The project aims to explore the place of myth as a theoretical and interpretative tool in the corpus of critical writing by the eminent Canadian critic, Northrop Frye. Frye is the first major modern critic who, himself, was not a creative writer. In fact, all through the history of literature critical pronouncements have been made by creative writers; their critical treatises have emerged as their self-confessed manifestos. Northrop Frye, exclusively a critical genius throughout his career, asserted the autonomy of criticism vis-à-vis the creative writing. At the same time he led criticism out of the morass of impressionistic opinions and also out of the narrow textual obsession of the New Critics, who were historically his predecessors. His was a Structuralistic and Modernistic enterprise. But when French Structuralism reigned supreme he was marginalized. His decentering became more complicated with the advent of the Post-modernist exercise especially the Deconstruction Movement. Frye appeared dated and obsolete. The aim of the project is to rescue Frye out of this unjust marginalization. It proposes to prove the viability of his theories to partake in post-modern polemics and to show how his ideas can offer a way out of the present critical cul-de-sac.

The dissertation is divided into six chapters each of which deals with one of the important aspects of Frye’s theoretical oeuvre.

Chapter one is entitled “Myth as itself: the fables of origin”. After briefly defining the course of the ensuing discussion, it gives a brief historical account of the origin and evolution of the Archetypal and the Myth Criticism. The ‘archetype’ came into critical parlance from the writings of Carl Gustav Jung and started influencing intellectuals like Hillman, Corbin and percolated into the literary world through Maud Bodkin’s celebrated book The Archetypal Patterns in Modern Poetry. Frye at the beginning of his career
claimed himself to be an archetypal critic. And later on he abandoned this word in favour of the term 'analogical'. He veered towards a Christian connotation of the term 'archetype'. Frye, in fact, was more influenced by the anthropologist Frazer whose voluminous book *The Golden Bow* exercised considerable influence on poets like T.S. Eliot. Myth criticism evolved out of Frazer's writing through the analytical interpretations of the Cambridge Hellenists. Frye found a grand schemata of literature embedded in the mythic structures. He fashioned elaborate theories of modes, symbols and genres out of the storehouse of mythology of the western world. This was his way of creating a critical paradigm from the proto-literary corpus rather than importing a paradigm from something outside literature, i.e., Anthropology, Psychology or Linguistics. The chapter ends with a brief assessment of Frye's position in the critical establishment and an appreciation of his international profile which justifies the undertaking of a project like this.

Chapter two is a calibrated analysis of Frye's most well-known book *Anatomy of Criticism*. This chapter is entitled "Myth as Mode: the rituals of imagination". It discusses the centrality of *Anatomy* in Frye's critical universe. It shows how Frye in this book develops the idea of autonomy of criticism and then proceeds to weave his sweeping schemes of modes, symbols, genres. Taking cue from Vico, Frye develops here a cyclic historiography based on the principle of ricorso which traces the gradual change of literary culture from emphasis on gods to heroes and then ultimately to the ironic dehumanization of plots and characters. The most famous idea in this book is how different genres have grown out of myth of different seasons. Ultimately Frye talks of the tension between myth of concern (conformation) and myth of freedom (independence and individuation) which affects literature.

Chapter three is entitled "Myth as Code: the anxiety of faith". It deals with the other significant obsession of Frye, i.e., with the Bible as a code for Western literature. Frye observes that the early myth critics were operating under a hangover of Renaissance to give an undue emphasis on the classical, i.e., the Hellenic, inheritance of the West. By myth they only understood the classical myths and thereby ignored the Judeo-Christian heritage of the Western world. He identified Bible as the Grand Narrative or Mono-myth which shapes the consciousness and therefore needs to be considered while interpreting or appreciating
literature. This chapter attempts a brief survey of Biblical criticism beginning with Judaic Midrash exegetics. It places Frye’s ideas in this historical context. Then there is a brief discussion about Frye’s own religious experiences as a few apocalyptic visions as recorded by his biographers. Then it analyses the tension between Bible as literature and Bible as scripture which goes towards defining his own fables of identity and his secular scripture.

Chapter four is entitled “Myth as Praxis: the architecture of power”. It shows how Frye’s myths of concern grow into defining a particular political position for himself. His theories have an abstract look but are rooted firmly in social commitment. He used to tread a path somewhere between social determinism, on one hand, and the aesthetic indetermination, on the other. He was a liberal humanist whose legacy is bound up inextricably with the tension that exists between the social function of literature and its aesthetic integrity. The chapter ends with his specific ideas on modern century as it is experienced in Canada, perhaps, his own imagined community. He gradually expands Canada as a metaphor beyond its geographical confines and gives commentaries which become universal in their aspirations.

Chapter five is entitled “Myth as Theory: the games critics play”. It tries to assess the strength and weakness of his critical theories in the context of present polemics. It attempts to see the evolution of Frye’s ideas in the womb of Comparativist Anthropological theories of Frazer. Here Frye seems to be having an anxiety of influence vis-à-vis T.S. Eliot. It shows how Frye developed his anti-New-Critical ideas in the light of anthropological ideas. Then there is an attempt to compare his theory with the contemporary Culture Studies, after which the discussion moves into an analysis of Frye’s sense of History. The chapter ends with a nuanced comparison between Frye’s ideas with that of Lacan and Derrida. It is a discussion of Frye’s ideas in the context of Psychoanalysis and Deconstruction.

Chapter six is entitled “Myth as Meaning: the maps of interpretation”. In this concluding chapter attempt is made to analyse Frye’s own application of his theoretical postulates to some literary texts. In a sense this becomes an application of the general to the particular. First, it observes how his ideas about literature and culture grew out of his study
of Blake's poetry. Then it attempts to show how Frye while analysing an individual text (in this case, Keats's *Endymion*) comes closer to a New Critical Analysis, though he locates the resources of the text in mythology. Ultimately towards the end of his critical endeavour he champions a kind of openness very much akin to the ideas of the post-modernist theory. At the end it attempts to show the validity of his theory in the analysis and interpretation of a modern American poet, William Carlos Williams which confirms his flexibility and capacity for accommodating facts and ideas resistant to the rigidity of any theoretical structure. All these go a long way towards fulfilling the initial objective of restoring Frye to the centre of contemporary theoretical debate.