions were far removed from those of Homer. “An individualistic code of honor that often operated against the interest of the society” (*New Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. III, 1997b) was not accepted in a more sophisticated
Rome and Virgil. Thus his story becomes subservient to the abstract theme of Roman civic virtue without making his hero “an instrument of nationalistic propaganda” (*Encyclopedia Americana*, vol. 10, 1983). Despite the fact that Aeneas fulfills the destiny imposed on him, he also defines and maintains human values.

The quest of the hero in the epics is for authentic human and social values and he finally re-establishes the ideals for which his society stands after passing through difficult ordeals. The epic tradition underwent a gradual modification with the rise of Christianity. With the Christian influence, the Greek and Roman myths were replaced by Christian myths on the literary scenario. The heroes of the Christian epics were a mixture of the old and the new, possessing the heroic proportions but without the tragic possibility of their Greek and Roman counterparts. “The fortunes of the new hero were identified with the Holy Roman Empire and the City of God” (Cesare, 501-502).

Hesiod’s *Works and Days* highlights that heroes were men of the ‘race of gods’ who acts as royal guardians-*phulaks*- to mortal men. The glory of the death of such heroes was attached not only to the individual but to the city-state too. Hesiod’s hero is a political hero whose heroism is focused on the civic forces (*Works and Days*, 123). Pindar merges the two aspects of the hero i.e warrior aspect with the mediating mode. For him the hero is depicted as exceptional human being who is raised high above mere humanity to a semi-divine status. The immortality, which is attributed to the hero, adds to his semi-divine (Miller, 5).

In Aristotelian tragedies also the protagonist is an exceptional man whose flaw in character brings about his downfall. In his *Poetics* Aristotle refers the hero as “a man”, thereby emphasizing the humanity of the hero. He speaks of ‘noble persons’ and ‘noble actions’. Aristotle speaks not of the nobility of rank but of ethical nobility. He sees the hero not as a perfect symbol of goodness but as one with whom the audience can identify (*Poetics*, 13).

Again in the Renaissance the heroes are presented as supermen in keeping with the humanistic ideals of the period. In Shakespearean dramas protagonists like Othello, Lear, Hamlet, King Richard are great people of excellence. They are tremendous
personalities who undergo undeserved suffering due to their acts of omission or commission. Though the catastrophe in Shakespeare’s plays is rooted in the tragic trait of the hero, there is a feeling at the end of the drama that men are impotent in the hands of unseen forces that affect their actions and the consequences. The forces lying outside man and influencing his destiny are summed up by Bradley as “the order” or the “ultimate power” in the tragic world. However in Shakespearean tragedies the tragic downfall of the hero is brought by some marked imperfection in hero’s character. It is a form of evil which disturbs the moral order of the world. Inspite of the destruction of the hero and many innocent creatures with him in the final catastrophe, it is finally the “principle of good” which finally survives in the world of Shakespeare’s dramas. On the development of Shakespearian tragedy from the solid work of Henry V to the emerging brilliance of Julius Caesar, Hubler noted that “[w]hat matters now is not so much what a man does but what he is” (Introduction, XXVI). The Shakespearean tragedy centers on a man’s internal struggle that effects a profound change of character, in consequences of which a gap is opened between what a man is and what he does: Macbeth is a good man who, blinded by ambition, acts badly.

In ancient Greek religion, the worship and glorification of the hero was an integral part. The hero was considered as a mediator “between the living world and whatever nonhuman powers and zones exit” (Miller, 4). Fontonrose alludes to heroes as “powerful ghosts which emphasize not only the intermediary powers that are associated with heroes but also their connections with death, contrasting with the ancestral dead of a family or with the manes, being worshiped in public as the dead in general” (46).

We can say now that hero is an embodiment of action, the defender of the common man against oppression and corruption of the established power structures. Hero is credited with extra qualities compare to common man such as courage, maturity, hard working, fighter etc which makes him to work for the welfare of the community. Ihab Hassan aptly explicated in The Pattern of Fictional Experience that hero is “an epic character, a figure somewhere below the gods and above the common run of men” (326). In other words, Hassan treats heroes near to god and above the common men but he is the representative of his community for true welfare. Commenting on the hero as demi-god, J. P. Clark (1978) aptly opines:
a man of super-human qualities favoured by the gods, a demi-god. He is an illustrious warrior…a man admired for achievements and noble qualities.

(2)

Clark also depicts hero as a warrior with his generous qualities as he has the audacity to fight against social problems. Sometimes his sacrifice for the community makes him adorable. Thomas Carlyle’s On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History accredited heroism to great men of geniuses good and evil for example the political and military figures such as Oliver Cromwell, Frederick the Great etc, who organized change in the society in the advent of greatness. The circumstances of the hero’s conception are unusual. The hero is often simply an ordinary person in extraordinary circumstances, who despite the odds being sacked against him or her typically prevails in the end. Carlyle’s assertion built upon Fichtean doctrine that the greatness of man consists in the cultivation and exercise of heroic virtues aimed at resolving the tension between transcendence and history. The hero according to Carlyle is simultaneously transcendental, in that he always embodies the same transcendental authority, and historical, in that the embodiment belongs to a specific time, place and culture. Commenting on transcendental and historical emergence of hero, Carlyle writes:

They were the leaders of men, these great ones; the modelers, patterns, and in a wide sense creators, of what so ever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain; all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realization and embodiment, of thoughts that dwelt in the great men sent into the world…

(On Heroes, 2)
Explicit defenses of Carlyle’s position were rare in the second part of the 20th century. Most philosophers of history contend that the motive forces in history can best be described only with a wider lens than the one he used for his portraits. For example, Karl Marx argued that history was determined by the massive social forces at play in “class struggles”, not by the individuals by whom these forces are played out. Peter Barry in his book *Beginning Theory* has pointed out that:

…history as class struggle (rather than as, for instance, a succession of dynasties, or as a gradual progress towards the attainment of national identity and sovereignty) regards it as ‘motored’ by the competition for economic, social and political advantage. The exploitation of one social class by another is seen especially in modern industrial capitalism, particularly in its unrestricted nine-tenth-century form. (157)

After Marx, Herbert Spencer wrote at the end of the 19th century: “You must admit that the genesis of the great man depends on the long series of complex influences which has produced the race in which he appears, and the social state into which that race has slowly grown...Before he can remake his society, his society must make him” (34).

The quest is the chief activity of the divine hero. Quest is often symbolized by such dreams, actions, swimming, running, walking, driving or dreaming itself; daydreaming and imagining (Butler, 133). Every fictional work deals with the quest of hero for some values-political, moral, religious or social or all these together. It may be a quest for either some old values or a new set of values. Emphasizing the quest element in a hero’s ventures, Rollins aptly remarks:

Every hero has his quest, his vital mission. Whatever his goal the hero must be a seeker. To decline the
quest is to lose his opportunity as hero. To decline the quest is to be less than himself.

(20-21)

Agreeably, the term quest is very significant and principal aspect in the journey of the hero. Quest is the “deepest deep structure of the tales directing the hero to go out, ask, find out, fight for, take and run” (Burkert, 1979). The quest of the hero takes him from known world to unknown world. The stage for the quest is usually a wilderness or a wasteland. This provides a suitable arena for the non-human and supernatural forces and the hero has to encounter in his quest. These forces help him and enable him to strive and gain victory. “The hero comes back from this mysterious adventure, with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man” (Campbell, 23).

The quest also stands as hallmark of the maturation of the hero. Miller identifies the sequence of separation, testing and reintegration as common to the quest as well as to “the rites that mark the passage between inscriptive childhood or adolescence and full male adulthood” (The Epic Hero, 16). The quest accomplishes after the recognition of the hero’s special character, usually the hero’s rightful kingship or the hand of a maiden or an ambiguous reward. However, not all heroes came out as champions at the end of the quest.

A Greek mythological hero, Jason in his quest for the Golden Fleece, is caught in the will of an otherworld woman and finally made into a feeble and shameful person. Oedipus’s quest for his own identity leads him to a terrible end where he and his family are destroyed. Nevertheless, these and other such heroes, because of their nature as heroes, had no other option but to pursue their quest even though it brought about destruction to them.

If the quest is within, hero’s gift is likely to be an intangible one for example Christ, Buddha or Mahavira but if quest is that of the worldly pleasures and lies in the satisfaction to be attained outside, it can be seen in the legend of Achilles, Heracles, Alexander, Varuna and Napoleon. The quest of the hero is an extended search for something that has been lost or taken away from him, something that ought to have been
his birthright. He encounters fabulous forces and wins a decisive victory. The successful completion of this search reveals to the hero the secret of his true identity and enables him to return from his mysterious adventure and take his rightful position in society. Joseph Campbell in his empirical study on Hero in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* says:

The hero has died as a modern man; both as eternal man-Perfected, unspecific, universal man- he has been reborn. His second solemn task and deed therefore, is to return then to us, transfigured, and teach the lesson he has learned of life renewed.

(20)

One concept that remains constant in the definition of hero is that of the quest for excellence. Excellence means everything that makes a man more than just an inconsequential little being. The hero fights against the society to achieve excellence consciously or unconsciously for greater degree of freedom. Ihab Hassan in his famous book *The Pattern of Fictional Experience* gives the three subclasses of hero:

The hero appears primarily in the guise of a victim or scapegoat, *Pharmakos*. He enjoys little or no freedom of action: he is ruled, that is, by necessity.

The hero appears primarily in the guise of the self-deprecating *eiron*. He enjoys a limited degree of freedom, and makes an uneasy truce with necessity.

The hero appears primarily in the guise of the rebel, rogue, or self-inflating *alazon*. He enjoys considerable freedom, and gives the illusion of escaping from necessity.

(334)
The Greek word *alazon* means “imposter, someone who pretends or tries to be something more than he is. The most popular types of *alazon* are the miles glorious and the learned crank or obsessed philosopher” (Frye, 39). The *eiron* is the man who deprecates himself, as opposed to the *alazon*. Such a man makes himself invulnerable, and, though Aristotle disapproves of him, there is no question that he is a predestined artist, just as the *alazon* is one of his predestined victims (Frye, 40). The *alazon* deplores the fact that a brilliant mind should be tied to a vermin-ridden body. The *eiron* observes that his mind is lousy too, and drives the analogy home with one of the very bits of crank-learning which the *alazon* has just displayed. Illustrating the stance of the hero, Ihab Hassan in *The Pattern of Fictional Experience* writes:

Elements of the Greek *alazon*, imposter, compulsive rebel, or outsider, the *eiron*, the humble, self-deprecating man, and the *pharmakos*, scapegoat and random victim, unite to form the tarnished halo weighing on his head. In the end, however, his character is simply what remains to a hero when self and world are thrown out of joint, and self-transcendence is sought though all the gods may be defunct. (327)

In order to understand the function of the *Pharmakos* death, we first should retrace the historical development of the ritual figure. It is a universal feature of primitive life in all countries and periods that disease, deaths, blight of crops and in general, calamities of every kind are attributed to the activity of the magician, and we might therefore regard the ritual as an attempt to get rid of evil by expelling the author of evil. The *Pharmakos* was sacrificed amidst elaborate ceremony, whose object was “to affect a total clearance of all the ills that have been infesting a people” (Frazer, 575). It is of prime importance that the scapegoat is chosen “for inadequate reasons, or perhaps for no reason at all, more or less at random” from among all those who bear “marks of the victim” and that he is completely innocent of the charges brought against him. This is true even though his persecutors are acting in good faith and believe him to
be guilty and even though he probably is so imbued by the outlook of his society that he shares their view (Griffith, 97).

The ceremony ultimately connected the person offering the sacrifice, the animal sacrificed, and the god whose acceptance of the gift restored the temporarily lost sense of wholeness to the universe. As offerings to restore the oneness of a whole society, the ceremonies of sacrifice often coincided with the arrival of the New Year or the changing seasons. The animal scapegoat could be a substitute for the King, as Géza Róheim explains:

In Babylonian texts we find the king doing penance for the people. The king who was killed for famine or drought may be called a scapegoat himself and in some cases ... we find a regular scapegoat ceremony as a mitigation or equivalent of regicide.

(Animism, 311)

Evans Lansing Smith associates the journey of hero with “death, with dreams and with poesis” in his work The Hero Journey in Literature: Parables of Poesis (Smith, 460). Smith provides an overview of the hero journey theme in literature, from antiquity to the present, with a focus on the imagery of the rites of passage in human life (initiation at adolescence, mid-life, and death). This is the only book to focus on the major works of the literary tradition, detailing discussions of the hero journey in major literary texts. Included are chapters on the literature of Antiquity (Sumerian, Egyptian, Biblical, Greek, and Roman), the Middle Ages (with emphasis on the Arthurian Romance), the Renaissance to the Enlightenment (Shakespeare, Milton, Marvell, Pope, Fielding, the Arabian Nights, and Alchemical Illustration), Romanticism and Naturalism (Coleridge, Selected Grimm's Tales, Bierce, Whitman, Twain, Hawthorne, E.T.A. Hoffman, Rabindranath Tagore), and Modernism to Contemporary (Joyce, Gilman, Alifa Rifaat, Bellow, Lessing, Pynchon, Eudora Welty). The mythic journey according to Smith describes:
The mythic journey here, however, reminds us that there is a passage through death, and a return journey to be made, perhaps as perilous as the departure from life…the long lineage of hero journeys that begins with a state of political oppression which initiates the compensatory action and constitutes the call to adventure.

(The Hero Journey, 7-12)

According to Carl Jung, Heroes are a small part of a culture's mythology. They have been useful for thousands of years to the people for whom they serve as an idealized human, a sort of "super" person, capable of dealing with problems that surpass normal humans and their abilities. In this sense, heroes are:

Part of the perceptual system of a culture through which unfamiliar situations, originating either within the culture or outside it, are interpreted and fitted into old symbolic molds. In helping to pattern the relationships among basic beliefs, values, and behaviors that organize social interaction, heroes produce common social understanding of new social conditions.

(Breen and Corcoran, 14)

Lord Raglan in The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth and Drama contends that this archetype is so well defined that the life of the protagonist can be clearly divided into a series of well-marked adventures, which strongly suggest a ritualistic pattern. Raglan finds that traditionally hero’s mother is a virgin, the circumstances of his conception are unusual, and at birth some attempt is made to kill him. He is, however, spirited away and reared by foster parents. We know almost nothing of his childhood, but upon reaching manhood he returns to his future kingdom. After over a victory over the king or a wild beast, he marries a princess, becomes king, reigns uneventfully, but
later loses favor with the gods. He is then driven from the city after which he meets a mysterious death. Characters who exemplify this archetype to a greater or lesser extent are Oedipus, Theseus, Romulus, Perseus, Joseph, Moses, Jesus Christ, Arthur, Robin Hood.

The hero is a model of higher potential for his race, his nation and even for humanity has been explicated by J. Lash in his book *The Hero: Manhood and Power*. According to him:

[The hero] possesses a consistent capacity for action that surpasses the norm of man or woman. This contrast between what may be heroic in action and what identifies a hero …the hero is nevertheless of the human species, not superior to it, not beyond it. Even if his earliest prototypes are partially divine, the hero is, in his prime, fully human rather than superhuman. A rare configuration of traits and a striking style of action mark him as having arête, excellence.  

Bruce Mayer in his book *Heroes: The Champions of Our Literary Imagination* unmask the greatest heroes of literature, showing what makes them heroic as well as what makes them human. Ultimately, he demonstrates, heroes reflect the best of humanity. Dean A. Miller pointed out in his acclaimed book *The Epic Hero* that the hero is a one who has always achieved fame and he further says:

The hero must be a major mover in the human drama is more than a little diminished by the popular or folk conception making all of the significant dead into heroes. Moreover, the notion that a hero must be someone who has attained fame-immortal and always remembered fame…
I.1.c. Myth of the Hero and Hero Cult

Myth of Hero and Hero cult make hero ever-existing and ever-evolving. Myths are multi-dimensional, ever present and all-pervading component of all cultures and with the evolution of mankind have emerged as a significant phenomenon in world literature. Claude Levi-Strauss says myth makes people aware of their roots and gives them a “tool with which to face human existence” (The Raw and the Cooked, 27). Writers worldwide have used myths to show the flow of the past into the present as Wole Soyinka says, “The old must flow into the new” (The Lion, 54). Wole Soyinka in his Myth, Literature and the African World observes that man exists in a comprehensive world of myth, history and mores, and myths arise from man’s attempt to externalize and communicate his inner institutions. Myth of the hero is as old as human civilization like the Biblical story of Adam and Eve. A typical personification of the impulse is the snake that tempts Eve to violate her passive containment in the Garden, or the shadowy figure in fairy tales that tempts the hero or heroine to break the status quo and do something evil, i.e individual.

In myth it is often imaged as the separation of the world Parents. Father Sky and Mother Earth hold each other in an embrace and the world is left in darkness. The children born between them must thrust them apart, despite their parents' protesting cries and groans. Only then does light enter the world. This light symbolizes consciousness. Only in the light of consciousness can man know. Yet the acquisition of consciousness is a Promethean act subjecting the hero to the danger of inflation and retribution…. *As a bearer of light, the hero is willing to face these dangers, despite the awareness of his aloneness, individuality, and mortality, in order to carry development further.* However, once the apple is eaten the world falls into opposites, and 'good' and 'evil' are assigned their place in the world. The Great
Good Mother shows her dark aspect, the hateful or Terrible Mother, while the creative Father now sits opposite the Destructive Father, and brothers kill each other in the name of love, and the world is alternately either an enchanted or persecutory place.

(*Myth and Psyche*, Emphasis Mine)

The myth of the hero is an ancient concept commonly found in all the cultures of the world and is perceived as a reality by people in various times in a number of ways like in rituals, myth, scriptures and dreams and even in history. A glimpse at the mythologies of the different part of the world reflects either the sacrificial zeal of mythological heroes, thereby, making them *eironic* figure or their will to fight for a cause, thereby making them *alazonic* figure. The conflict between his inner self and that of the society has been the major tormenting factor for the hero, whether he is mythological or contemporary. Be it Jesus Christ, Prometheus, Arjuna, Mahavira, Gautam Buddha, Oedipus, the Shakespearean hero, American hero or African hero, Joseph Campbell’s assertion on the role of Mythological hero is worth quoting here:

For the mythological hero is the champion not of things become but of things becoming; the dragon to be slain by him is precisely the monster of the status quo: Holdfast, the keeper of the past...The mythological hero, reappearing from the darkness that is the source of the shapes of the day, brings a knowledge of the secret of the tyrant’s doom. With a gesture as simple as the pressing of a button, he annihilates the impressive configuration. The hero-deed is a continuous shattering of the crystallization of the moment. The cycle rolls: mythology focuses on the growing-point.

(*The Hero*, 311)
The archetypal patterns of the Egyptian Book of the Dead which is about the posthumous journey of the soul and of the Sun God Ra, on a barge through the twelve regions of underworld; and the symbolism of the Tibetan Book of the Dead, with the Chikai Bardo (Primary Clear Light of Reality), the Chonyid Bardo (Peaceful and Wrathful Deities and Realms of Rebirth), and the Sidpa Bardo (King and Judge of Dead’s Mirror of Karma, reflecting all deeds as manifestations of the mind) both establish a narrative sequence and cluster of images frequently encountered in literary versions of the journey (Smith, 453-454). Greek Myth and the Mystery rites of Eleusis have both laid the foundations for the literary itinerary of the soul’s journey in works from Homer to Virgil, to Apuleius, to Dante, to the Ars Moriendi of the Middle Ages, books written for as guides through stages of dying. These enriched the cluster of motifs with practical experience of the emotional, physical and spiritual stages of the dying process, often depicted in symbolic versions of the hero journey. A hero in myth often had close but conflicted relationships with the gods.

A hero, in Greek mythology was originally a demigod, their cult being one of the most distinctive features of ancient Greek religion. The term cult identifies a pattern of ritual behavior in connection with specific objects, within a framework of spatial and temporal coordinates. Rather than a single, unified concept, ancestral and hero cult articulated different versions of the past. The hero cult in the eighth century B.C. in Greece helps to mediate social change within a framework of culturally determined rules. It was linked on the one side with the circulation of Homeric poetry and on the other side with transformation of ancestral veneration in the context of the emergent polis. A review of the archaeological evidence for the Iron Age and Early Archaic period suggests that the earliest hero cult in the archaeological record emerged at Sparta during the eighth century. Veneration of ancestors was practiced widely in the Greek world throughout the Iron Age; it did not disappear with the emergence of the polis and hero cult. The two main theories on the origins of hero cult and the role of Homer can be summarized as follows: 1) Homer’s omission of hero cult and his attitudes toward the dead are anomalous; there is continuity between a native ancestor cult and the hero cult that develops from it over time; 2) Homer inspires hero cult among mainland Greeks, who have no connection with the Mycenaeans and very different
burial practices; this leads to both the tomb cults and hero cult, the latter an attempt to co-opt the heroes of epic (Antonaccio, 397).

Later, hero (male) and heroine (female) came to refer to characters who, in the face of danger and adversity or from a position of weakness, display courage and the will for self-sacrifice- that is, heroism- for some greater good of all humanity. Stories of heroism may serve as moral examples. In classical antiquity, hero cults that venerated deified heroes such as Heracles, Perseus, and Achilles played an important role in Ancient Greek religion. Heracles, the great benefactor of humanity was probably the most contradictory of all the Greek heroes. Heracles’s name means ‘the glory of Hera’ even though he was tormented all his life by Hera, the Queen of Gods. His behavior repeatedly transgressed the bounds of human moderation, as his overwhelming vitality led him to actions that violated the norms of civic, familial, and religious institutions. He was the offspring of a divine father, Zeus himself, and of a mortal mother and, therefore, condemned to confront the continual wrath of Hera. His birth granted him an ambivalent status: he was both a hero and a god (Papadimitropoulos, 131).

Hero (mythical priestess) in Greek mythology, priestess of Aphrodite, goddess of love, at Sestos, a town on the Hellespont (now Dardanelles) was loved by Leander, a youth who lived at Abydos, a town on the Asian side of the channel. They could not marry because Hero was bound by a vow of chastity, and so every night Leander swam from Asia to Europe, guided by a lamp in Hero’s tower. One stormy night a high wind extinguished the beacon, and Leander was drowned. His body was washed ashore beneath Hero’s tower; in her grief, she threw herself into the sea.

We can also find many examples of scapegoat-rituals in ancient Greece or Rome. Rituals in which a scapegoat is driven from society to alleviate some ill are well-attested and there are famous literary representations of them, such as the driving of Encolpius from Marseilles in Petronius’ Satyricon, or the leading of Lucius around Hypata during the Festival of Laughter in Apuleius’ Metamorphoses. The classical world also offers examples of scapegoating in the broader sense of persecution: one thinks of ostracism as well as of the Athenians’ prosecution on false charges of Pericles, Aspasia, and Anaxagoras during the great plague (Griffith 97-98).
The Hebrew nation, during the ceremony connected with the Day of Atonement, used two scapegoats: one, called Azazel’s goat, took away the nation’s sins to the desert, and the other was sacrificed to Jehovah. The expulsion of the scapegoat was also a feature of the ceremonial Thargelia in Athens. Two pharmakoi were expelled from the city, and first fruits were then dedicated to Apollo, the god of expiation and atonement. The human scapegoats of this festival are called pharmakoi, that is, “sorcerers”. Whereas the Hebrews demanded a perfect animal for their scapegoat, the Athenians preferred a monstrous, idiotic or misshaped person as these were generally regarded as sorcerers, as embodiments of black magic (Róheim, 345). The scapegoat, then, may represent a king, a city, a god, or a single person, but his sacrifice always implies a consecration; in every sacrifice an object passes from the common into the religious domain. The ceremony itself was made elaborate to protect the person or society sacrificing the pharmakos from the terrifying power unleashed by the death and acceptance of the sacrifice; successfully completed, “sacrifice is a religious act which, through the consecration of the victim, modifies the condition of the moral person who accomplishes it” (Hubert and Mauss, 13). The scapegoat, taking upon him the sins, illnesses, and despair of society, provided a means of communication between the sacred and the profane.

We have found many references of mythological heroes in the literature of the Asian continent. The Asiatic heroes establish a point that a hero is a hero since birth, different from legendary Greek heroes. Naturally unusual birth and strength distinguish him from other persons, since childhood. Amongst the Asiatic heroes, The Nart Uryzmag is born at the bottom of the sea, while Batrazd is born from a woman who has been kept a virgin in a high tower (Bowra, 93). The Great Mahabharata hero, Karna was born of Kunti, who was kept a virgin. Another epic hero from Ramayana, Lord Rama was conceived as a result of the consumption of blessed sweet-rice by his mother. The hero’s testing occurs for two purposes; to identify him as a hero and not just another human and to refine him, burn away that part of him which is mortal and leave that part which is divine. The consecration of the hero by acquiring weapons and his initiation by acquiring a name or perhaps a status, are the final steps in his training before he is ready to perform his task. Normally initiation is performed by a parent, a priest or a God, sometimes by another hero. Sometimes an individual who recognizes in himself, divine
attributes initiates himself. Prince Sidhartha came be known as Gautama Buddha after he attained enlightenment, and Vardhamana became famous as Mahavira after attaining the highest spiritual knowledge.

The heroes of Asia have often wielded supernatural weapons like swords, sorcery or even something as humble as a phallus (Butler, 16). He fights his opponents heroically and honorably. Achilles is like some irresistible power of nature, a fire capable of burning cities. Hector knows that his powers are invincible but he decides to fight him (Bowra, 95). Here ‘Achilles’ is the hero having power of onslaught and destruction like Indian God ‘Varuna’ in ‘Rig Veda’ (Majumdar, Raichaudhary and Datta, 36-37). Later this place of destruction in Indian mythology is occupied by Rudra. In his desire to behave heroically in accordance with his true nature, the hero even fights Gods or the whole system. The heroes of Iliad engage Gods and Goddesses in fight and display rare heroic courage but are ultimately defeated for Gods are stronger than men. Thus taking risk is an ordinary trait of hero’s character for some concrete cause.

II

I.2. Research Objective

The present study entitled “The Writer as Hero and the Hero as Writer: A Comparative Study of Hero in the Selected Plays of Wole Soyinka and Rabindranath Tagore” proposes a comparative study of revolutionary writers and peerless Nobel Laureates Rabindranath Tagore and Wole Soyinka. Writers, novelists, poets and playwrights have opted English language to express their ideas, different from their mother tongue. Both the writers belong to the colonial and post-colonial society of their respective countries and, therefore, underwent the upheavals of colonialism which shook the socio-cultural fabric of colonized nations. Both the authors were staunch patriots and they raised their radical voice against oppressive regime indirectly through their works in the colonizer’s language.

Colonialism has always been a painful process, and Africa like Tagore’s India in general and Soyinka’s Nigeria in particular has had its experience of the colonial rule. It
must not be forgotten that the colonial encounter here, has a background history of humiliating colonialism and slavery. Like other colonies, India and Nigeria experienced this violent trauma of colonialism and the chief characteristic of which is a sense of deep injury, a hurt that agonizes with a threat and moves to an extreme, where the colonized finds himself distorted, imposed and owned. Tagore, in one of his famous poems, castigated the European assault on colonized countries like India and Nigeria.

With mantraps they stole upon you, those hunters,
Whose fierceness was keener than lightless forests,
Whose pride was blinder than you lightless forests,
The savage greed of the civilized stripped naked,
Its unabashed inhumanity
Your forest trial became muddy, with tears and blood.

(Collected Poems, 205)

Fanon has more elaborately stated about colonialism, “Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it (The Post colonial Studies Reader, 154).

The playwrights Rabindranath Tagore and Wole Soyinka came out maximum with their thought provoking plays. The real image of the contemporary social reality, economy and polity got reflected through the hero and the other characters of plays. Interestingly, the hero of plays was mostly a common member of the society and worked/sacrificed for the welfare of the fellow members. On the other side, these heroes also represented the innate nature of the dramatists either Tagore or Soyinka. In other words, these plays symbolized the writer as hero and the hero as writer.
The proposed study aims to present a comparative study of hero in the selected plays of Tagore and Soyinka in order to explore the contours of hero within his socio-political and socio-cultural milieu. The famous plays of Rabindranath Tagore i.e. Sacrifice (1917), Red Oleanders (1925), The King and the Queen (1923) will be compared to the ground breaking plays of Wole Soyinka i.e. The Strong Breed (1963), Kongi’s Harvest (1967), Death and the King’s Horseman (1975). The comparative study will take up social realist approach concentrating on socio-political and socio-cultural aspect. It is based on the premise that the writings of the most of the authors are the reflection of their socio-cultural or political surroundings, being a social animal. Here Tagore and Soyinka can be seen as both independent and overlapping with each other. Within the new topology, Tagore and Soyinka continue their prior existence, that is, their reality outside the frame of comparison, even as they display vividly the common ground where their very difference becomes viable for the comparative project.

Deviating from the prevailing widespread inclination of treating the hero as only main character in literature, here an attempt is made to look into its all possible aspects with socio-political and socio-cultural perspective. The major objectives of the study are as follows:

1. First of all, to bring out a systematic socio-political history of India and Nigeria for a better understanding and background of comparative study of proposed authors.

2. Secondly, to assess the impact of social and political background of the authors on their writings with an eye on their biographies. It is intended to rethink and re-examine the brilliance of Rabindranath Tagore and Wole Soyinka in the field of play writing to situate its place in world literature.

3. Finally, to present a comparative study of selected plays of Tagore and Soyinka with focus on the guise and deeds of hero.
I.2.a. Grounds of Comparison

The present study aims to present a comparative study of hero in the selected plays of Wole Soyinka and Rabindranath Tagore as mentioned above. It is essential for a sound comparative study to carefully delineate the grounds of comparison, for these grounds are by no means self-evident. We need to define the epistemological grounds for the initiation of comparative study and understanding. Comparison foregrounds the following philosophical issues: 1) the politics of representation; 2) the intra and inter identities thresholds of recognition and validation. We have to answer questions like; which subject is initiating the comparison and why? What is at stake in the comparison? How does comparatism as pedagogy and methodology create its own epistemological object as subject and within what parameters of normativity?

It is generally accepted that similar socio-political and historical factors can promote the development of literatures that may be similar in themes and styles in different regions of the world with or without the benefit of direct or indirect literary influence. In the present comparative discussion, Rabindranath Tagore and Wole Soyinka respectively loosely and inclusively represent nineteenth-twentieth century India and twentieth-century Nigeria; while “literature” subsumes creative writing and literary criticism. The writings of Tagore and Soyinka especially plays can profitably be compared at levels of both direct influence and accidental similarities. Undoubtedly, the plays of Tagore and Soyinka fairly and accurately reflect the general situation in India and Nigeria for two reasons. Firstly, Indian and Nigerian writers have been responsive for socio-political developments. Secondly, with the largest concentration of writers and critics on the Indian subcontinent and the African continent, India and Nigeria as post-colonial societies have exerted considerable influence on the corpus of literature on the whole.

The majority of comparable plays between the literature of Tagore and Soyinka will be derived from accidental similarities- confluences. Literatures, which converge in theme and/or style without the advantage of influence instance “confluence” (Balogun, 483). Of these, the most obvious parallel plays are Tagore’s and Soyinka’s respectively, Sacrifice (1917) and The Strong Breed (1963); Red Oleanders (1925) and
Kongi’s Harvest (1967); The King and the Queen (1923) and Death and the King’s Horseman (1975). We shall compare the plays of Tagore and Soyinka on the bases of thematic similarities and differences. We shall point out following thematic similarities and differences:

1. Critical to Social traditions and anomalies
2. Man’s inhumanity (selfishness, hypocrisy, callousness, and exploitation) to man and progress of humanity
3. The real meaning of progress, the fate of man in his environment, the struggle for survival, the cost of survival
4. Voice against British Imperialistic Oppression
5. Liberty and Liberation from social evils and imperialism i.e. nationalism
6. Critical of bourgeois society
7. Spokesman

Here we shall focus on the main protagonist of the play i.e. hero. What is the nature of hero i.e. eironic, alazonic or Pharmakos? What is the role of hero in the play? How is he portrayed either negatively or positively? What is the guise and disguise of hero? What is the relation and behavior of hero in particular with other characters of the play and in a whole with the society?

I.2.b. Research Method and Periphery

The present comparative study will take up social realist approach to compare the selected plays of Rabindranath Tagore and Wole Soyinka respectively. We can understand writers and their works better in their connection with socio-economic and socio-political settings. The proposed research also based on the premise that most of the writers have linked their writings with socio-cultural and political surroundings of their times. In other words, the contemporary social and cultural setting has obvious
impact on writings of the most of authors. In this way, social realistic approach seems better option for interpretation of Tagore and Soyinka because it is a scientific method of socio-economic inquiry. It aims at exposing the foibles and blind faith of the society which they witnessed. The social criticism exposes and ridicules the social taboos of exploitation.

While examining the works of two renowned dramatists, Tagore and Soyinka, we have to keep in mind their concept of life and their commitment to ideology. It is very clear from the works and aesthetics of Tagore that he was essentially a poet. He was influenced by *Upanishads*. He makes use of this influence in his poetry, plays and novels. His perception is determined by the humanistic outlook. He looks at the characters and the environment from their humanistic focus. In the words of Dr Radhakrishnan:

One does not find any systematic exposition of his life in his works but rather his personality is completely revealed in his poems which are unconscious expressions of his soul, the outpouring of his devotional heart and the revelations of his poetic consciousness.

*(Tagore’s Anthology, 23)*

Thus, it may be remarked that Tagore’s position as a poet-philosopher and dramatist is concerned with his status of an Indian Renaissance who was greatly concerned with the problem of art, both verbal and non-verbal in his own unique way. Therefore, when we approach him for the analysis of his major plays, we keep in mind the fact that his approach has nothing to do with the Marxian ideology as we may observe this fact happening in the works of Soyinka.

Tagore’s artistic expression embraces the social reality of his times as he presents the character in totality, taking in view the foibles and rituals which were responsible for the blind faith and the suffering of mankind in his times. This is truly
reflected in his play, *Sacrifice*, written in Bengali under the title *Bisarjan* which raises very sensitive questions addressed as: Does the state have any right to control religion? Should blood sacrifice be tolerated in a modern society? These questions are raised time and again and there appear the dynamic conflicts in the narrative of the drama. In this way, we may feel inclined to say that Tagore always looks at the reality of the society from a purely humanistic angle. He makes it very clear that one human being has no right to slaughter another person and offer his sacrifice at the altar of the goddess. Tagore, therefore firmly believes that a work of art, whether a novel or a poem or a play should comprehend the reality of life. A work of art should be embedded with humanism. A well known critic, Mulk Raj Anand himself a humanist, says in his tribute to Tagore:

He was one of the greatest humanists of our country and the world. He taught whole generations of the country to be humanist, not vaguely, but creating...characters, those human beings who are so real in their weaknesses. He conferred a certain dignity on weakness; his is more than a mere philosophical humanism. His humanism is evident in the courage to inspire and to lead weak people through critical periods.

(*Tagore: The Novelist, 3*)

Whereas on the other hand, Wole Soyinka’s concept of life is projected through Marxian ideology. He is deeply influenced by the socialist philosophy. It aimed at castigating the differences between the haves and have not, between the rich and the poor, between the oppressed and the oppressor. When Soyinka as a theoretical socialist expresses himself as a critical realist then judgments and analysis of society come to the fore in his plays. It is important point to see that he creates heroes to get the best expository results. It is one of the important aspects of the technique of his critical realism. This is accurately reflected in his play *Kongi’s Harvest* in which Daodu, an *alazonic* hero, is in a state of constant warfare, questioning the outworn and stagnating authority so as to bring a new lease of life into the society.
In carrying out the adequate research methodology in this dissertation, we follow the concept of interdisciplinary approach. For instance, according to the usage of the term “interdisciplinarity”, as a researcher, we focus on ‘inter’ and not on ‘trans’. It means that we take into consideration the disciplines involved in the writings of each author. Very meticulously, for instance, in the case of Tagore, we came to know that an interdisciplinary approach will require a researcher to study Tagore’s view about his aesthetics of art which is based on his concept of *Upanishads*. Dr. Radhakrishnan makes a candid comment in this regard that Tagore’s philosophy largely dwells on the thoughts of the *Upanishads*. He elaborates:

Tagore’s writings are a commentary on the *Upanishads* by an individual of this generation on whom the present age as had its influence.

*(The Philosophy of Tagore, 2)*

Tagore himself inclined to the same view when he states:

To me the verses of the *Upanishads* and the teachings of the Buddha have ever been things of the spirit, and therefore endowed with boundless vital growth; and I have used them, both in my own life and in my preaching, as being instinct with individual meaning for me, as for others, and awaiting for their confirmation my own special testimony, which must have its volume because of its individuality.

*(Sadhana, viii)*

Evidently, the *Upanishads* have strengthened Tagore’s conviction of the infinite reality. He accepts a God, “who is close to us”, and who “holds creation dear to his heart” *(Modern Indian Thought, 20)*. This means that, according to Tagore, an artist derives energy from divine creativity, and in this manner, artistic expression comes out
of his communion with God, the supreme power of divinity. Tagore makes it clear when he states:

In art the person in us is sending its answers to the supreme person, who reveals himself to us in a world of endless beauty across the lightless world of facts.

*(Personality, 36)*

And the same thought is repeated in a poem in *Gitanjali*:

Now you make your garrulous poet silent. You take the flute of heart and play. And play upon it a melody rich and deep.

*(Gitanjali, Poem no. 59)*

In *Gitanjali*, we come across quite often the idea of God as the inspirer of man’s artistic efforts: “My art is your gift. It is you who make songs blossom in my heart like flowers in a garden” *(Gitanjali, Poem no. 125)*.

At the same time, we notice that in order to reconcile the supreme spirit with individual self, Tagore takes into account the principle of love which he thinks is of great significance even though it comes to man through religion:

Religious consciousness is nothing but the experiencing of the relation of love between *Paramatman* (Supreme Spirit) and *Jivatman* (Individual Self)...this love has separation on one side and union on the other. In this love we get a synthesis between the limited and the limitless between Shakti (energy) and Soundarya (beauty), between rupa (form) and rasa (feeling).

*(Atmaparichay, 78)*
Thus, Tagore is fully assured of the fact that the true art surges towards the Divine, and when it pulsates with the spiritual truth, the artistic expression thus attained reflects profundity and suggestiveness. He refers to this fact in these words:

I do not imply that the final nature of this world depends upon the comprehension of the individual person. Its reality is associated with the universal human mind which comprehends all time and all possibilities of realization.

(The Religion of Man, 23)

These instances confirm Tagore’s belief in the principle of divinity in art which, according to him, works by revealing the divine in man, and the human in God. The artistic expression should be an outcome of inner realization grounded in the divine power:

Man has his other dwelling place in the realm of inner realization, in the element of an immaterial value. This is a world where from the subterranean soil of his mind, his consciousness often like a seed, unexpectedly sends up sprouts into the heart of a luminous freedom, and the individual is made to realize his truth in the universal man.

(The Religion of Man, 91)

Tagore as a social realist portrayed his hero’s lives realistically in his plays. The reason for it is obvious because Tagore was then living amidst the suffering, miserable, ordinary villagers. In Tagore’s plays, the personal feelings of the heroes went beyond the narrow framework of personal life and acquired a broader framework of the problem of humanity as such. Many of Tagorean hero’s try to uphold the noble values, culture, ethos, beliefs, traditions, rituals and practices of Hinduism in India and are willing to
sacrifice their lives for them. On the other hand, Soyinka is a socialist realist who always puts oppressed and exploited people at the centre of his work.

Tagore becomes much more realistic to highlight the dire poverty of his countrymen and country. During 1901, Tagore saw a sharp deterioration in the life of the Indian people with his own eyes and he also associated with peasants and knew all the hardships in which they lived. Tagore admits this painful realization in his *Crisis in Civilization* when he explicates:

As I emerged into the stark light of bare facts, the sight of the dire poverty of the Indian masses rent my heart. Rudely shaken out of my dreams, I began to realize that perhaps in no other modern state was there such hopeless dearth of the most elementary needs of existence. And yet it was this country whose resources had fed for so long the wealth and magnificence of the British people. While I was lost in the contemplation of the great world of civilization, I could never remotely imagine that the great ideals of humanity would end in such ruthless travesty. But today a glaring example of it stares me in the face in the utter and contemptuous indifferences of a so-called civilized race to the well-being of crores to Indian people.

(14-15)

Among the narrative techniques, Realism, in literature, is an approach that attempts to describe life without idealization or romantic subjectivity. Although realism is not limited to any one century or group of writers, it is most often associated with the literary movement in 19th-century France, specifically with the French writers, Flaubert and Balzac. George Eliot introduced realism into England, and William Dean Howells introduced it into the United States. Realism has been chiefly concerned with the
commonplaces of everyday life among the middle and lower classes, where character is a product of social factors and environment is the integral element in the dramatic complications in literature, an approach that proceeds from an analysis of reality in terms of natural forces.

The term “social realism” is a term that derives from Russian inspired beliefs about the function of literature in a revolutionary socialist society. Social realism is inspired in various ways by the Russian revolution, Soviet communism, international Marxism, and the need to respond critically and in a denunciatory fashion to the various mechanisms of repression and the frustration of personal and collective aspirations. According to Dictionary of Literary terms by Coles:

Realism, in literature, is a manner and method of picturing life as it really is, untouched by idealism or romanticism. As a manner of writing, realism relies on the use of specific details to interpret life faithfully and objectively. In contrast to romance, this concerned with the bizarre and psychological in its approach to character, presenting the individual rather than the type. Often, fate plays a major role in the action.

(Dictionary of Literary Terms, 163)

There is difference between social realism and socialist realism. According to Galsworthy, the word ‘realist’ characterizes that artist whose temperamental preoccupation is with revelation of the actual spirit of life, character and thought with a view to enlighten him and others. The main difference between social realism and socialist realism is between ‘is’ and ‘should be’. Social realism means the depiction of social reality in literature as it is; there should be a point one to one correspondence between the society depicted in literature and the real actual society.
Socialist realism means the depiction of the social reality not as it is but as it should be: idealized. The second kind of approach is a typical Marxist approach to literature. The theory of Socialist Realism was adopted by the Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934. Approved by Joseph Stalin, Nickolai Bukharin, Maxim Gorky and Andrei Zhdanov, Socialist Realism demanded that all art must depict and highlight some aspect of man's struggle toward socialist progress for a better life. It stressed the need for the creative artist to serve the proletariat by being realistic, optimistic and heroic. The doctrine considered all forms of experimentalism as degenerate and pessimistic. Socialist realism had its roots in neoclassicism and the traditions of realism in Russian literature of the 19th century that described the life of simple people.

In art as well as in literature, Joseph Stalin was the founder of socialist realism. Stalin has called our writers, “engineers of the human soul”, said Andrei Zhdanov at the 1934 First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers. In 1932, Stalin asserted:

The artist ought to show life truthfully. And if he shows it truthfully, he cannot fail to show it moving to socialism. This is and will be socialist realism. The imperative to depict life ‘truthfully’ was ‘intertwined with the imperative to glorify socialism and the state. The socialist realist doctrine rested upon the expectation that artists would align their work with the interests of the government.

*(Joseph Stalin: A Biographical Companion, 248)*

Andrei Danatovich Sinyavsky, a noted Russian socialist realist frequently wrote under the pseudonym i:e Abram Tertz. Abram Tertz pointed out in his well acclaimed book *On Socialist Realism* (1960) that socialist realism is “the concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development” (24). Its function is to ideologically transform and educate workers in the spirit of socialism. Socialist realism is the result of a deeply held belief in the need to use art to reshape society into a ‘better’ state for the workers.
He proceeds to highlight that socialist realism is founded “on the concept of purpose with a capital P”. He further asserts:

> Being an “all-embracing ideal”, the purpose of socialist realism is to help transform people’s consciousness by literature and art for the sake of revolutionary movement.

*(On Socialist Realism, 26)*

Such a purposefulness spirit is founded in the teleological nature of Marxism (Tertz, 33-34). Socialist realism depicts the “positive heroes” who are not just good men but men of purpose. Tertz describes the “positive hero” as the “cornerstone” of socialist realism whose innumerable virtues are capped by “the clarity and directness with which he sees the purpose and strives towards it” *(On Socialist Realism, 157-173).*

The positive hero was first found in Gorki’s novels in the 1910s such as *The Petty Bourgeois*, characterized by the heroic self-assurance and straightforwardness towards his future goal. *The Petty Bourgeois* highlights that “only men who are as pitiless, straight and hard as swords will cut their way through” (Terz, 50). The positive hero embraces the ideals of “ideological conviction, courage, intelligence, will power, patriotism, respect for women, self-sacrifice”. The essence of such a positive hero is his lack of hesitation and inner doubts in striving directly towards the socialist purpose (Terz, 48-49).

*Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory* (1973) by Caradog Vaughan James describes the definition of socialist realism in a very influential manner. He highlights that socialist realism is based on “a direct relationship between the artist and the process of building a new society; it is art colored by the experience of the working class in its struggle to achieve socialism” (88). He further says that this process of building a new society by “critiquing the social order and giving voice to the desires and grievance of the people, be accessible of the masses and performs a didactic function in society” (James, 3-7). James continues to explain:
Socialist realism was, in fact, an interpretation, within the context of Marxist-Leninist ideology of artistic developments throughout the proletarian period of the revolutionary movement...an attempt to codify those developments and project them into the future, transforming the artist’s ‘tendency’ into a conscious programme.

(Soviet Socialist Realism, 84)

Herman Ermolaev’s landmark book on the genesis of socialist realism entitled Soviet Literary Theories, 1917-1934: The Genesis of Socialist Realism (1963) defines socialist realism as a “method of literature and criticism”. He further explicates:

Socialist realism is a method of literature and criticism to be used in portraying reality in its revolutionary development and in creating works purporting to inculcate the masses with the spirit of socialism.

(The Genesis of Socialist Realism, 6)

James continues to highlight that socialist realism depicts a very “optimistic and purposeful intention for the socialist education of the masses” (6). He reveals aesthetic ideas and theories in the Soviet Union to have been widely permeated by the influence of Marxism in the years preceding the creation of socialist realism. Another noted socialist realist, Andrei Aleksandrovich Zhdanov, second Secretary of the Communist party (1941-48), attempted to define the concept of socialist realism in his speech given at the First Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers in 1934. He aptly asserts:

Socialist realism, the basic method...demands from the writer an authentic, historically specific depiction of reality in its revolutionary development. This authenticity and historical specificity in the depiction
of reality should be combined with the task of ideologically reshaping and educating the toilers in the spirit of socialism. Socialist realism guarantees the creative artist exceptional opportunities for the manifestation of his creative initiative, for the choice of various forms, styles and genres.

(Scott, 21-22)

Socialist realism depicts the bright side of the ‘new society’, ‘new heroes’ and their revolutionary spirits. Maxim Gorky’s *Mother* has been regarded as the cornerstone of socialist realism for its devotion to social change and its portrayal of a revolutionary hero. Rufus Mathewson, a socialist realist pointed out that the two ‘formulas’ in *Mother* were much followed by Soviet writers: the “conversion of the innocent into an active revolutionary” (Nilovna, the mother of a revolutionary son Pavel, was increasingly drawn into the tide of revolution and became a true revolutionary) and pattern of emblematic political heroism in the face of terrible obstacles” (*The Positive Hero*, 67-44). The adherence of these heroic characters to the revolutionary cause is enshrined as revolutionary spirit. Commenting on the necessity of creative work to stand on the high viewpoint, Maxim Gorky aptly writes about socialist realism:

For us writers, it is necessary in our life and in our creative work to stand on the high viewpoint—and only on that viewpoint that can see clearly all of the filthy crimes of capitalism, all of its mean and bloody intention, and all of the greatness of the heroic activities of the proletariat.

(*Aspects of Western Civilization*, 343)

Social realism is concerned with dynamic interpretations of life with the purpose of changing the existing reality. Henry James, Henrik Ibsen, George Bernard Shaw, T.W. Robertson are considered to be the founders of the social realism in literature as they are believed to have embraced realism in its embryonic stage. Social realism is a
literary approach that helps to reveal the dark suppressed face of society and harsh hidden realities. Social realism highlights the injustice of the social, economic and political system and their effect on less well-off members of society. The concept ‘social realism’ in the strictly scientific and philosophic sense has come to us with the philosophy of Marxism. Leo Tolstoy also the follower of social realism theory admits that the real world presented for the sake of art is also not up to the purpose.

Ernest J. Simmons in his book *Introduction to Russian Realism* (1965) highlights that realism is a literary form that, “grapples with, assimilates, and interprets reality, the subjective element plays an enormous role, to say nothing of the subjective element in the reader…reacting to the writer’s reactions to reality” (3-4). Ostensibly, realism is in fact the impression of ‘life as it is’ as perceived by both the writer and reader.

Similarly, George Lukas also supported the aesthetic doctrine of social realism. For him realism was not a ‘style’ but ‘the basis of every literature’. Lukas’s views on realism in its proper form links everything with everything else, “presenting human societies as complexly interconnected totalities”. This “interconnectedness makes realism a fluid, vibrant medium of transaction between different spheres of life; the private and the public, the individual and the social, the mental and the physical” (M. Keith, 600-601). The realist assumes his or her position at the center of the world.

*The Encyclopedia of Literature and Politics* (2005) by M. Keith highlights Lukas belief on realism that presents a complete picture of the world it depicts, including the social components of that world. Keith further states that, “Lukas also thinks that the ‘totality of vision’ depends on what Hegel Called the ‘Totality of objects’ which are those essential elements that are integrally linked to the lives of the Character” (601).

Another noted theorist, Fredric Jameson’s *Afterword: A Note on Literary Realism* (2010) also defines realism as “essentially an epistemological category framed and staged in aesthetic terms” (279). He further asserts, “that the way in which all the great realists have thought of their narrative operations as an intervention of the superstitious or religious, traditional, conceptions of life…but in each historical
situation, the claim for truth will be a somewhat different one” (280). In the same vein, Albert Camus believed that “real literary creation...uses reality and only reality with all its warmth and its blood, its passion and its outcries. It simply adds something which transfigures reality” (The Rebel, 269). The social philosophy of Albert matches with Tagore, a social realist, who too was deeply concerned with representing what he perceived to be the truth.

Rabindranath Tagore considers that the only real literature is the expression of the historically developing nation spirit, the dialectic movement of the political and economic idea. That movement provides a norm for distinguishing between the eternal and the ephemeral in literature. So, the greatest author is most closely identified with the community and its evolution, one who divines the need of one’s time, express its spirit, and represent his contemporaries. Tagore is humanist and always concerned for the downtrodden narrated the central problems posed in aesthetics which is why realists have considered literature and art as the instruments of humanism. A noted critic, Kh. Kunjo Singh calls Tagore a “social realist”. He comments on the social realistic approach of Tagore in his book Humanism and Nationalism in Tagore’s Novels:

It is Tagore who ushered in the spirit of social realism and liberal humanism into the Indian novel and it is to him that the modern Indo-Anglican novel owes its moral and humane concern in its projection of contemporary reality.

(148)

However, true realism not only is realization and depiction of the situation but realists like Tagore, do more than that; they set it up as a demand to be made on men. They know that this distortion of objective reality due to social causes, this division of the complete human personality into a public and a private sector is a disfigurement of the essence of man. That is why they protest not only as painters of reality, but also as humanists. This great passion for the betterment of mankind is the valuable aspect of realism. This tasks and responsibility of literature are exceptionally great. But only true realism can cope with responsibility of betterment of mankind.
As a socialist realist, Soyinka is deeply rooted in the philosophy of Karl Marx ideology. Marxist literary criticism, with a fairly long history, also emphasizes the relationship between culture and society. In their writings Marx and Engels argue that the history of man is the history of class struggle to liberate from certain forms of oppression. Understandably, the class struggle which operates at societal level is driven by man, a heroic figure who feels it the most and raises his voice against it. The writer as a hero being the sensitive being is constraint to react against any kind of oppression and injustice by mean of his writings and by projecting a hero who is his own reflection. Thus the Marxist ideology which emphasizes the struggle for the transformation of the human society, so that man can be liberated from exploitation and oppression in all its forms and ramifications becomes the raison d’être of the writer as well. In this context Nayar explicated his views about author’s class position:

Authors are not just geniuses, they write in social contexts. Both their choice of form (genre, style) and content are influenced by the author’s class position. The Marxist critic relates the context of the work to the author’s own class position. It is presumed that the class-consciousness and prejudices of the author sees into her/his work unconsciously, but can be made visible through a close reading.

(Literary Theory, 111-112)

Literature is a social product and its interpretation must depend upon an adequate sociology. Marx and Engels were the first to debunk the idealist aesthetics which views all artistic creations as reproductions of the ideal. They stressed materialist interpretations of art and pointed out social nature of all artistic creations. In their famous book On Literature and Art, they discuss the origin and development of art by saying:

The essence, origin, development and social role of art could be understood through analysis of the social
system as a whole, within which the economic factor-the development of productive forces in complex interaction with production relations-plays the decisive role. (17)

III

I.3. Literature Review

The review of literature on the dramatic world of Rabindranath Tagore and Wole Soyinka provides a panorama of multifarious perspectives and dimensions of Tagore’s and Soyinka’s oeuvre which are indispensable to the argument of thesis.

I.3.a. The Writer and the Hero in Indian Literature

India has produced several great writers who have influenced a whole generation and continue to inspire the coming generations by their writings. Their works vividly portray the picture of Indian society and subtly bring out the ills in it. Indian writers have played a progressive part in the reform of Indian society since ancient times be it Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Raja Rao, Munshi Premchand, Rabindranath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan etc. In all Premchand’s novels before Godan, he created idealistic heroes, Premshankar in Premasram, Sur Das in Rangabhumi, Chakradhar in Kayakalp and Amarkant in Karamabhumi, all of whom bear the indelible imprint of Gandhi and Tolstoy but Hori is the most realistic hero in his works. Hori is not merely an individual; he is the representative of a class, whose virtues and failings he shares. Untouchable (1935) and Coolie (1936) are the popular novels of Mulk Raj Anand.

Munoo is portrayed as a voiceless hero in Coolie. The hero of the novel, Munoo represents the proletariat that lives on the fringes of a society characterized by competition, not association. His realization of the existence of the two warring classes, viz., the rich and the poor, and the absence of nexus between the two, illustrates the crux of the Marxist thought. R. K. Narayan’s The Bachelor of Arts (1937) has depicted the
hero Chandran, who is the *eironic* figure and sensitive young man caught in conflict between the western ideas of love and marriage instilled into him by his educated and the traditional social setup in which he lives. He carries his frustration to the point of renouncing the world and becoming a wondering monk.

Amongst the three prominent literary genres, Drama in India has had a rich glorious tradition. Drama in India is an expression of the religious impulse of human being, as was also the case in most of the countries of the world like Nigeria. Bharat Muni’s *Natyashastra*, the first complete, concise and a systematic treatise of drama in India elevates the role of drama in the Indian culture and makes it the fifth Veda. The art of theatre as mentioned in *Natyashastra* was the work of Lord Brahma, who was asked to give mankind the fifth Veda, which unlike the four earlier Vedas could be understood by everyone, even those who didn’t know Sanskrit i.e the lower marginalized sections of society. Drama, a prismatic literary genre reflecting the multitudinous aspect of Indian life, hence, occupies a pivotal place in Indian society. Commenting on the nationalistic flavor of Indian drama, Dhawan and Reddy writes in *The Flowering of Indian English Drama*:

> India has the longest and the richest tradition in drama. The origin of Indian drama can be traced back to the Vedic period. As a manifestation of our national sensibility Indian drama came into existence as a means of exploring and communicating the truth of things and was popularly hailed as the “Fifth Veda”.

Bharat Muni’s theory of dramatic art was followed by many celebrated Sanskrit dramatists of ancient period such as Bhasa, Shudraka, Ashwaghosha, Kalidasa, Harsha, Bhavabhuti, Bhattacharyya Murari who dealt with mythological themes solely aimed at entertainment of people with prime objective to teach morality. Sanskrit drama was at its zenith in those times renowned dramatists like Kalidasa, hailed by many anglicized Indian scholars as the “Shakespeare of India” for his classical *Abhigyana Shakuntalam*. 
The real journey of Indian English drama begins with Michael Madhusudan Dutt’s ‘Is This Called Civilization’ which appeared on the literary horizon in 1871.

The Indian English dramatic tradition started gaining recognition with the appearance of Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950), T.P. Kailasam (1885-1946), Harindranath Chattopadhyaya (1898-1990) and Bharati Sarabhai (1912) on the literary scene. These writers were writing at the time when India stood at the threshold of revolutionary changes which left no section of society untouched be it the downtrodden, lower caste groups or religious minorities.

Rabindranath Tagore was considered as “the epitome of Indian spiritual heritage” (Indian English Drama, 2). He wrote primarily in Bengali but almost all his Bengali plays are available to us in English renderings. Kabita Sinha, an Indian critic, was very much impressed by Tagore’s versatility. For her, “Tagore has been a dynamic life-force” right from her childhood. She observed his relevance for our present socialist society:

Tagore to me is eternally relevant and when our time-scale and modernity tarnish and get rusted, he will remain as fresh and shining as he is today. Let alone Tagore’s literary works, when I go through his constructive ideas of farming, co-operative, economic and rural development, education, vocational education, self-employment, problems of language, communalism, separatism, castism and his attitude towards international affairs, sometimes I feel, he is almost writing for our present socialist society.

(Indian Literature, 25)

Tagore’s works like The Home and the World, The Cycle of Spring, Red Oleanders, Gora, Laboratory, Sacrifice, The King of the Dark Chamber hold up a mirror to this society in conflict and reflect the crisis of spirit resulting from the
dialectical relationship between the reformist and revivalist impulses. Commenting on the representative nature of Tagore’s heroes, Mulk Raj Anand asserts:

Tagore’s young heroes, a whole galaxy of contemporary Indian portraits, from the lovers who have learnt through modern education… Haran, Sandip, Amit Ray are company representatives of our age, they do not offer much hope; better, disillusioned, impetuous, mostly concerned to make romantic gestures, they are only relieved by the fact that Tagore shows very skillfully how much more they are sinned against than sinning…in the lovable and human qualities, which cling even to the most vicious of them, they remain in our memory as the poignant symbols of fighters who feel in the all-embracing manifold struggle of our generation to find a new way of life.

(Tagore the Novelist, 11)

Sri Aurobindo is the prominent dramatist in Indian English drama. He wrote five complete blank verse plays are Perseus the Deliverer, Vasavadutta, Radoguna, The Viziers of Bassora and Eric. The notable feature of Sri Aurobindo plays is that they depict different cultures and countries in different epochs, ringing with variety of characters, moods of sentiments. Aurobindo wrote Perseus the Deliverer (1907) which is based on a Greek myth. In the Greek myth, Andromeda is a passive figure and a patient sufferer; but Perseus, the hero, is a miracle-worker who saves her in the nick of time from the jaw of the dreaded sea-monster. Bhatta S. Krishna highlights the romantic impulse of Aurobindo which appears as the driving force behind his creative plays. He comments:

Sri Aurobindo employs ancient legends to highlight the contemporary urge for freedom and bondage and
heighten the elements of heroism, adventure and mystery in the actions of his imaginary characters and as such, all his plays are imbued with a strong romantic impulse which appears to be the driving force behind all his plays.

*(Indian English Drama: A Critical Study, 19)*

T. P. Kailasam based his plays on Indian epics primarily on the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. He wrote both in English and Kannada. G.S. Amur rightly remarks about Kailasam:

A talented actor who appeared in the amateur as well as the professional stage, he brought to the writing of drama an intimate knowledge of the theatre. It is for this reason that his plays whether in Kannada or in English have a uniform technical excellence.

*(Critical Essays, 65)*

Though Kailasam is regarded as the Father of Modern Kannada Drama, his genius finds its full expression in his English plays such as *The Burden* (1933), *Fulfillment* (1933), *The Purpose* (1944) and *Karna* (1964). *The Purpose* is a play about Ekalavya. The hero, Ekalavya, is a nishaada who seeks education from Drona but is dismissed because of his low-born status. Though Drona personally bears no grudge against Ekalavya, he is forced to reject him because of the promise made to Bheesma that he, Drona, would concentrate only on the education of the princes. The play aims to highlight the problem of a tradition that allows birth to usurp the function of the inner worth of an individual. Kailasam’s hero, Ekalavya is an embodiment of struggle and strong determination.
Harindranath Chattopadhyay is the most significant name in the history of Indian English drama who contributed in its development with a vast array of plays dealing with the social themes be it the hardships of the working class, artificial morality of the society or the darker side of imperialism. Harindranath has written excellent plays like *The Window, The Parrot, Pundalik, Eknath, Tukaram* and *Raidas*. His plays reflect the social milieu of our times. His plays present the living picture of humanity in its various shades. In *Tukaram*, the hero of the play, Tukaram has represented as an *alazonic* hero because he protests against the discrimination prevailing in orthodox society in the name of caste, creed and religion.

Bharati Sarabhai is the Modern Woman playwright during the colonial era of Indian English drama. She has written two plays, *The Well of the People* (1943) and *Two Women* with some considerable measure of success. S. Mokashi Punekar comments on his play, “Bharati Sarabhai’s *The Well of the People* is probably the only articulate work of literary art giving complete expression to the Gandhian Age” (*Musings on Indian Writings*, 6). Up to post-independence era, drama in English in Indian soil could not flourish as a major current of creative expression. Although the Pre–Independence Indian English drama is notable for its poetic excellence, thematic variety, technical virtuosity, symbolic significance and its commitment to human and moral values, it was by and large not geared for actual stage production.

Nissim Ezekiel (1924-2004) the recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Padma Shri scrutinized the institutions of society like marriage. He showed the disharmony of marriage and also presented the picture in fairly uncomplicated manner. He lambasted the institution of marriage in *Three Plays* (1969) which contains *Nalini: A Comedy, Marriage Poem: A Tragic-Comedy*. In his play, *Nalini*, Ezekiel depicts the immaturity of a whole class through the portraiture of two youngmen- Bharat and Raj. His second play *Marriage Poem*, tries to depict the hollowness of the social institution called marriage. The hero of the play, Naresh believes that marriages done in a hurry cause regret only. In the play, Naresh is presented as a frustrated hero who has no love for his wife Mala.
Asif Currimbhoy (1928) in the vast canvas of his plays hardly left any aspect of Indian life untouched, be it politics, history, psychology, religion, art, philosophy, social and economic issues likewise his hero in his plays provides us with different phases of social reality. He has been called ‘India’s first authentic voice in the theatre’. Some important plays by Asif Currimbhoy are *The Tourist, Om, The Dance Drama, The Restaurant, The Doldrumners* (1992), *The Captives, Goa* (1970), *Monsoon, An Experiment with Truth, Inquilab, The Refugee, Sonar Bangla, Angkor* and *The Dissident MLA* etc.

The hero of the play *Om*, Svetaketu has been taken from the *Chhandogya Upanishad*. He is a myth representing the historical development of Hinduism. In Act-I, he is projected as a representative of the Vedic period both as a warrior and as a man of action keeping the cosmic world in order. In Act-II, he stands for devotion to a personalized god for attaining salvation, which is another important aspect of Hinduism. In Act-III, he is a teacher showing the path of salvation through knowledge. In Act-I he is an *alazonic* hero and in Act –II and III, he is represented as an *eironic* figure. Three of Svetaketu’s life- a soldier, a temple priest and a teacher- represent the three aspects of Hinduism- action, devotion and knowledge.


**I.3.a.i. Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad Minded Writer**

Rabindranath Tagore was an icon of Indian culture. He was a poet, philosopher, musician, writer, and educationist. He (1861-1941) is undoubtedly the most outstanding and popular Indian writer. He wrote primarily in Bengali, but had a mastery of English also. He translated his own poems and plays into English, often changing the originals. Tagore also wrote poems, short stories, letters etc., in English. Commenting on the writings of Tagore, Iyenger aptly writes:
He belongs unquestionably to Bengali literature, but he belongs to Indo-Anglian Literature too—indeed, he belongs to all India and the whole world. He was a poet, dramatist, actor, producer; he was a musician and a painter; he was an educationist, a practical idealist who turned his dreams into reality at Shantiniketan; he was a reformer, philosopher, prophet; he was a novelist and short-story writer, and a critic of life and literature; he even made occasional incursions into nationalist politics, although he was essentially internationalist.

*(Indian Writing in English, 99)*

Tagore became the first Asian to win Nobel Prize for his collection of poems, *Gitanjali*, in 1913. He was popularly called as Gurudev and his songs were popularly known as *Rabindrasangeet*. After reading Tagore’s breathtaking creative work *Gitanjali*, W.B. Yeats, an Irish critic, hailed Tagore as founder of a ‘New Indian Renaissance’ and expressed his views in an extraordinary manner:

*[The poems of] Rabindranath Tagore have stirred my blood as nothing has for years…these lyrics…display in their thought a world I have dreamed all my life…Rabindranath Tagore…is so abundant, so spontaneous, so daring in his passion, so full of surprise, because he is doing something which never seemed strange, unnatural, or in need of defense. These verses will not die in little well-printed books upon ladies tables…or be carried about by students at the university to be laid aside when the work of life begins, but as the generations pass, travelers will hum them on the highway and men rowing upon rivers. Lovers, while they await one another, shall find, in murmuring them, this love of God a magic of*
gulf wherein their own more bitter passion may bathe and renew its youth.

_(Introduction by W.B. Yeats, VII-XV)_

Tagore was a prolific writer who at the age of twenty, wrote his first drama-opera _Valmiki Pratibha_ (The Genius of Valmiki) - which describes how the bandit Valmiki reforms his ethos, is blessed by Saraswati, and composes the _Ramayana_. Through it, Tagore Vigorously explores a wide range of dramatic styles and emotions, including usage of revamped _Kirtans_ and adaptations of traditional English and Irish folk melodies as drinking songs. His prominent plays are _Chitra_ (1913), _The Post Office_ (1912), _Sacrifice_ (1917), _Red Oleanders_ (1925), _The King and the Queen_ (1923), _Chandalika_ (1938), _Muktadhara_ (1922), _Natir Puja_ (1932), _The King of the Dark Chamber_ (1914), _The Cycle of Spring_ (1917), _Sanyasi_ (1917) and _The Mother’ Prayer_. These plays are firmly rooted in the Indian ethos and ethics in their themes, characters and treatment.

Tagore’s _The Post Office_ describes how a child –striving to escape his stuffy confines—ultimately “falls[s] asleep” (which suggests his physical death). The protagonists in his plays realize the value of compassion and self-sacrifice. In all his plays, the heroes struggle hard to relieve the sufferings of humanity, from the clutches of the material world. Tagore’s heroes are “sharply individualized, interact with other characters and undergo changes, under the pressure of events and other forces of change operating within the milieu. They are never static and do not remain mere products of artistic control or manipulation” (_Tagore the Novelist_, 10). The humanistic approach of Tagore is aptly conveyed in the words of a noted critic, Sallama Mosa when she says:

He (Rabindranath Tagore) was the leader of humanist literature…he practiced literature not for the sake of literature or beauty but for the humanity.

_(The Profile of Rabindranath Tagore, 189)_
There is a vast corpus of critical opinions expressed by critics from all parts of the country on the plays of Rabindranath Tagore which reflect the vision of the dramatist.

Krishna Kripalani’s *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography* (1962) presents a magnificent study of Tagore by dealing with the difficult critical problems surrounding Tagore’s writings. Kripalani worked with Tagore in Santiniketan for eleven years was editor of the *Visva-Bharati* Quarterly, a literary journal in English, which Tagore was the founder and first editor and was with him from 1933 to the poet’s death in 1941. Kripalani has a style which is attractive, though sometimes florid, and an ironic tone that is often pleasing. This study deals with the difficult critical problems surrounding Tagore’s writings by the simple means of denying that they exist; toward Tagore the man their attitude verges on hagiolatry.

Bimanbehari Majumdar work entitled *Heroines of Tagore: A Study of Transformation of Indian Society 1875-1941* (1968) discusses that Tagore is a minute observer of the manners and customs, ideas and beliefs, as well as of the conduct and character of the various strata of society from which he has drawn his heroines as the case of social injustice. In this book, she has drawn a contrast between Tagore’s heroines of the nineteenth and those of the twentieth century.

A noted critic, Sankar Basu in his book *Chekhov and Tagore: A Comparative Study of their Short Stories* (1985) has talked about the development of the genres of short stories in Bengali and in Russian Literature. He has compared the Short stories of Tagore and Chekhov by taking into consideration the specificity of social life, customs, cultures, traditions, family surroundings etc. of Bengal and Russia. Considering these factors, an attempt has been made by Sankar Basu to show the similarities of the stories of Tagore and Chekhov both on an ideological and thematic plane as also on the level of characterization of these stories. He has taken the themes which are common in both the writers.

Tapati Dasgupta’s *Social Thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore: A Historical Analysis* (1993) makes a pioneering attempt at evaluating the social philosophy of
Tagore. She lays emphasis on Tagore’s idea of ‘social unity’ among people. She opines, “The core of Tagore’s philosophy was the maintenance of balance and rhythm in social activities…Man has two aspects, one is personal and the other social. When man is self-centred, he is a savage. The social aspect of man makes him enlightened, helpful and civilized” (Social Thoughts, 52).

Siser Kumar Das’s book *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore: A Miscellany* (1996) is a collection of different genres of writings of Tagore. This book comprises of three volumes including the large number of lectures and addresses on various political and moral issues and also messages and conversations with some eminent personalities of the world like Einstein, Rolland and Gandhi. The first section contains prose works of Tagore like *The Religion of Man* (1931). The second section brings together a number of lectures by Tagore at different places of the world. The next section is a compilation of occasional writings namely messages, tributes letters and public opinions etc. and the last section is a collection of interviews.

Bishweshwar Chakraverty, a well noted critic, has come out with a dramatic critical study of Tagore’s work as a dramatist in his book entitled *Tagore: The Dramatist* (2000). It is a four volume book; other associated volumes are ‘Nature and Dance Drama’, ‘Symbolic Drama’, ‘Prose Drama and Comedies’ and ‘Musical, Verse and Poetic Drama”. This study places Tagore as a dramatist artist into a fresh perspective by following the process of continual development of this specific stream of creativity in him that flowed through variant channels of expression spanning six decades, two of the nineteenth and four of the twentieth century. Chakraverty defines Tagore’s dramatic idiom of international standard especially in the case of creative expression, the dramatic form, the medium, an action-character-dialogue. In the manipulation of dialogue Tagore exhibits the changing modes of expression such as musical speech, verse, song, lively colloquial prose. The study is based on the original Bengali texts of the plays, most of them are untranslated and some of them untranslatable, particularly in genres like Musical Drama, Nature Drama and Dance Drama. The plays shed light on Tagore’s themes of ascendant values developed through the conflict of our lesser man with our greater man. His plays classified into eight genres.
are subjected to scrutiny by way of generic introductions, plot synopses and analyses in depth to reveal the empiric and incessantly maturing artist in Tagore.

The work of Gaurav Pradhan entitled *Rabindranath Tagore (Literary Concepts)* (2002) provides an analytical study of Tagore’s literary concepts particularly Man, Woman, Love and beauty. Love, in Tagore’s works is one of the dominating features. Love, like the green grass, and the trees and life’s music is only for the surface of the world. It comes and vanishes like a dream. But underneath is duty like the rude layers of stones.

Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson in their book *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man* (2003) explore the man behind the myth, presenting the power of his person, the power of his name and the power of his work, revealing Tagore’s personality in all its myriad-mindedness.

Ketki N. Pandya, an Indian critic, in his book *Tagore’s Chitra and Aurobindo’s Savitri: A Comparative Study* (2004) offers a novel reading of the *Chitra* and *Savitri* Legends. The study not only documents the contemporary socio-cultural, religious, political and literary conditions of the times but also comparatively analyses the content, form and philosophy of *Chitra* and *Savitri*.

Santosh Chakrabarti’s work entitled *Studies in Tagore: Critical Essays* (2004) presents thirteen papers of which eight are devoted to his fiction, making an incisive study of their principal themes. Tagore, with his polyvalent personality, is a perennial source of interest to people at home and abroad. Apart from their abiding literary value, his writings are significant because they enshrine his views on the myriad aspects of life, which are in no way dated. His novels and short stories are riveted to the socio-familial problems of the times in which he lived. More significantly, His study of the women, especially from the psychological angle, reveals an ever-sensitive mind, keen perception and clarity of vision which make his writings so interesting and exceptional.

Another well known critic, Kalyan Sen Gupta in his work entitled *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore* (2005) talks about Tagore’s ideas on love, freedom, happiness, marriage, education, politics, and the existence of evil in the five chapters of this slim volume. Tagore never lost his faith in the inherent goodness of humanity. He devotes one chapter to Tagore’s relationship with Mohandas K. Gandhi and their philosophical differences on such topics as nationalism and education. Sen Gupta tells us that Tagore believed religion had no place in the political realm and rather was a personal issue. “The society he dreams of is the one which is self-sufficient in its material aspects and egalitarian in its spirit, which is not static with old customs and conventions, but responds to new ideas and changes” (Gupta 41).

In one of the recent research works on Tagore produced on the birth centenary celebrations of Gurudev Tagore is Ujjwal Kr. Panda’s Paper entitled “Ritual Suicide and the Paradoxical Nature of Regeneration: A Comparative Study of Tagore’s Sacrifice and Soyinka’s Death and the King’s Horseman” (2012). This study attempts the thematic analysis of both the plays i:e ritual suicide.

Indranath Chaudhuri, a well-known Indian critic, in his article “Myth, Orality and Folklore in World Literature With Special Reference to Tagore” published in *Studies in Myth, Orality and Folklore in World Literature* (2013) by Vandhana Sharma has dealt with the history of myth, and asserts that in Indian context oral, tribal or folklore are neither the residue of the past, nor the behaviour of the uncivilized, but it is the continuity of a rich culture and also a process of making the present more worthy.
A very renowned scholar of Tagore, Mohit K. Ray in his study “Tagore’s Use of Myth, Orality and Folklore” published in Studies in Myth, Orality and Folklore in World Literature (2013) by Vandhana Sharma maps out the variety and complexity of Tagore’s use of myth, orality and folklore with copious illustrations.

Another noted critic, Majumdar in her paper entitled “Yeats and Tagore: A Comparative Study of Cross Cultural Poetry, Nationalist Politics, Hyphenated Margins and the Ascending of the Mind” (2013) has explored their relationship and also seeks to clarify how and why these two poets shared certain ideas and ideals while there were also divergences.

T. Malathi Gabriel’s article “A Comparative Study on Tagore’s Sacrifice and Wole Soyinka’s The Strong Breed” (2014) provides many things in common as both the plays deal with their native cultures, proud traditions and zest for modernity in theme. In this paper, he highlights the comparison that Tagore in his own region and era has seen the human condition from a cultural perspective and belief pattern, Soyinka projects the same from an African domain.

Arnab Bhattacharya and Mala Ranganathan’s The Politics and Reception of Rabindranath Tagore’s Drama: The Bard on the Stage (2014) makes a pioneering attempt at evaluating the major plays of Tagore and demonstrating the playwright’s thematic concerns. This book is an anthology of research articles contributed by eminent critics. The research papers analyze the plays of Tagore from various perspectives.

The Three major plays of Tagore analyzed in this dissertation are Sacrifice (1917), Red Oleanders (1925) and The King and the Queen (1923). In Sacrifice (1917), the Tagorean hero, Jaising, decides his fate and sacrifice himself for the sake of community, thereby, imparting the idea of self-sacrifice which originated from Jaising’s sacrifice grown out of his social concern to save the life of his king, Govinda. Jaising is a strong hero who bravely stands for peace when human sacrifice is claimed for the Goddess of War. The conflicting issue of the play is the ritual sacrifice of animals before the Goddess Kali. Jaising is the embodiment of virtue and morality.
In *Red Oleanders* (1925) Tagore depicts the all pervasive images of corruption and the death of justice, thereby, conveying his vision through Ranjan, who gives voice to his voiceless co-workers which the headmaster aptly defines “nothing seems to fasten on to him. His boisterousness is infectious. The diggers are getting frisky” (36). Ranjan vehement opposition of the authority of the king makes him the “compulsive-rebel”—the *alazon* to remove unscrupulous capitalism, environmental exploitation and blinding greed of power and wealth. Ranjan therefore is an embodiment of protest and sacrifice for the rights of exploited workers in a gigantic system of the powerful king and the pig-headed defenders of the exploited system.

In *The King and the Queen* (1923), Tagore depicts the destruction and futility of war. The central theme of the play concerns the discipline of the destructive forces of ego-centric love to affect a spiritual poise. The play highlights the moral blindness of the king which forced him to go against his own queen and his brother-in-law. Submerged in a sensual heaven, the king becomes the cause for an internal rebellion. Due to this conflict between the king and the queen, Kumarsen sacrifices his life to control the situation of the war and becomes the *pharmakos* figure at the end of the play.

I.3.b. The Writer and the Hero in African Literature

African Literature is predominantly called ‘Protest Literature’—protest against foreigners, the religion which they sought to impose on the people, racial discrimination and political subjection and corruption. The social, cultural and political turmoil generally acts as a stimulant for a sensitive writer, who is a socially conscious being. Prevailing conditions when he acts as a writer force him to take a definite stand on many issues and being the conscience of the society, the writer becomes the most appropriate person to speak for it. African Writers have realized quite early their role in instilling a new confidence among their people.

Writing has almost been a mission for African writers. Ever since they started writing, they have been sensitive to the political and social changes on the continent. Their themes have shown great variety. In the beginning their chief concerns were countering the distorted version of African past and the evil consequences of European
hegemony. For these writers, the prime concern got identified as a protest against exploitation by the colonizers. In a virile voice black writers protested against indifferent establishments, black or white. They were angry and in their idealism were understandably in a hurry to battle with and change the world to make it better for blacks. Thus the African voice, the black voice, strident, rose against years of mental, physical and economic subjugation under whites and traditional usage, declared its coming of age while underscoring the problems that are attendant on such independence. Thomas Hodgkin’s conception of African art puts in a nutshell the spirit that informs the works and ideas of African writers:

African art is essentially a collective art done for everyone with the participation of everyone. It is a practical art…it is a committed art: the artist mirrors his people, his time, his history, but he mirrors them from a definite personal point of view. And it is an art which virtually goes on all the time.

(African Heritage, 278)

A number of African writers, Amon Tutola, Mongo Beti, Camara Laye and Cyprian Ekwensi used their writings to mirror the transitional and turbulent African society. Chinua Achebe and Nguge Wa Thiongo are another two prominent African novelists, who have presented the two aspects of life in their works— the harm done to a traditional society by alien rulers and the merits as well as defects of the traditional society. These writers are revolutionary and use their writings as a strong weapon.

Walter P. Collin in his book Emerging African Voices: A Study of Contemporary African Literature has talked about various heroes in African literature. J. P. Clark in his book The Hero as a Villain: Inaugural Lecture Series has talked about the various issues in the life of a hero. To take a few examples from the prominent works: Okonkwo, the protagonist of the novel Things Fall Apart, is Achebe’s prototypical hero, who is in reaction against the Christian father, who himself became a Christian by reacting against the Christian father, a pagan of old community. Okonkwo, though he
destroys himself, does so not from individual motives, but as a representative of Igbo land beaten down by something too foreign, too external to him, even to understand. Okonkwo, a strong individual and Igbo hero is struggling to maintain the cultural integrity of his people against the overwhelming power of colonial rule. He is an alazonic hero who fights against the white colonist but at the end of the novel, Okonkwo’s act to give up his life is not a futile attempt is his heroic attempt to protest against the hegemony of the colonizers.

Njoroge is another African alazonic hero in Ngugi Wa Thiong’o’s Weep Not Child because he is growing up amidst to the Mau-Mau war and the conflict between the African natives and the British colonial rulers. Caught between ruthless demands of insurgent forces and the ruthless repression of the colonial state, Njoroge senses no exit so he became scapegoat.

Kolawale Ogunbesan in his book A King for all Seasons: Chaka in African Literature in Presence Africaine has talked about the famous hero Chaka. Chaka is one of the best-known heroes of African literature. It seems most remarkable that Chaka has so often been chosen as an epic hero in West-African plays written in French. What might be the reason that a number of modern West-African writers were inspired to write free dramatizations based on precisely this story of the South African Zulu hero? Senghor (1964), Seydou Badian (1962), Djibril Tamsir Niane (1971), Abdou Anta Ka (1972), and Condetto Nénékhaly Camara (1970) have all used the Chaka theme in a different way, according to their own ideas and inspiration, but all tried in their plays to restore the glorious past and to square up with the colonial domination which denied this past. That’s probably why Chaka became a “King for all seasons”.

I.3.b.i. Wole Soyinka: A Sui generis

Among the galaxy of African writers, Wole Soyinka is a sui generis. It is not that he stands aloof from the main stream of protest and cuts out a path for himself; in fact he is very much a part of it, but the intensity of the heat of red-hot iron in his works makes him the most distinguished of all the writers. As a human right activist, Soyinka has been a courageous voice for justice, freedom, and the end of tyranny. He has risked
his life time and again to articulate the moral principles that provide the foundation for human rights, both in his native Nigeria and around the world. In politics, he is revolutionary, determined to break the status quo by any power legitimately at his disposal. Wole Soyinka is universally acclaimed as a great dramatist who deals with the core issues of human liberty, equality and justice in contemporary society brutalized by violence and corruption. His iconoclastic tendency is reflected in his works. He has influenced a number of African Playwrights because his writings have acknowledged the use of cultural elements. In an interview in 1973, he said:

I have a special responsibility, because I can smell the reactionary sperm years before the rape of the nation takes place.

*(The Guardian, 29)*

The great poet, novelist and playwright of modern Indian renaissance, Rabindranath Tagore in his poem entitled “Africa” uses an expression: “Poet (Writer) of a New Age” and this appellation aptly applies to Wole Soyinka who himself welcomes as well as heralds the dawn of a new age in the African cultural renaissance. Wole Soyinka is also known as “The African Tagore” by Dilbag Firdausi, a famous critic. Soyinka’s major works are *A Dance of the Forests* (1959), *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963), *The Swamp Dwellers* (1963), *The Strong Breed* (1963), *Kongi’s Harvest* (1965), *The Road* (1965) and *Death and the King’s Horseman* (1975). Soyinka has experienced emotions beyond despair and has constituted these objectively as a profound self-awareness, and a cynicism which is tempered by a resolve to live in the very eye of contradiction. He has then attempted in his plays, to create characters and situations in which these emotions can be bodied forth.

There is a vast corpus of critical opinions expressed by critics from all parts of the country and the world on the plays of Wole Soyinka which reflect the vision of the dramatist.
Vijay Nair, an Indian critic, in his paper, "The Drama of Existence: The Plays of Wole Soyinka" has talked about the plays which undertake explorations of the conflict between past and present and the ruler and their subjects. Soyinka presented his political vision for Nigeria through his dramatic hero. Soyinka’s Protagonist is a variation of the universal hero. Through some of his heroes, Soyinka articulates his ideals for a new political order in Nigeria. Ogun provides the ideal for a Soyinkan hero. He is the god of iron and of war, destruction and carnage, and the god of creativity. So Ogun heroes are a kind of paradox, they destroy and create life.

Eldred Jones, a well known Shakespearean critic has commented profusely on Soyinka and his theatre. In his study on Soyinka in the seventies, Jones remarks that Soyinka’s theatre is similar to Irish theatre and has its roots in the Nigerian tradition. The critic opines that Soyinka’s corpus has a wide range of themes with comedies and tragedies falling within its purview. His plays deal with “the fate of man in his environment, the struggle for survival, the cost of survival, the real meaning of progress”.

In *The Writing of Wole Soyinka* (1983), Jones analyzed the works of Soyinka cumulatively and commented on the “universal appeal” of the writer’s oeuvre. He focused on the “constant challenges and constant choices” which the human life in the works of Soyinka confronts. The critic opines that “Soyinka’s work celebrates life, and deprecates its opposite”. The opposite includes minor internal repression, Civil War and the entire catastrophe which man creates on earth. The protagonist is battered and bruised by these experiences and gradually moves towards wisdom after facing the severe trials.

Another critic, Jonathan A. Peter in his work *A Dance of Masks: Senghor, Achebe, Soyinka and African Culture History* (1978) offers a study on the generic human nature, which is universal in the light of the major works of Soyinka. He comments that Soyinka’s works denigrate mankind by presenting an unflattering portrait of man’s history and destiny. The writer considers man as ‘a doomed animal’, who falls prey to his fellows but can rise above his present state by his ill, creative endeavour and community involvement.
Ketu H. Katrak, the most notable critic of eighties analysed Soyinka’s theory of Yoruba tragedy and compared it with the Greek tragedy. In his critical work, *Wole Soyinka and Modern Tragedy* (1986) writes that Soyinka uses the Yoruba ritual and myth to create his own form of tragic drama where the protagonist undergoes suffering and trauma. According to the critic, “individual will, destiny, the meaning of death, the value of community-brings Soyinka’s tragic drama close to Greek tragedy”. Katrak’s study depicts the tragic experience of the Yoruba artist, who displays an exemplary moral courage in the face of social justice. He concludes that the goal of Yoruba tragedy is to energize the community at the end.

Critics like James Gibbs and Chidi Amuta interpreted the works of Soyinka from a sociological perspective. The Civil War (1967-70) dominated Nigeria for a long period. A bulk of literature on the War can be seen as an attempt by Nigerian writers to re-establish their moral commitment to the political evolution of their country. In this process, Wole Soyinka occupies a unique position. James Gibbs in his book *Modern Dramatists: Wole Soyinka* (1986) has talked about various dramatists in African literature. James Gibbs in his book *Critical Perspectives on Wole Soyinka* has talked about the various themes in the plays of Wole Soyinka.

Chidi Amuta in his study “From Myth to Ideology: The Socio-Political Content of Soyinka’s War Writings” (1988) analyses a drastic change in Soyinka’s style of writing after the mental agony and moral indignation he experienced in the course of his twenty four months detention during the civil war. Amuta avers that the war experience brings a change in the themes in the works of Soyinka “from myth to more secular, even radical political inclination”. According to Amuta, Soyinka turned away from the groves of Yoruba gods after his traumatic experiences during the Nigerian Civil War and “reaffirmed his confidence in a socialist democratic transformation of the Nigerian society”. His post-war writings testify to his intense political thrust and the brutish aspects of War ethos.

Radhamani Gopalakrishnan in his article “The Christ Figure in the Plays of Soyinka” (1989) depicts the blind beggar in *The Swamp Dwellers*, and Eman in *The Strong Breed* are representative Christ figures. The Beggar here is a Christ figure,
though drawn in rather dim outlines. Wandering about, all alone, taking little for himself, he can give himself completely away. The sacrifice element is absent in *The Swamp Dwellers*, the emphasis being placed on the positive benevolence of Christ. Introducing the central figure, Eman, Soyinka dramatizes the need for sacrifice which is the only sure means of expiation or retribution even to one’s own self. The Yoruba, the classical, and the Christian elements are blended together in the tragedy of Eman.

Wole Soyinka’s works in nineties focus primarily upon the myths and rituals incorporated by the writer in his works. Mahadeva in his study *Myths and Rituals in the Plays of Wole Soyinka* (1993) projects Soyinka as a “mythopoeist” who had realized the dramatic potential of myths and rituals that could lead to a “Theatrical revolution”. Mahadeva opines that the dramatic range of Soyinka is wide and covers within its ambit “the purgation of a community to self-sacrifice, politics and corruption to torture and death in prison,... powerful priest and dictators; city life and traditional village set ups; the spirits, ancestors of the African world and gods in the mythic world, the rich and the poor, the old, the young and the unborn” (Mahadeva, 140).

Sunanda P. Chavan in her work entitled “The Hero as Artist in Wole Soyinka’s *The Road*” (1999) focuses on its hero-Professor-as Soyinka’s vision of ‘artist’. As an artist, Professor is obsessed with the problem of relevance of life and death for human existence In terms of eternity as well as contemporaneity. His ‘quest for the word’ is primarily a quest of the artist. ‘The word’ which defines the central purpose of existence, may be validated as a semantic and syntactic metaphor for Wole Soyinka’s concern as an artist, with the content and the form. It symbolizes his search for the ultimate meaning which also involves his search for the language adequate for its communication. Professor, with all the contradictions in his personality, poses the most crucial challenge before the interpreters. He is deeply involved with the world of corruption, fraud, forgery, bribery, accidents, police and arrests on the one hand, and with the metaphysical world of search for ultimate meaning of death, on the other.

In *The Plays of Wole Soyinka: A Sociological-Psychological Study* (1999), M. Pushpa, an Indian critic, offers a psychological analysis of Soyinka’s works. She studies the impact of cultural chaos on human psyche and personality. In her opinion, the
conflict between will and the social needs affects the psyche of characters. She opines that “the collision of cultures produces pain” which is even more intense than “the onslaught of humiliating colonialism”. The critic holds the view that the people in the period of transition are caught between the anvil and the hammer, and are engaged in the shaping of a new life. The protagonist waits for the opportune moment to strike the right chord, but sometimes he does not succeed and his failure leads to the disintegration of his self.

The work of K. Naveen Kumar entitled “Social Problems and Conflicts in Kongi’s Harvest” (2008) attempts to provide the theme of the play i.e., dictatorship of traditional and modern rulers in Africa. The central conflict of the play is about modernity, which wants to usurp the traditional ruler’s powers and privileges in the society. The central conflict of the play happens to be between the tradition and modernity. The traditional ruler Oba Danlola represents tradition. He is the religious and political leader of Ismaland. Modernism is depicted through the character of Kongi. He is the constitutional head and the President of Ismaland. As a champion of new values, Kongi wants to destroy the traditional systems of the land at the root itself. He has seized power from Oba Danlola. He wants him to surrender publicly and acknowledge his supremacy.

Basavaraj Naikar in his work entitled “A Dance of the Forests: A Socio-Political Satire” (2008) focuses on the political event i.e., the Independence Day of Nigeria in 1960. Whenever a country achieves independence, she has to undergo a transitional period in her history marked by the end of the colonial rule and the beginning of postcolonial freedom. Such an experience can be as thrilling as challenging to a nation. The sudden removal of the colonial rule and oppression results in the acceptance along a progressive path by following some great ideals set by the ancestors and gods etc.

K. Saravana’s article “Socio-cultural Factors in the Plays of Wole Soyinka’s The Lion and the Jewel and Girish Karnad’s Hayavadana: A Comparative Study” provides the comparative analyses that explores and reevaluates the socio-cultural aspects in the Plays of both the writers i.e Soyinka’s The Lion and the Jewel and Karnad’s Hayavadana.

The three major plays of Soyinka analyzed in this dissertation, *The Strong Breed* (1963), *Kongi’s Harvest* (1965) and *Death and the King’s Horseman* (1975) project the heroic figure as young, *alazonic*, sacrificial and politically-oriented like the playwright himself. Eman in *The Strong Breed* (1963) sacrifices himself to oppose evil, so does Daodu in *Kongi’s Harvest* (1965) as part of a new political strong breed and as a rebel who risks everything to stop the tyranny of dictatorship. Daodu as a heroic figure like Soyinka recognizes that sacrifice is needed to halt Kongi’s insatiable appetite for power and the social pain it produces. This is a celebration of heroic responsibility.

The hero in Soyinka’s play entitled *The Strong Breed* (1963) imparts the idea of Self-sacrifice, which originates from Eman’s sacrifice grown out of his social concern to root out evil from the community. In *Death and the King’s Horseman* (1975), Soyinka depicts the cultural conflict between indigenous and colonial countries, Yoruba and British, metaphysical and physical, social and personal. The play revolves around the tragic hero of the play named Elesin Oba, the king’s chief horsemen, who is expected to commit suicide following the death of his king, but he is distracted from his duty. This struggle of the individual to live, at the community’s behest to die, is a crisis which Elesin undergoes. His crisis is the crisis of every individual who struggles to free oneself from community’s fold and live for oneself. Due to his distraction from his duty, his elder son Olunde, the hero of the play, sacrifices himself and becomes the *pharmakos* figure for the continuity of his tradition. Family, society and community is so important in both the Indian and the Nigerian contexts that individuality is often sacrificed at alter of the communities and family’s well being.

I.4. Scope and Limits

The plays of Rabindranath Tagore and Wole Soyinka are not a well-touched subject in the studies of English literature. Some separate researches have been carried on the plays of Rabindranath Tagore and Wole Soyinka from sociological,
psychological and feminist perspectives. A brief survey of critical studies on Tagore establishes that either the religious aspect of his works or socio-cultural and political conditions of the time has been researched. Likewise a good deal of critical opinion exists on Soyinka which focus either on the mythical aspect of his drama or socio-political milieu that affected the psyche of his characters. There exists limited research and critical work on comparative study of both the writers, Tagore and Soyinka in any field of literary genre. The present comparative study aims at juxtaposing both the noble laureates, one from India and the other from Nigeria as highlighted through their heroes who embody the principles and vision of both the writers.

Such a comparative study of hero in the plays of Rabindranath Tagore and Wole Soyinka is a gaping hole in the literary field and the present research aims at plugging it up. The present study is relevant for opening up new vistas of critical dialogue as far as the conviction of hero within the fictional world to recreate the society and that of the writer to redefine society are concerned. In the light of the struggle and mission of the hero, the study attempts to understand the evolution, pattern and the nature of the selected plays of the two writers.

There are certain limitations to comparative study. The problem of space and boundary is often assimilated with comparative study. Obviously India and Nigeria have different social, political and economic settings, so that Rabindranath Tagore and Wole Soyinka also have separate identities. It is very difficult to imagine the real cultural situation of India and Nigeria at the same time. It is argued that while comparing two separate identities of different origin, we cannot do justice on our part regarding each identity. We can assume that wanting to learn from “other” experiences that are not one’s own is and should be the real motive behind any comparative endeavor and not just the imperative to hector, proselytize, or hierarchies difference in the name of a dominant “superior” identity. Clearly, learning cannot be non-transformative, just as knowledge cannot be the provincialization of reality in the name of one location or the other that we “nativize” as our own. It is only within the restlessness that characterizes the spaces that lie between the way things are and the way they should be (the volatile gap between the actual and the ideal) that learning takes shape (Radhakrishnan, 455).
The present comparative study also has another problem as well as excitement related to the question of centrism. The question arises here that up to what extent the project of comparison escape the arrogance of centrism? What, for example, is the normative assumption behind “our” desire to compare Indian and Nigerian literature? Once a comparison is initiated, there is no way to retreat safely into a single frame, into the safe haven of centrism. As we enter the world of comparison, are we capable of decentering ourselves from Indocentric or third-world-centric frame of reference? Are we capable of the hermeneutic task of thinking through and beyond the circularity of our own frame of reference? The double bind of comparison works thus: on the one hand, comparative methodology has to persuade each of the entities implicated in the comparison to re-identify itself with respect to the other; and on the other hand, it has the obligation to “let each entity be” rather than violate each in the name of the comparison. It all depends on where the interpellation is issuing from.

1.5. Chapterization:

The present study projects the analysis of the hero in the selected plays of Wole Soyinka and Rabindranath Tagore from a social realist perspective. The thesis has been divided into four main chapters. The chapters have been titled as: Socio-Political Background of Rabindranath Tagore and Wole Soyinka; The Eiron: Hero in Rabindranath Tagore’s Sacrifice (1917) and Wole Soyinka’s The Strong Breed (1963); The Alazon: Hero in Rabindranath Tagore’s Red Oleanders (1925) and Wole Soyinka’s Kongi’s Harvest (1967); The Pharmakos: Hero in Rabindranath Tagore’s The King and the Queen (1923) and Wole Soyinka’s Death and the King’s Horseman (1975).

The introduction gives an overview of the hero journey in literature and how hero and the writer himself is epitomised as the icon for the redefinition of the society. This chapter has three sections. The first section of this chapter sets Tagore and Soyinka as Men of Letters, An overview of hero’s journey in literature, myth of hero and hero cult. The second section of this chapter deals with research objective and research method and periphery and the last section provides a detailed review of literature related to my subject and chapterization of my thesis. The study proposes to analyze the heroes in the light of their alazonic, eironic or pharmakos stance.
The second chapter entitled “Socio-Political Background of Rabindranath Tagore and Wole Soyinka” deals with the personalities of the two writers, giving a needful description of the prevalent trend in Indian and Nigerian literatures and their contemporaries. Literature is an image of society. It reflects and flourishes in society. Hence, the socio-political history of India and Nigeria has also been briefly discussed in this chapter. This chapter proposes to discuss a cross-cultural comparative approach to examine both the writers and the social and political changes happened in India and Nigeria, which affected Tagore’s and Soyinka’s literary sensibilities.

The third chapter bearing the title “The Eiron: Hero in Rabindranath Tagore’s Sacrifice (1917) and Wole Soyinka’s The Strong Breed (1963)” analyzes the eironic stance of hero in Rabindranath Tagore’s Sacrifice and Wole Soyinka’s The Strong Breed. In both the plays analyzed in this chapter, Tagore and Soyinka integrate the ritualistic practices of their respective societies to highlight how self-sacrificing heroes like Jaising and Eman have always been put to test for reviving the society.

The fourth chapter entitled “The Alazon: Hero in Rabindranath Tagore’s Red Oleanders (1925) and Wole Soyinka’s Kongi’s Harvest (1967)” highlights the alazonic stance of hero in Rabindranath Tagore’s Red Oleanders and Wole Soyinka’s Kongi’s Harvest. In both the plays analyzed in this chapter, Tagore and Soyinka highlight the oppressor’s self-centred and insensitive approach that sucks the oppressed. Both the heroes, Ranjan (Red Oleanders) and Daodu (Kongi’s Harvest) emerge as the “compulsive rebel” –who is the embodiment of protest.

The Fifth Chapter titled “The Pharmakos: Hero in Rabindranath Tagore’s The King and the Queen (1923) and Wole Soyinka’s Death and the King’s Horseman (1975)” analyses the pharmakos stance of hero in Tagore’s The King and the Queen and Soyinka’s Death and the King’s Horseman. Pharmakos figure can be viewed as the one who purifies and rejuvenates the society with his sacrifice. The hero in Tagore’s The King and the Queen and Soyinka’s Death and the King’s Horseman becomes the ‘random-victim’ of circumstance that surmounts difficulties. Tagorean hero, Kumarsen sacrificed his life to save Kashmir from total devastation and Soyinkan hero, Olunde
sacrificed himself to rescue his father’s failure which was essential to the continuity of his culture.

In the sixth chapter, the conclusion becomes a kind of epilogue which gathers and binds all the strands of the preceding chapters into a whole so as to present to the reader a final and cumulative view of both Tagore and Soyinka’s vision about their hero in their selected plays in the light of their *alazonic, eironic* or *pharmakos* stance.
REFERENCES


