CHAPTER - VI
CONCLUSION
The last and concluding chapter of this thesis presents a final analysis of Achebe’s novels which lay bare “a dialectic transformation of experience, a new way of looking at tradition to create a different order of reality through universalizing imagination”\(^1\). His novels as well as the short stories present a new kind of fictional reality exploring the complexities of human condition and a search for spiritual roots and a rediscovery of Africa’s past. Achebe’s fictional works are full of vigour and vitality and there is always an unmistakable stamp of tragic human situation where man and woman were caught up in a process of complete cultural transformation that didn’t go altogether in tune with tradition. What makes Achebe a unique writer is that he not only simply documents the cataclysmic changes brought by the traumatic contact with the West, but very forcefully proffers solutions from a very clear and objective perspective that filtered through immense realism. This is how a writer can guide,
inspire and motivate people in their persistent and unending struggle to achieve their political freedom and make it more relevant and even meaningful for that matter. It would not be wrong to say that the writings of Chinua Achebe is a deliberate and conspicuous effort and an endeavour in this direction. The social upheavals Africa had been subjected to since the colonization of the country leading to the collapse of the cultural ethos and the present chaotic state in the post-independence period with a growing awareness of both national identity and post-independence malaise and predicament find a poignant expression in the fictional works of Achebe. What lends a unique flavour to all the writings of Achebe is his incorporation of anthropological elements, fictionalization of nationalist and political aspirations and the recent trends of treating social and existential problems in art.

Achebe, through elaborate and detailed descriptions of native rituals and customs, has vividly painted in the first part of *Things Fall Apart* a serene and close-knit communal life of pre-colonial Igbo society. He has dexterously presented the events of the novel to show how communal moral issues are confronted at the personal level. The protagonist of the novel, Okonkwo is a living symbol of all the traditional values the Igbo society nurtures and maintains with profound intrinsic values. What makes Achebe so different from other writers is that he paints life as it is rather than how it should be. He is not hesitant in exposing the drawbacks and loopholes of his culture like the discrimination of *osu* and even the throwing away of twins in the Evil forest.
In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe tries to validate the glory of the Igbo culture, and convey the clear message that Africa, too, had its own past though with some imperfections and it was neither barbaric nor primitive in the real sense of the term. He presents the Whiteman’s administration and Christian missionaries dispassionately and objectively to accentuate the fact that the presence of the Whiteman became a catalytic agent of breaking up everything in the old culture, but the internal feuds and dissensions were equally responsible for the disintegration of the Igbo society. Whatever the case may be, Achebe wants to show that colonialism is a very painful reality in Africa and the horrendous effect released by this historical event haunts the minds of the people till date.

Again, like the first novel *Things Fall Apart*, the theme of *Arrow of God* is the collapse of cultural heritage in the face of an alien culture. The process of the collapse of the old order because of its exposure to the West is realistically depicted by Achebe in the novel. Achebe in alternating chapters depicts the two worlds where there is no meeting point at all. The cracks which had tragically developed in the traditional system in *Things Fall Apart* grew into chasm. In this novel, the forces of colonialism – Church, government and trade precipitate into a crisis and tragic resolution which dislocate the quality of tribal life destroying the hero of the novel, Ezeulu, the man who epitomizes that life.

*Arrow of God* is a tragedy of power, of historic confrontation where. Ezeulu, the obstinate, overbearing and overweening Chief Priest of Umuaro is ruined by his lack of
ancestral wisdom and by the historic forces beyond his control. In the end Achebe re-emphasizes the ancient wisdom that nobody is greater than his people.

The third novel, *No Longer at Ease* presents a very moving picture of traditional rural life suffering the onslaughts of modernity brought by a hybrid culture. In this novel, Achebe doesn't fail to satirize the evils of the colonial system evident in the indifferent attitudes adopted by the European officials in Africa. Colonialism's idea of civilizing attitude, adopted by the primitive non-European, non-white people, in the post-independence era is put to the test in the light of its disastrous consequences.

The next novel, *A Man of the People* is hailed by many people as a prophetic novel. The novel poignantly attempts to grapple with post-colonial realities; and the emerging situation in the modern African state reveals a disastrous rupture and break with its traditional past which inevitably grips the collective psyche of the people in a chaotic frame of disintegration. The novel tries to show that the social predicament and political malaise are not to be treated as the only evil effects of colonialism, but rather the ruthless manipulation of the Africans themselves.

In the last novel, *Anthills of the Savannah*, 1987, appeared twenty-one years after the publication of *A Man of the People*, Achebe deals with the problems inflicting the African society in the aftermath of colonialism. The novel highlights how early idealism in the days following independence gradually gave way to cynicism and
disillusionment with political corruption and public apathy reaching an obnoxious level. In a subtle manner, Anthills of the Savannah delineates the nature of the crisis endemic in the Third-world post-colonial situation. Achebe's collection of short stories titled Girls at War and Other Stories explores the very essence of the Nigerian way of life and its social and moral retrogression displaying a wide range of experience. Mention may be made of the stories that show an aspect of the conflict between traditional and modern values as exemplified in 'The Sacrificial Egg', 'Dead Man's Path', and 'Marriage Is a Private Affair'. Certain stories in the collection display the nature of custom or religious belief and a few of the stories deal with aspect of the Nigeria - Biafra War, one of which gives the volume its title, Girls at War. The stories are a display of African issues and experiences and in a nutshell the stories present the social and cultural milieu of Africa.

To conclude, the thesis explores the fictional world of Achebe. Achebe's novels are set against the African/Nigerian society torn by tension emanating from the conflict between two cultures - the colonizer's and that of the colonized. It also shows how internal forces at work within the African culture, post-independence political corruption, and the crisis of consciousness of the protagonists, the national leaders who are divided and who belie the dreams of the native African accelerate the fall. His novels aim to rewrite history which had been thwarted and distorted beyond recognition by the colonial powers of the West, and to erase the stigma of slavery which persistently rankles in each and every African mind. Achebe, however, doesn't try to oversee the
African blemishes that have been part and parcel of African reality. He tries both in his fictional writings and poetry to show this principle of dualism which is a major theme in all his writings. His novels are written for therapeutic purpose to outpour his inner gloom, pain and anguish, humiliation and moral dilemma that stem out from the colonial experience.

As a novelist and critic of Africa, Achebe wants to convey that the Western critics have no right whatsoever to interpret the African culture which they hardly know and understand. The Western critics of African literature must be purged of the air of superiority and prejudice, and should cultivate humility to apprehend the African sensibility in the right perspective. Achebe is of the view that the European’s understanding of the African, his psyche, sensibility, outlook and attitude is very often limited, lopsided and shallow and yet he (the European) arrogates to himself the right to understand and interpret the African character. Contemporary African writing, the new voice of World Literature, has endeavoured to emancipate Africa from its literary stereotype by the ‘unique and novel’ potentialities of the Man of Africa and African experience, its rich culture and mythology. Achebe as the sensitive mouthpiece of his community writes with some kind of commitment to his society, people so that his works are a vehicle of some kind of message and some kind of protest. By doing so he becomes a historian, critic and finally a social reformer. He does not glamorize his past but rather he portrays in his novels the complex, self-contained tolerant society with a profound philosophy and dignity, and a culture which is dynamic, rich and generous
enough to accommodate Western values. Achebe is not against change at all, but he
vehemently denies the imposition of values from an alien system. He is of the opinion
that life and culture are never static, but rather they are dynamic and ever changing. He
welcomes the kind of change that goes in tune with tradition otherwise he guards and
dusts the validated and glorified Igbo society with special care.

Achebe in his novels rebuilds his own battered society and culture and feels that
the "histories of the colonizing process (like all histories) have continually to be
rewritten. But at the centre of that rewriting from the post-colonial perspective, is the
reclamation of the voice(s) and experiences of the 'Other'."

As has been done already the proposed thesis has made an in-depth and incisive
analysis of the post-colonial socio-cultural crisis and the crisis of consciousness in a
historical period. The chapters dealing with Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God, No
Longer at Ease, A Man of the People and Anthills of the Savannah depict different
stages of social, cultural and historical crisis experienced by Nigeria vis-à-vis Africa.
The final note in all the works of Achebe is "one of reconciliation, a transcendence of
social self and a recovery of the essential Human Self."
NOTES

