CHAPTER I

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The First World’s response to the Third World literature has so far been part of a literary establishment trying to identify and universalise the themes like colonisation, existentialism, and expatriation, without focussing on the specific experience, characteristic of the Third World. Application of a universalist critical discourse on Third World writers by the First World has been resisted by Raja Rao from India and Achebe from Nigeria through their critical concepts based on their characteristic perspectives. Examples of the result of canonisation of the texts from India are Vikram Seth’s The Golden Gate which resorted to the English sonnet form for writing a novel from the Third World or Rushdie’s Satanic Verses, which viewed Islam from a First Worldist viewpoint—which naturally invited much acclaim from the West. The novels of Achebe and Raja Rao are to be analysed, in a context free from the First Worldist literary canons, by focussing on the mythicising aspects of culture, rather than demythologising the agents that carry typical Third Worldist experiences.
A new reading of the novels of Achebe and Raja Rao in a mythical perspective gains validity in the Third World context. Both writers through the novels under study try to fill the gap between mythical thought and contemporary reality. Raja Rao’s creative grapple with Reality is essentially metaphysical whereas in Achebe, the focus is sociological but both bear a consciousness rooted in a mythic mode of apprehension.

It is in this context that we are tempted to accept the fictional patterns of some of the first generation novelists of Indian English Literature who are inclined to adopt narrative modes emerging from a mythic apprehension of reality. The mythic consciousness that emanates from their fiction comes out from an uninhibited propensity to relocate the cultural identity that often leads to a rediscovery of the primordial energy. For them the post-colonial experience is only one aspect of a continuum of cultural experiences. For example, one major cultural imperative of contemporary African writer is the search for an alternative strategy to express his faith in the values that sustained the precolonial humanity of African society.

Both Chinua Achebe and Raja Rao belong to a class of creative writers and theoreticians from the Third World who have evolved a distinct tradition of resisting colonial ways of thought by cultural assertion. The new narrative strategies with an ingrained tendency to resist the form of the western novel find numerous instances in the new literatures in English from Afro-Asian or Latin American countries. The reshaping of this western genre through novelists like Tutuola or Achebe from Nigeria, Nadine Godimer from South Africa, Derek
Walcott from St. Lucia, Marquez from Columbia, is the result of a fundamental choice between the values adopted by the western world and the values inherent in the indigenous systems. Charles R. Larson brings out the distinct characteristics of African novels, which markedly differentiate them from the western models, like the use of ethnological material instead of description, limited scope for dialogues, a concept of time different from the western linear progression of time, absence of too much importance to characterisation and many other stylistic features (*Emergence* 19). The new literatures in English differ from their traditional counterparts both thematically and structurally. Rene Maran’s *Batuoula* (1921), Yambo Ouloguem’s *Bound to Violence* (1968), Tutuola’s *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952), George Lamming’s *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953), Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* (1938) are all typical specimens of the non-western, Third World novels with value associations which are ideological, emotional, and even economic and political. Larson examines in great detail the universality of the experience of the various novelists from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, the South Pacific in his book *The Novel in the Third World*. This study is based on the premise that novels from Asia and Africa have more similarities with one another than with the western novels.

Bernth Lindfors discusses the Indian scholar’s approach to Achebe in his article “Achebe and the Indians”. One popular attempt is to compare him with writers from India and other Third World countries, with reference to his themes and techniques.
Ahmed Ali, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Kamala Markandaya, V.S. Naipaul, George Lamming and Gabriel Garcia Marquez have been singled out for comparison, so have certain African and Afro-American writers, namely Cyprian Ekwensi, T.M. Aluko, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin. This comparative approach has the double advantage of setting Achebe’s achievements in a larger context of literary creativity and simultaneously providing a limited number of points of reference for a meaningful in depth analysis. (180)

Though Nigeria and India are widely separated geographically as well as culturally, they share certain characteristics like a vibrant tradition of spirituality in outlook and the historical experiences of colonialism. The Afro-Asian narrative mode as distinguished from the dominant European tradition, has been a source of self-discovery among writers from these areas of political subjugation. Both Raja Rao and Chinua Achebe belong to this category of writers whose mythic apprehension of reality places them in a position at the vanguard of a set of writers who assert their collective identity leading to cultural renewal.

The genuine need for a theoretical position based on the internal observer’s experience is well stated by the celebrated post colonial critic, Prof. Syed Hussein Alatas “... scholarship has to be based, at root, on the internal observer. I do not deny that the external observer can contribute, but there is no scholarship unless there is already a corpus of knowledge built by internal observers” (qtd.in Talib 9). This position as an internal observer for the Third World novelist paves the way
for unearthing a mythic consciousness that contributes to cultural renewal in the post-colonial situation. This mythic consciousness along with an aesthetics based on the cultural tradition of the respective country contributes to the decolonisation of the colonised mind. The impulse for the employment of a mythic imagination seems to come out of the need to decolonise the intellect. The reclaiming of a mythic apprehension, may be part of an effort to assume national or ethnic identity. It is this common Third World heritage that validates a comparative study of novels from the Third World that challenge the conventional European models.

The discipline of comparative literature has, as Diana Bryden puts it:

paid brief lip service to the comparative study of national literatures that appear to be written in the same international language . . .

More recently Anne Paolucci has advanced some proposals for moving away from the old European centred discipline of comparative literature into a broader multinational literatures and suggesting that co-operation between area specialists and comparatists will be necessary. (11)

The need for a new approach in comparative literature in the light of the emergence of so many new literatures in English is highlighted by the Indian critic Ganesh. N. Devy in his article “The Commonwealth Period and Comparative Literature”:

By creating a category of Indology (or Orientalism) comparative literature was given the security of remaining a European technique of literary study. It did not have to take into account the new
literatures discovered in Asia and Africa by the European colonizers. The division thus helped European scholars in maintaining the established European literary values and critical concepts without the fear of their being proved inadequate in any major way. (147-48)

It is a fascinating endeavour to see how, many Third World novelists, widely separated in space, raise similar responses with regard to their thematic preoccupations and narrative strategies. The comparison of novels from a Third World perspective gains increasing relevance in the post-colonial socio-political environment. For example the Indian scholars have studied Achebe's novels comparing the themes and techniques used by him with other Third World writers like Ahmed Ali, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, George Lamming and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. The study of these authors in the larger context of literary creativity is essentially non-European, based on certain characteristic Third World experiences. The comparative study of an African novelist and an Indian novelist from the Third World critic's point of view is the perspective adopted in this study.

Consider, for example, the Ibo concept of art which according to Achebe, has an ontological stance:

In popular contemporary usage the Igbo formulate their view of the world as 'No condition is permanent'. In Igbo cosmology even gods could fall out of use, and new forces are viable to appear without warning in the temporal and metaphysical firmament. The practical purpose of art is to channel a spiritual force into an aesthetically
satisfying physical form that captures the presumed attributes of that force. (Hopes 43)

This Ibo worldview can be well compared to the Indian conception that art is a representation of objects in the subtle plane of existence. The Indian artist was never a realist, not interested in the physiological phenomenon, but in the essence of things. The presence of the spiritual in the Indian and Ibo worldview can be taken up as the common bond between the two continents. Achebe maintains that “Ike, energy is the essence of all things human, spiritual, animate and inanimate. Everything has its own unique energy which must be acknowledged and given its due” (Hopes 42). Both in Indian and Ibo societies, every activity in social life is intimately related to religion. The fictional worlds of both Achebe and Raja Rao permeate with responses and paradigms of a basically religious nature. Worshipping the forces of Nature, the ancestors, the gods and spirits is a way of life as shown in the various festivals and rituals narrated in the novels of Achebe and Raja Rao. There is a philosophical viewpoint behind every action in the Ibo society, just like in India, though the philosophical system is not well developed. The sacred element operates in the thinking and behaviour of the people in both countries.

A comparative study of Achebe and Raja Rao is justified on the following assumptions derived from the ethical and religious peculiarities of the two communities, Indian and Nigerian. In Africa and India religion is an ontological process, which operates as a way of life, through rituals, festivals, and mythopoeic patterns and stories as against a written scripture as the prime source of all...
religious activities. There is a bewildering variety of ways of worship among the thousands of different castes in Hinduism. In Africa too there are about a thousand tribes, each with its own religious system. Just like Indians with different languages and different provincial cultures, the Africans too maintain a common general philosophical understanding among themselves. Both in India and Africa, there is no distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the spiritual and the material areas of life.

The ways of worship among Hindus, and among the large number of tribes in Africa, each with its own cultural performance provides a mutually similar range of cultural and religious activities. Both Indian and African societies follow a rhythmical pattern of behaviour with each stage of life marked by a significant ritual, related to the particular phase of life. Events like birth, death, naming, marriage etc. are marked by ritual in Achebe’s novels. Even the art of conversation is raised to a ritual act of social communion. In both Indian and Nigerian societies, every life activity is intimately associated with a religious act or expression. In spite of the differences in the practice of religion among the Hindus in India and the different tribes in Africa, there is a common philosophical understanding permeating the religious responses in the two continents.

Just as in Hindu religious practice, Ibo religion maintains a main god with many spirits as agents who are also worshipped. The evil spirits are also acknowledged as part of the cosmogony and are considered as the enemies of man. The power of words, Mantra, is also recognised by Ibo religion as part of any communication with the gods or supernatural beings. Like the power of
Mantra among the Hindus in India, the incantations of the Ibo magicians are believed to be powerful and efficacious.

The beliefs, customs and the like are transmitted from the past to the present through an oral narrative practice resorting to stories, proverbs, myths, ritualistic incantations in both Indian and Nigerian societies. Though the epics in India The Mahabharata and the Ramayana are written scriptures, the stories are mostly oral transmissions, which help in maintaining cultural continuity. Transmission of traditional wisdom is essentially oral in both societies. The literary traditions in any country tend to be the stamp of the culture to which the author belongs. The selection of the subject matter, the ideas and modes of thought and action, the social habits of his major and minor characters, the language that they use in the novel, give a distinctive quality to the novels selected for study. These novels derive their power from a deft adaptation of oral literary devices, from religious rituals to the conventional ways of greeting. Both novelists deserve special attention in the context of maintaining a superimposition of the literary tradition over the oral tradition in both Asian and African societies on their march to a world of civilization and scientific progress.

As distinct from a European sense of a linear progression of time the African and Indian concepts of time are based on a unique understanding of the nature of the universe. The African concept of time is elaborately described by the Nigerian scholar John S. Mbiti in his book African Religions and Philosophy wherein he sees time as a key to the understanding and interpretation of African religions and philosophy. For the African, time is a two dimensional phenomenon,
a concept that influences the African understanding of the individual, the society and the universe. John Mbiti comments:

The linear concept of time in western thought, with an indefinite past present and infinite future, is practically foreign to African thinking. The future is virtually absent because events, which lie in it have not taken place, they have not been realized and cannot, therefore constitute time. If, however, future events are certain to occur, or if they fall within the inevitable rhythm of nature, they at best constitute potential time, not actual time. (17)

The idea of timeless existence is common to both African and Indian cultural traditions. Raja Rao calls the Indian equivalent of this conception as atemporal reality, the timeless period.

In India, the artist is never a realist not interested in the physiological phenomenon, but in the underlying dynamism. The artwork is at a level where the witness participates in the essence of things. Any writing is a form of prayer, like the Indian epics, which try to transport us beyond the surface realities. The aesthetic principles behind the fictional world of Achebe and Raja Rao give ample scope for the comparative study of their novels. A strong faith in the role of native tradition and indigenous wisdom is part of their aesthetic vision. Both of them explore the nature of reality through an effective exposition of the mythical relationship between man and the cultural paradigms that he inherits. The spiritual streak operating in social life is a major concern for both novelists along with the archetypal patterns in the collective experience. For Raja Rao
literature is a spiritual discipline, not a profession but a vocation", which is the consequence of the metaphysical life (Interview with Arya 8). He starts as a humanitarian in Kanthapura and ends up as a metaphysical novelist. Achebe on the other hand proclaims that the duty of the African writer is to show his own community that:

African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and above all they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period and it is this that they must now regain ... The writer's duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost. (Morning 1)

These novels, with a narrative replete with proverbs, myths, rituals, folk tales, infuse into the text a mythic consciousness encompassing the relationship between man and God. Like myths, things are seen in totality, and no moral judgement is passed. The characters are shown together, rather than in isolation. The various festivals, rituals, customs depicted as well as the style of narration relegate the novel to a status beyond the historical or anthropological.

Raja Rao's fictional mode is an attempt to reach an authentic spiritual vision while Achebe, firmly anchored in the reality of the Ibo experience, presents the historical situation of conflict and change adopting a narrative strategy stemming from a deep faith in the significance of the mythic in literature. By a
comparative analysis of the indigenous discourse, following archetypal patterns, a new awareness is created by the affirmation of the native ethos. The freshness of native living is captured by the two authors in their use of native idioms and expressions, the naming of characters, and also in the culture specific discourse operating through a sacred time and space, all of which contribute to a fresh insight into a distinctive consciousness which may be termed mythical. Both novelists evoke the collective identity of the respective cultural traditions. In Kanthapura, for instance,

the vision of myth is not conveyed or suggested through the private vision of a single character, but it is the expression and the consequence of a communal ‘genius loci’ deeply rooted in the unbroken frame of timeless Indian tradition in which the past and the present live together. (Monti 8)

Both writers have an impartial faith in the mythic past which finds fictional validation in their novels under consideration namely Things Fall Apart (TFA), Arrow of God (AG), Kanthapura (K) The Serpent and the Rope (SR) which in turn serves as a definite decolonising instrument generating a counter discourse. Raja Rao, a Brahmin by birth has done away with rituals when very young and he proclaims that he is not a religious man (Interview with Balu 4). Achebe keeps a distance from the religion of his birth, Christianity as well as the Ibo religion, the customs and rituals of which he knew intimately. The artistic vision of the two authors, one considering writing as teaching and the other as ‘Sadhana’, meet at one point where art and religion, literature and myth intersect.
Achebe while referring to his pre-colonial artistic inheritance refers to art as the celebration of reality and art in its social dimension. Like the moulded figures of *Mbari*, art for him is the creative potential in all ("Restoration" 3). This statement validates the conclusion that both novelists are not mutually exclusive in their artistic vision. For they are imbuing into the fictional world a remarkable faith in the power of the mythical in creativity. We get a profound impression of the cultural spirit in the respective communities when we read these novels by Achebe and Raja Rao. Both of them resort to a mythical mode of apprehending reality in their creative endeavours. The cultural ethos of the Indian and Nigerian communities is perceived in the mythic configuration of these novels.

About the use of language that a writer should adopt in the African context, Achebe says:

Can we ever learn to use it like, a native speaker? I should say, I hope not. It is neither necessary nor desirable for him to be able to do so. The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use... He should aim at an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience. (*Morning* 61)

It is the same kind of creative freedom that Raja Rao too advocates when he says that an Indian should not write like the English man. Rao says that the Indian storyteller speaks, with no ‘at’s and on’s’ to disrupt the continuity of the narration in a traditional story. “Episode follows episode and when our thoughts stop, our breath stops and we move on to another thought. This was and still is the ordinary
style of our story telling” (Foreword K vi). Through linguistic innovations, by adopting a culture specific discourse, both writers evoke the responses of the reader with remarkable success as the whole language relates itself to the mythic consciousness, and the tempo of African and Indian life is appropriated into a language suitable for the relevant thought movement in the collective life of the respective regions. Raja Rao’s foreword to Kanthapura (1938) declares in unequivocal terms the credo for Indian English writing as well as for creativity in many different literatures in the world. Braj. B. Kachru underlines the importance of Rao’s foreword:

Rao’s foreword provided a conceptual framework for understanding the creativity in English of non-native writers such as Chinua Achebe, (b. 1930) Mulk Raj anand (b. 1905), G.V. Desani (b. 1909), and Amos Tutuola (b. 1920) to name just four writers from the Outer Circle. (582)

Rao’s conception of the use of language is expressed in metaphysical terms in his seminal article “The Ultimate word- “Every movement I make is Samskara, ritual, every statement I make, the sanctifying word, Mantra. In this ambit of sacrifice with the pragmatic statement of who I am and where I am placed, I speak” (1). The creative mode attains a mythical language with a fusion of the word and its meaning in Achebe.

At one level the cultural history of their communities, get fused into the mythic configuration of their fictional world. On the other hand they go beyond the cultural barriers as they contain the archetypes. Thus these two writers go
beyond the two favourite subjects of the Third World writer, namely colonialism as a disruptive force and the post-colonial politician as an agent of social injustice. This kind of mythical and cultural perspective is in a way the dismissal of the colonial critic who is “unwilling to accept the validity of sensibilities other than his own” (Morning 23).

The two authors demand a critical perception based on indigenous imaginative experience, which is essentially mythic. Both writers display “the greatest potential for abrogating Eurocentric concepts” (Ashcroft 117) by writing in a way which is not replicatory of the conventional models from Europe. In the case of Achebe, the Ibo oral literature influenced his form and style just as Raja Rao in his novels used the puranic narrative strategies. The indigenous literary theories in India and Africa, which serve in the decolonisation of the two cultures as manifested through written literature, focus on two different aspects, one formalist and metaphysical and the other socio-political with stress on the issue of social commitment. Bill Ashcroft and co-authors in Empire Writes Back comment on the critical tradition in India and Africa:

Though they share common concerns, such as the issues of decolonization, the relationship of the modern writer to traditional practice, and the question of language choice, the critical theories in these two major areas of colonial intervention [India and Africa] have had different emphasis. (Ashcroft 132)

The literary interest gained in the world by India and Africa, was generally dominated by colonialist positions. Mokwugo Okoye the Nigerian scholar on
Africa presents this situation prevailing in African countries in his preface to his study, *African Responses*:

Asian science, literature and philosophy, like their European and American counterparts, have for some time been recognised by the world . . . but not so the African, mainly because we have no written literature outside the old Egyptian hieroglyphics and also because our intelligentsia have so far shown little interest in these things in their pathetic parodying of western culture. (Okoye 11)

C.D. Narasimhaiah while comparing *Kanthapura* and *Things Fall Apart* favours the perspective adopted by Raja Rao:

While Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is, like Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, a story of seeming disintegration of the village thanks to the whiteman's superior political power, people do put up a fight to vindicate their honour . . . . Not disintegration but all round regeneration, sarvodaya is the final verdict of the novel, also written by a young man of twenty-eight like Achebe . . . . If every novel of Achebe takes the reader from failure to failure till a whole people are seen betrayed, in Raja Rao we see the individual growing from strength to strength. Moorthy, Ramaswamy, Govindan Nair are all symbols of cumulative spiritual strength . . . . (165)

Comparing the African and the Indian fiction O.P. Juneja observes that "a symbiosis between the indigenous culture and the properties of western culture embodied in English is an essential part of colonial consciousness which is
found in the language of writers like Raja Rao and G.V. Desani from India or Achebe, Ngugi or Soyinka from Nigeria" (226). While C.D. Narasimhaiah points out the relative force of Raja Rao’s first novel in terms of the assertion of native ways of survival, Juneja brings to our notice the relative success of African writers in writing a domesticated English drawing from oral tradition.

Rao’s fictional mode is inclined to reach an authentic spiritual vision while Achebe fictionalises the sociological aspect of the mythic consciousness, dealing with history in a mythopoeic mode. Both writers translate into language the freshness of the cultural ethos of the respective communities. For instance the mythic core of Ibo and South Indian communal life is depicted through a language drawn from the oral tradition.

Achebe underlines the need for a native variety of English for literary expression:

the price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use. The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its values as a medium of international exchange will be lost. *(Morning 61)*

Raja Rao too has the same kind of attitude towards the use of the coloniser’s language. He asserts:

one has to convey in a language that is not one’s own, the spirit that is one’s own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien...
language. I use the word alien, yet English is not really an alien language. It is the language of our intellectual make-up-like Sanskrit or Persian was before-but not of our emotional make-up—we cannot write like the English. We should not. (Foreword K v)

The need to innovate the English language arises out of a necessary reorientation of the English language to express “a set of perceptions faithful to the collective but varied experience and aspirations of a people” (Thumbo 259). The collective identity in all its aspects—spiritual, social and cultural—of the respective nations is well presented in their novels under consideration: Kanthapura, The Serpent and The Rope, Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God. Both writers succeed in evoking the collective experience by resorting to the use of a turn of phrase, mythical pattern or image, a proverb or any other aesthetic response, verbal or nonverbal, derived from the tradition. The structure and language impart a marked shift towards the mythical, thereby redefining the nature of the genre itself at the ontological level.

The literary and cultural epistemology of the colonized nations in Asia and Africa, has to establish itself, based on the aesthetics of values inherent in the indigenous culture of each nation. Hence comparison of the literatures of the colonised gather significance as it established an ontological comprehension of everyday reality in the colonial and post-colonial situations in the Third World nations. The paradoxical choice of the colonial oppressor’s language for creative expression is explained by Raja Rao.
We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians, we have grown to look at the world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect, which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. (Foreword K vi)

Achebe in his use of the English language also has the same faith in using English as a medium of creative expression.

For an African writing in English is not without its serious setbacks. He often finds himself describing situations and modes of thought which have no direct equivalent in the English way of life . . . I submit that those who can do the work of extending the frontiers of English so as to accommodate African thought patterns must do it through their mastery of English and not out of innocence.

(“Role of the Writer” 160)

Both Achebe and Raja Rao translate into English the freshness of the native way of living and ethos rendered possible by the use of native idioms and expressions, phrasing and so on. Their use of the English language at once is universal and carries the freshness of the native experience with a creative focussing on the role of gods, myths and archetypal patterns or any other expression from the cultural tradition.

Through the publication of Kanthapura, Rao “provided a paradigm within which the bilingual’s creativity must be understood and described” and in the
same way Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, proved that the English language could be creatively experimented in the effort to draw from the mythical stream for the creation of fiction.

Raja Rao and Achebe in their interpretation of their cultures to themselves, could be considered as Nativists, as their critical contributions and creative works place themselves in a space free from neo-colonialist influences, by helping to strengthen native cultural resources though writing in the coloniser’s language. “Nativism” as Makarand Paranjape the Indian English critic says, “is a part of a world wide phenomenon of cultural nationalism and self assertion in which colonized and other marginalized literary cultures have begun to vociferate their differences from Euro-American universalist critical discourses” (Preface. *Nativism* xvi). By a literary exploitation of the native mythopoeic imagination, both Achebe and Raja Rao appropriate a Nativist position as against the subversive neo-colonialist theoretical assumptions that encouraged modern novelists in India like Rushdie or Sashi Deshpande to write in the way they did. Balachandra Nemade, the Marathi novelist, poet and critic, in his article “Nativism in literature” published in 1983, elaborates on the idea of Nativism as a suitable theoretical position appropriate to the analysis of literature in the Afro-Asian countries. Nemade argued in the article that the imperialistic, colonial mechanism neglected the presence of Nativism as it expected every community to be European. He says that Dante and Shakespeare considered world writers were basically native writers. It was the imperial might of their countries which was responsible for making them world writers later (*Nativism* 235). The term Nativism implies an
attitude containing a feeling, thought, and memory arising out of one's attachment to a geographical area. In fact in comparative literary studies, one native way of writing is compared with another native way of writing. The mimetic dependence on western models by writers in the post-colonial Third World scenario could cease to operate with the emergence of a Nativist mode of writing-in theme, form, language and style.

Raja Rao's art considered as a spiritual discipline and Achebe's art proclaimed as a conscious effort to regain one's true mythopoeic selves are not mutually exclusive in intention or in the technique of narration. The common task before them is to fictionalize the mythopoeic in society in a different level of language in view of the dominant western outlook confronted by the two countries during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The novels, short stories and criticism of the two writers are in the line of self-discovery for the two races, which were overrun by the same western colonial power for almost two centuries. Their literary efforts contribute to the decolonising process by helping us to see the past in its totality and thereby leading to intellectual self-sufficiency for the Europeanised writer in Nigeria and India, falling apart between two worlds.

Both of them could be termed as representatives of the 'novel in the Third World'. They are different from the conventional western-novelists for they made no attempt to create a villain in their novels. Even characters are of secondary importance. The culture specific discourse strategies adopted by both novelists help these writers to evoke such responses that one readily accepts the work as the expression of a unique mythic consciousness.
Along with a preoccupation of the operations of the sacred in society, their novels are anchored in the particularities of colonial and post-colonial social contexts. Rao attempts to philosophise literature just as Gandhiji tried to spiritualise politics. Gandhiji spoke to the people of India “in the language of the timeless religious myths. He abstracted in true Indian tradition the element of eternity from time, sought for religious truths, not historical significance” (Reincourt 287). Raja Rao speaks the very same language in fiction as his creativity is defined as the “time bound seeking the timeless” (Interview with Kaushik 1).

The temptation to idealise and mythicise India in Raja Rao is not merely the result of a sentimental nostalgia of a writer who stayed most part of his life outside India. Rao instead of concentrating on the role of the writer as a critic of his own culture, tries to interpret the metaphysical significance of what the culture represents. Achebe too knew that art was to explore the deeper meanings of the human condition. In both cases the resonances of the mythical can be found in the situations, language, patterns, metaphors, images and structure of their novels.

The psychological prompting behind such an act is due to the belief that anything that is neglected for celebration can cause disruption. Certain basic questions like, ‘Do the gods and deities help these communities to combat historical changes?’ arise when we study the stories of the two communities. Ani, the earth goddess in Things Fall Apart combined two formidable roles in the Ibo pantheon as “fountain of creativity in the world and custodian of the moral order in human society” (Achebe, Morning 1). Goddess Kenchamma in
Kanthapura is the all-pervading grace that provides solace to the villages in times of trouble and peace. C.D. Narasimhaiah's commentary about this aspect is significant:

Kenchamma is in the centre of the village, forms the still centre of their lives and makes everything meaningful. Marriage, funeral, sickness, death, ploughing, harvesting, arrests, release—all are watched over by Kenchamma (Raja Rao 41).

Prof. Ayyappa Panikkar in his article “Man and God in Indian and African Fiction” presents certain explanatory arguments in support of a comparative analysis of Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Raja Rao's Kanthapura:

These novels reveal how close the gods are to man and they take us to a different world from the modern urban society of the west. Their novels are typical examples of what may be tentatively called Third World Fiction where the structure of organisation is different from that of western fiction. They may be read, profitably as examples of the novel as myth not that they use mythology as a source of narrative pattern, but that their own narration achieves the quality and status of myth. (110)

A reading of Kanthapura and Things Fall Apart will explain the community's reasons for living, its way of understanding of the universe and the historical experience of colonial encounter through the mythical figures of Moorthy and Okonkwo. A literary work assumes the quality of a literary myth when it assumes a mythical radiance through peculiarities in structure and language.
The reconstitution of a historical event in Kanthapura or the representation of the existential question through Rama in The Serpent and the Rope assumes a mythical fascination. Like the primitive myths, they interpret and explain human life in the modern context. These novels, fill the ontological gap between the primitive myths and the meaning of it in the modern context. Myth is a strong preservative of tradition but it denies that it is a dogma. Myths are constantly regenerated and every historical change in society creates its mythology. The archetypal approach is a tenable option before the critic who tries to connect literature and myth through the archetypes operating within. Indians and Africans are closer to their mythology than their European counterpart, and hence there is greater appeal to the reader in these areas in the employment of the myths. Just as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata along with countless rituals, which constitute the larger mythology of the land commission the Indian mind, the Nigerians too share among themselves a rich lore about their gods and ancestral spirits.

Many of the ancient traditions and mythic ways of life in the colonies were forgotten both due to technological advancement and the impact of colonisation. “The transcendental elements” says James Newton Powell “the myths and rituals which unite people are now thought to be silly superstition if they are recognised at all” (90). A remythification of the cultural past or the immediate present renders it possible for the Third World writer to rediscover the wisdom underlying the native cultural traditions. The task here is not to study the novel using the myth to elucidate it, but to use the work of art to illustrate the inherent mythic pattern Rao and Achebe resort to, an unconscious
use of myths as a result of the expression of a natural sensibility which is part of the cultural tradition.

The term myth implies a multiplicity of meanings. The implication of the term accepted in this study and the link between myth and literature has to be established before proceeding to interpret the four novels of Achebe and Raja Rao as literary narratives that gain mythical status. The relevance of the mythical values in creativity is another interesting area of enquiry in the comparative study of these two Third World novelists. John J. White categorises mythological fiction into five groups based on the approach adopted by each writer. White quotes E. W. Herd:

i. “the novel which assuredly sets out to retell an acknowledged myth”; ii. “works in which the author uses myth as a means of literary allusion, intended to attract the attention of the reader and to add significance to a theme or situation by means of illustration or parallel”; iii. “conscious use [of myth] as a structural element”; iv. “a mythical structure . . . within the novel without conscious development by the author” and finally, v. “the situation of an author who claims himself, or who is claimed by critics, to be creating a new myth”. (qtd. in White 51-2)

The term mythological novel as explained by John White as a novel that makes extensive and effective use of mythological analogies in *Mythology in the Modern Novel* is not appropriate to the novels under discussion as the roles of mythological motifs is merely analogical in novels like James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. But myths offer
themselves as principal subject matter or structural principle in these four novels under consideration. Hence the term “Novel as myth”. It is not merely the pattern of correspondence between the novelist’s context and mythological narratives that makes a novel a myth. Many twentieth century novelists like Joyce, Kazantzakis, Marquez are preoccupied with myth in their creative efforts. John White presents a long list of mythological novels containing mythological motifs, like Joyce’s Ulysses, Hermann Hesse’s Demian the Italian novelist Elias Canetti’s Die Blendung, Maxim Gorki’s Bystander, Alberto Morovioa’s Il Disprezzo, John Updike’s The Centaur, David Stacton’s Kaliyuga, Melville’s Moby Dick and many others. But the scope and the extent of the mythic in these novels by Achebe and Raja Rao have a wider and deeper significance than it is in a novel like Ulysses. The novel in its theme structure, style assumes the nature and quality of myth, in the case of these two writers.

For Jung, myth is a manifestation of the archetypal pattern and archetypes refer to something fundamentally unconscious. Campbell utilized the Jungian approach in his The Hero with a Thousand Faces wherein he remarks that “mythology shows itself to be as amenable as life itself to the obsessions and requirements of the individual, the race, the age” (382). The loss of myth in any particular cultural tradition is “like a man who has lost his soul leading to a moral catastrophe” (Jung 8: par.154). Scholars such as Northrop Frye, Maud Baudkin and Philip Wheelright have taken myths to mean “universal archetypes and primordial images emerging from the collective unconscious” (Bidney 22). As E.M.W. Tillyard commended, “the words myth, mythical, mythology and
mythological have been dreadfully overworked in recent years and have a distressingly large range of significance" (qtd. in White 41).

The well-known social anthropologist, Levi-Strauss speaks about the separation of mythical thought and science in the modern world. This separation of mythical thought and science, he argues, started with Bacon, Descartes, Newton and the others, with science turning away from mythical and mystical thought.

Levi-Strauss differed from Malinowski’s theory that the primitive people are to be understood through their attempt to fulfill the basic necessities and Levy-Bruhl’s emotional conception that the primitive is basically driven by mystic and emotional representation. He believed that primitive thinking is disinterested and intellectual and that it is a way of general understanding of the Universe, a total understanding that takes place through myth. Myth, “gives man, very importantly the illusion that he can understand the universe and that he does understand the universe. It is of course only an illusion” (Levi-Strauss 17). He argues that the mythical thought disappeared into the background during the renaissance and the seventeenth century in the west.

The fundamental question before the colonised countries in Asia and Africa has been to choose between the values of the mythical past and the competitive western system based on scientific thought for evolving a worldview to meet the challenges of the twenty first century. It is in this socio-political context that the attempts of Achebe and Raja Rao, to fictionalise the mythopoeic in society gather significance. Any attempt to reach back to the mythical thought helps one to strike a path of self-discovery. Their efforts to retrieve mythical thought from a
cultural past, to see the past in its totality, contribute to a process of cultural affirmation. All cultures “possess myths which express absolute spiritual ideals and most cultures possess myths which represent the actual earthly difficulties of attaining to such ideals” (Falck 143). Colin Falck speaks about this mythic perception thus:

Myth is a form of integrated perceptual awareness, which unites ‘fact’ and explanation because it is a form of awareness in which fact and explanation have not yet become disunited. It is a mode of perception or vision, rather than a mode of explanation . . . .

(Falck 117)

Falck argues that we require a “paradigm shift which will replace structuralist and poststructuralist literary theory so that we re-establish the validity of intuition imagination and inspiration” (117). The mythic form in literature creates a mythic awareness, which helps us to have a sense of meaning in our life. Fiction here, tries to remythologise the spiritual landscape. Myth and literature are interlinked as perceptions on life in the analysis of the novels of these two Third World writers. For a work of art to reach the status of myth, the use of mythological parallels alone as in Joyce’s *Ulysses* would not suffice. As Philip Rahv puts it, “those parallels [in *Ulysses*] do not really enter substantively into the presentation of characters. The manner in which Bloom is identified with Odysseus and Stephen with Telemachus is more like a mythic jest or conceit, as it were, than true identification” (116). The aim of this thesis is not to study the novel using the myth to elucidate itself but to use the work of art to illustrate the inherent mythic pattern.
In other words, when the mythological stories are hived off from the whole, they enter a realm of finite space and time to which the novel itself belongs (Phelps 4). The novels Kanthapura, The Serpent and the Rope, Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God reinforce the mythical radiance through a language drawing from traditional oral tales, legends and myths. The proverbs, riddles, prayers etiological folk tales all contribute to a pattern of imaging which derive from the epiphanic moment, the flash of instantaneous comprehension of the world with no direct link to time. Myths defy time and plunge into the timeless world.

Andre Debezes in the article “from Primitive myths to literary myths” points out the role of myths in literature:

In literary creation the myth has a role in the relationship of writers to their own time and audience. Writers express their experience or beliefs through symbolic images, which may echo a myth that is already current and/or be recognised by their audience as expressing a fascinating image. (962)

For him myth is a symbolic narrative which exerts a fascination to bring people together by “offering them explanation for a situation or a call to action” (962). Colette Astier in his article “Literary and Mythological Narratives” draws a distinction between literary narrative and mythical narrative:

Myth, however is defined not solely in terms of the intensity of the scenes it evokes, but also by the organization it imposes on them and one of the laws governing the privileged structuring of mythology is that of contrast... Napoleon’s story is conjured up,
but with it his love affairs and St. Helena. When we talk of Joan of Arc both her weakness and her strength are stressed along with her belligerence and the stake. (727)

The term myth shares with literature man's concern about himself and his relationship with Nature and god. It serves to connect the collective unconscious with man's self in the modern world. Myths are transcendent in nature and explore the psychic residue in man's consciousness. Frye observes that "in terms of narrative myth is the initiation of action here or at the conceivable limits of desire which means that myth is a structural literary pattern recurrent in literature" (Anatomy 136). Northrop Frye maintains that the typical forms of myth become the genres of literature-comedy, romance, tragedy and satire representing the elemental forms of myth associated with Nature's cycle of spring, summer, autumn and winter. From the West, Joyce Yeats, Eliot, O'Neill, Thomas Mann, Kafka, have woven mythology or archetypal modes of expression in their literary works. They use ancient myths to bring out the similarities and parallels between the ancient past and contemporary reality. Present study focusses on the archetypal ideas like quest, the role of the sacred in individual and society, and the theme of sacrifice. The two novelists centre their interest on man, world and God - but in altogether different levels.

As William Righter in Myth and Literature puts it, "myth is, at varying levels of consciousness and degrees of articulateness, a way of describing the foundations of social behaviour" (10). Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God and Raja Rao's Kanthapura and The Serpent and the Rope, contain
the essential meaning of the set of cultural responses in the particular societies.

These novelists adopt the "intellectual shorthand which has gained acceptance as standing for an elusive, almost unanalysable amalgam of beliefs, attitudes and feelings" (Righter 10).

Both novelists do not consider a partial view of the two cultures. They project through their novels the flaws of the society as well as the spirit within the individual that helps him to thrive on with self-esteem. The novel sometimes "bursts through its own texture, giving way to a narrative discourse other than its own consisting (as in myth) of events about which there is nothing to be said" (Astier 730). A simple literary 'theme' like the freedom struggle in India acquires the status of myth in Kanthapura when "it expresses the mental constellation in which a social group recognizes itself" (Debezies 962). A literary myth generally has "symbolic images, pairs of opposites, stereotyped phrases repetitions and contrasts in myths, tales epics and other literary genres where the symbolic dominates" (Debezies 962). The mythical images of a goddess or the Mahatma in Kanthapura, the mythical image of mother Ganga, or the Himalayas, the image of the mother, in The Serpent and the Rope, the images of Earth goddess, Ani in Things Fall Apart, or the ancestral spirits in Arrow of God created an atmosphere encompassing a mythic vision of the world.

Colin Falck believes that we require a paradigm shift, which will replace structuralist and post structuralist literary theory and tries to re-establish the validity of intuition, imagination and inspiration. Myth, he proposes, is the basis of all human knowledge. He elaborates the mythic thus:
Myth and mythic mode of apprehension, of reality, seems in actual historical and prehistorical fact to be a universal stage through which the developing human linguistic consciousness passes, and the mythic mode of awareness can perhaps best be understood as another aspect or dimension of the corporeally based awareness of our own powers and agency of which gesture or dance is the most primitive manifestation. The seeming universality of myth be a prima facie justification for supposing that these corporeally based and pre-or incompletely-conceptual modes of awareness may be not merely a universal, but also a necessary aspect of human existence on which our fully articulated and discursive conceptual language has its experiential foundation. The mythic mode of consciousness is a vision of reality and therefore also of men’s place in reality, in which the perceived presence and activity of certain gods, superhuman creatures, or cosmic forces, is accepted by a community as an adequate and satisfying perception of all the main events of the world as it is ordinarily experienced. Since all language must be based in gesture and must arise out of a dawning consciousness of bodily power and its limitations, the gods and cosmic forces which populate myths can perhaps best be seen as satisfying a pre-objective need to give form and comprehensibility to powers or agencies which lie outside our human power or agency and which it must be among the functions of a developing language to try to come to terms with.
Colin Falck's views on the use of myths in literature gain great significance in the investigation of employing traditional images of gods, ancestors and powers along with the rituals of the particular culture to which these novelists belong. Hence the mythic form in literature creates a mythic awareness which helps us to have a sense of meaning in our life. “The configurations within which human life”, for Falck, “can most fundamentally be understood as falling may be understood as a matter of a poetic order which is inherently mythic” (119). The novels by Achebe and Rao try to mythologise the spiritual landscape. There is an essential oneness of myth and literature as both are perceptions of life.

Laurence Coupe in his exhaustive study of the various theories of myth linking myth, language, narrative, history and imagination says that “Myth is that narrative mode of understanding which involves a continuing dialectic of same and other, of memory and desire, of ideology and utopia, of hierarchy and horizon, and of sacred and profane” (197). Coupe believes that “myth is a disclosure rather than a dogma, a narrative whose potential always evades the given order with its illusion of truth” (197). Coupe argues that myth operates and revolves round a dialectic between ideology and utopia - ideology is one kind of imagination and utopia is another. The first kind provides a sense of society or tradition to which we could relate the novels of Achebe Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God and the second kind, which is related to the eternal truth, could be more appropriately applied to Raja Rao's The Serpent and the Rope. Rao's Kanthapura is a combination of both these kinds of imaginations.
Scholars like Cupitt, Burke and Ricoeur challenge the modernist trend of establishing the prospect of demythologization. The idea of the sacred is retained into the modern secularized societies in India and Nigeria and these novels testify to the continuing influence of the sacred retained in the form of mythic formulations. As there are so many differing attitudes to myth among theorists, any study on the mythic in literature could reasonably adopt the ‘family resemblance’ approach of the theologian Don Cupitt. He favours a definition of the term myth that contains a number of typical features and a narrative could be named mythic if it contains a considerable number of these features. Laurence Coupe quotes Cupitt from _The World to Come_:

so we may say that myth is typically a traditional sacred story of anonymous authorship and of archetypal or universal significance which is recounted in a certain community and is often linked with a ritual; that it tells of the deeds of super human beings such as gods, demigods, heroes, spirits or ghosts, that it is set outside historical time in primal or eschatological (ie last, ultimate) time or in the supernatural world, or may deal with comings and goings between the supernatural world and the world of human history; that the superhuman beings are imagined in anthropomorphic (ie humanly formed) ways, although their powers are more than human and often the story is not naturalistic but has the fractured, disorderly logic of dreams, that the whole body of a people’s mythology is prolix (ie lengthy wordy) extravagant and full of
seeming inconsistencies, and finally that the work of myth is to explain, to reconcile, to guide action or to legitimate we can add that myth making is evidently a primal and universal function of the human mind as it seeks a more-or-less unified vision of the cosmic order, the social order and the meaning of the individual's life. (qtd. in Coupe 5)

This approach enables the reader to avoid sticking on to a particular paradigm alone. The emphasis given in this study to the archetypal frame is only one among many paradigms. There is a yearning towards perfection, “an insistence on seeing things through to as near their full development as is practicable” (Coupe 6) in the process of making or reading myth.

Max Bilen draws a distinction between two perceptions on life namely myth and literature.

The narrative of a novel is more or less fictional, whereas the narrative of a myth demands to be accepted as true (Levy-Bruhl, Maurice Leenhart, Mauss, Eliade, Sellier); a poem is untranslatable, whereas a mythical narrative can be translated into any language (Levi-Strauss); literary texts are structured in section, whereas a mythical narrative is a collection of symbols and can even be reduced to a permanent structure (Gusdorf, Levi-Strauss); literary narratives refer to a historical moment, whereas mythical narrative presuppose a form of time that is reversible since reversibility is a feature of sacred time (Eliade); the individuality and rationality of literary
narratives conflict with the collective and supernatural nature of mythical narratives (Sellier, Levi-Strauss); a literary narrative leads logically towards a dialectical resolution of conflicts, while mythical narratives provide initiation into a radically altered state (Eliade) or mediate to establish a balance between two incompatible assertions (Levi-Strauss); literary narratives are experienced privately, mythical narratives socially (Sellier); literary narrative fulfill a profane, socio-historical function, whereas mythical narratives serve a sacred, socio-religious purpose (M.M. Munch); literary narratives represent a relative form of truth, whereas mythical narratives convey absolute and eternal truth, since they are founding stories (Eliade); literary narratives give a partial psychological analysis of the hero, whereas mythical narratives reveal something mysterious and ineffable; the meaning of a literary narrative is more or less obvious, whereas that of a mythical narrative is hidden and requires exegesis; and, lastly, in contrast to the literary narrative, the mythical narrative often has an initiatory and transcendent character. (861),

A work of fiction with a large number of mythological allusions need not necessarily generate a mythic novel. A novel can assume the status of myth if it attains a dynamic quality, a structure and function applicable to myths. Rao and Achebe are myth makers in literature as it is the case with Borges, Faulkner or Kafka. A novel functioning as myth need not narrate myths in the traditional setting. The setting is colonial India or Nigeria in the tribal set up. The extent of
influence of mythology on the structure of novels is greater among Third World writers compared to novelists from the West, as we shall presently see in this study. What this dissertation aims at is not to study myths per se, but to study its role in fiction and how its presence transforms the literary narratives into a mythical narrative. These novels under study are novels as myth not because they are based on Indian or Ibo mythology, but because they create new myths.

In both Achebe and Raja Rao, cultural tradition shapes the literary form, a form of the novel distinctively different from the western realistic novel. The new literatures in English from Afro-Asian countries show an ingrained obligation to alter the form of the western novel in narrative strategies. As Anais Nin puts it, “the total death of the novel is always being announced when what should be observed is the death of certain forms of the novel” (155).

The new literatures in English, whether it is Nadine Gordimer from South Africa, Derek Walcott from St. Lucia, Soyinka from Nigeria, or Rushdie from India reflect a conscious attempt to retrieve the true story, the story transmitted as myth from generation to generation in all these areas, the writer has to make a fundamental choice between the values of the western world and the values inherent in the indigenous systems. Novelists like Tutuola, Ekwensi, Achebe, Sudhin Ghose or Raja Rao altered/adapted the form of this western genre to formulate the distinctive experience peculiar to the respective cultural traditions. Their alternative narrative strategy is directed towards the mythicising aspects of culture as it acts as a mode of “resistance to colonial ways of thought developed
by the colonized themselves" (Walder '72). These distinctively non-European features are applicable to the Indian experience as well.

The objective of this study is not to discuss the case of traditional myths in the narration of the story in question, but to establish that theme, form and language which can profitably achieve the quality and status of myth. The four novels under consideration are related to an essentially collective experience that define and locate certain characteristic Afro-Asian sensibilities. The novels are Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) *Arrow of God* (1964) Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* (1938) and *The Serpent and the Rope* (1962). The justification for selecting these novels for analysis is that they are set in the respective cultural traditions more deeply than their other novels, which help us to trace the mythic in these two significant writers from the Third World. All the characters in these four novels, are products of a cultural tradition whose grappling with the history of the clan present an interesting philosophical truth that turns our attention towards the potentialities of a mythic apprehension of life in these countries. These characters reveal a strong bond with their own traditions and their success or failure depends on their ability to win sanction from the community for their revolutionary zeal. These novels establish how close the traditional cultural paradigms are to the lives of these people and how different the cultural ethos of these two Afro-Asian countries are from those of the urban society in the west. The dissertation attempts to analyse, mainly the four novels as products of a mythic apprehension of reality based on their content (ch. ii), function and context (ch. iii), structure (ch. iv).
These novels selected for study, redefine the nature of the genre itself at the ontological level with their non-European features in techniques of novel writing and in the style of English language. Looking at these novels as insiders, they point out to a distinctive Afro-Asian narrative tradition which often reflects on the validity of the mythic in the lives of these people; when investigating the form of myth in fiction, one can include all the details of narration that help to contribute to a mythic quality. The mythic in fiction as investigated in this study is not limited to the employment of established traditional myths in the presentation of the story.

The term myth can be interpreted with reference to the content—that myths generally speak about creative events or the rhythm of the universe—stories about the origin of gods in the Iboland and the various other tales by way of explaining the natural phenomenon like the rain and the drought. The story of the quarrel between Earth and Sky how Vulture sent to sky had won rain back to earth wrapped in leaves of coco-yam points out to the dichotomy of existence. The myths of creation and destruction, life and death, the very quality of existence form the content of Achebe’s novels. The way the rhythm of the world is maintained, the way the sacred and the profane interact to reach the goal of cultural renewal, is what is preserved in the story of the Iboland in the two novels by Achebe. Raja Rao shows how the legendary history of the land in question originated, how the roots of the Indian, English and French cultures interact through the various characters, Rama, Madeleine and Savitri. The metaphysical discussions in The Serpent and the Rope often touches upon the
origin of things, of culture and customs. The very quest of Rama, his pilgrimage from France to India is in search of the sacred values inherent in his own mythic tradition. The lives of the Mahatma, Mao, Lenin, Sankara, Krishna, Malraux, Gide, dostoevsky, Sri Aurobindo, the Great Sage, Bhatrihari, Paul Valery, Baudelaire Christ, Buddha are all material in the writing of The Serpent and the Rope which under certain conditions could be considered as reminiscent of the lives of certain ancient mythic heroes. The story of The Serpent and the Rope is the story of Rama’s intimate relationships with women in the role of a mother, wife, lover and sister and his quest to seek the Absolute at the feet of a Guru.

Another dimension of the meaning of the term myth is in relation to its function. Myths function as models that explain the activities in the world or in other words the activities of the gods or culture heroes. These mythopoeic novels contain through the narrative the Ibo view as well as the Hindu view of the world. the materials in these novels are integrated into this mythic perspective, highlighting a mythic function in literature.

Yet another dimension of the concept myth that can be applied to the analysis of these novels is the context which is ritualistic, a pattern of behaviour which has been sanctioned by usage. The mythopoeic approach to the study of these novels helps to identify the hidden aspects of certain Afro-Asiatic literary narratives that centre on the points of intersection of the narrative of myth and the narrative of a novel. The mythico-poetic attitude of the two novelists is revealed through a language and setting that contributes to a spiritual state that enables individuals to reach a realm of absolute freedom and universality. The
mythico-poetic attitude, as Max Bilen puts it, is found in the language in which “the words, sounds or colours are put together, seems to establish an order that is both closed and open, particular and universal, located in and outside time” (Bilen 862).

The mythical function of these novels is to take the reader to certain archetypal patterns in human experience that ultimately ends up in a freedom from every day contingencies. A mythic urge that is universal in scope can be perceived in the language and context of these novels. The mythic apprehension of reality is presented through content, function, context and form. The various situations are presented through cultural paradigms, which contribute to the mythic nature of these novels.

Kanthapura, The Serpent and the Rope, Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God are attempts to represent the very same existential experience that myths generally try to expose. The qualities of timelessness, universality, unity are clearly perceived in these texts which make them ‘mythic novels’, emerging out of a traditional consciousness in the respective cultural environments. A mythical theme like a quest for the Absolute or a yearning to reach the ideals of a perfect ineffable godly experience is found expressed through the language of these four novels. An inexhaustible yearning to please the ancestral gods work out a pattern of conduct for the characters in Achebe’s novels while the insatiable quest for reaching the metaphysical truth runs through the structure of Kanthapura and The Serpent and the Rope which contributes a mythical quality to the narrative.
These novels can be named 'Novel as myth' as they assume the qualities of mythical narratives like highlighting the collective nature, the structuring of the operation of a sacred time, the use of a symbolic configuration through traditional cultural paradigms and bearing with them the tendency to be accepted as truer than fiction. According to the French scholar, Max Bilen, "a literary narrative in most cases is fictional, structured in sections possessing individuality and rationality which always refers to a historical moment leading to a dialectical resolution of conflicts" (862). But these narratives as in a mythical narrative provide initiation into a radically different space in the resolution of a crisis as in Kanthapura where Kashipura emerges as the rebirth of the totally destroyed village. The death of Okonkwo in Things Fall Apart, the failure of Ezeulu in Arrow of God are events that provide insights into another imaginative world where a radically different state of being is implied. So the endings of these novels fulfill the function of initiation, which is a characteristic feature of mythical narratives.

These two novelists demand a critical perception based on a characteristic sensibility that belongs to the Third World novelists in particular in order to fully appreciate the manifestation of their essentially mythic consciousness as found in their fiction. This mythic mode is found in the use of language, structure and the cultural patterns that emerge from the theme and form. The cultural histories of the two societies merge into the overall mythic configurations in the novels under study. Myth is a protean term with two fundamental meanings:
First some primitive or typical recurrent patterns of human behaviour, found both in literature and life and second a more specific form linked with a particular culture and dealing with named characters and locations and transmitted to us nowadays primarily through the medium of literature. (White 38)

The mythic novel is the result of an intuitive urge among modern writers to find new values founded on the old. These two novelists invite the readers to interpret the modern experience in terms of traditional sources of archetypal patterns.

Can we establish an identity of the modern novel and myth? How far can a literary narrative like the novel assume the quality and status of myth? The novel presents mythological motifs through imagery, which infuses the attributes of mythic language into the text. There may be novels where a limited system of analogical comments from mythology is part of the structure for highlighting the plot or character. Such novels do not come under the class of ‘novels as myth’. The organisation of the whole structure and content of a novel in terms of mythic characteristics can be considered as necessary conditions for a ‘novel as myth’. The work may be modelled totally on an old myth or it may contain a theme or pattern identical with the old myths. These novelists are successful creators of such new myths; Borges, Faulkner, Giono, Kafka and Pavese are also examples of writers who have refrained from constructing their works with ‘bricks taken from older mythologies’ (White 8).

To conclude myths narrate a story, explain creation and reveal the meaning of existence or god. These features are woven in to the novelistic structure by
projecting the profound spirit of their cultures. An ontological comprehension of the socio-cultural concerns embodied as patterns in their fiction is adopted for comparison. The mythopoeic motives operating in the depth of African and Indian imagination come to life in the fictional world of both writers through certain recurring motifs of a mythic nature. This comparative study excludes the later novels of both writers because there has been a shift of emphasis in narrative practice from the mythical towards the historical. Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, and *Arrow of God*, Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* and *The Serpent and the Rope*, are selected, as they deserve to be considered as precursors of a distinctive variety of the genre from Africa and Asia.