CONCLUSION

Colonialism is a historical reality. So many novels are written with a bearing on colonialism. These are mostly novels which tell the story of how Europeans came to oriental countries and established their rule there. Since colonialism is a politically significant act, the novels which deal with it are also imbued with a certain politics of narration and representation. Novels which deal with colonialism are written from several points of view, from that of the coloniser (imperialist perspective) and that of the colonised (anti-imperialist perspective or post-colonial perspective). The novel as a form of literature has been instrumental in the propagation of ideas which helps Europeans to justify colonialism during the colonial era. Hence the relationship between fiction and colonialism is politically charged. Fiction has been an important vehicle of colonial discourse. But interestingly postcolonial endeavours have also used the possibilities of fiction. In this way the political nature fiction stands in two opposite poles with respect to colonial discourse, adding flames both for and against it.

Joseph Conrad justifies the European colonial venture in *Heart of Darkness* and tries to distinguish it from other types of conquests by giving it an acceptable definition. It is to be noted that *Heart of*
*Darkness* begins with a eulogy of Britain’s imperial endeavors. It invokes the great milestone which the river Thames had marked in the history of the British Empire. The narrative refers to ‘all the men of whom the nation is proud’, like Sir Francis Drake, Sir John Franklin and the great Knights-errant of the sea ‘...they all had gone out on that stream, bearing the sword and often the torch, messengers of might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire’ (4). Marlow begins his tale by distinguishing colonialism from mere conquest. He maintains that colonialism of the modern times is entirely different from conquests that involve brute killings and the ‘snatching’ of a particular territory from its inhabitants as was done by the Romans in the past. Marlow in his narrative tries to define and justify colonialism of the modern times.

What saves us is efficiency- the devotion to efficiency. However, these chaps [the Roman conquerors] were not much account, really. They were no colonists; their administration was merely a squeeze, and nothing more, I suspect. They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force- nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others. They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence,
aggravated murder on a grand scale. The conquest of the earth, which mostly means taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look at it too much. (8)

This distinction that Conrad draws between the colonist and the conqueror is a clear attempt to present colonialism as something legitimate as opposed to other modes of conquests. One can find that the distinction that Marlowe draws between ‘the colonist’ and ‘the conqueror’ (8) was a mere brag as he finds for himself all the brutal things he had attributed to the ‘conqueror’ [i.e. robbery, violence, aggravated murder on a grand scale etc] in the so called ‘mission’ in which he had great faith until he met Kurtz. This anagnorisis which Marlow undergoes is a critical point in the novel and is shared as well by history also.

Achebe’s famous critique against *Heart of Darkness* that since it portrays Africans as inferior, it cannot be called a great work of art. Apart from this critique Achebe calls Conrad a ‘racist’. It puts to question the place Conrad enjoys in the Western canon as one of the greatest writers who anticipated literary modernity in the English language. It even raises the question whether the English canon itself is biased in favour of British imperialism.
One may argue that Joseph Conrad is a pioneer of postcolonial writing. This is because of the presence of certain apparent anti-colonial remarks in his novels. There is also a sense of tragedy associated with much of his colonial fiction, which insinuates a stance against the evils of colonialism. But a careful analysis reveals that Conrad do not fulfil such a role in English fiction. That is to say that he cannot be called a writer who anticipated post-colonial concerns. Some would say that *Heart of Darkness* despite its apparent anti-colonial comments is noted for its imperialist and racist undertones.

The art form of the novel in a sense has been instrumental in the English people’s colonial enterprises. Academic analyses of the kind which Edward Said undertook exposed the strange connivance of the English novel with the imperialistic mission. In fact people like Joseph Conrad were involved in the process of ‘writing the empire.’ He does this by cleverly affirming the supposed inferiority of the oriental people despite his anxiety with the excesses of colonialism. Conrad, though he acknowledges the moral hollowness of colonialism was actually an imperialist and racist at the core of his heart as evident from the inferior portrayal and exoticization of his African characters. In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow, the central character says ‘The conquest of the earth which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different...
complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look at it too much.’ But his racial prejudice and contempt for the supposedly inferior African is evident when another character says ‘exterminate all the brutes.’ The mere existence of such comments in Conrad’s novel reveals his racist and imperialist mentality which subsequently and immediately undermines his attributed status as a postcolonial writer.

Conrad was actually sympathetic not towards the colonial subjects, but towards the morally degenerated white man. As a self-righteous European he was terribly disillusioned with the acts of vandalism perpetrated by the Europeans on the colonised. Just as Homi K. Bhabha points out one can see an anxiety in the coloniser’s ideology and this anxiety is what one sees in Conrad’s novels. Conrad was a person who strongly believed in the moral superiority of Europeans. He laments the moral degeneration of the Europeans abroad and sees imperialism as a corrupting force which informs the European attitude. This perspective dictates his complex attitude towards imperialism. Hence, the text can be assumed to portray how the white man has to compromise his moral superiority [that is the hallmark of his civilization] in order to civilize ‘the other’. Hence it is to be noted that colonialism becomes a corrupting force that demoralizes the white man.
who tries to subdue the colonial subject in an evil manner. One can understand this well from Conrad’s novels, especially *Heart of Darkness* which focuses on the tragedy of Kurtz who is the symbol of a morally depraved Europe and whose tragedy according to Conrad is the tragedy of Europe itself. All these arguments are sufficient to establish that Conrad is a novelist of the Empire who is actually concerned about the immediate need not to compromise the supposed ‘European values’ in the imperial enterprise. It is interesting to note that the same art form called the novel has been used by colonial subjects to counter the imperialist hegemony in the post-colonial era by writers like Chinua Achebe. The ‘empire writes back’ through novelists like Achebe. Even though Conrad and Achebe belong to two different periods (the colonial and postcolonial periods) the two have dealt with the same theme in their novels, that is, the coming of the Europeans into the oriental nations and its impact on native culture and life. But they differ in the way they use ‘the novel’ as a form of art. If Joseph Conrad cleverly uses the novel for affirming the inferiority of the African people, Chinua Achebe uses the novel to give the colonised Africa a new voice. Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* focuses on how the Europeans intrude into and disturb the serene life of a village in Nigeria. It portrays the cultural fabric of traditional Africa, thereby giving it a new voice. Just as Conrad
mourns the tragedy of Europe through the tragedy of Kurtz, Achebe
mourns the tragedy of Africa through the tragedy of Okonkwo, the
central character of *Things Fall Apart*. The interesting thing to note is
that, if Kurtz epitomizes the masculine ideals of Europe, Okonkwo
epitomizes the masculine ideals of Africa and one can see that the are
symbols of their respective cultures.

One can conclude that colonialism corrupts and contributes to the
plight of both the colonised and the coloniser alike. Even though it gives
power to the coloniser, it definitely contributes to the moral
degeneration and cultural duplicity of the coloniser through his unethical
practices to stay in power. Colonial encounter entails an accommodation
of different cultures and races and leads to a subversion of the
pretensions of the white race. An analysis of *Heart of Darkness*
demonstrates this fact because the cruel, exploitative and irrational
activities of the European colonial powers subverts and makes a
mockery of Europe’s image as a modern culture rooted in rationality and
moral order. The power tactics which the coloniser employs (to maintain
its power) nullifies his ideological and cultural pretensions to authority.
The dichotomous representation of Africa in Conrad and Achebe
reinforces the idea that reality, after all, is a construct made possible by
the discourses validating it. The fictional account of Africa by Conrad
and Achebe could also be placed in two opposite poles, one feeding on the dominant colonial stereotypes about Africa and the other trying to liberate it from the colonial vituperations to which it was a victim for a long time. This is necessitated by the political need of the coloniser to conquer and the colonised to get liberated. The way Achebe attempts to uplift and repair the image of Africa is really commendable. He does this by showing that Africa is the heir to the rich cultural heritage as described in his novels, especially in *Things Fall Apart*. Achebe could reasonably uplift the pride of Africans which had been tarnished by the colonial perpetrators. This kind of a boost in the morale of the oppressed or colonised is the true object of any postcolonial endeavor. Resistance is a key word in postcolonial studies as it is the most effective way to counter imperial hegemony and to affirm the identity of the colonised. One of the disastrous consequences of the colonial process upon the colonised has been the onslaught upon their identity. One has to note that if the coloniser talks about a pre-colonial disorder in the colonised lands, postcolonial fiction as practiced by Achebe talks about pre-colonial order or harmony in the colonised lands.

The cultural identity of the colonised was under threat because all the factors which constituted their identity including their language, customs, and philosophy were being manipulated by the colonisers to
their own advantage. The imposition of the coloniser’s language through the system of education is one example of this. Through this the coloniser tried to literally wipe out the indigenous culture, thereby inflicting lasting wounds upon the psyche of the colonised. The relevance of cultural resistance as a mode of survival arises here. This is the reason why one of the objectives of the postcolonial writer becomes an act of reimagining the notion of identity in a manner that would boost the morale of the colonised.

Liberation is the central concern of all postcolonial endeavours whether in theory or in praxis. Liberation happens in response to the quest for freedom by the subject who is under oppression. The Biblical saying that “Truth will set you free” has got a distinct relevance here. European colonialism was maintained not just by physical force but largely by discourses propagated by the coloniser. These discourses were actually dark lies about the colonised which made their suppression possible for a long period of time. So for the true liberation of the colonised to happen (especially from the stigma of the dark lies about them), commitment to the ‘truth’ and its divulgence are necessary. This ‘truth’ relates to the truth about the colonised, about their true self, culture, way of living and philosophy. This is what has been attempted
by Chinua Achebe through his fiction. It is this attempt at commitment to truth that makes Achebe’s work worthy in a postcolonial context.