CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters attempt to survey the mythical in Afro-Asian fiction which revolves round the study of tradition, myth and culture in Indian and Nigerian communities. The study pursues a distinctively Third Worldian perspective in the imagination of Raja Rao and Chinua Achebe, which has been gaining increased cultural significance in the present day context of a globalised populist culture. This comparative analysis aims at pursuing the operation of mythic imagination, both at the thematic and at the narrative levels in the context of colonial and postcolonial social reality in India and Nigeria.

There are several cultural archetypes in Indian and Nigerian societies which come up through a mythic configuration in the narration as well as in the content of the narration. The four novels under study gain a spectrum of heterogeneous qualities in narration that infuse into the works a certain appeal that resembles the appeal of traditional myths in the respective cultures by adopting a different variety of English which has evolved itself through the sensibilities of a tradition bound society. The narrative strategies adopted by the two novelists could be considered typical of the Third World novelist’s attempts to free himself from the Eurocentric approach to fiction writing. It has
been an enlightening experience for the Afro-Asiatic readers to rediscover themselves by apprehending the method and meaning of culture from a truly indigenous perspective. This study attempts to pave the way for providing ample scope for redefining the identity of non-European traditional societies in the larger political context of post-coloniality and globalisation. By harmonising the traditional oral culture and discourse, these novels, express through a mythical language and structure, the voice of the collective unconscious. Thus these mythic novels lead us to the vital areas of collective awareness of the distinct cultural entity belonging to the respective traditions.

A comparative analysis of two such similar environments, circumstances and sensibilities, activating the mythic consciousness expounded through cultural archetypes, helps us to comprehend these two distant societies. In these novels myth makes its presence felt, as much as the collective imagination gets expressed. There has never been any moralising in these novels, but the language establishes a link with the mythic. This is a trait, which can be contrasted with the tendency in the world of the new millennium to establish a new competitive order. Satchidanadan, the critic-poetic, in his article, “Will Literature Survive”. comments on the triumph of discontinuity and divisibility in the modern world and also in literature. He says that “Post - modernism extols ‘difference’ while post - structuralism celebrates discontinuity and deconstruction . . . mankind is beginning to understand how to demonstrate and reassemble the most complex and unpredictable of all its machines - language” (9).

The Third World finds itself and speaks itself through the voice of Achebe and Raja Rao. The intention of this comparative study has been to place the
works under consideration as a distinct variety of fictions from the Third World bearing the stamp of mythic attributes in the narration. The thematic preoccupations and the narrative strategies in the novels Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God as well as Kanthapura and The Serpent and the Rope contribute to gain a mythic quality and status for them. History in these colonial and post-colonial novels serves as a vast canvas for the discovery of metaphysical values in the case of Raja Rao and for the discovery of traditional values in the case of Achebe. In both societies, a gradual detachment of the modes of awareness in society from their respective mythic consciousness with the onset of an alien political cultural aggression can be found. One major argument of this study is that the novels under consideration gain a mythical mode of apprehension, a disappearing trait in modern societies. Considering Achebe’s novels from Things Fall Apart to Anthills, one could trace the operation of the mythical at varying levels of intensity, true to the living tradition of modern Nigeria. But in Raja Rao, the very same metaphysical intensity has been kept alive from Kanthapura to The Chessmaster and His Moves as his major concern is the Ultimate Reality. Raja Rao maintains the living link of the individual in the mythic consciousness through the characters whose self is part of a mythic continuum, which helps one to apprehend reality. In the case of Raja Rao’s fiction, all the protagonists, Moorthy in Kanthapura, Rama in The Serpent and the Rope, Kirillov in Comrade Kirillov, Govindan Nair in The Cat and Shakespeare, Sivarama Sastri The Chessmaster and His Moves are created from a mythic consciousness which is part of the lived experience of modern India. In order to understand and appreciate their characters of Achebe and Raja Rao, one must be
able to appreciate the world view—a view that integrates both the perpetual and the spiritual—prevalent in the respective societies. What is unique about this world view is that the axiomatic distinction between the experiencing self and the experienced world is done away with in order to gain an integrated vision of the world implied in the mythic mode of awareness in the Nigerian and Indian societies. Both societies through their own native assumptions and sensibilities resolve the problem of the dualism of subjectivity and objectivity; In Achebe the medium is realistic and traditional, while in Raja Rao, the medium to reach Advaita or non-dualism is a personal experience of discipleship which is again a paradigm inherited from tradition. The characters are symbols with scant attention to the individual consciousness; Action in society falls into a ritualistic pattern as in the case of Moorthy in *Kanthapura* or of Pai in *The Cat and Shakespeare*. The artistic intention of Rao is to reach a level where there is an escape from personality for the protagonists, as against the struggle for the emergence of individual consciousness as seen in the characters Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* and Ezeulu in *Arrow of God*. Excepting this strongly individualistic stance, both Okonkwo and Ezeulu are predominantly mythical in their imagination and sensibility. Their speech and manners, their concerns in life are attuned to a predominantly mythical function and context in spite of their final faulty decisions to fight single handedly against the will of the community.

Both Achebe and Raja Rao through their mythic narration contribute to a decolonising process, not as a byproduct of a positivearticulation of the meaning of the cultural ethos of the respective communities. They are confident and convinced of the fundamental values that have evolved into the mainstream of
their respective cultures. For both these leading writers from the Third World, there has never been any aggressive, conscious agenda in their minds to write back to the empire with decolonising intentions. In Raja Rao’s writings, for instance, the West is a too insignificant an entity in the mythic stream of India, to be included in to the innermost thoughts and patterns of the native cultural tradition. His Western educated hero Rama who lives in France with a French wife, has never been free from the influence of a mythic India. His protagonist in The Chessmaster and His Moves, Sivarama Sastri, too finds it an impossible feat to move away, ontologically from the meaning of a mythic India. For Sastri neither Che Guevara nor Gandhiji will give the ultimate answer. The only way to understand the world lies in understanding the Absolute, which for Raja Rao, is the meaning of India. Even in Comrade Kirillov where the intellectual hero who is enamoured of Marxian ideology, who apparently denounces Gandhiji, ends up with a feeling of being Indian, a feeling of being a Brahmin. His conscious efforts to change his name and dress make him a ludicrous figure, a symbol of Indian intellectuals in the post-colonial political set up. On the contrary, one could see Achebe’s Obi Okonkwo in No Longer at Ease (1960) and Odili Samalu in A Man of the People (1966) failing to respond to the people’s demands, and ending in fiasco. Raja Rao’s characters who take up social responsibilities in post-colonial India are also failures, like Comrade Kirillov. For Rao, India proposes to resolve all dualities; it is a symbol, a myth that goes beyond any historical power. Rao’s discourse avoids the negativized frame of ‘us’ versus ‘the other’ of Fanon and Said.
In the light of the post modernist trends in writing fiction, Rao's creative matrix may appear anachronistic and revivalistic in an age of urban nomadism and information superhighways. Rao’s definition of nation in terms of mainstream culture could be viewed by the post-colonialist critic as revivalist. What we find in Rao’s fiction is a reinforcement of the paradigmatic patterns in tradition. India, for Rao, is a paradigm for a myth, the myth that resolves all contradictions where the self is ontologically involved. His idea of India slips out of the temporal axis and the matricised space. The mythic land of India depicted in Kanthapura with the revolutionary force gathering strength from goddess Kenchamma and from the new avatar of Vishnu, the Mahatma, is a different India from that in Nehru’s Discovery of India in which we find historicisation of the specificities of India. Rao essentializes India in The Serpent and the Rope as well where the narration is replete with sites of mythological happenings like the discourse of Yagnavalkya and Maitreyi.

The aesthetics of Raja Rao and Chinua Achebe is rooted in the cultural foundations of the respective nations. In the wake of the post-colonialist frenzy of speaking in favour of the politics of the margins against the politics of the mainstream, Raja Rao’s aesthetic approach, with his emphasis on the mainstream culture is inevitably holistic. In Kanthapura Rao brings out the desi culture with remarkable poignancy. Achebe also moves towards a holistic view without falling himself a victim of western post-modern positions of anti-hegemonic discourse or the extreme positions of the Negritude movement. Raja Rao’s Advaitic vision of the world recognises the mainstream culture in India, generally designated as Vedic. Achebe’s vision too is a product of an Ibo spiritual tradition. Indian and
Nigerian experience can be treated as paradigms of the Third World reality in their novels, projecting a basically traditional ideology and value system quite different from the European.

The post modern theorists consider the concept of nation and culture as a construct that homogenizes the cultural plurality of the people in favour of a fictional national essence:

Nation is further discredited as an essentializing norm by the New Historicians. Jean Franco a new historian disputes Frederic Jameson’s thesis of holding novel as “national allegory” by wondering “whether the term national allegory can be any longer usefully applied to a literature in which nation is either a contested term or something like the Cheshire Cat’s grin- a mere reminder of a vanished body (Kumar 64).

Both Achebe and Raja Rao, project a distinct discourse of cultural conviction on the meaning of the Ibo and Indian identity in their novels. Their theories on culture and their creative writings put forward an Asian-African narrative model that is axiomatically different from the post modern deconstructionalist writings. Rao’s new book, The Meaning of India constitutes a counter discourse to the post-colonial discourse of critics like Bhabha, Spivak, Rushdie and Said, with a definite affirmation of the indigenous critical parlance that could be categorised as Third Worldist. As Kumar in reviewing the book The Meaning of India puts it, “Reading Rao is revisiting Gandhi, re-invoking Buddha, remembering Patanjali, re-enacting Krishna and re-joining Rama.” (64)
Analogical study of the two novels from India and Nigeria, set in colonial times, reveals the pangs of colonial confrontation in a traditional social set up and how the mythic vision helps sustain spiritual strength in the community in the wake of European aggression. The experiences of the people in Kanthapura and Umofia depicted in the novels can be termed archetypal in the sense that the cultural and political confrontation, imply the communal reality of conflict and change found in almost all countries in Asia and Africa.

Both Achebe and Rao through their mythic apprehension help the African-Asian reader to look back not merely at the mythic lore, but at a mythic perception that integrates man and Nature. The language, form and context of these novels, Kanthapura, The Serpent and the Rope, Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God, project the mythical rather than the physical events in the lives of the characters. Reading them is a total experience, a universal experience. Raja Rao’s novels are a class apart except Kanthapura, for their metaphysical import. The socio-cultural interior in Kanthapura, Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God are similar as the community is the hero in all these works.

Mokwugo Okoye, author of African Responses observes:

the western industrial society has in effect destroyed the old myths of man (race, the one true god, nationality, fatalism) but only to substitute them with new ones called ideologies, which are seemingly suited to the psycho-social conditions of existence in modern society.

(317)

In the Asian and African societies also, there has been a loss of contact with Nature’s deepest forces in the twentieth century with the advent of scientific
rationalism in these societies. Present day Afro-Asian societies witness the failure of ideologies and confront the limiting aspects of scientific expansionism. Their novels reflect the national ethos with such conviction that they can be termed mythopoeic novels. Kanthapura and Things Fall Apart depict in a mythic language the multiplicity of collective traits in the Indian and West African communities. Even in a pungent political satire like Anthills of the Savannah certain traditional skills like the employment of the myth of Idemili contribute to the formulation of a mythic language and context. But the major characters in this novel, Sam, the dictator, Chris, the Minister for information, Ikem, the editor of the National Gazette and Beatrice, the senior Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Finance are alienated from the people. But the traditional oratorical skills, like the use of prayer, are repeatedly present in the novel. The mythic quality in narration, a typical West African trait lingers on even in this post-colonial novel by Achebe, which speaks about the oppressed common people in Nigeria.

The mythical in these four novels embodies a meaning based on an ontological vision of the world. The mythic in the cultural traditions in India and Nigeria contains the fullest possible meaning of the modern world in which we live. Life as depicted in these novels highlight the important linkage between myth and mundane life. Just as in myths, these novels contain a sacred history which provides a frame of reference for cultural guidance which gives relevance to this comparative study of an Asian and African writer in view of the common link between narrative techniques and the respective mythic stream of consciousness. The archetypal sensibilities of the respective native traditions condition the responses of the individual characters, especially that of the
protagonists. The protagonist Moorthy in Kanthapura reenacts an ancient ritual by trying to establish dharma at a time when India is suffering under the Redman’s government. Rama, in The Serpent and the Rope, too is part of an ancient paradigm of discipleship, a role that gets repeated for generations from the Upanishadic age through contemporary life. Though Kanthapura is a novel that relates the colonial experience, it is not the historical experience that gains significance, as history is concerned with things that happen once only. The Mahatma’s actions, which remind us of the actions of the incarnations of Vishnu, are followed up by his disciple Moorthy which again is followed up by Seenu and innumerable other Congress volunteers in India at the time of freedom struggle.

Action assumes a ritualistic significance in the narrative structure in Kanthapura. The ritualistic nature of Rama’s quest is super imposed by the repeated reference to Yagnavalkya - Maitreyi discourse, and the satyavan - Savithri story of winning over the God of Death. These two novels by Raja Rao, are mythical narratives in the sense that “Myth is ritual projected back into the past; not a historical past of time, but a ritual past of eternity” (Raglan 147) Achebe’s novels, Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God are about the practice of dharma for the tribal chief in Things Fall Apart and for the chief priest in Arrow of God. Like myths, these narratives are concerned with the gods and goddesses and heroes in the Ibo cultural tradition thriving in the consciousness of the villagers in Umofia in Things Fall Apart and in Umuaro in Arrow of God.

A certain mythic consciousness emerges out of the language and structure of these four novels which raise them to a mythic status. A close textual analysis
of these four novels reveals the mythical as ingrained in the archetypal patterns, in the context and language and in the form, as it is projected in the preceding chapters. The main characters in these novels possess archetypal traits in them so that their predilections are related to the community's larger concerns. Each individual character in the novels under study face life in a rapidly changing environment that could be termed the archetypal Third World experience.

These four novels could be termed mythopoeic novels as they carry the potential, resistance and affirmation in the Ibo and Indian communities respectively. The Africans' anthropocentric and anthropomorphic interpretation of the world is reflected in the characters Okonkwo and Ezeulu in Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God respectively.

It is possible for us to argue that the scene of Third World fiction as seen in these novels represents the mythic consciousness in tradition operating in the concerned societies; the picture presents the singularly unique cultural context, linking man, Nature and spiritual world. We further perceive that the success and failure of the protagonists depend on their ability to adapt themselves or to confront the changing scene by proper intuitive understanding of the mythic stream of thought in each cultural context. Even the other characters in these novels disclose images of the mythic through their responses, ideas and experiences, which motivate their actions. Though two different attitudes to life are employed in the characterisation in these two authors, the protagonists with their exceptional qualities primarily rely on certain mythic values, which are permanent in nature. The temporary fiasco in the missions of Okonkwo, Ezeulu...
and Moorthy provide an opportunity to critically access the efficacy of their mode of confronting conflicts in social life.

The mythic qualities in the narration of these Third World novels, and the role assumed by collective consciousness over the individual consciousness thereby relegating the personal story of the protagonist to the background serve as definite decolonising instruments. They seek through these novels a mythic time, instead of a historical time operating in linear progression. Furthermore the spiritual in the mundane elevates these four narratives to a level above the ordinary with no villainous characters in the progress of events. Both novelists privilege form over matter, structure over story. These novels have a structure, a certain narrative pattern that goes beyond the one dimensional hero-enemy myth with the hero having no alternative but to slay the enemy. Raja Rao's Kanthapura leaves us the remarkable option of winning without slaying. Ramaswamy's metaphysical solutions to the puzzle of death and life, duality and non-duality, the male and the female, provide us with an extraordinary ethos that emanates from a typically Indian experience. Okonkwo, while trying to kill the court messenger, as an impulsive gesture of resisting the colonial aggressor, fails to accept the other options open to the community for fighting the crisis in society. The impression left behind when the novel comes to a close is that the individualistic impulse behind the revolutionary act by Okonkwo does not get social sanction as the Ibo sensibility believes in the wisdom of the collectivity which is more complex and more rewarding than individual attempts at overcoming a crisis.
All these novels provide strategic answers to the questions posed by the political situation in which the novels are set. Through a mythic form and language, they provide symbolic gestures to overcome a crisis. Okonkwo's act of suicide is a ritual act, an act that provoked ripples of an impending revolution into an otherwise stagnant scene of Ibo communal life. He is a scapegoat; his act is symbolic. The unknowable in Ibo cosmology is represented in Things Fall Apart through the various gods, goddesses, ancestral spirits, priests and priestesses like Chielo. The chief priest Ezeulu in Arrow of God is symbolic of the spiritual world, in Ibo cosmology. The myth of goddess Kenchamma and the heroic myth of the Mahatma in Kanthapura serve as guiding principles in the narration of the novel. At the time of the brutal suppression of the resistance against the British Raj, these two mythic forces provide relief and hope for the villagers. In The Serpent and the Rove, in spite of the psycho-social schism between Rama and Madeleine, the hope of a deliverance and the possibility of reaching out to the Absolute are indicated through Rama's final meeting with the Sage in Travancore. It was a final ritualistic act of the disciple surrendering himself totally to the impersonal principle, the Guru.

Myth here is "a play of past paradigm and future possibility that gives expression to the other, to those persons and causes which are outside the present hierarchy" (Coupe 196) In all these novels there is the final affirmation of the mythical over the historical, as there is a comic affirmation of the human quest behind every major pattern in the social structure of the communities. The quest myth is clearly presented through symbols and patterns of behaviour, though it can be seen in the character of Moorthy or the other followers of the Mahatma,
in the case of Ramakrishna Pai in *The Cat and Shakespeare* or Sivarama Sastri in *The Chessmaster and His Moves*.

One appreciable feature of these novels is that they are open to logical interpretation without being on the side of religious doctrines. These narratives guarantee the autonomy of culture. They include the total body of imaginative hypothesis in the Ibo and Indian societies allowing conflicting claims to assume positions of power in the narratives. Mythic thinking in these narratives gain contemporary relevance. Myths are always related to the ideological or to the utopian aspect of life. The ideological provides a sense of society or tradition to Achebe’s novels. The second kind of myth, myth as a related concept of the eternal truth is seen in operation in Raja Rao’s narratives, and these concerns prevent ideology from becoming narrow. These two novelists, could be considered mythopoeic novelists, involving themselves in the social imagination of the respective cultures to which they belong (Ricoer 190) Myth, for Ricoer, is all about this dialectic of past and future, the way things have always been and the way things ought to be. The mythopoeic approach opens up new possibilities of a new kind of thought, which goes beyond rationalism. They may be read as examples of the novel as myth not because they derive many things from mythology, but because they assume the form, function, content and context of myths together in a mythic language. Communication with the extra ordinary world through oracles, prayers, predictions of Masks, and metaphysical ruminations of individuals contribute to the mythic quality of these novels.

While examining these novels, it is an enlightening experience to see how these novelists, hailing from widely different cultures of Asia and Africa.
pursue their creative urges with a mythic perspective. This study of Achebe and Raja Rao attempts to invite the critical attention of readers from India and Nigeria to appreciate each other’s literature, as the common features do not end up with a mere sharing of common political experience like colonialism. While discussing the role of mythic imagination in India and Nigeria in the creation of these works, one finds it imperative to devote more attention to comparative studies of works among writers from the Third World rather than to a comparison of the fictional strategies of a western novelist and a Third World writer. Comparative studies of works from within the Third World contribute to a widening and sharpening of the imaginative sympathies of the perceptive readers who are on the look out for complementary features in other cultures of the world. This study attempts to identify certain characteristics of the novel in the Third World in its form and content like the communal consciousness in the guise of myths and rituals, a background based on a sacred time and space, lack of importance to personal history, certain archetypal situations like the threat of cultural extermination, mythification of history, and signs of cultural renewal within the culture. The role of the mythical in contemporary life, even today, is vital for a proper understanding of the working of the African and Indian mind.