

Chapter Two:

Methodological Frameworks

The study has used qualitative and exploratory approach to fulfil the objectives of the research. It is a project shaped by interests in various socio-political forces like classes, castes and economy. The thesis speculates varied cultural reasons and underlying social dynamics that triggered the proliferation of mythological novels in contemporary times by eclectically drawing upon ideas from number of theorists and critics viz. Meenakshi Mukherjee, Partha Chatterjee, Pavan Varma, Anthony Giddens, Andre Lefevere, Yuri Lotman as well as Levi-Strauss, Roland Barthes and Fredric Jameson. By combining analytical perspectives of Postmodernism, Postcolonial Studies, Translation Studies, and Cultural Semiotics regarding globalization and identity, the present chapter elaborates various theories of myth proposed by these theorists. It develops a systematic framework to analyse contemporary mythological novels and to explore the global phenomenon of resurgence of myth in present century India.

To begin with the idea of Indianness and Indian identity in the present context, the chapter theorizes how mythological novels address the cultural identity crisis among new emerged elite class created by globalisation. The thesis considers the resurgence of mythological novels in contemporary times as a direct result of the impact of globalization and the identity crisis experienced by specific educated, urbanised Indian elite class emanating from globalisation and expressed through liberalisation.

It is crucial to understand globalisation for better cognition of the argument. J A Scholte in his book, *Globalisation: A Critical Introduction* (2000) introduces classification of globalization. Globalization in terms of internationalization is largely based on exchange of trades, capital investment, information, people and ideas among different countries for the economic benefit. Liberalization refers to ease the restrictions and barriers between countries in order to facilitate international economic integration. Deterritorialization is a social process where the barriers of boundaries and borders on social and cultural factors withdrawn to certain level. Westernization refers to the ideas of the west are borrowed, imposed or accepted with or without force. Universalization suggests synthesis of all cultures on the planet by becoming really global (15-16).

Globalisation put forward the question of national boundaries. It becomes more complicated when it is considered in terms of country like India. Whether it diminished nationalism or intensified it, must be answered. Superficially, globalisation proved to soften the idea of nationalism. As John Kusumi argues, “Globalization is the anti-thesis of nationalism as it suggests that there are no boundaries (and) just one globe” (Godfrey, 2008). The distinctive local cultures are under erosion and there is identity crisis. Cultural plurality is transformed into world culture. Globalisation has, in fact, reduced the significance of national barriers. The age old concept of nation state comes under threat. It has been rightly termed as universalisation, liberalisation, internationalisation.

But at the deeper level, it seems to be the prominent force for the resurgence of nationalism globally. There has been a resurgence of nationalism, traditionalism, and religious fundamentalism alongside trends toward growing globalization from the late 1980s. With the explosion of regional, cultural and religious differences, culture has

become a new source of conflict and an important dimension of struggle between the global and the local (Godfrey, 2008). “National movements are motivated by a desire to assure the existence and flourishing of a particular community to preserve its culture, tradition, language” (Natalie, 170). In the country like India, the issue of nationalism, instead of being obsolete, still remained strong and meaningful. Being an external force that results in diminishing nationalism, globalisation provoked nationalism in stronger way. According to Giddens, “The revival of local nationalism and an accentuating of local identities are directly bound up with globalizing influences to which they stand in opposition” (*Beyond Left and Right*, 05).

Globalisation is a broad term that amalgamates/ encompasses catastrophic worldwide changes in economy, technology, society, culture and politics through the matrix of exchange. It can be defined as dissemination of International influence on regional or local phenomena. It transforms the local and regional into global one. It reduces or almost removes national boundaries and creates opportunities for smooth environment for business, service and workforce.

The structuration of globality among various parts of the world, depends upon the ratio of interchangeability of exchange, understanding and transactions. One of the characteristic features of globalization is that it domesticizes the international as it internationalizes the domestic. It promotes for the localized meaning by focusing on the linguistic and semiotic features which makes them global. It implies the unification of the world into single entity by removing or erasing the identity of individual consciousness.

Anthony Giddens defines globalisation in *The Consequences of Modernity* (1991), “Globalization is the intensification of worldwide social relations which links

distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (64). Distinct localities are interconnected through spatial and linguistic aspects. Spatial includes transport systems like railroad and cars, telephone and other media technologies. Linguistic linkages can be understood by means of communication to these localities. All together affect and intensify the happenings.

National boundaries have become, more or less, fluid; enabling easy economic enterprise and socio-cultural changes across the borders. Melting away of geographical boundaries, initiation of the arrival of multinationals and the intervention caused by globalization threaten local cultures into extinction and greatly affected almost all national and cultural artifacts like national literature, film industry, television serials, local cafe culture.

Because of liberalization and privatization, the grip of the state was loosened on media, TV, industries, education, health and so on. The freedom of voice and expression was extended in all realms which resulted in the rise of the new reader in contemporary times. The delimitation of certain ideologies renders a new era of the mixture and free acceptance of the West. Initially the west has been imitated but lately the elite class has invented their own space and language to express their sensibilities.

Globalisation has an impact on Indian localities and are shaped and reshaped by it. The Indian counterpart also has reactions in this respect. The entrances of the global market in India threatens the local culture and folk traditions. With the advent of globalisation, the national boundaries have faded away and have created a certain kind of cultural identity crisis, which Meenakshi Mukherjee terms as ‘anxiety of Indianness’. The contestation and negotiations in the view of new ideologies of

contemporary India can be a turning point in the way of looking Indian identity with different perspective at global platform. Globalization has created a void where India as a nation must be located.

Apart from that, the phenomena of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation have led to the emergence of a new class of English speaking elites (Sajith Pai) what – in his *Becoming Indian* (2010) and *The Great Indian Middle Class* (1998) – Pavan Varma called new Indian middle class. This generation – Urban Indian English speaking youth is also a major consumer of western best sellers of fantasy and thriller viz. J. K. Rowling, Stephanie Meyer, and Dan Brown to which they need an Indian counterpart. Contemporary mythological novels are Indian analogue of the western best sellers for English speaking cosmopolitan Indian. Contemporary mythological novels present gods as more human than divine. As the god-ness of gods is being questioned, contemporary readers find their voice in the myth narratives and this identification makes them interesting reads.

Reader approaches the text with some prior cultural knowledge and suggests the codes developed in reading globalised fantasy novels like *Twilight Saga* (2005-2008), *Harry Potter Series* (1997-2007), *The Lords of the Ring* (1968), *The Da Vinci Code* (2003) and so on. This global popular fiction is rich in terms of folklore, fantasy and mythology. Besides, this new audience also regularly consumes mythological and fantasy programmes on television that were privatized and digitized after the 1990s. They form an important aspect of the cultural knowledge with which reader brought to their interpretations of mythological novels. Poetics and ideology of this readership that influences the mythological novels is thus influenced by globalization.

The globalisation generated cultural identity crisis among the English speaking elites in India. Through the mythological novels, the English speaking community endeavours to create a niche at the global sphere by using the myths as one of the strong bases for negotiation of their identity.

Globalisation has triggered resurgence of myth in Indian fiction and generated an unparalleled interest among elite class. The thesis considers the proliferation of mythological novels in 21st century India as direct repercussion of the identity crisis experienced by specific educated, urbanised Indian elite class emanating from globalisation and expressed through liberalisation. Mythological novels address the identity crisis and reinterpret mythical past. The respective authors utilize myth creatively for coming to terms with the predicament of the present.

Here the idea of India as a nation is to be interrogated. Identity of India as a nation has been questioned and explored from various perspectives. There are many debates regarding the idea of Indian or Indianness as it can be created, negotiated and re-negotiated through various discourses. However, the idea of India as a nation has been questioned and explored with various perspectives. The discourses like Dalit literature, Subaltern studies, Postcolonial studies and Orientalism have interrogated the traditional idea of Indianness and claimed that it is elitist, upper caste, upper class, orientalist or patriarchal. The identity of India can be re-negotiated through various discourses.

Apart from that, Indianness can be explored only in fragments. 'India' would no longer be conceived as an essential entity existing independently of discourses about India. On the contrary, India can be seen as a 'discursive construct' produced by multiple discourses which are enmeshed in social institutions and power structures.

The word does not contain any transcendent meaning, we make up the meaning as we go along, filtering the world through language. In his *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) and *The Order of Discourse* (1981), Michel Foucault suggests that the objects exist and events occur because they are apprehended and interpreted within discursive structures and we are not always aware of the way that the discourse structures our understanding. Everything is constructed and apprehended through discourses only (Mills, 53-62). These discourses have profoundly shaped the structure of our society and the nation.

In view of the new ideologies of contemporary India, the contestation and negotiations can be a turning point in the way of looking at Indian identity with a different perspective at the global platform. India is a multi-lingual and multi-cultural country; hence so many literatures. Each literature comprises of its linguistic and cultural uniqueness. Literature of this variant culture and country is expected to deal with the phenomenon of changes in literary tradition, in the relationship among the participants of the literary productions, in the modes of transmission of literature and in canons of criticism and taste in given society. In post-colonial terms, these literatures when they are produced in the country like India carry a great impact of history. Though many critics claim that a closer look upon these multi-literary country provide us with the balance sheet of borrowings and survival, but broadly speaking, these gave Indian literature a worldwide recognition.

Recent theoreticians have questioned and contested the idea of Indianness. All the same, they complicated the idea of 'Indian'. The concept cannot be put into certain single idea or definition. India as a nation or Indianness cannot be explored in unitary terms anymore. The very idea of Indianness or Indian can be penetrated with textual

approach and stereoscopic thinking. It can be accessed via mediational categories like narratives. “The attempt to posit a unified and unitary category called Indian literature that captures the entire spirit of a multilingual and multi-religious nation needs to be interrogated as a legacy of orientalism” (Ramakrishnan, 07). Apart from that, Indianness is a kind of ideology, a superstructure that resides on the base which is made up of religion, region, ancient myths, history etc.

When colonial and orientalist ideology considers India as discursive terrain and an object of knowledge that had to be interpreted and understood, Meenakshi Mukherjee demystifies the very idea of Indianness in her essay “Anxiety of Indianness”. According to her, the idea of Indianness of new generation may be attributed to global market place which demands “Upmanyu Chatterjee’s *English, August* be subtitled ‘An Indian Tale’ and Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* be perceived as National Allegory” (181).

After *Midnight’s Children*, new experimentation begun in Indian Writing in English. English emerged as the language of the developing new urban culture. (English as the language of the nation as the language of literary sophistication and bourgeois civility – any other bhasa stands for regionality, 182)

Aijaz Ahmad in his essay “‘Indian Literature’: Notes Towards the Definition of a Category”, argues,

We can assert the category ‘Indian Literature’ as a necessary corollary of the very real civilizational unity of our peoples, or as a consequence of the equally real centralizing imperatives of the modern nation-state, but of the thing itself, ‘Indian Literature’ – its historic constitution and generic composition, its

linguistic overlaps, its supposedly unified and unifying practices – we still know relatively little. (264)

In the essay “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory’”, Ahmad complicates the notion of the literature of the third world as ‘National Allegory’. He disseminates the definition of the third world literature by putting an argument that apart from national allegories, where the texts that are not national allegories can be categories (12). In his dialogue with Jameson, he opens up new vista for Indian literature to be located. He argues that the ideological conditions of a text’s production are never singular but always several. He insists that within the unity of three-worlds that has been bestowed upon our globe by the irreconcilable struggle of capital and labour, there are increasingly those texts which cannot be easily placed within this or that world.

Partha Chatterjee questions and contests the idea of the nation in the essay “Whose Imagined Communities?” – a critique of *Imagined Communities* (Benedict Anderson). According to his critique, the nation is created by the material domain (imitation of the west) and spiritual domain (nation culture) in the post-colonial period. The material domain is mostly based on the western modular in the fields like economy, statecraft, science and technology. The material is the domain of the outside. The latter – the spiritual is an inner domain. It consists of nation language created by native elites. They try to make native language fit into ‘modern’ culture keeping the State (material domain) out of its periphery; hence, create their own artistic space (218-219). Indian myths can be the space - in the spiritual domain - created by this elite class. Myth becomes an artistic space, a zone, to declare the identity to the modern world produced and patronized from literature of urban middle class.

Myth as Refractions

Myth keeps on being translated as the nature of language and politics of the receiving system changes from time to time. They are modified and manipulated to achieve certain kind of readership and to influence certain class. In the context of global events like liberalisation, privatization and globalization, contemporary mythological novels in English are translations of the old myths into the language of day-to-day use. New mythological fiction in English translates classical Indian mythological discourse into the modern day language of fantasy and thriller of the West which are primarily meant for new generation young Indian English readers and the ideology of present era. Or to put it in other way, though they sound full of digitalised and technological lexis, they still contain the aura of Indian ethos which is desired by the new Indian English speaking class.

Contemporary mythological novels can be seen as what Andre Lefevere terms as 'refractions' from older mythological stories and writings in Sanskrit and other Indian languages like Tulsi Ramayana, folk-tales or oral traditions in global phenomenon. Lefevere in his article, "Mother Courage's Cucumbers: Text, System and Refraction in a Theory of Literature" talks about translations as rewritings and refractions. Refraction is a canopy term that covers adaptations, translations, interpretations and so on, retells some story or film adaptations of literary texts. He defines refraction as "the adaptation of a work of literature to a different audience, with the intention of influencing the way in which that audience reads the work" (235). Refraction when used in a constructive way in creating the image of the original, makes original more popular in terms of criticism, commentaries, comparison and so on.

A target text or work is always a newly represented form of the previous source text or works. In this context, any text comes to us in the form of always already read and perceived as refractions or misunderstandings and misconceptions. Any translated text, be it adaptation of pictorial representation of certain narration and vice versa, is always a processed source text. The way of refraction of the text depends on the outside influences like culture and society of which the translator and the readers are part of. Therefore, in translation, when a text is rewritten, adapted, or refracted, some ideology is always at work.

According to Lefevere, not only linguistic translations but other forms of translations like retelling of some story or film adaptations of literary texts also are filtered and processed by the prism called translators or refractors. A refractor, an individual always connected to his social and cultural sphere, becomes an ideologue of the cultural and social ideology to which he belongs. As the translator or refractor is influenced by his own culture and society, so is the reader. When an old mythology is being translated, the customs, traditions, habits fashions and interest of the target reader are to be considered. The target reader's cultural preferences play an important role in determining the nature of rewriting.

When it comes to the acceptance of the translated text, the reader or the receptor comes under focalization. Lefevere, in "That the Structure in the Dialect of Men Interpreted" mentions, "Refractions are made to influence the way in which the readers read a text as such they are powerful instruments in ensuring the 'right' reading of works of literature and in perpetuating 'right readings'" (89).

The common words, phrases, idioms should be used which are natural to the common reader. In the introduction of the book, *Translation, History, Culture: A*

Sourcebook (1992), Lefevere quotes Goethe, “if you want to influence the masses, a simple translation is always best. Critical vying with the original really are used only for conversations the learned conduct among themselves” (05). Simple translation here means the translation where the reader does not need to use or activate his knowledge of poetics. In his article, “Refraction – Some observations on the Occasion of Wole Soyinka’s Opera *Wonyosi*”, Lefevere describes the process of rewriting.

In the process, virtually every feature of the original may be changed, or else very little may be changed. Changes will usually fall under three categories: a change of the language in which the original is written, with its concomitant socio-cultural context, a change of the ideology of the original (i.e., its ‘word view’ in the widest, not just the political sense of the word) and a change of the poetics of the original (i.e., the presuppositions as to what is, or is not, literature that can be seen to have guided the author of the original, whether he/she follows them or rebels against them. (192)

This process of adaptation and altering brings in questions of adequacy and authority. It includes the issues like subversion and repression too. It cannot be possible without certain reluctances that Lefevere calls constraints. Source text is altered, rewritten and refracted due to what Lefevere calls, poetological, ideological and patronage related constraints that suits the receptor culture (235-236). In his “That the Structure in the Dialect of Men Interpreted”, he clearly declares,

The ideological and poetological constraints under which translations are produced should be explicated, and the strategy devised by the translator to deal with those constraints should be described: does he or she make a translation in a more descriptive or in a more refractive way? What are the

intentions with which he or she introduces foreign elements into the native system? Equivalence, fidelity, freedom and the like will then be seen more as functions of a strategy adopted under certain constraints, rather than absolute requirements, or norms that should or should not be imposed or respected. It will be seen that ‘great’ ages of translation occur whenever a given literature recognizes another as more prestigious and tries to emulate it. Literatures will be seen to have less need of translation(s) when they are convinced of their own superiority. It will also be seen that translations are often used (think of the Imagists) by adherents of an alternative poetics to challenge the dominant poetics of a certain period in a certain system, especially when that alternative poetics cannot use the work of its own adherents to do so, because that work is not yet written. (98-99)

Ideology of the culture and society plays a major role in refraction. The text has to cope up with the ideology of the receptive culture. The original text is refracted with the resolution of ideological constraints at maximum level. As source texts are refracted through prism of receptor audiences’ ideology, the refractions must be modified and manipulated with careful attention to assure their acceptability. He also claims that ideology is often enforced by the patrons, the people or institutions who commission or publish translations (*Translation*, 14-15). This has made clear that translation and patronage cannot be separated. According to Lefevere, ideology dictates the basic strategy the translator is going to use and therefore also dictates solution to problems concerning the process of translation. By ideology, Lefevere means “the conceptual grid that consists of opinions and attitudes deemed acceptable in a certain society at a certain time, and through which readers and translators approach text” (qtd. from

Hermans, 2004, 127). Ren Shuping in his article, “Translation as Rewriting”, elaborates,

Lefevere claims that translation aims at influencing the development of a culture and the development of a literature, and this aim is reflected on the level of each of the four constraints under which translators operate. According to Lefevere, translation is closely linked with authority, legitimacy and power. Therefore, translation needs to be studied in connection with power and patronage, ideology and poetics, with emphasis on the various attempts to shore up or undermine an existing ideology or an existing poetics. It also needs to be studied in connection with attempts to integrate different universe of discourse. (Shuping, 57)

The culture and society in which refractions are done influence the way they are done by imposing these constraints. When the authors rewrite myths in contemporary social, cultural and political context, they manipulate and modify them to overcome certain constraints in terms of its readership. Source text is to be manipulated to suit the receptor culture and its ideology. Refraction is an activity to minimize these constraints to make text more acceptable in the target culture.

Patrons circumscribe the translators’ ideological space; critics tend to circumscribe their poetological space. To make a foreign work of literature acceptable to the receiving culture, translators will often adapt it to the poetics of that receiving culture. (*Translation*, 07)

The publishers, the editors, distributors, readers, academic criticism and critics, government officials – institutions take the place of patrons in the contemporary literary world and have certain expectations which must be fulfilled.

Not all features of the original are, it would seem, acceptable to the receiving culture, or rather to those who decide what is, or should be acceptable to that culture: the patrons who commission a translation, publish it, or see to it that it is distributed. The patron is the link between the translator's text and the audience the translator wants to reach. If translators do not stay within the perimeters of the acceptable as defined by the patron (an absolute monarch, for instance, but also a publisher's editor), the chances are that their translation will either not reach the audience they want it to reach or that it will, at best, reach that audience in a circuitous manner. (*Translation*, 06-07)

So, refractions can be considered as a system embedded in environment and culture consist of both texts and people like writers, refractors, receptors and distributors.

The poetological constraints refer to the poetics of the time in which the text is getting translated. The language differ from time to time, era to era. As system, myth novels have their own code of behaviour that Lefevere calls poetics. Poetics has two components – inventory and functional. Inventory covers genre, symbols, characters and prototypes. Functional component consists of how literature may or may not function in the society and culture. They include ideological and pragmatic related constraints that reflect culture and society.

While refracting, refractors face certain alien poetics into the systems they are operating in. Constraints are the reason that the new poetics are shaped. While dealing with the poetics and its components, there arises certain formal and functional constraints. Formal constraint includes linguistics and semantics that reflect natural language and its grammar. Since the language reflects culture, old myth embodied in

old language (that of rhetoric – in terms of epics) reflects the ancient culture and its glory. When old natural language is refracted into new one in mythology, discrepancies are bound to arise in the transformation of old into new (that of digital and technological language). But here is an attempt to naturalise the variation.

In his “Mother Courage’s Cucumber”, Lefevere suggests “a strategy for adapting refraction to the native system to integrate new poetics into old one by translating its concepts into more familiar terminology of old poetics” (239). It explains new poetics to show that the system can accommodate it and can allow it to enter into inventory and functional components of its poetics. Difference and change due to refraction in poetics make works more acceptable than a straight translation. The new poetics that is “the combination of various elements from old, non-canonised imports from other systems rearranged to suit alternative functional views of literature” (246) makes refraction acceptable and compatible to receiving system.

Refraction entails a compromise between two systems – receiving and source. Compromise between the receiving and source systems is never too easy. The degree of compromise depends on what Lefevere calls reputation of the work in the receptor system. The level of popularity of certain myths decides the degree of compromise. In both systems while they interact with each other, there is a conflict. The dominant system indicates its constraint to dominate and subvert the constraint of less dominant system. In our case, the myths are being refracted into new language of digitalisation. They would be the dominant systems. So the ideological and pragmatic constraints would be suppressed and compromised by the new dominant system.

If the source text belongs to a superior culture, the translation of it would be given sharp attention, extra care and adorable respect. Similar is not the case when the

source text is being translated from an inferior culture into a superior one. Hence, the favour of the west can be observed to provide smooth reading for the receptor either by providing glosses or avoiding awkward usages. The sole criterion is the text to be accepted in the dominant culture. The status of text, whether it belongs to dominant culture or to the orient, determines the refraction strategy and the nature of translation.

Myths are always approached and conceived through second hand experience, though refractions like translations, summaries, criticisms, stories and so on. Myth and its contemplation, application of myth into life, commentaries, and identification of certain characters to real life or personality, are all refractions that work make possible for the reader to concretize and receive.

The resurgence and subsequent popularity of contemporary mythological novels in the face of current technological advancement can be understood in terms of refraction. While conceived as refractions, mythological novels are constructed and articulated with constraints. They are working under constraints and manipulations that play an important role in the acceptability among the target audience. This modification and manipulation of Indian myths in the modern day language of fantasy and thriller can be seen as refractions that are meant primarily for new generation young Indian English readers – English speaking elites in India. Their popularity expresses the phenomenon of globalization while working under ideological constraints of the era.

The contemporary writers are rewriting old myths in the refracted form that are accepted in global phenomenon. Andrew Lefevere's theory of refraction renders a positive answer to how old myths are translated and manipulated to minimise these constraints to fit these myth narratives in the era of globalization.

Apart from that, when ancient Indian mythology is getting refracted, the influence of the West and globalization is felt. The contemporary writers are rewriting old myths in the refracted form to be accepted in global phenomenon. So myths are refracted through prism of western culture or ideology. The control factors like poetics and ideology restrict the refractions from falling too far out from the system in which they are getting moulded. These control factors operate within and outside the system in such a way that provoke new poetics to be generated which is suitable to certain ideology of the society.

Indian youngsters are exposed to Indian mythology in various ways from their early childhood. The visits to temples and certain places which always have sthalapurana, rituals, festivals, traditions, customs, TV serials of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and certain stories and incidents from mythology which are introduced in their school and college syllabi (all are in refracted form) are the major ways in which Indian mythology gets its hold on elite youth. It can be said that these are various ways to canonise certain versions of myths by blocking other way to look at them. Only those myths are selected which fit in or they are made to fit in with manipulation. Readers are expected to accept the selections offered in these ‘virtual anthologies’ without questioning the ideological, economic and aesthetic constraints which have influenced these selections. Ideologically, they suppress and subvert the other voices that can be thought of with a different perspectives. With certain orthodoxy and conservation, myths are manipulated and served with limited essentialist perspectives. “It is through refractions in social system’s educational set up that canonisation is achieved and maintained.” (*The Translation Studies*, 216)

Through refractions, it is possible to observe other shades of the canonised myths. Refraction makes it possible to question and contest those manipulations. When it comes to authority and authenticity of refractions, it is original to the group of people who are only tangentially exposed to myths as enumerated above. These readers are influenced through refractions only as they never came across the original in terms of Upanishadas, Vedas and other classical Sanskrit source texts. Very few of these readers have actually read the *Ramayana* or the *Mahabahrata* in Sanskrit.

The meaning of the text is not inherent but produced in certain conditions of the text and is always open for interpretation. Translation is no longer thought as an isolated act rather it is considered as the product of the wider significance that carries textuality and intertextuality from many languages, cultures and societies. Being no longer a linguistic transference of texts, translation becomes a strategy to link two cultures, nations mirroring each other having asymmetrical power relationships.

Indian myths in recent times are modified with the same colour and everything has been brought down to earthly description. It portrays gods as more human than with divine power of the old myths. The popularity of such fantasies created a wave in the area of creative writing which manifests the importance of identity of the nation and culture. As they are the Indian counterparts of western best sellers, mythological novels create a spiritual domain for elite class to negotiate the identity crisis propounded by globalization.

The plurality of translation opens up new vistas of studies in connection with ideology and poetics, power and patronage. While being translated, the text has to travel from one semiotic system to another one; hence the collision of ideologies of variant cultures. Lotman in his *Culture and Explosion* (1994) says,

Any system lives not only according to the laws of its own self-development but also incorporates a variety of collisions with other cultural structures... Sufficiently frequently the collision produces a third, fundamentally new phenomenon which is not an obvious, logically predictable, consequence of either of the colliding systems. (65)

The process of transformation or the collision of ideologies can be seen as one of the strategies of cultures to deal with what lies outside their boundaries and at the periphery. The transformation of such texts during refraction process takes place at the space what Russian Semiotician Lotman calls semiosphere.

When thought as translations or refractions, contemporary mythological novels achieve different dimension of meaning making and interpretation. They travel from semiotic system of old language of mythology into another semiotic system of modern day language of science and technology like fantasy and thriller fiction of the West. They get refracted in Lefevre's terms. The semiotics of culture can explain the process of refraction and manipulation of these translations. It can explain how Indian myths are being translated into new global media discourse of six pack abs of Arjun or Mahadev and size zero Sita.

The theoretical model provided by Soviet semiotician Yuri Lotman and the Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics provides the mechanism how Indian myths are refracted while working under constraints during the cultural change in globalization and assists us to theorize cultural change and globalization. It provides us the tools to read/assess contemporary Indian mythological novels in English as means to access and understand/negotiate identity crisis in the wake of globalization. Apart from that, Semiotics of culture assists us to theorize cultural transformation/ variation in India as

nation. India as nation can be theorised as a discourse of Self-description generated by core nucleus of the semiosphere by creating boundaries and defining itself against its 'other' in the context of global Indian Semiosphere. "The rhetoric mechanisms like text-within-text, core-periphery, the boundary, semiosphere, semantic tropes, inverted images, [iconic rhetoric], generate indeterminate, newer and sometimes apocalyptic, sometimes utopian texts through *translational* exchanges between two or more incompatible semiotic systems" (Sachin Ketkar, *Lovebirds*) like the language of myth and the language of modern day science that are non-isomorphic and untranslatable to each other, but are isomorphic at the third level-that of the globalized Indian semiosphere.

India can be a semiotic space where everything coexists and produces complicated polyglot text-culture. India can be considered

"as an example of a single world looked at synchronically, imagine a museum hall where exhibits from different periods are on display, along with inscriptions in known and unknown languages, and instructions for decoding them; besides there are the explanations composed by the museum staff, plans for tours and rules for the behaviour of the visitors. Imagine also in these hall tour-leaders and the visitors and imagine all this as a single mechanism (which in a certain sense it is). This is an image of the semiosphere." (*Universe*, 126-127)

For the linguistic diversity of India, another definition of semiosphere is useful. In his *Universe of the Mind* (1990), Lotman defines semiosphere as

The semiotic space necessary for the existence and functioning of languages, not the sum total of different languages; in a sense the semiosphere

has a prior existence and is in constant interaction with languages. In this respect, a language is a function, a cluster of semiotic spaces and their boundaries, which, however clearly defined, these are in the language's grammatical self-description, in the reality of semiosis are eroded and full of transitional forms. Outside the semiosphere there can be neither communication nor language. (123-124)

In Lotman's terms, Culture is considered and studied as exceptionally complex polyglot text consists of a hierarchy of text-within-the-text. The structure of the culture is reflected in the artistic text with innovation and recognition. When culture is considered as a very complex polyglot text (Semnenko, 86), it generates the text and it is the text itself – isofunctional and isomorphic to individual intellect. So the culture is both the text itself – collective and generates the text - the individual. The artistic text creates its own world which resembles the outer reality to some extent with the polar tendencies like innovation and recognition at the same time. They reflect the history which is isomorphic to the history of mankind, general through the particular and vice versa. When these realities are contextualized with contemporary times, they represent the isomorphic modality of the world from which they are created and produced. The culture is considered as text so all the smaller texts are texts-within-the-texts. These artistic texts reflect the structure of culture out of which they are created. (Semnenko, 83)

Foreign intrusion of text at different semantic space is text-within-the-text. The foreign text creates disturbances in the balance of the larger text and increase the unpredictability. For extension of the creativity of the text, saving it from being redundant, we need this intrusion. It becomes important when this unexpected intrusion

of a text acquires an essentially semantic function, reveals author's construction (historical) and reader's perception of the text (mythical). From one semantic network, later Lotman calls semiotic space, it is placed into the another semiotic space; hence becoming text itself as whole from non-text (fragment). The text-within-the-text - a fragment of text which is detached from its natural semantic network and mechanically introduced into a different semantic space play the role of semantic catalyst, change the nature of basic meaning, remain unnoticed (*Culture*, 69) and becomes so natural and unquestionable; hence sound like myths. There are other dimensions of the text within the texts. Insertion of short story, dreams, picture within the picture, play within the play, introducing deliberate fragments like quotations, notes, epigraphs into continuous narration etc. This function of the text makes it important and accentuates the lucid play of the text.

Another rhetorical device that can be useful to analyse the contemporary mythological novels is Inverse Image. Used frequently in the visual arts, it exchanges dominant features of two opposing objects. It increases unpredictability of the text and saves it from being redundant. They are like "the sheep ate the wolf, the horse rode the man, and the blind led the sighted" (*Culture*, 78).

When it comes to visual art, Lotman has new semiotic system of iconic signs – iconic rhetoric. In his *Semiotics of Cinema* (1976), he develops theory of semiotics of cinema and non-verbal signs. Lotman differentiates linguistic signs which he calls conventional signs in terms of Saussure with visual signs. Visual signs or non-verbal signs are iconic signs. Its iconicity depends on a resemblance between the signifier and the signified. When the films are created from some book, conventional languages like verbal languages acquire iconicity – the poetic image, or the language of music. The

reverse process is also possible where the iconic signs are translated from visual to the written domain of linguistic signs. These new mythological novels can be treated as translation from the visual world of Hollywood cinema in to the written domain.

The mythological novels help us to negotiate our cultural identity that is threatened at the wake of globalisation. Nation as discourse of self-description generated by core nucleus of the semiosphere by creating boundaries and defining itself against its 'other'.

To clarify above argument, the concept of core-periphery becomes crucial. He considers culture as a text, a system as a self-description created by the core-nucleus of the system. The core text that expects the peripheral to be isomorphic hence wants to freeze the play of interpretation fails to control and becomes more unpredictable. Various new texts which are evolved in the same space decrease the certainty and carry it to the array of wide interpretations and meanings. The core is the center less dynamic, structured, predictable and normative, resistant to changes whereas the illogical, irregular, innovative or foreign elements lie at the periphery – more dynamic and unpredictable. In their article “On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture”, Lotman and Uspensky define the core as,

The entire system for preserving and communicating human experience is constructed as a concentric system in the center of which are located the most obvious and logical structures, that is, the most structural ones. Nearer to the periphery are found formations whose structuredness is not evident or has not been proved, but which, being included in general sign-communicational situations, function as structures. (213)

India as a nation (system) created by the self-description by creating other can be understood by this concept. The most established canonised texts and structures make the core, which are in our case, Sanskrit versions of the ancient myths used and promoted by Brahminist tradition. The subversive versions of myths in regional Indian literature and new mythological novels in English evolve at the periphery which are irregular and does not follow the norms created by the core. The core defines itself by creating such others at the boundaries.

According to Lotman, this translation is an intertextual collage between two or more language or language systems. These illegitimate associations between Indian mythology and global phenomena provoke new semantic connections and give rise to new texts. The dissimilarity of these two systems are quite evident. The text travels from one semiotic system – classical mythology in regional context to another semiotic system modern day language of science and technology in global context. New mythological novels fulfils the requirements for the new text to be created. These new texts are created by juxtaposing two polar thoughts which are impossible to be juxtaposed as the language of western or European fantasy fiction is quite dissimilar to the eastern one. When two languages – semiotic systems are dissimilar, here in terms of divinity and humanity, illegitimate, imprecise but approximate translation is one of the most important features of any creative thinking. Their mutual recording creates a new semiotic system capable of many readings and opens up unexpected reserves of meaning. It is an enormously *productive* though chaotic mechanism of global proportions.

There is of course lamentation on the new versions as they are unfaithful to the original. Instead of seeing globalized culture as a phenomenon that kills language

diversity, it can be seen as a system that produces newer messages, texts and languages such as that found in the texts and language of contemporary mythological novels. New lexicon and semantics are generated during the transformation process.

The globalisation process can be analogous with what Lotman calls ‘cultural explosion’ where the chaos and conflicts become the key ideas in the generation of new information and texts. The drastic change which is unpredictable – explosion – in cultural and social systems that disturbs the conventional balance and forces the systems to receive foreign elements slowly and gradually or rapidly and radically. (Smenenko, 67)

New language equips us to understand the new text in the context of globalised India. It develops multilingual theory of communication where unpredictability is the key idea. It reveals that the dramatic advances in science, technology and information systems that are made in order to decrease uncertainty and unpredictability in our lives in reality end up increasing uncertainty and unpredictability ‘explosively’, thus producing “nightmarish, hysteric, irrational fear of apocalypse and anxieties of eschatological kind” (Sachin Ketkar, *Lovebirds*). As such advances often produce new semiotic things, devoid of traditional roots, producing heightened symbolic potential that results in the ‘mythology of objects’ found in many of these contemporary novels.

The language of these mythological novels are strikingly contemporary. It seems to be emerged from urban metro cities - a common residence of the Elite class discussed above. Semiotics of culture can help us understand why the language of new mythological novels, has largely emerged from urban landscape. Using this theory, it is possible to conceptualize cultural globalization as the globalization of the semiosphere.

Myth as Ideology

The study also uses Barthes' concept of myth as 'Depoliticized Speech' and Jameson's idea of 'Political Unconscious' to explore contemporary Mythological novels.

Roland Barthes' path-breaking book *Mythologies* (1972), a collection of essays published as articles in magazine during 1950s, put forward a method to read texts by their signification process. The book provides an academic model to interpret certain unopposed traditions and conventions to the real world interpretation of pop culture. Roland Barthes develops a systematic approach for analysing how we perceive myth as present day object. He objectifies everything by introducing a systematic study of myth as semiological system that endowed with meaning. He dissects certain insidious myths by the tools of semiology. The main argument of these essays is obsession of modern culture with certain objects like professional wrestling, photograph of food to accompany article about cooking in glossy magazines, French travel guides and even advertising for washing detergents that seems so natural from surface can reveal some deeper meaning if demystified. Barthes exposes everyday consumable commodities to probe at them the meaning by making them the product of long history. By removing the mythical mask of natularity, he reminds the reader that the mythology of anything is part legend, part illusion and part truth.

In the essay, "Myth Today", Roland Barthes considers myth as a type of speech – a second order semiological system of communication that is a special preconditioned form of language with a message (107). The messages which are type of speech, are not confined to oral speech but have wider significance and consist of modes of writings or representations, photography, cinema, reporting, sports, shows, publicity

etc. (108). Myths are forms of popular culture and more than this. Since, myth is a type of speech chosen by history – a system of communication, that it is a message, a mode of signification, a form, everything can be myth provided it is conveyed by discourse (107). It can be defined not by the object of the message but by the way in which it utters this message within the context of certain semiotic system through the process of signification. This process of signification has to be located into the context of social relationships. They cannot be studied solely in terms of system of signs but need to be grasped into certain social and cultural semiotics.

Roland Barthes uses the word myth as an expression of a historically specific ideological vision of the world. Myth has double function. It points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us (115). A historical reality supplied by the world is processed into natural image of reality by ‘myth’. For Barthes every cultural artifact has meaning which is conditioned by ideology. Myth is the most appropriate instrument for the ideological inversion which defines the society (142). Myth doesn’t hide things. Instead, myths inflect or distort particular images or signs to carry a particular meaning. It alienates the history of the sign.

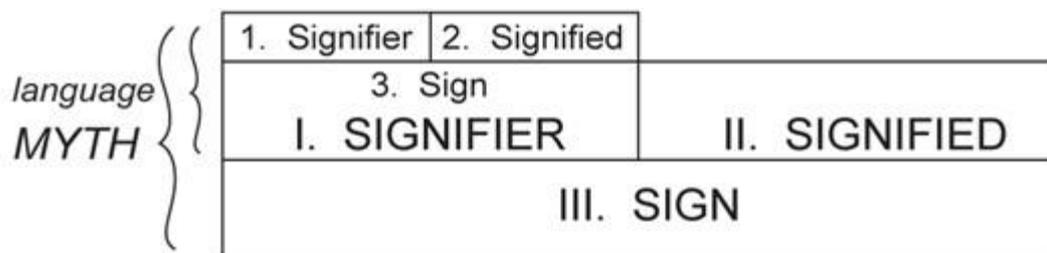
The function of myth is to transform history into nature. It is this characteristic of myth which represents itself as universal and natural, that characterizes its ideological function. Barthes mentions, “It is the bourgeois ideology itself, the process through which the bourgeoisie transforms the reality of the world into an image of the world, History into Nature” (140).

Myth, a thoroughly ideological process, works by presenting culturally specific objects and relations as if they were timeless, natural, and thus unquestionable. Barthes argues that myth has to be understood by how it transforms the socially (the interest of

bourgeois class) and historically specific (structure of capitalist societies) into something which is natural and inevitable.

Mythology transforms culture into nature in terms of ideologies. It is this duplicity of myth, a construct which represents itself as universal and natural, that characterizes its ideological function. Myth is fundamental in representing our deepest instinctual life of primary awareness of man in the universe. It is myth that gives meaning to our life and experiences in the real world.

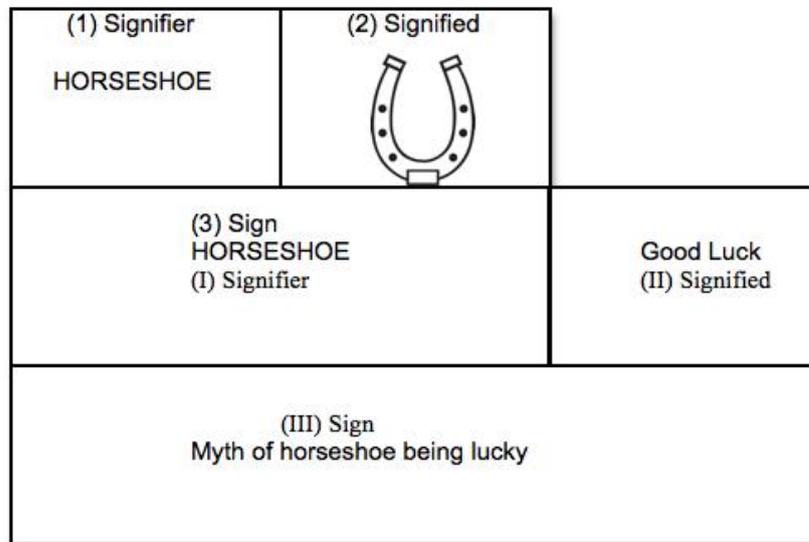
Myth has tri-dimensional pattern of the signifier, the signified and the sign. But unlike language, it relies upon signs in the first order systems such as language which existed before it. In order to engage in the process of signification, a sign which is the associative total of signifier and the signified – a concept and an image, in the first order system becomes mere signifier in the second order system of myth.



(*Mythologies*, 113)

According to Barthes, myths are second order semiotic systems. Barthes defines two semiological systems - language-object (number 1, 2, 3 - the linguistic system and its relation to the object it represents) and metalanguage (number I, II, III - the second order system of myth where sign from first system becomes mere signifier)

that is created by appropriating these linguistic relationships to each other to endow meaning; hence myth. The below diagram can explain this argument.



(Picture 1)

The signifier 'horseshoe' signifies the object – (the real object if referent) becomes a sign at second level of signification process. The sign 'horseshoe' at second level signifies 'good-luck' which creates the myth of horseshoe being lucky.

Myth uses other systems, be they written or pictorial, to construct meaning. In doing so, it becomes a metalanguage as it refers to other languages. Barthes sees myth as metalanguage by which it can distort history and removes the possibility to explain its roots. Myth is seen as historical image open to society for appropriation.

Now this process of signification is mythic in Saussurean terms of the arbitrariness. Since the signifier and signified have in his eyes a natural relationship, the reader is allowed to consume myth innocently. He does not see it as semiological system but as an inductive one. Myth as semiological system makes communication possible and makes it meaningful. Barthes sees myth as second order semiological

system that intermingles signifier and signified of form and meaning. Myth becomes mode of signification in meaning making process. Hence, in the perspective of Barthes, “Everything can be myth provided it is conveyed by discourse” (117), or to say in other way, everything has its mythical side. It is a representation of historical and dominant culture values usually from upper class. For example, wine which is considered as a symbol of French nationalism and glorified in every way, has actually a darker side. It is responsible for drunkenness and bad health of poor people. When it is given history in proper contexts, it reveals its production in Arab countries by colonised and slaves. The wine is presented so natural and a symbol of French nationalism, is actually dressed up representation of French colonialism.

To substantiate his remark on first and second order semiological system, he gives the example of the magazine cover that shows a ‘Negro boy saluting (probably French Flag)’.



(Picture 2)

At first, the picture suggests that the France is a free nation that considers all equal. There is no racial discrimination and all serves France without any social differences. Barthes reads the picture as...

On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour. All this is the meaning of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors. I am therefore again faced with a greater semiological system: there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (a black soldier is giving the French salute); there is a signified (it is here a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness); finally, there is a presence of the signified through the signifier. (115)

He then takes this picture to another dimension and reads the picture as a signifying system of denial of Negro history and the French Imperialism. Negro saluting the flag can be read as the denial of the colonial history and dominance of French Imperiality. Black soldier is taken away from one semiotic system, his real history which gives him his real meaning, and placed into another system, where there is a myth of equality of every French citizen and given another history. When put into another history, that of utopian vision of equality of rights and citizenship, it denies the real history and culture and thus the real history of French colonial exploitation. It gives another history to the soldier that makes him a sign to function in the new semiotic system of French imperiality.

Barthes's example is a magazine cover which shows a black soldier saluting the French flag. At the level of first-order language, this picture is a signifier (an image) which denotes an event (a soldier saluting a flag). But at the second-order mythological level, it signifies something else: the idea of France as a great multi-ethnic empire, the combination of Frenchness and militariness.

Myth does not belong exclusively to the past and archaic cultures but constitutes an intrinsic part of modern culture as well. Audience's understanding of media text comes from their understanding and knowledge of frequently told myths and stories. Through myth and retold stories, we interpret the surrounding world. Myths are manipulations of realities from ancient times to construct the shared values, tradition beliefs and conventions. Demystification of myth reveals many delusions and tricks that superficially make up national and social culture.

Barthes introduces myth as depoliticized speech. "What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, defined by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a natural image of this reality" (142). The term 'real' is used in Lacanian context. Lacan reinterprets Freud by relating his theories in the language of Saussure. He classifies the growth of an individual psyche into three categories: 'Imaginary', 'Symbolic', and 'Real'. Imaginary relates to the idea of the mirror stage where the child begins to recognize himself in the mirror but makes little distinction between the self and the other. Symbolic order is the entry into language. Here, the child develops an ego and gradually acquires language. He perceives outer reality through the medium of language. The Real suggests the reality outside the subject's consciousness. According to Lacan, the outer reality can only be apprehended through the language. As it lays outside the individual consciousness, it resists any

symbolisation. It can be only accessed via some mediational categories like language. In the context of Barthes (and Jameson), this reality – is the historical reality which must be reconstructed to question naturalness of myth.

The function of myth is to empty reality and has the task of giving a historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal. The process of myth making detaches things from their human meaning and make them insignificant which infact implies human insignificance. This draining of history strips represented phenomena of their content. What is actually a contextually specific action is taken to stand for something else: a timeless, eternal essence. This is termed as the ‘concept’ of the myth. Barthes expresses it by adding ‘-ness’ or ‘-ity’ onto ordinary words. This emptying is also a kind of filling. The concept carried by a myth appears to be eternal and absolute. In fact, the concept carried by a myth implants into the sign an entire history and perspective. It speaks to a very specific group of readers. It corresponds closely to its function. For instance, it refers back to particular stereotypes embedded in gender, racial, or class hierarchies.

Myth narratives when conceived as metaphorical poetic speech - a distinctive language of poetry in Aristotle’s term, become - a type of speech in terms of Roland Barthes. Social problems are embodied into mythological novels and their past can be reconstructed by the model provided by Barthes. Mythological novels are analysed as second order semiological systems, if read closely and demystified, reveals the problems at first level semiological level. The characters from the ancient mythology are uprooted and planted into contemporary fiction. Semiotic analysis of mythological novels unveil the constructedness of social realities and reveal the politics behind denial of historical facts which rather can be taken as natural. The issues that seem very

transparent can have another side and meaning, Barthean model can be very useful tool to assess contemporary mythological novels to reveal their ideological nature.

“If we substitute the word globalisation for postmodernism, Jameson’s influential contribution could stand as a general theory of globalisation’s discursive content, characterised by the pervasive use of pastiche, a fetishised relation to the real, a resistance to hermeneutics and the diminished potential for affect” (Connell, 84). In his essay, “Postmodernism: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism”, Jameson mentions commodification of art and other cultural artefacts. Commodity production is now a cultural phenomenon in late capitalist era.

Culture is commodified and consumed aesthetically and vice versa in postmodern period. By converting all the cultural artifacts into commodities – simulations, the postmodern condition has overtaken the depth by simulation of reality. Myths too, are transformed into one of the commodities in the postmodern world where information is a saleable commodity. Being an object of commercialization to sell, myths disguise themselves as the object of enjoyment in the late capitalist era. History, in the postmodern world is enticing, alluring and captivating but unattainable. Jameson calls this postmodern history as ‘pop images’ which is produced by commercial culture. The manifestation of this pop history are nostalgic films, best sellers, paintings, books and myths which present the delusion/ appearance of a historical account. The manifestations, at times, are so superficial and lacking depth, that the very representation is questionable. Epitome of postmodern depthlessness, the present myth narratives lack the depth of serious mythological epics. The proliferation of mythological novels today, from Jamesonian perspective, can be considered as commodity reification and fetishism.

Postmodernism describes the emergence of a society in which mass media and popular culture are the most important and powerful institutions that control and shape all other types of social relationships. The growing immediacy of global space and time resulting from the dominance of the mass media means that previously unified and coherent ideas about space and time have begun to be undermined and become distorted and confused. Postmodern popular culture is seen to express these confusions and distortions. Once thought united, wider social reality is being reflected only by surface reflections.

The superficiality or depthlessness consumes the images for their own sake rather than to present their usefulness for deeper values they may represent. As a result, qualities such as artistic merits, integrity, seriousness, authenticity, realism, intellectual depth, and strong narratives tend to be undermined. In his essay, “Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture”, Jameson while mentioning about popular literature says, “Popular literature clearly speaks a cultural language, meaningful to wide strata of population than what is socially represented by intellectuals” (130). The mass culture of certain society at certain point of time, utilise the space created by myth and other cultural artefacts to legitimise and validate their identity.

Jameson also affirms the existence of nostalgia for the past, a longing for a utopian society in the present fragmented postmodernist era. The retold myths are an attempt to reproduce that glimmering mirage of the past satisfying the reader’s desire for utopia for commercialization to sell in the late capitalist era as one of the major objective. The fantastic world that these mythological novels project, fulfil readers desire for a perfect world but at the same time they alienate him from the dark social realities like an Ideological State Apparatus. Contemporary mythological novels when

read in above context reveal the desire for utopia and its relation to historical reality embodied in its ideological functions. They deftly explore the prescription of social relations by means of Indian mythology. They flourish as they address identity crisis which is cultural and historically specific.

Jameson, in his *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as Socially Symbolic Act* (1981), discusses multiple issues regarding the dialectics of narratives. He says that narratives symbolically embody social reality and the surface narration usually mediates the unconscious reality of the text's relation with history. Here is an attempt to grasp the ontological relationship between Psychology and Marxism to interpret literary narratives and how it reveals the ultimate horizon of interpretation in such creative practices. Though he foregrounds all interpretations of literary text into History, the textual nature of history makes all interpretations to confine within its social, economical and political horizons at last instance. He develops a new hermeneutic to interpret literary narratives by synthesising the archetypal criticism, structuralist criticism, Lacan's reinterpretations of Freud, semiotics and deconstruction. These modes of criticism, Jameson asserts, are applicable at various stages of the critical interpretation of a literary work. But he admits that Marxist criticism subsumes all other interpretive modes by retaining their positive findings within a 'political interpretation' of literary texts which stands as the final and absolute horizon of all readings and all interpretations.

History is always present in everyday life yet rarely accessible in figural terms as it resists any symbolisation. History is like Lacanian 'Real' or Althusserian 'Absent Cause' that resists any form of symbolization and only can be accessed via mediational categories like textual forms with stereoscopic thinking.

The concept of mediation has traditionally been the way in which dialectical philosophy and Marxism itself have formulated their vocation to break out of specialised compartments of the (bourgeois) disciplines and to make connections among the seemingly disparate phenomena of social life generally. (*Political*, 40)

According to Jameson, “Mediation is the classical dialectical term for the establishment of relationships between the formal analysis of a work of art and its social ground, or between the internal dynamics of the political state and its economic base” (*Political*, 39). It is narratives, story-forms and plots that play a dominant role in mediating individual experience and social totality. In such context, myth can provide such important mediation between the individual and socio-cultural totality. Narrative thus is a key mode of mediating between the individual and society as well as between the apparent fragmentation of society and the real totality underlying it. The narrative like novels are already intimately connected with the realities of its social and economic environment. It only appears to be separated from them.

By narrative, Jameson means literary and non-literary narratives. A story is an organising principle behind the novel that connects the events, characters, thematic developments and so on. Narrative is the place in fiction and non-fiction that most directly expresses the unconscious totality of real life. The meaning of the subtitle of the book *Political Unconscious* points towards texts’ symbolic value in the Lacanian terms. Political Unconscious is the narrative that mediates our existence - from the myths and stories we tell ourselves to the plot lines of soap operas and novels - symbolically embody social reality.

Narratives reflect reality in a symbolic way that stands in a certain space and time in history, has their source in certain ideology which is both participatory and contributory in the development of sociological law of human development by evoking multiple number of feelings at multiple levels. By putting a question mark on the relationship of past and the present, event and the text, and fact and fiction, recent mythological novels open a wide range of roads to be explored meticulously. They embody the spirit of resistance, rebellion, and redefine the concept of existing metaphysics and science of interpretation.

Literature always embodies history and its presence; hence history is in textual forms to be interpreted. Literature is a feature of the unconscious of the text and needed to be recovered by the attentive critique – as it includes one of the most crucial forms of mediation in current society. It is narrative form of literature that play a significant role in mediating individual experience and social totality, through transcoding/translating into accepted code. According to Jameson, mediation is dialectical because it ‘links’ – mediates the two – ‘surface narrative and its unconscious’. Myth can be mediation between culture and economic like Levi-Strauss’ totem. Being natural and timeless at one time, it also transforms the culture into saleable image of the culture in the advertisement like form.

Contemporary mythological novels can be an important mediational category to apprehend the political unconscious of such texts. Conflict is buried within the text which is the key idea in the *Political Unconscious* can provide a framework for analysing the underlying signification of mythological novels in the contemporary mythological novels.

Jameson argues that Romance and magical narratives of medieval era were about present dangers as present narratives will be about future perils. They contain close observation of the world around them with some of the formal features of romance. Romance flourishes because it embodies some essential Marxist truth – the desire for utopia. Jameson quotes Frye asserting Romance is “the ultimate source and paradigm of all story-telling” (*Political*, 91). Such discourse, as a system, structures the way we perceive reality.

Romance is for Frye a wish-fulfillment or Utopian fantasy which aims at the transfiguration of the world of everyday life in such a way as to restore the conditions of some lost Eden, or to anticipate a future realm from which the old mortality and imperfections will have been effaced. Romance, therefore, does not involve the substitution of some more ideal realm for ordinary reality... but rather a process of transforming ordinary reality: “the quest-romance is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfillment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality”. (*Political*, 96-97)

Romance, the term has its roots in the medieval tales written in Roman language usually deals with war, exploration of far and wide places, falling in love, saving damsels, challenges, fighting with giants and monsters, fairies, magic etc. Romance as a genre developed historically from time to time and revived during the centuries time and again. It follows certain typical formal patterns esp. happy end. They represent certain desire for utopia and suppress the very realities of contemporary times; hence Jameson analysed them to understand the contemporary social realities by reconstructing the past.

He sees Romance as texts embody a degraded form of a 'pure' religious myth as anything other than a mystifying piece of 'bad' ideology that reflects some deeper anxiety in the political unconscious (*Fredric*, 85). Marxism is simply the most systematic and politically engaged version of that Romance Impetus. This romance form is very much evident in magic realism, fantasy and thrillers, science fiction and children's literature.

It is narrative where history contextualises itself by becoming a romance. And romance is the place in fiction most directly to express the 'unconscious' totality of real life. Narrative that mediates our existence from myths to the plot lines of operas and novels, is a key mode of mediating between 'the individual and society' and 'apparent fragmentation of society and the real totality' underlying it. Contemporary mythological novels are also one of the form of Romance.

Jameson also draws upon Freud's 'wish-fulfilment' and Levi-Strauss' 'Savage mind' to extend the hypothesis that "artistic works can be seen as symbolic solutions to real but unconsciously felt social and cultural problems" (Oxford). Real social contradictions find a purely formal resolution in the aesthetic realm by symbolic act. The interpretive model provided by Levi-Strauss "allows us a first specification of the relationship between ideology and cultural texts or artifacts: a specification still conditioned by the limits of the first, narrowly historical or political horizon in which it is made" (*Political*, 64). That perspective suggests that "ideology is not something which informs or invests symbolic production; rather the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions" (*Political*, 64). Hence all cultural

artifacts that are to be read as symbolic resolutions of real political and social contradictions deserve a serious exploration by reconstructing the ‘subtext’ which is latent and prior historical or ideological condition of the text. Any literary or non-literary text offers resolution to conflicts of the society from which it emanates. The social problems can be resolved magically with the help of narratives which cannot be resolved in reality.

No work is complete and self-sufficient. Already accepted and recognized narratives are able to project an illusion that they are complete and self-sufficient. As they are written in author’s codes, they reflect author’s language and aesthetics that result in allegory. “Political Unconscious works through all texts as destabilizing force that reveals a disjunction between a text’s meaning (as given by any interpretation) and ‘the repressed and buried reality’ of ‘fundamental history’ of class struggle” (Venturino). So any narrative can be analysed as socially symbolic act that can only speak – knowingly or unknowingly – in a language that is always social and historical and thus political. As they are linguistic representations, they are symbolic acts. The resolution of unresolvable social problems can magically be found in the narratives.

Through dialectics of narratives, the underlying conflict can be recovered and brought to surface where they can be logically resolved. These mythological novels can be studied – not as single and independent or separated historical items but in the maintenance of their deeper underlying structures. While surfacing the deep structure, myth gets modified and become new every time. Identifying this structure will account for the popularity of the text being studied. By exploring ‘the Political Unconscious’ of contemporary Indian English novels that use myth in prominent way, the ideology that shapes society and culture can be further clarified.

Jameson believes that in any literary late capitalist era, it is a need to reconstruct the prior historical or ideological subtext – that is unspoken and unconscious. The original problem which is latent to which the text is symbolic solution can be reconstructed and bring it to the surface and can be resolved logically. The task of cultural critic is to find the means of reconstructing the original problem for which the text is a symbolic solution.

Contemporary mythological novels when read in above context reveals the desire for utopia and its relation to historical reality embodied in its ideological functions. They demystify ‘bad’ ideology that reflects some deeper anxiety and conflict in the political unconscious. If attended with stereoscopic thinking, the texts reveals the conflicts buried within.