The Concept and Theory of

Reflection

in Literature

Great art always transcends theories—K Chellappan

... yet theories bestow basis for appreciation.
Chapter II

The Concept and Theory of Reflection in Literature

2.1 Justification of the Title of the Thesis

It is rightly said that great art always transcends theories and yet it is also true that we can study art of literature better in the light of theories. The title of the thesis is ‘The Reflections of The Ramayana in Indian English Literature’. The researcher was in a dilemma regarding the choice between the two terms – ‘Influence’ and ‘Reflections’ and whether the title should be ‘Influence of The Ramayana on Indian English writing’, or ‘The Reflections of The Ramayana in Indian English Literature’. In the process of making the right choice, the researcher felt the need to probe into the meanings, definitions and different connotations of the two terms ‘Influence’ and ‘Reflections’. The researcher thought it necessary to refer to the study of comparative literature where these terms keep recurring. The researcher had to examine the meanings of the terms and their applications, in relation with the study of comparative literature’. It appeared necessary to consider the literary theories like Influence, Anxiety of Influence, Imitation, Intertextuality and Reception theories. The study of these
theories becomes obligatory in the present scenario of the emerging of ‘World literature’, which is the offspring of the study of comparative literature. World Literature is a phenomenon being developed by the corpus of the intellectual writers to work together for a better literary and social consciousness.

**A Note on Comparative Literature**

Goethe had proclaimed very early, in 1827, that ‘National Literature’ did not mean much anymore and that the time for world literature was approaching. Sisir Kumar Das writes in his essay, ‘Why comparative Indian Literature’,

Goethe wanted the common reader to come out of the narrow confines of his language and geography and to enjoy the finest achievements of man. The comparitist also wants to come out of the narrow confines of his language and geography, to identify the best in all literatures as to understand the relationship between literatures in their totality.

(Dev Amiya and Das Sisir Kumar 1988:96)

The ‘World’ is now a much smaller place due to the revolution in the system of transport and communication technology. The translations of classics, particularly Asian classics into European languages and vice
versa have widened the horizons of intellect and knowledge of the writers and readers. The twenty first century reader, particularly a serious reader of literature, is more knowledgeable about the literatures of various nations. The availability of significant works of literatures of different nations in translation has led to the liberalization and enlargement of taste. A keener awareness is developed about the magnitude and variety of literature. In his essay ‘Muses in Isolation’, Sisir Kumar Das writes,

*The national literatures are the manifestations of the national consciousness and also depositaries of living experiences of the people – a part of their total social, political and religious activity.*

(Dev Amiya and Das Sisir Kumar 1988:5).

National literatures are the great source for creative and innovative writers who, with their increasing awareness of the power and value of the other national literatures than their own, desire to inherit the total achievement of literature. Such awareness of the writers is reflected in their writings. No single literature, even though rich, is rich enough to present the highest achievements of man. The study of different national literatures has the capacity to transcend the frontiers of national literature.

The impact of one literature on the other has become a part of the creative process, conscious or unconscious, in the present context. It
enhances a writer’s power of imagination, his invention and ability to express. The study of different literatures helps writers to re-organize and re-structure the literary works. Consequently, literature now has become an expression of the creative spirit which expresses man’s desire to know, to explore and to question. The study of comparative literature has also enabled a creative writer to use his literary creation as an instrument of social change and also social integration. The impact of the study of different national literatures has led to the liberalization of the mind of the writer as well as the reader.

2.2 Theory of Influence

‘Influence studies’ gain importance in the field of comparative literature. The critics explore different kinds of influence in the texts. Jaidev in his essay “Intertextuality and Influence : Connection and Boundaries” writes about influence and intertextuality. He says,

In any literary text, Influence is not a single, simple phenomenon, rather, several influences co-exist, coalesce, combine, clash; these are inter-literary, intra-literary also at times non – literary. There are also always degrees as well as kinds – creative and imitative assimilated and superficial, strong and weak and so on – of influence.

(Dev Amiya and Das Sisir Kumar 1988:129)
Jaidev gives one example in this essay. He mentions two literary works of fame – one by an English writer and another by an Indian writer. He takes the themes of *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne and *Samskara* by the Indian writer U R Ananthamurthy for consideration. He says that Indian writers were under influence of western literature but the themes of the two works are different and at many places *Samskara* by Ananthamurthy, distracts the reader’s attention towards *The Scarlet Letter*. According to Jaidev, these distractions range all the way from verbal through situational, responsive, and modal to structural and ideological ones. The conflict in the mind of Praneshcharya after he surrenders himself to Chandri is Hawthornian. Even the concept of forest where the sin takes place is Hawthornian. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Dimmesdale feels guilty and in the novel *Samskara* Praneshcharya, too, has a guilt feeling. The burden of sin and its impact is so heavy that Praneshacharya becomes a stranger to himself. Both Dimmesdale of *The Scarlet Letter* and Praneshcharya of *Samskara*, desire to confess their Sin before their communities but they lack courage to do so and try to rationalize their failures. Both think in terms of their responsibilities towards their communities and trusting ‘Sheep’. Contrastingly their partners in the ‘Sin’ – Hester in *The Scarlet Letter* and Chandri in *Samskara* do not suffer the feeling of remorse or guilt. Hester endows the act with sanctity, Chandri is after all a concubine and it is not in her nature to evaluate herself. She is unaccustomed to self-reproach. Similarity can be found in the attitudes
of both the writers. There is similarity in Ananthamurthy’s ambivalence towards Brahminism and Hawthorne’s ambivalence towards Puritanism of New England.

Another example is of *Midnight’s Children* by Rushdie and the German novel *The Tin Drum* by Gunter Grass. There are similarities in form, technique, theme and approach to history. Jaidev says that awareness of influence can lead to intertextuality and influence passes into the personality and in due course determines the vision of the writer.

Influence can take diverse forms. Examples of Shakespeare’s borrowings from Holinshed, Montaigne and others, the interactions between the two great romantic poets – Wordsworth and Coleridge, the influence of Boccaccio on Chaucer or the influence of Jules Laforgue on Eliot can be given. The example of the influence of Lalan Fakir’s folksongs with their ideologies on Rabindranath Tagore’s mystical poetry can also be given. Several influences operate within the text. According to Jaidev, influence does not depend on the awareness in the readers. Influence can operate without the reader’s being or becoming conscious of it. Jaidev says that from the eighteenth century down to the time of T. S. Eliot, influence was interpreted as a kind of ‘Inundation of the invasion of the undeveloped personality by the stronger personality of the poet’.
The post-structuralists use the term ‘Intertextuality’ which is inclusive of many things including influence. Both Bakhtin and Barthes include all the literary relations within the term ‘Intertextuality’ including influence, quotations, elusions, parody, influence which are all known collectively as ‘intertextuality’.

‘Interliterariness’ can be traced as early as in the second millennium B.C. Greek mythology, in both oral as well as written forms, was under the impact of the ancient orient. One can discern genetic contactual relationships along with clear typological affinities in the works like Gilgamesh, The Mahabharata, The Ramayana, The Iliad and Odyssey and so on. These are reflected in the similarity of epithets, similes and of themes such as abduction of a woman – Helen in The Iliad and Sita in The Ramayana or Draupadi in The Mahabharata. Similarity can be found in the structures also in the use of narrative within the narrative. Such narratives can be seen abundantly in the Gilgamesh and The Iliad.

Amiya Dev rightly says that Influence is not confined to two authors or two texts but is of entire literatures upon each other and involved with larger questions of socio-political implications. Such influence manifests in Interliterariness and “Intertextuality”.

In the modern era, intertextuality serves many functions, it can be renewing of genres, and it can be parody, adaptation, interpretation and so on. Intertextuality leads to re-arranging or recycling the old and ancient texts.
**Anxiety of Influence**

The phrase ‘Anxiety of Influence’ is used by the critic Harold Bloom. According to Bloom, Influence consists in a direct borrowing or assimilation of the materials and features found in the earlier writers. It is Bloom’s theory that in the composition of any poem, influence is inescapable. In the process, the influence evokes in the author an anxiety which compels a drastic distortion of the work of a predecessor. Bloom applies the concept of Anxiety of Influence to the reading as well as the writing of poetry. The poet, who is strongly influenced by his precursor, holds ambivalent views regarding the precursor’s poetry. Those who have questioned the myths also have an unfailing reverence for them. The example of K V Puttappa’s *Shudra Tapaswi* can be quoted (Chapter V of this dissertation). It may not be only admiration for the early poets but also envy, hate along with a fear of the precursor’s preemption of the descendant’s imaginative space. The poet tries to safeguard his sense of his own freedom and priority and distorts the poetry of the precursor beyond his own conscious recognition.

Swapan Majumdar in his essay “The Divine Vapour and the Holy Rapes - Problems of Influence Studies in Colonial Context” uses the word ‘Kenosis’. He says,

*The works of translation from the twin epics Ramayana Mahabharata and the Bhagavata in different regional languages provide us with instances of Kenosis – the repetition and discontinuity of which is again an unmistakable sign of the Anxiety of Influence.*

(Dev Amiya and Das Sisirkumar 1988:152).

Majumdar while writing about Influence studies in colonial context discusses two terms – Influence and Imitation. Imitation, he
says, is more positive and has a temporal validity. On the other hand
Influence is more relativist and perhaps ‘polygenetic’ in time. Imitation
acts within a definite area, eliciting an immediate direct response
through textual echoes and reverberations. Influence on the other hand
works in an indefinite zone, stimulating a pervasive empathy in the
receptor. He further says that Influence reveals simultaneous traces of
absorption from multiple sources. While the one looks obvious, the
other reflects a distant glow.

While summing up the difference between Imitation and
Influence, Majumdar writes, these two do not cancel out each other, but
in fact they are successive, complementary stages of a gradual,
cumulative process. Influence begins with a tendency of imitation
proceeding through Reception on the course of either integration or
differentiation. Majumdar opines that the demarcation line is very thin
between the ‘Influence studies and Reception studies’. According to
him, the focus of Influence studies should be on the emitter and the
spectrum of meaning generated by the emitter, his interpretations,
intentions and mutilation. Reception studies should focus on the
receptor and on what the age demands of him and of his literary ideas
and ideals, the focus should be on what elevates and kindles his
imagination. Whether in the Influence studies or in Reception studies,
the objects should be the creative author and their literary creations,
the principal medium of exploration.
The French school of comparative literature puts emphasis on the ‘Receptor’ and not on the ‘Emitter’. The term influence is giving way gradually to the word Reception. A particular terminology is there, regarding the Influence studies, which deals with the notion of Reproduction, Face, Reflection, Mirror, Image, Resonance, Echo and perhaps Mutation. The critic Yves Chevrel has grouped these terms in the section of Influence studies, in his book *La Recherche en Littérature générale et comparée en France Aspects et problems*.

### 2.3 Reception Theory

Reception theory is a reader–oriented approach developed by Constance school in the late 1960s and early 1970s including the works of Hans Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser and other German scholars. The most important contribution is of Hans Robert Jauss. It is a Hermeneutic concept adapted from the philosopher, Hans Goerg Gadamer. Hermeneutic theory holds that human beings always understand the world and by analogy, literary works in the context of their individual historically specific position in life. This is the reader’s point of view and most important aspect of this theory is the Concept of the reader’s horizon of expectation. Literary works are always understood according to what the changing horizons of expectations of readers allow (Abrams M. H. 1999:262). The example of Sita Archetype can be given which gain significant variations in different genres of Indian English literature (Chapter IV and V of this dissertation).
A given work can either conform to the audience’s horizon of expectations or go against it. This can happen even with avant-garde literary narratives. Hans Robert Jauss cites the example of Gustav Flaubert’s *Madam Bovary*, a novel that had caused a major scandal when it was published in 1856. The innovative use of free indirect discourse shocked the readers of that time as they found it too reticent in its condemnation of the heroine’s adultery, and the discourse seemed to them as supporting immoral behavior. But readers of later generations appreciated Flaubert’s stylistic experiment as a major innovation of the genre of novel. Critics came out with new interpretation of the novel and today it is read by contemporary readers with great interest.

The theory focuses on the reader’s reception of a text. The interest is not in the single response of a single reader at a given time, but altering responses, interpretive and evaluative, of the general reading public over the course of time. This mode of study also transforms the traditionally conceived history of literature as an account of the successive production of a variety of works with fixed meanings and values – by making it a history that requires an ever necessary retelling. It narrates the changing yet cumulative way in which selected texts are interpreted and assessed, as the horizons of successive generations of readers alter with passage of time.
2.4 The Indian Literary Context

The researcher thinks that, speaking in literary terms, the Indian situation is very complex. The Indian authors had a rich heritage of ancient literature preserved against many odds. Indian writers have been emotionally committed to their heritage. This commitment has guarded them consciously or unconsciously from other influences, mainly the western influence.

The Indians who learnt and comprehended English were intellectuals who could express themselves in English as effectively as in their languages. The infiltration of western culture and study of English literature, certainly had given a jolt to India’s traditional life, under the British rule. The nineteenth century Indian writers were largely influenced by western concepts. They chose for their models Scott’s and Thackeray’s novels rather than our ancient literary works. The western culture and the literature as well, attracted the Indians with their novelty and liberalism in spirit. But Indian English writers were also aware of their rich heritage in the forms of the Vedas, Upanishads and the great epics like *The Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* which had for ages influenced the life and culture of India. The Indian writers felt strongly the need for adherence to the roots and the need to satisfy the longing of their spirit for roots in the consciousness of their race.
The conscious study of Indian classical mythology made them delve deep into the past experiences recorded in the mythology to discover links between it and the contemporary existence, as the collective or rather the societal psyche and consciousness of the period is reflected in the mythology.

In his speech on receiving Saraswati Samman, the great Indian writer S. L. Bhyrappa said,

_Though Vedas and Upanishads form the foundation of Indian philosophy, it is the epics, The Ramayana and the Mahabharata which analyzed and critically concretized our national ethos. Values and even disvalues of life are concretized in Ramayana and Mahabharata and that made me realize that my vocation was exploration of human experience through the medium of imagination that is literature._

(Bhyrappa November 17, 2011).

The great epics have set a tradition, a culture, and an ethos in India. Though tradition is the matter of past, it is also related to the present. As T S Eliot says in his essay, “Tradition and Individual Talent”, the writer should be aware of the tradition as historical sense which is necessary for the present writer as he is a part of tradition and has to learn it and not merely to imitate. No writers and writings have any value in isolation. The writer should be aware of the ‘presentness’ of the past. Eliot gives the example of English literature produced from the Anglo-Saxon period up to the present day. He describes it as a wall where there are so many bricks working commonly. But a talented
individual does not engage himself in slavish and blind imitation of the tradition. He comes up with newness, novelty and new interpretations of the past and, so, his writing is creative writing.

The ancient Indian culture provided the mythic backdrop to literary explorations of Indian English writers. They began nourishing their moorings on their own past. As Meenaxi Mukherjee opines,

*The Indian people are still closer to the mythology than the modern Irish or British people are to Celtic folklore or Greek legends.*

(Mukherjee Meenaxi 1974:131)

The early Indian writers in English were the products of ‘Literary renaissance’. Their writing, therefore, emerged as a happy amalgam of new thoughts coming from the west and the wisdom of local glorious traditional past. The new awareness widened the horizons of their intellect. The impact of new thoughts gained from the west induced a critical impulse in the writers to respond, to explore and to question the traditional past. A new awareness of shared human experience was awakened due to the meeting of two cultures, thoughts and civilizations. This awareness gave them a critical apparatus to evaluate the ancient literature. They knew the significance and the value of the treasure of ancient literature but at the same time they felt obliged to renew its contact with the modern. One can discern in their writings a search for the relevance to the contemporary reality. Such academic exercise is of great social value as our myths and legends are still a living force in the life of Indian people. In numerous translations, versions and adaptations, the myths and legends have spread, becoming a part of the texture of the people’s life, giving them a common background for heroic tradition and ethical living, not only for the intellectuals but also for the unread masses of our people.
Every age has its sets of codes, canons and conventions in addition to the old and prevalent ones. The writers grow aware of the necessity of new canons and set of codes and conventions suitable to the new age. The innovative writers use the old sources but break away from the set pattern, replacing them with new ideals. The variations in rendering *The Ramayana* through ages are a veritable example of deliberate poetic swerves from their predecessors to establish individual identity by breaking away from the set patterns. The variations are apparent in the long line of ‘Ramakatha’ from ‘Dasartha Jataka’ to Tulsidas Ramayana, including the works of Valmiki, Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti.

The writers make changes in the themes and also at times make changes in the original attitudes of the characters. One can take the example of Bhavabhuti’s (8th century) *Mahaviracarita* where he makes a change in the theme. Ram went to forest as ordered by Kaikeyi and Dasharatha, according to the original *Ramayana*. There was no role of Ravan in the episode. But Bhavabhuti in his *Mahaviracarita* shows that Ravan wanted to ruin Ram and for that purpose he wanted to bring Ram to Dandakaranya under some pretext. Ravan sent Shurpanakha in the disguise of Manthara. Ram was just married and was in Mithila, the capital of Videha, Janaka’s Kingdom. Shurpanakha, in the disguise of Manthara, met him in Mithila and pretended to convey Kaikeyi’s message about Ram’s going to the distant forest. The reader or spectator feels that the change is appropriate for the major sentiment of the play as the playwright wants to develop the conflict between the two rivals, intensifying the desired sentiment of heroism.

Myths continue to be the integral part of Indian literature. The Indian writers in English, too, knew the potency of myths and the perpetual reinstatement of them in Indian consciousness. They made use of the myths and allusions as they help the reader with a better
understanding of particular characters and a deeper insight into human nature. The recognition of 'Indianness' in Indian English literature is attributed by the scholars to the network of myths which contribute to the reservoir of meaning. These myths and legends are the sources of the equally vast storehouse of images, symbols, ideas and concepts which have shaped and formed the mind and imagination of Indians. They have acquired new meanings from time to time in different contexts. They serve as answers to the needs of the deepest layers of the collective mind of India.

Certain epic characters in ancient Indian literature are shaped as archetypes as they embody certain impulses in the collective unconscious of the Indian mind. Many characters in The Ramayana serve as archetypes in literature. These archetypes have become important archetypes of the Indian psyche in course of time; Ram for nobility and monogamy, Lakshman as an ideal brother, Sita for her purity and devotion for her husband, Ravan for his misuse of power Vibhishana for his desire to protect the good, Hanuman as a true devotee, Manthara and Kaikeyi for their jealousy and intrigues and so on.

The Indian writers in English have modified the myths handed down to them from the old times, by adding greater or smaller degrees of subjective insights in answer to their own creative demands. They have used old mythological devices for modern literary creation and have used myths with contemporary perspective, in order to throw light on the modern predicament. We remember some western writers like Thomas Mann and James Joyce) who have successfully advanced the scope of the novel by appropriate use of myths in Doktor Faust and Ulysses, respectively.
People live their mythologies in India even today. So, writers make skilful use of myths to make the reality more easily comprehensible. This is evident in case of R K Narayan’s writings. In all the genres of Indian English literature, including the Indian diasporic writing, mythic allusions and extensive use of myths and archetypes can be discerned.,

Myths are used for different purposes. Raja Rao re-enters the old myths of his culture as a mode of achieving continuance of his ageless tradition. He reflects the peculiar Indian sensibility in which Indian mythology is inextricably embedded in his novel *Kanthapura*.

Some novels of R K Narayan such as *Dark Room, Mr. Sampath, The Man Eater of Malgudi* and *The World of Nagaraj* have the reflections of The Ramayana characters. In the novel *The world of Nagaraj*, Nagaraj’s father remarks,

>You are like Lakshman in *The Ramayana* who stood behind Ram his elder brother all the time without a murmur or doubt.

(Narayan R K 1990:27)

Though Gopu cannot be described as the archetype of Ram, Nagaraj definitely reflects the character of Lakshman.

The novels like Mulk Raj Anand’s *Gauri*, Nayanatara Sahgal’s *Rich Like Us* and Anita Desai’s *Where Shall We Go This Summer* reconsider Sita. They are elaborated in Chapter V.

The reflections of the mythical heroines in Shashi Deshpande’s novels mirror certain fallacies that are relevant to one sex. She also shows how female characters in myths are reduced to stereotypes. The female protagonists have mythic names like Sita, Maya which are reflective of their similarities with mythological heroines and their struggles. They want to free themselves from their confines and are in
quest of self-identity and self – actualization. Anita Desai mirrors the mythic reality of Indian life. Psychological reality matters more in her novels. As O P Saxena says,

*Myth may serve as criticism of the present or it may be used to heighten and glorify the present.*

(Saxena O P 1987:87)

As Swapan Majumdar says in his essay “The Divine Vapour and the Holy Rapes”, the methodology of reception studies would be more effective than that of Influence studies in the comprehensive study of the present era of Indian literature.

Influence of *The Ramayana* has been there on Indian life and thought since time immemorial. But it is interesting to see how through the ages, the same epic is received by different generations of writers and how it manifests itself in different genres of writing.

The researcher’s focus is on the Indian English writings and the different kinds of responses and interpretations of the epic in different contexts.

Re-reading, re-assessing, re-interpretations and re-constructions are all the manifestations of influence. The influence undergoes many refractions and metamorphosis before it is reflected in literature. Self-reflexivity also can be discerned in them.

Reception and reflections are the extensions of Influence.

The researcher resorted to the title *The Reflections of The Ramayana in Indian English Literature* also for the reason that the term ‘Reflection’ has many connotations like contemplation, expression, manifestation,
mirror, image, musing, observation, reflectivity, rumination, thoughtfulness, echo, effusion, icon, similitude and so on.

The researcher also thought that ‘the reflections’ highlight both the flaws and positive attributes. It is learning from the flaws and improving on them.

2.5 Myths and Archetypes in Indian English Literature

For ages, myths have intrigued us because of their rich, symbolic and narrative appeal and for this reason they possess a perpetual contemporaneity. They can be adopted in any age, by any writer, can be renewed, modified and re-interpreted according to the prevailing social political and moral situation. They are at once old and new. The inherent myth making tendency of man has so far caused the products of the complex human mind and thought structure. It is these paradoxical features that fascinate the intellectuals of all ages of various disciplines like anthropology, psychology, linguistics and so on.

Many myths have promised moral guidance, comfort and provide answers to various dilemmas, enriching the life and literature. For this reason, myths have become an important part of our cultural identity. Myths have the potential to hold communities and races strongly, stronger even than the language. The complexities of all human activities like war, love, hate, pride and peace are found in the mythic world. No society exists without some basic cultural patterns which are
mythic in nature and there is a collective consciousness at the root of these cultural patterns. Literature always mirrors the cultural patterns with mythic quality.

Indian myths have occupied a singular position in the world. Indian mythology is paradoxically a living mythology, despite being one of the most ancient, which exercises a great influence on Indian psyche. The onslaughts of western cultural influence and different religious cults have never affected the healthy growth of Indian cultural identity. Instead, they have enriched the content of Indian heritage. Also the impact of other cultures, religions and thought has offered tremendous intellectual freedom and opportunity for creative strains.

Indian myths are still a living reality. The myths and archetypes are still present in all forms of literature. The large numbers of Indians still live their myths. The Indian myths have remained thoroughly relevant in the contemporary world. It is because the myths have lent moral, philosophical and social dialogues dilemmas and also myths have presented rich alternative perspectives which have added to the contemporaneity of the myths, legends and archetypes. The Indian myth-world is rich with archetypes. The complexities of all the feelings and human activities like love, hate, war, pride and peace are found in Indian mythic world which is full of gods, goddesses, demons and so on.
As R K Narayan says in his, *Gods, Demons & Others*, that gods, demons, sages, kings in our mythology and epics are not remote concoctions but they are the archetypal symbols and types possessing psychological validity that sustain the ages. They are prototypes and moulds in which humanity is cast.

The intermingling of myths and literature nourishes the world with richness and suggestivity. R K Narayan writes in his *Gods, Demons & Others*,

*Everything is inter-related; stories, scriptures, ethics, philosophy, grammar, astrology, semantics, astronomy, mysticism and moral codes; each forms part and parcel of a total life and is indispensable for the attainment of a foursquare understanding of the existence.*

(Narayan R. K. 1987:4)

The Upanishads, Puranas, the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata have moulded the life and literature of India.

*Vedas and Upanishads are the foundations of Indian philosophy, but values and ideals of life are questioned, analyzed and shaped through The Ramayana and Mahabharata. The epics gave concrete realization to the values of life, in literary forms and thus Indian literature becomes a real medium for the quest of meaning in life.*

(Bhyrappa S. L. 2011)

Meenaxi Mukherjee writes, *If a world view is required to make literature meaningful in terms of shared human experience, then Indian epics offer a widely accepted basis of such common background, which permeates the collective unconscious of the whole nation*
Indian English writers have established a link between the past experience and the contemporary life. They have carved out significant literary patterns based on Indian epics. The collective Indian psyche is conditioned by the stories embedded in our mythology.

In her ‘Afterword’ to her book ‘The stone women’, Shashi Deshpande also writes that myths are important to us. We do not want to demolish them, we need them to live by, and they have shaped our ideas for a great many years. They embody our dreams. To destroy them would be to leave a large dent in the fabric of our culture on the other hand, if we are not able to make them meaningful to our lives, they will cease to survive.

The modern feminist writers present fresh perspectives on the mythical heroines, adding their own responses to the depiction of Sita and Draupadi. They have depicted Sita for example, as an inspiration, not a burden and a haunting construct, re-enforcing the sub ordination of women. Indian English writers have revisited explored and reshaped our myths according to the changing times.
REFERENCES


2. Ibid. P 5

3. Ibid. P 129

4. Ibid. P 152

5. Abrams M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Thomas Heinle, UK 1999, P 262


