Chapter – IV

Mythological Values

Myth, the narrative form of human imagination, conveys the highest form truth of the remote past. It promotes morality and so it becomes a sacred narrative. Evolution of mankind turns out to be traceable through myths. Since all religions incorporate myths of some kind, myths are considered as sacred and a study of human from remote past to modern time is also possible. Myth reveals through culture; inspired and justified by religion, Mircea Eliade in her essay *Cosmogonic Myth and Sacred History* writes,

> Our best chance of understanding the structure of mythical thought is to study cultures where myth is a ‘living thing’, where it constitutes the very ground of the religious life; in other words, where myth far from indicating a *fiction*, is considered to reveal the ‘truth *par excellence*’. (Dundes 138)

Myth codifies belief; enforces morality; safeguards ritual and guides man with practical rules. It is a crucial unit of “primitive faith and moral wisdom”. (Dundes 199)

Myth expresses the innermost embodied reactions to the formidable idea told as a story. The stories never explain the details of rituals or culture but they set precedence for the reader to follow a procedure. Ernest Cassirer considers that a writer uses language of his inherent self which naturally focuses on myth because he cannot escape from the commensurable language and thought. He writes,

> Mythology, no doubt, breaks out more fiercely during the early periods of the history of human thought, but it never disappears altogether. . . . because we ourselves live in the very shadow of it . . . from the full
meridian light of truth . . . Mythology, in the highest sense, is the power exercised by language on thought in every possible sphere of mental activity. (Ellmam 635)

Because modern man has not understood the meaning of myth, it seems to be an illusion to him and so he rejects it, not knowing that he is rejecting the very essence of life. He searches concreteness in myths instead of finding the intrinsic meaning, emphasizing a 'spontaneous law'. Ernst Cassier finds,

From this point of view, myth, art, language, and science appear as symbols; not in the sense of mere figures which refer to some given reality by means of suggestion and allegorical renderings, but in the sense of forces each of which produces and posits a world of its own. In these realms the spirits exhibits itself in that inwardly determined dialectic by virtue of which alone there is any reality, any organised and definite Being at all. (Ellmam 637)

Myths have flourished in all parts of the world to convey the highest form of truth and virtue of the remote past. George Santayana says in “Realm of Truth” in *Great Treasury of Western Thought*:

Truth is . . . not discoverable at all without some vital moral impulse prompting to survey it, . . . and holding it up to attention in the form of a recognizable essence. Dramatic myth, however poetical it may be or merely analogous to the facts . . . has entered the arena of truth; it is more cognitive, more intelligent, and more useful . . . Certainly nothing would be gained intellectually: and if we condemned intelligence, as well as imagination . . . we might outrage human nature too deeply, and provoke a violent reaction. It is more prudent for the critic of illusion to
consider the truth that myth may possess rather than to attempt to escape from myth altogether. (Adler 433)

The study of myths becomes more interesting and significant. When reading ‘The Collective Unconscious and Archetypes’ written by C.G.Jung, he says that the primitive generations would not have invented myths but might have experienced them. As he observes myths are original revelations of the preconscious psyche, involuntary statement about unconscious psychic happenings, and anything but an allegorical process. However, to explain, unconscious does not enter into the domain of higher mental processes since it has no verbal codifications. However, Jung divides this unconscious layer into ‘personal unconscious’ and ‘collective unconscious’. ‘Personal unconscious’ are that accumulated individual experiences after birth. Mostly it is storage of accessible and inaccessible impressions. ‘Collective unconscious’ are the thought forms inherited by individuals, which are archetypes, predisposition to certain experiences. To state an example, each person has a different view of what the Almighty being is, although he has never seen Him. God is an image though depends on personal unconscious, they are found universally and so it becomes ‘collective unconscious’. And, Archetypes are inborn predispositions that must be satisfied; for instance, to worship power, to relate to members of the opposite sex. Thus, Jung relates myth with the psyche of human being. He says, that the primitive man though not interested in objective explanations of the obvious, he had imperative mood to assimilate all outer sense experiences to inner, psychic events. As Jung adds in The Modern Tradition,

It is not enough for the primitive to see the sunrise and set; this external observation must at the same time be a psychic happening: the sun in its course must represent the fate of god or hero who, in last analysis,
dwellst nowhere except in the soul of man. All the mythologized process of nature, such as summer and winter, the phases of the moon, the rainy seasons, and so forth, are in no sense allegories of these objective occurrences; rather they are the symbolic expressions of the inner, unconscious drama of the psychic which becomes accessible to man's consciousness by way of projection-that is mirrored in the events of nature. (Ellmam 644)

Hence, myths become psychic energy as religion reflects, by belonging to unconscious. Probably this may be one of the reasons for all ethnic groups to live culturally.

Folktale is another generic classification of myth. It falls under the 'rubric' of fiction. Originally folktale limited itself to a particular region. However scholars of folktale employ cross-cultural significance to it they do not have time or place restrictions. They are told to children in order to impart morality. When the heroes of myths are superhuman, mostly gods, the characters of folktales are animals and humans recounting their adventures. They have a conventional opening like 'once upon a time' and are usually told in the nights as stories to children, but modern day folktales have become 'nursery rhymes' or 'fairy tales' though folktale does not involve fairies.

However, then, legend is also a prose narrative like myth but related to the truth that had occurred considerably 'less remote', when the world appeared much as it looks today. They are more often secular than sacred with humans as principal characters.
Hence myth, folktale, and legends are three different genres in that, myth become sacred- 'sacred narrative', as principal characters are divine beings. To establish the religiosity of myths, William Bascom quotes Essene,

Myths are often classified as those stories with a high emotional content, and particularly those having to do with religion. Myths often must be recited in a letter perfect fashion. Lantis cites the essentially religious myths about Moon-Man and the Old Lady of the Sea. An Eskimo considers these stories to be the absolute truth. No explanation of Eskimo religion is complete without including such myths as these, which are accepted on faith. (Dundes 15)

As faith tells what the senses do not tell, it gives revelation knowledge revealed by God to man. Hence, to logically reason out, faith is religion. To quote Spinoza in *Great Treasury of Western Thought*, “A prophet is one who interprets the revelations of God to those who are unable to attain to sure knowledge of the matters revealed, and therefore can only apprehend them by simple faith” (Adler 1374).

As religion and religious faith constitute culture, myths are seen in all cultures, primitive, archaic, and in modern. The sacredness of myth has made it a ‘to history’ dealing with realities. Even cosmogonic myths have to be accepted, as the world and death stands a proof. Moreover, the immense services to culture performed by myth are done in connection with religious ritual, moral influence, and sociological principle. Thus myths become a reality lived, and which continues its influence on man from primeval days.
However, the Yoruba, one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria has a very rich cultural history. The origin of the Yoruba is a traditional creation myth. The myth describes how God let down

a chain at Ile Ife by which Oduduwa - the ancestor of the Yoruba, and, indeed, of all men descended, carrying a cock, come earth into the waters, the cock scratched it to become land, the palm grew with sixteen branches representing the sixteen original kingdom.

(Berwanger)

Thus one finds theme of creation and conquest of Ife - possibly in the thirteenth century - by men who established dynasties at Oyo and Benin.

Moreover, Yoruba seems to have four hundred and one deities. These mythical characters are associated with natural features, especially of rivers. Since the study of these mythological divine beings would become a thesis by itself, it has been decided to concentrate on two specific and major myths of Yoruba tradition, which form the theme of Soyinka's plays Death and the King's Horseman and The Strong Breed, Ogun and Egungun, besides mentioning the important creation myths to have a basic idea about Yoruba myth and history.

Olorun is the chief of all gods. He seems to be the creator God. As he is believed to be omnipotent, they do not have a shrine or priest for this God. He is their almighty, Olodumare. They invoke him in blessings or in thanks and even in prayers. According to the Yoruba, Olorun created the world and humankind.

Orunmila seems to be the prophet and structural originator of the religion, based on whom many beliefs have risen, as he is said to be specifically gifted with knowledge and wisdom. The Yoruba believe that the destiny of man is ordained even before myth and Orunmila’s wisdom knows the likes and dislikes of the destiny,
which helps him guide both the divinities and man. Orunmila serves as the messenger between men and divinities. Babalawo is the priest of Orunmila, who are the highest of Yoruba priests.

One can learn much about Yoruba myth from Soyinka's *Myth, Literature, and the African World* and also his interviews. Especially the ‘Isokan Yoruba Magazine’ has brought out Soyinka's views on religion. When he was posed with a question about the tolerance of Yoruba amidst variety of cults being practiced even within the family,

But there is never any rivalry between different cult groups; they all know that they are interdependent. Because they are like specialists: everybody understands specific aspects of the supernatural world. Nobody can know everything. The Egunguns know how to deal with the dead; the Ogun worshippers know how to handle the forces that are symbolized by iron. But for the Ogun worshippers to function, it is also necessary that Shango worshippers and Obatala worshippers...perform their part. (Oba)

Two of his ministers for the throne challenged the tyrant Shango, the fourth king of the Yoruba people who ran away into the woods and hang himself. His death seems to have infuriated the friends of Shango to burn the houses of his enemies, though some believe that Shango might have gone to heaven and sending fire down to Earth. Since then, Shango has become storm-god with axe as his weapon, which represents the thunderbolt.

The rituals of Shango, who is supposed to have brought about prosperity into the Oyo Empire, would bring prosperity to them also. This probably gives them self-control. “Sango altars often contain a carved figure of a woman holding a gift to the
god with a double-bladed axe sticking up from her head. The axe symbolizes that this devotee is possessed by Shango” (Oswald 29).

Each god is an incarnate of natural forces like rivers, mountains, stone, thunder, or lightning. Shango's wife Oya is the queen of whirlwind in addition to being cruel, trying, unsympathetic, and volatile. Some of the deities are viewed as very ancient created by the Almighty, Olorun. However, Shango represents the opposite pole - cool, happy, and fun making, as he symbolizes wind.

Obatala seems to be another creator God, who shaped the human body, which the Olorun breathed.

Obatala is also the owner of all heads. Any Orisha may lay claim to an individual but until that individual is initiated into the priesthood of that Orisha, Obatala still owns that head. This stems from the belief that the soul resides in the head. (Oswald 30)

Obatala is trusted to be creating defective individuals and the Yoruba call such people as 'eni orisa' meaning ‘people of Obatala’. The Egungun and Ogun mentioned above occupy a space in Death and the King's Horseman. Soyinka writes in the author's note of the play that the drama is largely metaphysical, contained in the human vehicle which is Elesin and the universe of the Yoruba mind- the world of the living, the dead and the unborn, and the numinous passage which links ass: transition.

Death and the King's Horseman can be fully realised only through an evocation of music from the abyss of transition. (DKH)

Saying that the play is confrontation of the metaphysical, Soyinka has projected two opposite poles to clash in the play, the two myths – Egungun and Ogun, being the two shafts. While Egungun belongs to the world of dead, Ogun belongs to
the world of living. The king's horseman, after the death of the king, prepares for ritual death, by the time he sees a beautiful girl and the oscillation begins. But it is where Soyinka's literary talent comes to the forefront than the mythic significance - a dying man yielding to carnal desire. As he uses the mythic character to reveal his aesthetic sense:

Iyalọja, who is she? I saw her enter
Your stall...
Not even Ogun with the finest hoe he ever
Forged at the anvil could have shaped
That rise of buttocks, not though he had
The richest earth between his fingers. (DKH 19)

Ogun is the one that opens any beginning and assigns the task of preparing new events. This myth of Ogun becomes the theme of The Strong Breed that is discussed later in this chapter. Ogun seems to have opened the iron mole to enter into the domicile of the spirit and prepares for the opening of the inhabitants of this world. Ogun is a great warrior and a compassionate king. Olodumare had sent him to prepare way for the other iron moles but he happened to return leaving the work incomplete because Eshu did not make the necessary sacrifices to complete his work. Eshu, one among the most respected deities, seems to have a lot of responsibilities like protecting the travellers, as well the deity with the power over fortune and misfortune.

Every religious ceremony in Yoruba begins with an offering to Eshu, failing on which the intention of the ceremony is supposed to be unfulfilled. Ogun still becomes the symbol of iron in the Yoruba religion. Iron or steel is used to represent the force of this deity who can be both powerful and cruel. Moreover, Soyinka makes reference to the story of Ogun and Adi, the wife of Orunmila. Once Ogun and Adi
travelled together, when Orunmila heard about this, he cursed Ogun to be homeless. Soyinka mentions this story in the speech of Elesin, when he wonders that how Ogun with his raw power can shape such a figure even without having an abode in this earth.

Soyinka’s prominent use of the myth of Ogun's sexual power reveals through his artistic talents. The story is this: God sent Ogun with a woman, Olure to earth but Ogun wanted to travel alone. Anyhow, as mark of obedience he travelled with Olure. On their way, a large tree had fallen across the path, which made the female deity to return to Olorun seeking his help to make Ogun cut tree. While he was chopping the tree, Olure sat near with her legs wide apart; as a result, a wooden piece had stuck in her vagina accidentally. However, when the path was cleared up, she continued her journey but the stuffed vagina started troubling her. She returned to the Almighty and said that she wanted it to be removed. The God ordered Ogun, who, in turn, was ready to help, if she agreed to marry him. Once she had willingly agreed, Ogun removed the wooden piece but the scar remained, which was the mark of excision. Ogun, then, had sex with her but the sperm did not come quickly enough and so he cut the foreskin of his penis and this had to be the origin of circumcision.

There is another myth that shows Ogun is highly impulsive and impatient. Once he had come out of the forest, when the people were drinking palm and wine. He had been very thirsty and so asked them for drink. Since the people had consumed all of the wine, they were unable to give him any. This made him very angry and he started cutting the heads of everyone whoever did not give him.

This is why when one is finished drinking from any type of bottle or container they place it on its side, which signifies a sign of respect to Ogun. After this destruction, I have stuck his cutlass into the ground
and went to his mansion in heaven and vowed only to come to assist his children during times when justice was needed. (Agboola 13)

Though the king's horseman, Elesin, cannot be the symbol of Ogun, he possesses certain characteristics of the deity or as a requirement to the context, the writer converts him to be a symbol to represent Ogun. Ogun's impetuosity, annoyance, and sexual vitality can be seen in Elesin also. Elesin’s sexual drive makes him brash and intolerant, as well as making him forget the cause he has taken up. Moreover, he yields to sexual urge that result in the death of his son Olunde and later himself unnoticed, among the people who praised him few hours back.

Another myth referred with reverence in the play is Egungun, who is believed to be the collective spirits of the ancestors living in Heaven. Hence, automatically, they become the guardians of the family morality with the power to help or assault them. However, misfortune and blessings depend upon the sincerity of their living generation. The communications happen either in dreams or in trances, when, in addition, the ancestors guide their wards with instructions and information. Sometimes, in preference to direct communication of the messages, they are sent through persons or through certain cults.

As ordinary people cannot undertake the dangerous journey to dead land in order to consult the dead, the family members who wish to know certain facts or ideas summon a priest, who will take a young child, bathe his face in water of purification offers a sacrifice in a new earthen vessel, digs a hole in the earth in a sacred grove in the middle of the night, and bids the child look into it. Through the magical properties of the lustre water, the child, on looking down into the hole, is able to see into Dead land, and so can tell the priest all that is going on there. When the priest has obtained
the information he requires, he again bathes the child's eyes with the water of purification, which causes him instantly to lose all recollection of what he has seen and heard. The priest thus remains the sole possessor of the information, and he is able to tell the family that employed him what he pleases. (www.sacred-texts.com)

‘Child’ is one of the archetypes identified by Jung. ‘Child myth’, is found in the world myths. A study of this will be a rewarding experience.

However, a reading of www.mythicarts.com gives further idea about Ogun mythology. Egungun, as it is viewed, are masked men representing the spirits of the dead. The Egungun seem to appear as a robed figure designed specially to create an impression that the dead is making a temporary reappearance on earth. They appear uttering loud cries in the streets either in the day or in the night, as they are supposed to have returned from the land of the dead to ascertain the moral conduct of the people, especially women. A crowd always follows the Egungun, who in order to amuse the viewers sometimes rushes towards them, which makes the people to run in all directions to avoid the fatal touch. As stated earlier, Egungun is a man under the mask and yet people have fear for him and they believe that to touch him, even by accident, would cause death. Those who rise against Egungun or those who scorn him are punished with death.

Wisdom comes only from understanding God and his ways. So Yoruba does not interfere in the ways of God, either Egungun or Ogun. Soyinka portrays Egungun myth in Death and the King's Horseman to satirize the foreigners who have no veneration for their god. In the first scene, the girl, Elesin desires, the daughter of lyalloja is betrothed, yet:
Only the curses of the departed are to be feared. The claims of one whose foot is on the threshold of their abode surpasses even the claims of blood. It is impiety even to place hinderances in their ways. (DKH 21)

Moreover, Elesin is now the mediator between the reality – the Yoruba and the unknown - their ancestors; Iyaloja does not want to complicate issues. She even warns others by saying that they should not “…set this world adrift in your own time; would you rather it was my hand whose sacrilege wrenched it loose?” (DKH 21) though she had known about the sexual weakness of Elesin ahead, “Elesin, even at the narrow end of the passage I know you will look back and sigh a last regret for the flesh that flashed past your spirit in flight. You always had a restless eye. Your choice has my blessing”. (DKH 22)

The continuation of the worship for the ancestors and to-be-ancestor-Egungun, continues in the next scene also. Amusa, a converted Muslim, has respect for Egungun. He fears to see the man and woman wearing the Egungun attire. He cannot talk on seeing the Pikings in the Egungun dress and so he 'stammers badly' and rejects to arrest Elesin, and stop the death ritual saying, “Madam, I arrest the ringleaders who make trouble but me, I no touch Egungun. That Egungun inself, I no touch. And I no abuse 'am. I arrest ringleader but I treat egungun with respect”. (DKH 25)

His fear insists that the fear of God is to fear the judgement of God and eternal separation from him. The Yoruba believe that they would reach Heaven after death, if they were righteous. Heaven for them is the dwelling place of Olodumare and other divinities once reaching there; they believe that they could live peacefully. They believe that a man gets life “from the world of unborn, through the ‘abyss of
Among the numerous myths that explain the Egungun spirits, the one speaks about the philosophy of total surrender - the Egungun dress, of an individual's spirit joining the ancestors becomes noteworthy. The Egungun dress petrifies Amusa, for he should be aware of the mythical significance and metaphysical connotation of the dress. It is believed that the Egungun in heaven is closely covered and so the individual's body is covered from head to toe. Hence, the man playing the part of Egungun must appear as a robed figure designed specially to give the impression that the dead is making a temporary reappearance on earth. It seems absolute necessity to cover the individual completely because the rule should not be broken. If any minute particle of human form is exposed, the individual wearing the Egungun and the entire womenfolk watching it must die. Moreover, personal contact with the individual wearing the Egungun is also discouraged, since that too would result in death. So, those who can submit themselves in totality to the divine beings should only wear the Egungun attire but it is explicitly stated by Soyinka that the Pilkings are far from being in and out egoistic.

Religious wisdom, thus known to a common man like Amusa and lyaloja, is the highlight of the Yoruba tradition which Soyinka does not see in the westerners. Moreover, when the girls, in the third scene, happen to mock at Amusa, when he comes to give the warning against ritual death, they scorn the language and the excessive artificiality in their language and not their religious belief or the belief of Muslim Amusa. But this does not happen in the British camp. The alternative projections of the Yoruba and the western emphasize the satirical tone of Soyinka for
which myths have served in the backdrop. It is quite a novel method of lampooning introduced to the English reader.

The Egungun myth is taken to another sphere in The Strong Breed. The play, though not closely Yoruba, the scheme is the same – purification ritual, choosing the carrier, disheartening contacts with the carrier. Strangers are chosen as carriers in this drama - Eman and Ifada, who carry the sins and ills of the community with their death. Usually it is performed at the beginning of the New Year, when an animal is the scapegoat. The sacrificial food are dogs, cocks, pigeons, snails, eggs, chalk, camwood, black and white thread, kola nuts, yams, plantain, palm wine, and palm oil. But when it comes to human being, physical harassment is inflicted and Eman's father says “Other men would rot and die doing this task year after year. It is strong medicine which only we can take. Our blood is strong like no other. Anything you do in life must be less than this”. (DKH 134)

Soyinka refers to 'medicine' because it is a ritual glorifying Ogun, who is the God of medicine. When one reads Fatunmbi,

The word Ogun is difficult to translate into English, but we get a big clue from the word oogun. The letter O in Yoruba is used to indicate owner, or one who possesses something. The letter O is used to suggest that someone, or some Spiritual Force has mastered a particular form of wisdom. The word ‘oogun’ means ‘medicine’. So in a sense the word for medicine is ‘owner of ogun.’ I mean medicine as both physical and spiritual transformation. (Fatunmbi)

Moreover, Ogun opens and begins new events. For example, opening way for iron mole, and preparing the planet for the people to live.
As the Yoruba in Death and the King’s Horseman believed that the Egungun would represent their genuineness to their ancestors in Heaven, here people believe that animals will take their prayers to Paradise. Soyinka has brought in the common belief that everything in the world has consciousness and that Spirit can communicate with all things. In addition, the Yoruba believe that all like humans and animals have birth and death. This includes trees and rocks also. The destiny for all created things is fixed even before coming to earth. As a result they find no harm in killing a goat as mark of celebration of a passage of time. It suits the human carriers also.

Ifada, the carrier boy, is a stranger as Eman. At the day of purification, Eman tries to defend Ifada but Jaguna, the executioner, warns him, “A carrier should end up in the bush, not in house. Anyone who doesn’t guard his door when the carrier goes by has himself to blame. A contaminated house should be burnt down” (SB 128). The accentuation on the contacts with the carrier is again highlighted when Eman becomes, a carrier. A woman cries on seeing him, “Oh, my head, What have I done! Forgive me neighbor. . . Eh, it's the carrier!” (SB 131) and spits at him, probably to avoid contamination.

However, at the end of the play Eman becomes a carrier, seeing his father go to the river to complete the carrier ritual. This play also carries a satirical treatment, but this time on the corruption of his soil. The tutor, who is supposed to be sacred, being responsible for the initiation rite, pollutes the atmosphere. Probably Soyinka does not pay attention to the tutors’ professional activities because of his imperfection. Omae, a girl, approaches Eman's hut, where he receives education on traditional ceremony, as he belongs to the family of carriers - the strong breed. Eman, in order to escape from contamination, and from the punishment of his tutor, since it
is the time of initiating ceremony for him, tries to send her away. But they indulge in serious squabbling as she starts mocking him for his resentment and for not being circumcised. When Eman has started home she comes in front and tries to touch him.

He gets away from seriously being tainted and tells her the importance of initiation period. But the arrival of the tutor complicates things, as he calls Omae to join him in his hut where "I shall give you some clothes to wash, and then we will forget all about this matter eh?" (SB 140) Washing clothes seems to be the euphemism of making love. Hence, Soyinka uses myth that would suit his plot.

The stunning climax proves that the entire culture is soiled. The comments of Jaguna on the general response to the ritual that he has just performed reveal the mood of the people. Jaguna says:

Then it is a sorry world to live in. We did it for them. It was all for their own common good. What did it benefit me whether the man lived or died. But did you see them? One and all they looked up at the man and words died in their throats. (SB 146)

Apart from the myth, ritual, and satirical strain, the play needs mention for Soyinka's use of time and place. The actions happen in two places - the place in which Eman is born and where he lives. The actions at his native place are treated as flashback, which is not a voluntarily employed by Soyinka. It comes fluidly along the narration as a mark of his literary genius.

Anyhow, the plays together produce not only the rituals and the myth of the Yoruba but also the proficiency with which Soyinka has constructed his plot to suit the readers of the world. The protagonists in both the plays try to change the ritual and renew their societies but the mediators intervene to see that the rituals are completed. The Strong Breed, in particular, exemplifies the need for the reassessment of the
social event of the New Year, the ritual sacrifice. The only difference between the two dramas is this: “Death and the King’s Horseman” affirms the myth and tradition, while The Strong Breed questions the same. Thus it can be stated that Soyinka considers literature and aesthetics superior to myth and tradition, though one separates them from his play.

Coetzee mentions the Casanova myth when David Lurie receives a letter during his final face of tenure in the university. Unable to control his sexual desire David Lurie has an affair with his own student Melanie Isaac. It is soon learnt by her lover Ryan and her parents. They complain to the university authorities that David Lurie has raped Melanie. When the enquiry goes on, the university advises David Lurie to undertake counseling. A pamphlet is issued in due course.

On campus it is Rape Awareness Week. Women Against Rape, WAR, announces a twenty-four-hour vigil in solidarity with ‘recent victims’.

A pamphlet is slipped under his door: ‘WOMEN SPEAK OUT’. Scrawled in pencil at the bottom is a message: ‘YOUR DAYS ARE OVER, CASANOVA’. (DG 43)

Coetzee mentions Casanova who is more than a womanizer of Venice. A good example of Casanova is ‘Don Juan’, a Spanish legend popular for his seduction. David Lurie is no less a Casanova than a Don Juan through whom Coetzee demonstrates the sin of womanizing. David Lurie is forced to resign and of the end of the novel he becomes an employer of Bev Shaw’s Animal Welfare Club. David Lurie is the architect at his own destiny - the Disgrace caused to him because he failed to realize the moral truth that womanizing is a sin.

Among the several Hindu creation myths, the one told by the Hindu Tamil families to their children is this: there was neither heaven, nor earth, or space. It was
dark everywhere, Lord Vishnu was asleep, a giant serpent guarded him from disturbance, at that time, from the depths of the ocean, heard a sound ‘OM’, which had woken up the God. Then the Sun rose, from the navel of Vishnu sprout a magnificent Lotus flower, on which Lord Brahma was seated. The Lord ordered him to create the world.

A wind swept up the waters, then Vishnu and the serpent vanished. Brahma remained in the lotus flower, floating and tossing on the sea. He lifted up his arms and calmed the wind and the ocean. Then Brahma split the lotus flower into three. He stretched one part into the heavens. He made another part into the earth. With the third part of the flower, he created the skies. (Freeman)

Brahma created the uncovered earth with grass, flower, trees, and plants and to accompany them he had created animals and insects along with the birds. He granted sensory perceptions to all these, as a result the world started bristling with life. The Vedas have not assigned any name to the Lord as it says, “The primal Man is, simply, All: What is and what shall be. He is the Lord of immorality”. (The Vedic Experience, 133)

However, Brahma – the maker, Vishnu – the minder, and Siva – the slayer, are the trinity gods whose functions help the sooth sailing of the earth. A scientific explanation of Brahma is, “That from which all these beings are born, by which, after being born, they live, and into which they merge when they cease to be”. (The Message of the Upanishad 2)

Vishnu is not the popular pantheon for the Hindu may be because of two reasons, the first being, he is too busy with creation, which requires much concentration and the second, being all powerful cannot fit in the human imagination
to create an idol, as it is with Yoruba. But the other two though only His avatars, are considered different by the common man. Avatar is the manifestation of God, or incarnation of God on the planet. For example, the Hindu mythology tells stories of Lord Vishnu’s visit repeatedly ten times, whenever the evil forces become more powerful to restore peace on earth.

Anyway, Brahma having manifested created ‘Vac’, speech or sound, in the name Saraswathi. The goddess being beautiful and gracious, he married her. They become creator and ‘buddhi’ intelligence. So, it is believed that their union had brought man to this earth.

The second of the trinity is Vishnu, the divinity that provides all riches of the world to man. From the reading of Bhagavad Gita, one can understand that whenever evil gains ascendance, God incarnates on earth to restore dharma, punish the evil, and protect the weak and the righteous. Though go many myths surround as the incarnations of Vishnu, none of them seem to have stated that they are the incarnations of Vishnu. But one thing is sure; God takes several orders to maintain peace in the universe. He married Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth.

Lord Siva, the third trinity, is a god of destruction, slaying evil, which becomes an essential aspect of formation because without obliteration making would turn out to be impossible. To state an instance, in order to become virtuous vices should be exterminated. So, they become complementary. Moreover, soul requires death to review its plan and creation for its next birth. Lord Siva therefore becomes an energy that assures salvation.

Jayakanthan uses the myth of sage Gautama, husband of Ahalya and daughter of Brahma, in order to express the frozen state of Rajaraman, who resides in Sambuiyer's house, a friend of his father Krishnaiyer, for graduation. Krishnaiyer and
Sambuiyer are thick friends. As colleges are scarce in villages, only those who are rich and those who can afford spending to live in nearby towns alone take up graduation. Krishnaiyer discontinued his intermediate course in one year and his elder son, Ragupathy, who was a thug and mischief, was poor in studies, but the entire Agrahara recognized the intelligence of Rajaraman and so Krishnaiyer enrolled Rajaraman in Annamalai University, is one of the popular universities of Tamil Nadu established in 1929 by Rajah Sir S.R.M. Annamalai Chettiyar to promote Tamil Literature. Agraharam is a portmanteau word of mixed origin viz., Sanskrit and Tamil. The Sanskrit part ‘agra’ means first, foremost, pre-eminent, best etc., the Tamil part is 'akaram' which means house, settlement etc. Collectively the word means the foremost or important collection of houses or community in the olden structure of a village (gramah). Agraharams are inherently inhabited by Brahmins with a temple on the extreme tip of the street. He has arranged for Rajaraman to stay and study from the house of Sambuiyer, his friend, whose wife is Sarada. They have no issues and so they treat Rajaraman as their son. Happiness and light enters in their life.

As they have no child which could have grabbed the emotions of Sarada mami and Sambuiyer, the couple struggling to face each other conversed between themselves looking at different directions. Rajaraman has become a common soul about whose happiness and sorrow, they shared facing each other. (RM 7)

Rajaraman’s incestuous attraction for Sarada mami brings back darkness into the family. Rajaraman comes home after sunset from the temple. Sarada mami has neither lighted the two small galleries on both sides of the door-frame wall meant for acoustic lamps nor has she lighted the lamps inside the house. Rajaraman can hear the sounds of beating, rolling and crying. He senses an unthinkable and unforeseen
adversity and so “Rajaraman stand frozen at the door-frame like Ahalihai who become a statue as cursed by her husband Gautama.” (RM 79)

The myth of Ahalya and Gautama occurs in Prose Sarga, meaning chapter, forty eight of Balakanda in Valmiki’s Ramayana. Ahalya, daughter of Brahma was the most beautiful girl. Brahma is a creator God of Trinity followed by Visnu, the protector God and Siva, the destroyer God. Brahma wanted his daughter Ahalya to be married to the man of the best virtues, profound intelligence and superior knowledge in Vedas. His ultimate choice was Maharishi Gautama. Ahalya's divine beauty attracted all Devas and Asuras including the King of Devas Indra, who watched the habits of sage and noticed that Gautama Maharishi left his cottage at the dawn of each day to the river for bath and prayers. Indra disguised himself as sage Gautama and approached Ahalya. He said to her,

Oh, Ahalya, Brahma crafted you so well that all your limbs are symmetrically conjoined, so who is in the universe will not yearn to have intercourse with you.... and on seeing your slender waist and thickest hips I wish to copulate with you now itself.... and let there be no fear of safe period or unsafe period for I do not wish to have any progeny of mine from you.... (Rao)

To which Ahalya thought,

This is none but Indra in the guise of my husband, for my husband never asks me like this nor he violates times.... I heard that Indra is seeking me for a long time.... and when king of Gods expresses such a desire, it cannot be refused.... let him have it.... (Rao)
After the copulation, fulfilled in her heart of hearts Ahalya told God Indra, “I am gratified in complying with your wish, oh, best of gods get going, oh, lord, from here quickly, oh, ruler of gods always safeguard yourself and me from sage Gautama”. (Rao)

When Indra was about to leave the cottage, the great saint Gautama entered the hermitage carrying ritual firewood and sawed grass. He cursed Indra as, “You shall become infecund” and turned to his wife to curse “You shall tarry here for many thousands of years to come without food and consuming air alone and unseen by all beings you shall live on this hermitage while contritely recumbent dust.” (Rao)

Thus, Ahalya becomes a statue. Comparison of Rajaraman to Ahalya foregrounds the value of fidelity. Jayakanthan spots that infidelity is sin. The truth is portrayed beautifully.

Faithlessness of Rajaraman shakes the head of the family Sambuiyer, but when Rajaraman absconds Sambuiyer becomes apprehensive and goes in search of Rajaraman in his village. Sambuiyer is sensible and prudent even after seeing his wife with Rajaraman. Sambuiyer remains judicious and tells his wife,

I know you. You are innocent. You are yearning for a child. Had a child being born for us, this wouldn't have happened. You are treating me, your husband as your child and so to fulfill your affection for children I asked him to stay here. What to do? To you, the entire world is your child, but this world is a curse. It copulates even with mother. (RM 79)
When Sambuiyer is so kind, responsible, and determined Vembuiyer of *Ishvara Allah Tere Naam* is thoughtless, hasty and cruel. Jayakanthan compares Vembuiyer to Kamcan and Hiranyan, the cruel Asuras of Hindu mythology from Vishnu Purana. Hiranyakasipu was a king of 'daityas'. He becomes very atrocious after getting a boon from Lord Brahma that made him as good as immortal. The boon asked by him was, “let not death come to me either by man or beast, nor devil, nor god shall cause my death by day to day or by night with steel or stone or wood, indoors or outdoors, or earth or in sky. Grant me undisputed lordship over the world. (Raghav)

The boon made him invincible that he ordered the people of the courts to worship him. Even Lord Brahma who had given him the boon tells Lord Vishnu,

This one, on God of heaven, is to the gods, the brahmins, the cows, the normal living beings and innocent souls who obtained Your feet, an evil-doer, a source of fear doing wrong by the power of a boon obtained from me. Wandering about as a pain to everyone, he has a demon has searched all the universe missing a proper adversary... Once aroused he is shake full of tricks, arrogant, self-righteous and most wicked. (Prabhu)

Hiranyakasipu had a son called Prahlada who was an ardent devotee of lord Visnu. He worshipped Visnu alone and did not worship his father Hiranyakasipu. Besides worshiping Lord Vishnu, Prahlada started to preach the greatness of Lord Visnu. Hiranyakasipu unable to tame his son, ordered him to be killed.

He ordered him to be trampled underfoot by an elephant. The enraged elephant could not crush the body anymore than he could have crushed
a block of iron. So this measure also was to no purpose. Then the king ordered the boy to be thrown over a precipice and this order too was duly carried out: but, as vishnu resided in the heart of prahlada he came down upon the earth as gently as a flower drops upon the grass. Poison, fire, starvation, throwing into a well, enchantments, and other measures were then tried on the child one after another but to no purpose...

(Vivekananda 116-117)

As Hiranya was ruthlessly brutal enough to kill his own son, Kamca was equally barbaric and merciless that he killed the children of his own sister Devaki. Devaki and Kamca are the children of Uggrasena of Madhura. King Kamca is known for his savagery. He arranged the marriage of his sister Devaki with Vasudeva, one of his friends and the son of Shoorsan. Immediately after marriage, a celestial voice declared that the eighth son of Devaki could kill Kamca. On hearing this, Kamca wants to kill his own sister Devaki. However, Vasudeva pleaded to Kamca not to kill his wife Devaki and promised to submit the eighth child to Kamca. Though Kamca was satisfied at that time, he imprisoned Devaki, Vasudeva and his father Uggrasena . Kamca killed mercilessly each and every child of Devaki on the day it was born. All these six children were implanted fetuses in the womb of Devaki by Mahamaya, personified illusion. As per the instruction of Lord Visnu, Mahamaya, “transplanted the seventh issue of Devaki into the womb of Rohini who was residing at that time in Gokul. Then Lord himself appeared as the eighth issue of Devaki”.

(hinduonline.co/Scriptures/Puranas/VishnuPurana.html)

As these two Asuras are cold-blooded sadist, Vembuiyer of Ishwara Allah Tere Naam is heartless and callous with his children. Jayakanthan writes, “Vembuiyer is known
for his patience, he is kind with the clients and the most desirable servant of his superior, the Lawyer. He is that much a Kamcan and Hiranyan to his children in home.” (IATN 182)

As the head of the family, he should have loved his children, but he shows only a morbid affection. There is no pain and love. Swami Vivekananda writes in *Karma Yoga* as: “When you have succeed in loving your husband, your wife, your children, the whole world, the universe, in such a manner that there is no reaction of pain....” (56)

Vembuiyer proves himself rude and uncivilized when he shuns his daughter Abirami. He established himself as the die-hard Brahmin when he refuses to give her married to Musthafa. Hirayan, Kamca and Vembuiyer prove that extremism will result in violence beautifully. Fundamentalism brings annoyance as well as disgrace. All the three, Hiranyan, Kamca and Vembuiyer through bias, it is shadowed by their type.

If prohibition of fundamentalism is a value presented by Jayakanthan, prevention of pride is also another way that Jayakanthan focuses through the myth of Viswakarma. From Mahabharata, we learn Viswakarma is “the lord of the arts, executor of a thousand handicrafts, the carpenter of the gods, the most eminent of artisans, the fashioner of all ornaments.... and a great and immortal god”. (Kundu)

Being son of Brahma, Viswakarma is believed to be the divine draftsman of the whole universe. Rig veda calls him “the lovely Engineer of the total world”. (Kundu)

He seems to have designed the four Yugas: Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga and Kali Yuga. The people of Sankarapuram in *Ishvara Allah Tere Naam* think
that the thousand pillar hall of Sankaralingeshvarar temple should have been built by Viswakarma.

Viswakarma had built this temple in a height to fulfill the desire of lord Siva. He had thought that Lord Siva cannot make even a brick, he knows only destruction. The pride of his craftsmanship deluded him and so he entrusted the duty under the supervision of a demon which was lethargic and so unable to complete before sunrise. Hence the demon has no time to anchor the left pillar. Whether the conclusion is true or lie, the thousand pillar hall of Sankaralingeshvarar temple tells this story. (IATN 25)

Jayakandhan insists the truth that pride is the beginning of the sin and by using the myth of Vishwakarma, Jayakandhan has added beauty to the truth.

Myths are stories of gods and stories of people associated with God. Davadasi is such a type which means servants of Goddess. These servants of Goddess became dancing girls of temples. However, Scholars like professor K.K.Pillai consider that these “woman attendants and dancers must have arisen probably with the emergence of structural temples”.

Professor A.C.Altekar comments on Devadasi as:

Devadasis were from third century AD but Professor B. N. Sharma and R. N. Saletoere attribute it to the age of Kautilya. The former states that, ‘this custom is at least as old as Kautilya’ and the later also writes that the devadasis were clearly mentioned in the literature of the fourth century B. C. Both of them refer to Kautilya's statement that women
attached to the temples were studiously taught the arts of music and
dance and were employed in shutrasala (weaving department) when
they become old.

Reference to Devadasis is seen in Tholkapiyam (a treatise on grammar and
poetics in Tamil written during 1st – 4th Century CE), Paripatal (seventy religious
verse compositions on various Hindu gods found in the fifth book of Ettuthokai, a
Sangam Literature Anthology), and Pattinapalai (a part of Pattupattu collection of
Sangam Literature consisting long poems of three hundred and one lines in Akaval
meter, almost like Blank verse in English) also. However in due course of time their
sacred condition degenerated and they were considered as a property of divinity as
well as to the whole community. Devadasis are not allowed to marry because they are
already married to the temple God. So pathetic that they have become unholy because
of various political and social reforms. They serve the priests and local landlords. It is
a pity that they cannot escape from serving the temple and the men of power and
money.

Kalyani, the daughter of a Devadasi is the heroine of the novel, Oru Natikai
Natakam Parkkiral. “Kalyani did not know that her mother was a Devadasi and so she
could not engage in formal marriage however from the very first night of being with
Kalyani’s father until her death she did not turn to another man”. (ONNP 73)

Amidst all difficulties and disparagement she had lived a chaste life. As sita, the
heroine of Ramayana rejected Ravana, the King of Srilanka, his treasure jewellery and
his kingdom, mother of Kalyani too have denied the riches. Probably Jayakanthan
wants to urge the importance of chastity through Kalyani’s mother, because modernity
stresses sexual pleasure and material wealth, the marks of kaliyuga. When
Jayakanthan speaks about the importance of chastity, Ki.Rajinarayanan presents chaste vegetarianism in his novel *Gopallapurathu Makkal*.

Ki. Rajinarayanan makes Rengupatti, (patti is grandmother in Indian culture. Relationship is addressed along with the name) to say, “Kaliyuga has brimmed, God if one who governs is so sinful that is not think about citizens”. (GM 90)

Rengupatti does not want her grandson Narasimman to go for education, from Gopallapuram to Ettayapuram, a town in Thothukudi district of southern Tamil Nadu. He denies her request and goes to the school which teaches him English and Mathematics. She pours cow’s urine on him, when he returns from the school, to purify him. She has three low opinions about White people – there is no caste system among them, the people who cook for them are the low caste people and she has disgusted with them as they eat cow’s meat because people of Gopalapuram give respect to the cow and consider it as a symbol of god. The patti condemns the King who should be the role model to the citizens of his country is a sinner himself. Thus, Ki. Rajinarayananan shows the beauty of the Gopalapuram people’s devotion and truth that the king should be the role model to the citizens.

Kaliyuga asserts the development of physical bodies built by food and resultant desires. So from Rengupatti, one can understand that beef eating has become a practice in a country where vegetarianism is advocated and it disgusts the writer. He has learned from *Thirukkural* that,

“Than thousand rich oblations, with libations with rare,

Better the flesh of slaughtered beings not to share. (Pope 36)
Not to kill and eat (the flesh of) an animal, is better than the pouring forth of ghee etc., in a thousand sacrifices

(http://www.valaitamil.com/abstinence-from-flesh-168.html)

There is a misconception that Vedas and other Sastras of Hinduism support meat eating but a proper reading of them distains the doom of non-vegetarianism.

Rig Veda 10.87.16 says ‘one who partakes of human flesh, the flesh of a horse or of another animal and deprives others of milk by slaughtering cows, O king, if such a fiend does not desist by other means, then you should not hesitate to cut off his head.’ (Knapp)

Rig Veda orders to slay the person who kills a cow whereas Manu Smriti condemns those who kill animals for their meal and for others as the worst sinner. To quote Manu-smriti says in 5.51-52,

‘He who permits the slaughter of an animal, he who cuts it up, he who kills it, he who buys or sells meat, he who cooks it, he who serves it up, and he who eats it, must all be considered as the slayers of the animal. There is no greater sinner than that man who thought not worshiping the gods or the ancestors, seeks to increase the bulk of his own flesh by the flesh of other beings.’ (Knapp)

Not necessarily all myths must come from antiquity. Myths are created and recreated in the technological modern world. Life is beauty, its adventure, its secret, its awe as well as its excellent and inferior conditions are brought into moralizing that good will be rewarded and bad will be punished. Non-vegetarianism is thus treated as
a modern myth by Ki.Rajanarayan. By spraying cow's urine on Narasimman, Rajanarayan expresses his belief that cow's urine can remove impurities.

Mangathayaru, mother of Govindhappa Naicker, tells the story of their migration and settlement in Gopallapuram. Sennama, daughter of her maternal uncle, was the most beautiful girl who had divine beauty that attracted others. Her family was too proud of her until the excessive beauty became a destroyer of their happy life. ‘King of Thulukkas’ was attracted by her beauty and so he sent his servants as merchants of jewelry. Hence Chenna Devi’s father could not afford to buy the jewelry, he sent them. The next day, the King sent an ambassador who seemed like a Brahmin for the marriage proposal. As caught in the hands of the king, the family unwillingly accepted for the marriage. But in the marriage function, they came to know through one of their relatives that there was a cow's head was seen in the kitchen. As devotees of Vaishnava, they were disappointed by the King and they planned to escape from the clutches of the King. They were followed by the horsemen until the flood of the river stooped them. When they had decided to sacrifice themselves to the soldiers of the King, a miracle occurred. The branches of a peepal tree which was located in the opposite direction came down to help them. They were saved by the peepal tree, which they later considered as God. Mangathayaru says,

A height gigantic Peepal tree on the opposite banks of the river started bending towards us. At first we thought that the tree gets broken and falls across the river but later we realized the miracle that the branches of the tree touches the bank that we were standing and gets back to its position again. Our ancestors used to worship around the Peepal tree for generation after generation. It did not go waste Govindhapa. (GG 54)
Arasamaram, in English is Peepal tree, and in Sankrit it is Asvattha, which is sacred. Asvattha tree is called as tree of knowledge and so it is venerated. It is also called Bodhi tree sitting under which Siddhartha Gautama became Buddha. There is a common belief that along with Trinity, other Gods too reside under an Asvattha tree and so the tree is worshipped by the Hindus. The Rig Veda refers to an Asvattha tree at the top of which two birds live eating the Asvattha fruit and the two birds are God and the human soul. The following verses of Asvattha state its greatness:

'They speak of an eternal Asvattha tree with its root above and branching below, whose leaves are the vedas; he who knows it, knows the vedas’.

'Below and above spread its branches, nourished by the gunas (nature's three constituent modes of sattva, rajas and tama) . Sense objects are its buds; and below in the world of men stretch forth the roots in the shape of the consequences of (human) action’.

'It’s true form, however, is not perceived here, neither its end, nor its origin, nor its support. Having cut agunder this firm-rooted asvattha with the strong weapon of non-attachments’.

'If the (saying to oneself) “I seek refuge in that Primal person from whom has streamed forth (this) ancient (cosmic) process’, that goal is to be sought for, going wither they (the wise) do not return again (to Samsara or relative existence). (Ranganathanda 512)

Having realized the greatness of Asvattha tree, Ki.Rajanarayan pictures the greatness of it so and brings forth the value of faith. In Mahabaratha, one of the Indian
epics, Draupati, the Lord heroine, having been lost in the game of gambling, is brought to the assembly of Tiruthirastra, King of Hasthirapuram. Draupati has actually been dragged into the assembly by Dhuksasana by holding her hair. When Draupati claims that her husbands who have already lost themselves in the gambling, have lost their rights on her. Duryodhana, the elder of the brothers of Gaurava, orders his brother Dusasana to disrobe her. Though the elders objected, their objections are not heeded. Draupati notices the helpless condition of their husbands, believes that Lord Krishna will alone protect her and so she surrenders to him.

‘And the Lord does not wait when his devotee is in such a grave crisis. Sri Krishna invisibly provided unending lengths of cloth on the body of Draupadi. Hence, Pushasana went on & on, his hands aching and paralyzed with fatigue, but was no end to the covering of Draupadi’s body. At last Dushasana collapsed, completely exhausted, “victory to Lord Krishna” exclaimed Draupadi and fell down, unconscious tears rolling down her eyes.

(www.saiaustin.org/Mahabharata)

Born and brought up by listening to such stories, K.Rajanarayan installs the importance of faith. Being a Vaishnava, K.Rajanarayan echoes the words of Lord Krishna from Bhagavath Gita chapter 10, text 26, “Ashvatthah Sarva-Vrksanam, meaning, of all trees I am Ashvatthah” which makes him help his characters to cross the flood-river through highest of all trees, that is Asvatthan tree. The value of the faith is beauty and truth is thus narrated by K.Rajanarayan. When K.Rajanarayanan upholds faith through the myth of Asvattha, it can also be interpreted that the writer wants to prove the sanctity of womanhood.
Therefore, myths are not stories of antiquity read for pleasure but they impart values and helps man to remain civilized. They are the better technique employed by writers to communicate their ideas and moral standards. There are other means through which a writer can present his concept and ethics. The following chapter analyzes it under the heading Artistic Values.