Chapter 4

Ideological and Philosophic Parallels and Dissimilarities

No writer ever writes for the sake of writing only. Every word that comes from his mighty pen and every lofty thought that materializes from his powerful faculty of imagination unquestionably convey certain message to the reader. Chinua Achebe and John Maxwell Coetzee are such representative authors of the nations—Nigeria and South Africa respectively, that they are able to inflame serenely sleeping soul of the reader like quivering of earthquake. They do not aim at the aesthetic pleasure or to seek applause of the readers. They simply work as spokesmen for their nations. When we study their works we feel that they are more concerned for their nations and independence.

“What is a nation?” (8) is a title question of an essay by Ernest Renan. What we need is to rethink about many other such questions that can broaden our inadequate knowledge regarding its meaning. Is it merely a geographical area with a territory that confines the peoples from both the sides? Does a Nation have its own existence, its own identity without its populace? Obviously not. The culture, tradition and civilization, to which we consider the identity of the Nation, undergo several changes. Many of them wear out, become extinct when they fail to face the challenges of the time and those which succeed to survive themselves from the turbulent years are carried by the agents, vehicles to whom we call the citizens. Eventually, a Nation is simply what its people are. They are one of the four pillars on which the Nation stands. The other three are sovereignty, territory and government. Thus, as Renan says, “A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle” and “the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice, and devotion” (19).
Geographically, Nigeria and South Africa are the nations of the Africa continent that have sustained their existence even after passing through the furnace of the colonial epoch. In her encounter with Europe, Africa has suffered many terrible and lasting misfortunes. In *The Black Writer’s Burden*, Achebe writes, “In terms of human dignity and human relations the encounter was almost a complete disaster for the black races. It has warped the mental attitudes of both black and white” (qtd. in Achebe on the African Writer). Achebe and Coetzee have studied their nations from various angles. Their observations are different; however, their conclusions are alike as they study Nation and its agents simultaneously. They have preferred novel, the dominant literary genre in the world, as a vehicle to convey their ideology. Achebe’s works reveal pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial epochs. Madubuike observes that his theories reveal three related areas: “the interpretation of the African past from within; the problem of interpreting this past in a foreign language; the responsibilities and obligations of the writer to his own people” (142) and all of them have roots in the colonial experience, while Coetzee’s works reveal the history of apartheid and post-apartheid. These areas narrate the story of the construction and destruction of two African nations. They pin their pens down to their own nations and divulge what the people have learnt from such culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice and devotion.

In *Arrow of God*, Ezeulu tells the people that the internal crisis gives opportunity to the stranger. But they pay no heed to his suggestion and due to the clash between them Mr Winterbottom and Mr Goodcountry triumph in their plan. With the passage of time, those who have suffered due to the Igbo cultural and religious wrong notions, start doubting at the merit of the Igbo norms; hence they turn to the new religion and become the boon for the white men. Achebe is not ambivalent
while rendering the portrayal of Ezeulu with two perceptions, equally earth-shattering, however, juxtaposing each other. By showing Ezeulu fascinated by the white men’s mannerism, Achebe points at the need for change. He writes, “We refuse to see what we do not want to see. That is why we have not brought about the changes which our society must undergo. . .We have no option really; if we do not move, we shall be moved” (Trouble 25). But by showing Ezeulu rejecting the same, he reveals that this change should not be the aping of the white men, but the discarding of the old ideas that are astray and adapting or/and coining others to current facts. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe does not represent Okonkwo’s suicide as the end of an individual, but of a clan, of a culture, of a religion, and it is because they “ignore the wisdom of their ancestors” (Sircar 91), wisdom of unity among the clan, wisdom of reciprocal respect for two opposite genders. Nowhere Achebe justifies their assimilation of Christianity. He writes, “But we have no quarrel with church people; we have no quarrel with mosque people” (Anthills 218). He points his finger at certain tradition where the Igbo need to look into its magnitude. He does not tell the people that they should accept Christianity, but he reveals that if they had changed the wrong notion, many of them might have not espoused it. Thus, Achebe unveils the decaying Igbo culture; shows reasons and offers solution to the problem.

Coetzee makes readers feel the colonial period in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Susan spots the depiction of the contemporary issue of the torturing of prisoners by the one third of the world’s governments. She believes that the way the barbarian girl and the Magistrate are treated in the novel by Colonel Joll and his men, Coetzee raises the curtain up and gives the real picture of the universal truths about torture and oppression. In her opinion Coetzee actually, “obliquely condemns his own country” (282). Like Achebe, Coetzee does not merely aim at narration of exploitation of the
native by the colonizers, but also unearths many other factors responsible for their exploitation. What the reader needs are two different tactics. From one angle the unnamed Empire and the barbarians are the British rule and South Africans, respectively. It reveals resemblance between the colonial period of South Africa and Nigeria, while another angle reveals the scenario of independent South Africa, where the British rule is substituted by the white South Africans and the black South Africans are yet treated as the barbarians. Domination of one race on the other is a common observation of both the writers. Race is,

. . . something which is made and unmade. . . . The study of race is of crucial importance for the scholar concerned with the history of humanity. . . . The fact of race, which was originally crucial, thus becomes increasingly less important. . . . race is not everything, as it is among the rodents or the felines, and one does not have the right to go through the world fingerling people’s skulls, and taking them by the throat saying: ‘You are of our blood; you belong to us!’ Aside from anthropological characteristics, there are such things as reason, justice, the truth, and the beautiful, which are the same for all. (Renan 15)

Achebe and Coetzee know that race is a crucial issue and an excessive preoccupation with it has its dangers and its drawbacks, however, they deal with it as it is always perilous for Nation’s evolution. They focus on the marginalized races not only because they have empathy for them, but also because they know that the national progress will be asphyxiated if the marginalized classes will not be encompassed in the construction work of a Nation. Achebe homes in on the Igbo, exploited by the colonizers and other dominated Nigerian races, like Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba, while Coetzee targets at the black South Africans, who were first, slaved
by the colonizers and then exploited by the white South Africans. They believe that
the Igbo and the black South Africans cannot be undervalued by considering them as
the rodents or the felines.

Achebe and Coetzee’s dislike for escapism can be seen in their portrayal of
Okonkwo, Mrs Curren’s unnamed daughter and K, as they all undergo certain
psychosomatic skirmish. Their frustration and discontent induce them to revolt
against prevailing social norms and when they fail to collect the strewn identity, they
first cut themselves off from the society. Mrs Curren’s daughter and K choose a
separate life while Okonkwo prefers suicide. He is banished from his clan “like a fish
on to a dry, sandy beach, panting” (Things 123). His manliness is assaulted when he
has to seek shelter in his motherland. Here, he works hard with his family to plant a
new farm. “But it was like beginning life anew without the vigour and enthusiasm of
youth, like learning to become left-handed in old age” (Things 123). Work is no
longer a pleasure for him as it used to be, and when there is no work to do he sits in a
silent half-sleep. He cannot accept that, “The exile is a universal figure” (Lamming
24). This grief eclipses his life in such a way that he remains no longer a man of
action. Uchendu says,

You think you are the greatest sufferer in the world. Do you know that men
are sometimes banished for life? Do you know that men sometimes lose all
their yams and even their children? I had six wives once. I have none now…
Do you know how many children I have buried – children I begot in my
youth and strength? Twenty-two. I did not hang myself, and I am still alive.
If you think you are the greatest sufferer in the world ask my daughter,
Akeuni, how many twins she has borne and thrown away. (Things 126-127)
Okonkwo’s soul pines for Umuofia and Umuofians. And after seven years of exile when he goes back to his fatherland he realizes that both the things have fallen apart and his all efforts to bring them back to their dignified Igbo culture have gone in vain. Okonkwo’s inner conflict reminds me Reynolds’ words:

Whoever would reform a nation, supposing a bad taste to prevail in it, will not accomplish his purpose by going directly against the stream of their prejudices. Men’s minds must be prepared to receive what is new to them. Reformation is a work of time. A national taste, however wrong it may be, cannot be totally changed at once; we must yield a little to the prepossession which has taken hold on the mind, and we may then bring people to adopt what would offend them if endeavored to be introduced by violence. (203)

After coming back to Umuofia, Okonkwo feels that he needs to reform his clan blinded by the foreign influence. He struggles to open eyes of his people, but he cannot give time to them to realize what they are losing. His calculation regarding malevolence of the white men for domination on the native land and native lives is right, however, the problem is with his patience. He cannot give time to his people to learn, what they should accept from the foreign culture and for what they should stand together to protect the native culture. Achebe shows that one must be ready with the alternatives. If the person is not able to cope up with the established social norms, then better not to endure to change the system, instead to think about another option. However, it cannot be the one that Okonkwo chooses. When Okonkwo fails to assimilate with the foreign culture, he commits suicide. It ruins his identity of being a great warrior and his fame which is “rested on solid personal achievements” (Things 3). Okonkwo’s collapse is not a collapse of an individual, but of a Nation. Okonkwo’s escape from the life is actually the escape of Africans from the acceptance of reality
that they need to change themselves before they attempt to change the world or the society. Change doesn’t mean to emulate other. Social norms are meant to systematize the life and their failure to stand by themselves in current flow of life is an alarm bell to re-examine their merit and finally, the triumph of domination is but natural over fragility.

Coetzee also says that the first endeavour of human being is to live the life at any cost. Life is precious than any other things. He worries for the young generation of Bheki and John, who well up their precious blood to end apartheid. K’s life is an indirect message of Coetzee to the reader. Before starting the first chapter of *Life and Times of Michael K*, Coetzee recalls Heraclitus’ words:

War is the father of all and king of all.

Some he shows as gods, others as men.

Some he makes slaves, and others free.

The novel is set with the background of Civil War which has made the lives of common men hell by imposing senseless restrictions on their fundamental needs. The whole life of K, depicted in the novel, is a frustration due to Civil War. It does not exhibit carnage, but agitation. In search of tranquillity, K prefers isolated life in mountains. But the society and the government do not allow that. Finally, he has to come back to Cape Town, from where he had initiated his escape. Coetzee writes, “Yet there were tunes when his [K’s] fears seemed absurd, spells of clarity in which he would recognize that, cut off from human society, he was in danger of becoming more timorous than a mouse” (Life 105). Thus, life and times of K, his struggles for freedom, his choice for a solitude life is a message to the reader that we are social animals. Isolated life can never be an option or a solution to get rid of problems. However discontent we are from the society we dwell in, we cannot have a separate
life from it. Whether we prefer or not we have to be a part of it, or if we cannot be a part of it then we must have courage to oppose it or suppose we lack that courage then the third option is to create a separate world within the same society and to remain unconcerned, detached and indifferent to the social norms we do not prefer. Time plays a great role in our lives and only those who can assimilate with the changing time can succeed to survive. This assimilation doesn’t mean to compromise. The lives and times of Ezeulu, Okonkwo, Michael K and Odili actually give a message to the reader that there is always an option. What we need is the dexterity of the right choice. Blind adherence to the social norms to which we call culture and tradition in the case of Ezeulu, suicide in the case of Okonkwo, segregation from the society in the case of Michael K and bargain with the ideals in the case of Odili can never be a right choice or solution. The Magistrate, Chris, Mrs Curren and Lucy know their drawbacks; however, give a fight to the unfavourable circumstances.

Thus, Achebe uses suicide while Coetzee uses escapism to reveal the dissatisfaction of the people. But there is a common message behind the two different acts of rejection, i.e. neither suicide nor escapism can demise the problem. Problems are inevitable elements of our life and they are bound to come without any warning. Suicide, however, Achebe believes that, can never be a solution of any problem, as pain and pleasure go simultaneously in our life. Here, Coetzee conveys a message that if the person is not satisfied with society he dwells in, he must have courage to give a fight to it or to endure or to confine himself to his own corona. But he can neither escape from that social realm nor live an isolated life. Mrs Curren’s daughter gets settle down in America to express her wrath for the South African government. Here, Coetzee makes the reader muse if her decision has brought any change to the government policy. Instead it is proved to be a punishment to her mother who has to
remain alone in the most crucial period of her life. By portraying the character of Mrs Curren, “finding a voice” (Poyner 123) when death is at the threshold of her life, he seeks from the reader sympathy for her and acceptance of and equality for the black to solve racial problem.

Coetzee’s empathy for the black South Africans can be seen in his words: “We watch as birds watch snakes, fascinated by what is about devour us” (Age 29). He uses his pen as a sword to stop this war between two races of South Africa, conveying that it is “Time to get up!” (Age 5) before it is too late they should put a full stop to this endless atrocious racial crisis. He is worried for “The age of iron”, and thinks when the “softer ages [will] return in their cycle” (Age 50), as he feels that “There is something degrading about the way it all ends – degrading not only to us but to the idea we have of ourselves, of humankind” (Age 140). He is worried for the way the young generation of South Africa throwing away its life for the “liberal and humanitarian” (Hayes 131) revolution, before it knows what life can be. In spite of his sympathy for Bheki and John, he opposes their fair revolt as he believes that life is meant to live. He writes,

I detest these calls for sacrifice that end with young men bleeding to death in the mud. War is never what it pretends to be. Scratch the surface and you find, invariably, old men sending young men to their death in the name of some abstraction or other. . . . it remains the war of the old upon the young. Freedom or death! Shout Bheki and his friends. Whose words? Not their own (Age 163).

Here, Coetzee draws the attention of the reader at the cynical way and the bizarre purpose by which this generation is nurtured. This is not the recurrence of the history, but the elongation of the dark chapter of the life of South Africa which is
needed to be buried forever. Mrs Curren’s cancer is presented as a fine for the crime (i.e. the apartheid) which was committed long ago about in 1916. Coetzee writes that this crime,

. . . would have to be paid in shame: in a life of shame and a shameful death, unlamented, in an obscure corner. . . . I raged at times against the men who did the dirty work – you have seen it, a shameful raging as stupid as what it raged against – but I accepted too that, in a sense, they lived inside me. (Age 164)

This is how, Coetzee apologizes for wrong treatment of the white to the black South Africans. At the same time, by depicting the tragedy of Lucy, he appeals to the black not to make women the subject of their vengeance. Like Okonkwo’s suicide, Lucy’s rape by three black South Africans cannot be studied as an individual tragedy, but a national issue as it is committed on the racial ground and it takes the form of historical matter that has come down from the ancestors. Lucy says,

It was so personal . . . It was done with such personal hatred. That was what stunned me more than anything. The rest was . . . expected. But why did they hate me so? I had never set eyes on them. (Disgrace 156)

Gang rape, burglary, kidnapping, etc., are very common violence in South Africa and they are continuously increasing since post-apartheid. Coetzee writes,

It happens every day, every hour, every minute, he tells himself, in every quarter of the country. Count yourself lucky to have escaped with your life. Count yourself lucky not to be a prisoner in the car at this moment, speeding away, or at the bottom of a donga with a bullet in your head. (Disgrace 98)
Most of gang rapes are purely on racial ground. Coetzee’s Mrs Curren expresses the wrong deeds of the white which have decayed humanly attributes, while Lucy pays penalty for those deeds. She says,

But isn’t there another way of looking at it, David? What if . . . what if that is the price one has to pay for staying on? Perhaps that is how they look at it; perhaps that is how I should look at it too. They see me as owing something. They see themselves as debt collectors, tax collectors. Why should I be allowed to live here without paying? Perhaps that is what they tell themselves. (Disgrace 158)

Lucy’s tragedy is, therefore, studied as a national issue as she is not the only white woman who is paying the penalty of her ancestors’ wrong deeds. The author considers both the cases unfair as they are racial based internal crises asphyxiating the national progress. Lucy’s rape is not a sudden outburst of the ungoverned impulse, but very personal and done consciously. It recapitulates the history of South Africa. This cannot be studied as a gender difference where the man violates the dignity and chastity of the woman. It is not a nightmare that becomes faint and gradually vanishes from the memory when one wakes up. It is rape. The rape survival suffers physically once, but mentally hundreds of time – till the last breath of her life. The Time can never heal her psychological wounds. She loses faith on the opposite gender forever. She can trust neither her father, nor brother, nor any male. She may have a caring and loving husband, but her married life is bound to be affected by the reverberation of the incident and the genuine love is suspected in that sanctimonious relationship. The victim may not be able to differentiate the marital tie and the tragic past. She can never have a normal life later on. This loss of faith of one gender on the other is a
great loss for the Nation as nothing can compensate this loss. Unity and fraternity among the people is very necessary to strengthen that one of the four pillars.

Bheki and John’s tragedy reveal their claim for their fundamental rights which the government denies, while Lucy’s rapists reveal their vengeance against the white authority and the government. But why women are instrumented to that vengeance and sexually harassed. Why it is sexual harassment instead of murder. The rape survivor may think in that way also. Instead of counting rape cases that have taken place during apartheid and post-apartheid in South Africa, Coetzee focuses on the fact that, in these political and racial crises and in the periods of white-peril and black-peril, women of both the races suffer. What he reveals is that apartheid cannot be brought to an end in that way. The idea of apartheid emerges from the horizon of mind, which is made authentic by the government by giving it the form of policy. He audaciously writes that the white South Africans are responsible for the way the black have aimed at vengeance.

Plaatje gives a controversial writing to the daily Press whose writers give one side of the picture that “Black Peril” for the South African Whites means “assaults by black men upon white women” (Mote 85). Plaatje draws their attention at the facts they have either deliberately forgotten or neglected. By giving the other side of the same picture, he writes,

... before the European invasion there were no prostitutes in South Africa. Again, they forget that members of their own favoured race whom white juries refused to convict, have saddled hundreds of native women with nameless babies and we do not blame clean-living white men for the sins of the erring few. Moreover, they are too apt to overlook the fact that fancy
salaries, free education and preferential treatment have not succeeded in keeping white people’s fingers off other people’s goods. (Mote 85)

According to Plaatje if it is a disgrace for a white man to live in the same street where a black lives or to travel in the same tram a black travels, then there is no propriety of his sleeping in “the bare arms of, the black woman” (88). There is no law for the white men who procreate illegitimate children with coloured concubines and then who years afterwards desert their off-spring and move to another part of the country; where, in the evening of their days they settle down with lawful white wives, and think no more of the past. They are the “progenitors of the three-quarters of a million mullattoes in South Africa” (88). Their sexual perversion has brought many incurable diseases which were nowhere in Africa before their arrival. Thousands of Natives are imprisoned for the “artificial crimes manufactured by the authorities” (85), which have brought them into contact with the real criminals. And if, Plaatje believes, the laws applicable to them were applied to the white men, for only six months, ninety per cent of the white population would be “gaol-birds” (Mote 85).

While reading Plaatje, Coetzee’s life like characters, like Bheki, John and Lucy float before our mind’s eyes as they are apt to the period he has described. So their sufferings, their lives and deaths are national issues. Lucy’s words, “I am a dead person and I do not know yet what will bring me back to life. All I know is I cannot go away” (Disgrace 161) appeal and provoke the reader, at the same time. Unlike Okonkwo and Mrs Curren’s unnamed daughter, Coetzee portrays Lucy neither committing suicide nor escaping from South Africa, where women can never be secure. Instead he rings a bell: “Wake up. . . This is the Country. This is Africa” (Disgrace 124) and expresses his hope from the next generation in the following words:
South Africa: a bad-tempered old hound snoozing in the doorway, taking its time to die. And what an uninspired name for a country! Let us hope they change it when they make their fresh start. (Age 70)

Rape is not the central issue that the author talks about in *Disgrace*. But it is erosion of moral values, devastation of principles where the *Nation* is fragmented, disunited and scattered; the citizens are segregated on racial and colour ground without any possibility of a breach between them; security and justice are illusions; the government is bias and corrupt; women are means of reprisal, settlement, a vehicle to shift the social status, as in the case of Petrus; the intellectual minds are in the pit of passion; education is no longer for the character building, the teachers are no longer the lighthouse indicating the true direction, instead misleading the students and where the girl students are grabbed in and instrumented to their ungoverned impulses in the college campus.

Thus, here, Coetzee recapitulates the Colonial, Apartheid and Post-apartheid periods all together creatively. Booker truly says that Coetzee’s novels reveal that “the end of apartheid did not magically solve all social, political, and economic problems in South Africa” (151). But while reading them in between the lines, one can certainly find that they also reveal solutions to the problems. When we scrutinize them, we realize that they are more than about violence, rape, animal cruelty, or racial cruelty. They are about “a microcosmic examination of the failures of sympathetic imagination that make these things possible” (McDunnah 23). One solution to all problems, in Coetzee’s view, is love and sympathy for all. For instance, Lucy might have gone for abortion. Instead she boldly and heartily accepts the child of the rapists as she does not want to make it unlovable like Bheki and John are. Her pregnancy and social security of her ‘would be child’ compel her to become the third wife of Petrus,
her black hand. However, rape and marriage are not the solutions that Coetzee reveals, nor does he suggest for the “historical reconciliation” (Poyner 159) between the two races or between the raped and the rapist, but cordial relation and mutual acceptance which can only be the solution to bridge these long parted races and to establish security, peace and harmony in South Africa. Coetzee believes,

We must see what the child, still befuddled from his travels, still trailing his clouds of glory, could not see. We—or at least some of us, enough of us—must look at the past with a cruel enough eye to see what it was that made that joy and innocence possible. Forgivingness but also unflinchingness: that is the mixture I have in mind, if it is attainable. First the unflinchingness, then the forgivingness. (Attwell 29)

It is not Lurie or Lucy that Coetzee talks about, but education, social and political issues which are, he thinks, needed to be reformed. If constitution is equal to all without any discrimination of race, cast, creed, colour, then there will be no clash for the social status and material needs. Coetzee gives a splendid resolution:

Too many people, too few things. What there is must go into circulation, so that everyone can have a chance to be happy for a day. That is the theory; hold to the theory and to the comforts of theory. Not human evil, just a vast circulatory system, to whose workings pity and terror are irrelevant. That is how one must see life in this country; in its schematic aspect. Otherwise one could go mad. Cars, shoes; women too. There must be some niche in the system for women and what happens to them. (Disgrace 98)

On the one hand Achebe and Coetzee depict exploitation of multiple wives of Ezeulu and Okonkwo and the barbarian girl whose social and economic insecurity have made them dependent on and subjected to the threat of men, while on the other
hand they depict self dependent Beatrice and Lucy, representing a women class needed in independent African nations. Stratton studies the portrayal of Chielo in *Things Fall Apart*, from a new angle. She believes that through the character of Chielo, Achebe implies that “women in positions of power are despotic and destructive because they are irrational. By contrast, men in positions of power are shown to be reasonable, impartial, and constructive…” (31). Perhaps Stratton has not studied or underestimated the character of Beatrice, who is well educated and in a good position in her professional life. She is the strength not only of Chris, her beloved who considers her “Priestesses” and “prophetess” (Anthills 109), but also of Ikem from whom she earns high opinion. She gives Ikem a new vision to study women. He realizes,

The women are, of course, the biggest single group of oppressed people in the world and, if we are to believe the Book of Genesis, the very oldest. But they are not the only ones. There are others – rural peasants in every land, the urban poor in industrialized countries, Black people everywhere including their own continent, ethnic and religious minorities and castes in all countries. The most obvious practical difficulty is the magnitude and heterogeneity of the problem. There is no universal conglomerate of the oppressed. (94)

Thus, here, we find how Ikem’s vision is broadened for which Beatrice is credited. He starts thinking about the suffering, rights and emancipation of all those who have become the victims of the men in power. He gets mission for his life, for his pen to fight for their rights. Even at the time of clash between Ikem and Chris, it is Beatrice who tries to bring them close and to bring their internal crisis to an end. She becomes the great support to Elewa and her illegitimate child in whom she finds a
hope for a peaceful life in Africa. Neither Achebe nor Coetzee has underestimated the strength of women. Instead they have given real picture of gradual change in women folk. They believe in the individual progress, without gender difference, which eventually leads the national progress. Achebe has shown a working women folk of Igbo society in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, the way Coetzee has depicted Lucy in *Disgrace*. Therefore, idleness is something unaffordable in an independent Nation. Achebe and Coetzee express their aversion for such sluggishness through Okonkwo’s hatred for his father, Unoka and through the generation of Bheki and John who wander in the street with no purpose. Coetzee does not like Vercueil living on charity of Mrs Curren. He says, “I wish you would learn something instead of just lying around” (Age 22). He does not like Vercueil for the way he begs for and sometimes steals Mrs Curren’s money, who offers him various jobs, but every time, within a short duration, he would either lose his passion for them or bluntly deny to do any work. Coetzee criticizes such South African youth:

... it is time you took a look at yourself. You have seen what the children of today think of drinking and lying around and leeglopery. Be warned. In the South Africa of the future everyone will have to work, including you. You may not like the prospect, but you had better prepare yourself for it. (Age 72)

We need to think why K prefers an isolated life. What has made him a rebel to reject all kinds of favour? Right from the beginning of his life, Michael K has been subjected to the rejection. First, it seems that he is an illegitimate child and he is rejected by his biological father, as no information of his father is given in the novel. It can be a basic reason for why he never gets love from his mother, Anna. Secondly, he is born with a hare lip, due to which he is disapproved, first by his own mother and later he becomes the subject of mockery by the society and by the children of his age.
The love of any woman is out of question in his life. And therefore, he rejects all those things which he does not feel them belonging to him. He rejects all favours which seem to him things in charity. These circumstances seek empathy of the reader for him. He is not indolent that can be noted from his love for gardening.

However, Michael K is criticized for the life he has adopted of working only for his empty tummy. This cannot be afforded in an independent Nation when the world is changing like anything. One ought to work not only for own self, but also for the society and the Nation where one’s existence is deeply rooted.

The meaning of Nation goes beyond its narrow definition that it is a large group of people sharing common attributes like descent, history, culture, tradition, language, inhabitance, etc. Nation is an intangible entity, however, it is “transcendent reality” (Snead 232). It aims at Sarvodaya for self Udaya. Progress of the Nation after independence is a vital challenge and nationalism does not end where independence begins. Independence is not like a toffee that one would purchase from a shop, unwrap it, and put it in the mouth and just say, Yummy – and after having it, re-enjoy its taste merely with an idea of satisfaction. Instead one’s responsibility to maintain that independence goes on increasing once it is achieved. Instead after independence nationalism should be blossomed like rose periwinkle, without waiting for the favourable season or miraculous help that may bring cancer like segregation to an end. People are expected to aim at great goal for the Nation building. Willingness and dexterity are the fundamental things that are expected so that all the dreams and longings may come to fruition. Brennan has truly said, “The idea of nationhood is not only a political plea but a formal binding together of disparate elements. And out of the multiplicities of culture, race, and political structures, grows also a repeated dialectic of uniformity and specificity: of world culture and national culture, of family
and of people” (62). That is why Nation is a great constructive work. The contribution of each and every person is desirable and must be mandatory for its framework. Building a Nation is the noblest task of human beings’ life. Each and every person is answerable to the history and next generation. It demands backing, commitment and coherent effort of all citizens to achieve change and evolution of the Nation, without expectation of individual share. What one needs are guts which are revealed in Ronald Reagan’s words, “We meant to change a nation, and instead, we changed a world.” Achebe and Coetzee have observed that their people are lacking this dedication. In such circumstances, “Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myth of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye” (Bhabha 1).

During the freedom struggle people had been shown many dreams for a bright future and promised that political independence would solve all social problems. But just after a couple of years of independence all “the hopes had collapsed and disillusionment had set in. Political independence was not a panacea” (Obiechina 121). In an interview at Bard University in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York State by Jaggi Maya in November 2000, on the occasion of Achebe’s seventieth birthday and published in The Guardian under the title, ‘Storyteller of the Savannah’, Achebe put forward a thought provoking question asked by Nigerians returning home from the war, “Where’s the freedom we were told about?” (Jaggi). There was a mass of common people which did not improve as they were expected. The life had become a burden for the poor people. On one hand agricultural land was dying. There was no hope for soil revival. Semiliterate were deserting the dying villages. They shifted into the towns to add up the numbers of unemployed people in the slums and on the other hand population was increasing. A new black elite power stepped into the place vacated by the former imperialists. They proved to be unequal to the challenge of
nation-building. They failed to provide efficient leaders. They failed to establish stability due to violence, and coups and counter-coups. F. W. de Klerk had truly calculated that it was Mandela’s efforts that he successfully walked a long road and it won him a seat high on the top of the hill. He could reach there as he had a vision for his South Africa, as he strived to see Her there. But it might not be the destiny of all the South Africans. The people, passing by that hill would halt for a while to admire him, but it would not bring any change to their life. Only a man of destiny would think that beyond that hill lies another and another. The journey is never complete.

Klerk was quite right. Just after a few years of independence, reality regarding the failure of independence came forward. It was because people had no nobility and ambition to push their beloved nation forward. They had no vision for their Nigeria in future. They could not realize what independence actually means. With independence true understanding of freedom has not come, because they do not have any vision for future. They do not plan even for their own betterment. They never think that their past itself is a great lesson and teacher as well. At the same time it is a mirror for the self evaluation to avoid mistakes in future. Affiliation of the present with the past is very necessary. It does not spoil, but it certainly brings changes to the present and future as well. The loss of memory of the past is ideologically a great loss. Because it is the memory of collective efforts of the ancestors, which they did for their own rights; for the peaceful life of the next generation; for the freedom of their Black Mother from the foreign domination and for obliteration of the erroneous history of the notorious writings of the colonialists which destroy the image of Africa by introducing it as a dark continent and Africans as savages. What this postcolonial people are suppose to do is just to learn the importance of independence their ancestors have bestowed them and to re-build a new
gorgeous identity of Africa at global level to negotiate with the world in order to fill up the gap.

The leader is expected to take care of the people. His mind should generate thoughts for the welfare of the people. As in Sanskrit says, ‘दुर्गलस्य वलं राजा’, the king/leader must be the strength of feeble. Then only when hard times come in his life, he does not find himself alone. His people will be with him as strength and trust. He should be the captain during the crucial time. Being a captain he is supposed to create vision and direction for the people to proceed on. This is to cease the aimless efforts of the human beings. He should be enough talented to express himself in an effective way to his people. At the same time he should pin his ears back when people are expressing their opinions. Thus, communication must be there between the leader and the people. He should share the national issues with his people and tell them what has happened, how it has happened and what precautions he would take so that it would not happen again in future. He must have such courage to rectify himself. Such transparency is required to win the trust of his people. He should develop a scientific approach even for religious norms, so that he can amend the wrong cultural and religious notions and entrench the good one. There should be a feeling of gratitude for each other. It is essential to make a strong bond between the leader and the people. Thus, like Nelson Mandela, his life itself must be a great source of inspiration for the people even after his death.

In Sanskrit it is said, ‘राजा राजा तथा राजा’ It means the people always follow the king/leader. If the leader is religious, the people will also be religious, if the leader is wicked, the people will also be evil, and if the leader has Sama drishti, it means if he is impartial and even-handed, the people will also develop the feeling of unity, equality, harmony and fraternity among themselves. That is why it is said, ‘राजा कश्चिं
It means the leader is responsible for the circumstances. He will be subjected to appreciation and culpability as well. But when the nation is underdevelopment, responsibility goes hand in hand, on shoulders of the both, the leader and the led as well. When people elect a representative amongst themselves, it does not mean that they are now free from all other responsibilities. Everyone knows the need of change in all the fields of life after independence. Everyone thinks that someone should do something. But no one comes forward to do it, considering it as own responsibility. One of the reasons of failure of independence in all the prior colonized countries is escapism from one’s own responsibility.

Achebe and Coetzee, both have observed this Vedic principle of ‘कुर्वाचातातिरि संप्रदायिति’. That means nations get destroyed due to the incapable person as a king. And they believe that this is pertinent to even people. They have noted that the vicarious attitude of the people have deteriorated Nigeria and South Africa. After independence those who have come in power have nothing to do with ethical values, so it cannot be expected from the people who have become indifferent to the national issues. Leaders of this last half a century have become used to with crime and corruption. In such circumstances to expect loyalty and humanity from the people is ludicrous. Those, like Christ and Ikem, who cannot compromise with ideals of the life are subjected to their early unnatural death by the dictators. During this half a century of independence, no leader has ever come with Sama dristi. This has given upsurge to the racial and communal crisis in Nigeria and South Africa.

Fanon also draws the attention of the reader towards the failure of the national consciousness of the underdeveloped countries due to the traditional weakness. He writes,
History teaches us clearly that the battle against colonialism does not run straight away along the lines of nationalism. For a very long time the native devotes his energies to ending certain definite abuses: forced labor, corporal punishment, inequality of salaries, limitation of political rights, etc. This fight for democracy against the oppression of mankind will slowly leave the confusion of neo-liberal universalism to emerge, sometimes laboriously, as a claim to nationhood. It so happens that the unpreparedness of the educated classes, the lack of practical links between them and the mass of the people, their laziness, and, let it be said, their cowardice at the decisive moment of the struggle will give rise to tragic mishaps. (Wretched 148)

Thus, absence of strong bond between the leader and the led is the main reason behind the failure of independence in Nigeria and South Africa. These two nations have unfortunately suffered from the syndrome of political upheavals, corruption, racial crisis, maladministration, disordered bureaucracy, native and foreign cultural crisis, cynicism of the people, etc. Achebe and Coetzee unveil the fact regarding the failure of independence in these two nations. After independence only the agents, the vehicles of exploitation (who are now not uitlanders but the natives in power) are changed whereas the machineries are the means and modes remain the same as they were before independence. Karl-Heinz Hansen has truly said, “A people not prepared to face its own history cannot manage to face its own future” (qtd. in Chang 447).

Achebe and Coetzee believe that now colonizers cannot be blamed for this wretched condition of their nations. In A Man of the people, Achebe makes public and fiercely criticizes the cynicism of the people who consider their Nation a national cake and who are interested in their own “fair share of the national cake” (11), while
in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Coetzee exquisitely furnishes this message through that collective task of children making snowman at the square. It is merely a snowman; however, they all enthusiastically give their own contributions in that great task. But thinking about the failure of four republics of Nigeria, Achebe regrets, as in his observation Nigerians have nothing to do with the change and the *Nation*. His analysis of life after independents states: “The only thing we have learnt from experience is that we learn nothing from experience” (Chinua). Coetzee’s *Disgrace* also tells the same story of failure of learning a lesson from the experience. Lucy’s rape, by three black South Africans, stirs the inner sense of David. He pines to heal the psychological wound of his daughter. He, who is “blind to the history of his own action” (Graham 437), wants to seek justice from the South African government. But he neglects to accept the fact that he is also a culprit of the same crime. He has also spoiled the life of many girls of his daughter’s age and has “a history of desiring ‘exotic’ women and assumes that he has the right to purchase or possess their bodies without being responsible for them or respecting the lives they live.” (Graham 437). He forgets his “yoking of the mistress and daughter” (Beard 65) by bringing Melanie on the bed of his daughter’s room. After Lucy’s rape, when he goes back to Cape Town, he first meets Melanie’s father, Mr Isaacs, to seek his pardon. He says, “I am sorry for what I took your daughter through. You have a wonderful family. I apologize for the grief I have caused you and Mrs Isaacs. I ask for your pardon” (Disgrace 171). But his regret is translated into obscenity as soon as he sees Melanie’s younger sister, Desiree. Here, Coetzee points at the things which are beyond repaired and they are discouraging sources for those who genially endeavour to bring some changes in the society and intend to maintain the sovereignty. But it is true that one
should, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has” (Margaret).

Achebe and Coetzee seem to change the mass by their representative characters who dare to lead one man army. The Magistrate, Mrs Curren, Lucy, Chris, Ikem, Beatrice, even Okonkwo also reveal that one should not concede without endeavour. They give a fight to the unfavourable circumstances till their last breath so that they can go to their people “and tell them that we have struggled for them with what remaining strength we have” (Anthills 122). Achebe fascinatingly transmits this message through the story of a leopard and a tortoise.

There was a leopard. Since many days he was trying to catch a tortoise. Once he got a chance. On seeing the tortoise on a solitary road, he told him to prepare himself for death. The tortoise sought a favour from him before he killed him. The leopard agreed, as he thought that it would not harm him. The tortoise requested him to give him a few moments to prepare his mind. Again the leopard found nothing wrong in it. He granted him some time. But instead of standing still, as the leopard had expected, the tortoise went into strange action on the road. He started scratching with hands and feet and throwing sand furiously in all directions. The leopard was puzzled. He asked the tortoise why he was doing so. The tortoise replied:

*Because even after I am dead I would want anyone passing by this spot to say, yes, a fellow and his match struggled here.* (Anthills 122-123)

According to Achebe struggle against the injustice is not new. It is since the existence of living beings on this beautiful planet. But the struggles came in different forms, in different ages. During colonial period people struggled against slavery, exploitation, colonialism, against imperialism, plundering of the Nation by the uitlanders, etc. After independence they are struggling against the men in power,
corruption, disordered bureaucracy, racism, against unemployment, poverty, incurable diseases like AIDS, etc. Like the tortoise of story mentioned above, in the novels it is Okonkwo who struggles against newly intruded colonialists and their missionary activities; it is Ezeulu who struggles against the internal crisis to save the power going in the hand of the white man; it is the Magistrate who struggles against tyranny of representatives of the unnamed empire; it is Christ and Ikem who struggle against the tyranny of his sycophantically blinded friend Sam, who is misusing the power he has been given in neo-colonial period; it is Bheki and Mrs Curren who struggle against the tyranny and mal-administration of the white South African Government during the post-apartheid period; it is Michael K who struggles to survive during the Civil war; it is Lucy who struggles against the disordered bureaucracy and newly coined terms like black-peril and white-peril during the post-apartheid period. And finally it is Achebe and Coetzee who struggle through their works to give a new vision to their reader so that the independence can be achieved in real sense and the next generation may remember that they had at least tried to re-build the Nation, to restore the life and to reform the society.

Coetzee observes that the human strength is squandered in ridiculous bustles. As a meticulous author he believes that it should be utilized productively for building a Nation. In Waiting for the Barbarians the authority aspires to find out the truth and creates a senseless, wrong notion about the barbarians. Coetzee believes that this notion of ‘the barbarian’ is nothing, but an idea – a product of a mind at leisure. It creates menace in people. It makes their lives fidgety, so that their attention can be averted from the consequential chore and engaged in absurd matters, and so that the “new men of Empire”, i.e. men in power, can make “make fresh starts”, write “new chapters” on “clean pages” (Waiting 26) and retain their power “war or vengeance as
justice” (Neumann 74). The land, depicted in the novel, was actually of the nomads. But the people, who came there, years ago, have made the town a comfort zone for them. Now they claim for that land considering themselves civilized and the tribespeople barbarians. But the barbarians still think of them as the visitors and transients. It may be their ignorance, but it is undoubtedly malevolence of the people living within the stone walls of the town for a secure life. Actually, these so-called civilized people have fathered all these vices for which they blame to the barbarians. And poor barbarians, in spite of having everything, are subjected to the tyranny of men in power. On the first glance this story of the barbarians and the unnamed empire does not appeal to the head and heart of the reader. But Gordimer’s opinion, mentioned below, gives a new insight to the reader to explore Coetzee’s works from innumerable angles.

J. M. Coetzee’s vision goes to the nerve centre of being. What he finds there is more than most people will ever know about themselves, and he conveys it with a brilliant writer’s mastery of tension and elegance. (Waiting, back cover)

In Waiting for the Barbarians, Coetzee feels sorry for exploitation of the barbarians and at the same time, he criticizes them for their passiveness. Survival of the fittest is law of the Nature, and it was, even before Darwin made it known to the world. Search for tension and elegance in the novel leads the reader to a new critical perception regarding the barbarians as black South Africans and the unnamed Empire as the men in power that include the government, the police, the bureaucracy, the white South Africans, etc. Coetzee criticizes the barbarity of the nomads who follow the authority without hostility and do nothing for their fundamental rights. As a revolutionary writer, Coetzee wishes,
...these barbarians would rise up and teach us a lesson, so that we would learn to respect them (Waiting 55).

When the Magistrate is released from the imprisonment, he gets wind of withdrawal of the barbarians with their flocks into the deepest mountain valleys. Head’s attention goes on this close of the novel where he finds, “reduced population at the settlement . . . [which is] now abandoned by their supposed protectors, remain waiting for the barbarians” (74). But he closes his eyes to Coetzee’s optimistic approach for the peaceful and harmonious bond between the two communities. He believes in—live and let live. He hopes that the barbarians will come out again when the soldiers grow tired and go away. They will graze their sheep and leave the town people alone; the town people will plant their fields and leave them alone; and in a few years the frontier will be restored to peace. Here, Coetzee is found waiting for his dream come true. One day the government will learn to look at black and white South Africans not as two different races, but collectively, as a national entity—vital and inevitable for building South Africa. He writes,

Be patient, one of these days he will go away, one of these days quiet will return: then our siestas will grow longer and our swords rustier, the watchman will sneak down from his tower to spend the night with his wife, the mortar will crumble till lizards nest between the bricks and owls fly out of the belfry, and the line that marks the frontier on the maps of Empire will grow hazy and obscure till we are blessedly forgotten. (Waiting 149)

Thus, though Coetzee’s novels, Waiting for the Barbarians and Life and Times of Michael K, deal with the dualistic facets, like “confinement and freedom, the present and the future, the pain of the captive body” (Durrant, Postcolonial 42) and the “bliss” (Coetzee, Life 68) of the liberated body, the optimistic end is the most
unique thing of both the novels which makes him immortal in literature. Literature is a medium for Achebe and Coetzee to convey their message to the world. They both have chosen novel—“a mass ceremony”, because even while reading it in isolation, one can read with the conviction that millions of others are “doing the same, at the same time” (Brennan 52). They oppose those writers and the critics who insist that the writer should confine to the contemporary issues. They take in hand the postcolonial issues to expose the atrocious colonial and neo-colonial, and apartheid and post-apartheid periods which are the most dominant subjects of the postcolonial literature. However, they move “farther away from their initial major preoccupation with protest and conflict” and after a “passionate search for a national culture” (Maria 14, 3), after studying the past and the present as well, they, in a light satirical tone, mirror the people of Africa about their forte and flaw, about their cultural identity for which they must have dignity and about certain aspects which they yet, need to change, so that they can stand shoulder to shoulder with other countries of the world to give them a new perception about Africa to which they dared to consider dark continent.

Coetzee is found more concerned with “how socialization can be imposed on individuals through the ordering of time and space” (Head 88). Achebe’s seminal novels, Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God reveal “the result of the disaster brought upon the African psyche in the period of subjection to alien races” (Achebe Novelist 43). He believes that the fundamental theme on which the African writers should work must be disposed of. This theme, he writes in The Role of the Writer in a New Nation,

. . . is that African peoples did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and,
above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African peoples all but lost in the colonial period, and it is this dignity that they must now regain. The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self-respect. The writer’s duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost. There is a saying in Ibo that a man who can’t tell where the rain began to beat him cannot know where he dried his body. The writer can tell the people where the rain began to beat them. After all the novelist’s duty is not to beat this morning’s headline in topicality, it is to explore in depth the human condition. In Africa he cannot perform this task unless he has a proper sense of history. (qtd. in Achebe on African Writer)

As an African writer Achebe believes that it is his duty to help his “society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement” (Novelist 44). Expressing his pride for the African Culture and criticising notorious writers like Conrad, he suggests that the West might derive some advantages from Africa once,

...it rid its mind of old prejudices and began to look at Africa not through a haze of distortions and cheap mystifications but quite simply as a continent of people—not angels, but not rudimentary souls either—just people, often highly gifted people and often strikingly successful in their enterprise with life and society. (Image 13)

Achebe believes that African writes must make their pen mighty enough to give a word for word fight to those because of whom the very humanity of black people is called in question. He criticizes Conrad for “his fixation on blackness” in *Heart of Darkness* which “parades in the most vulgar fashion prejudices and insults
from which a section of mankind has suffered untold agonies and atrocities in the past and continues to do so in many ways and many places today” (Image 10, 11). His criticism has distorted the dignity of Africa and African culture to such an extent that even after so many years of independence, the African writers are yet writing under that burden to make that image of Africa spotless. Achebe himself says that he would be quite satisfied if his novels teach his readers, especially Africans, that nothing is “shameful” and “blasphemy” (Novelist 44) about African culture and “that their past—with all its imperfections—was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God’s behalf delivered them” (Novelist 45). In his novels Achebe has ironically portrayed the white characters, especially the missionary activists. Their motives were not only of evangelism and to bring light to the dark place of the world, but of affront, exploration and exploitation of African countries. Achebe’s character, the Reverend James Smith epitomizes Conrad’s psyche. Achebe writes,

He saw things as black and white. And black was evil. He saw the world as a battlefield in which the children of light were locked in mortal conflict with the sons of darkness. He spoke in his sermons about sheep and goats and about wheat and tares. He believed in slaying the prophets of Baal. (Things 176)

Achebe has truly premeditated that these missionary activists had crafty sight. They first observed the dynamics of African culture and then determined to devastate it. In the words mentioned above the binary difference between white/black, light/dark and sheep/goat represent the notorious notions of the Europeans for Africa and Africans. Through the character of the District Commissioner, Achebe has portrayed Conrad himself. The Commissioner got a new interesting story for his
planned book from the suicide of Okonkwo. And the name he chose for that book is *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. This is how Achebe expresses his sorrow for the way Africa is viewed and for the fall of cultural heritage in the form of suicide of Okonkwo.

Fanon criticizes the magazines in which “the Wolf, the Devil, the Evil Spirit, the Bad Man, the Savage are always symbolized by Negroes or Indians” (Black 113). He writes:

. . . it was with the greatest delight that they [the native intellectuals] discovered that there was nothing to be ashamed of in the past, but rather dignity, glory, and solemnity. The claim to a national culture in the past does not only rehabilitate that nation and serve as a justification for the hope of a future national culture. In the sphere of psycho-affective equilibrium it is responsible for an important change in the native. (Wretched 210)

Achebe and Coetzee do not give sermons, but through the medium of writing, put their fingers on the pulses of the people to convey their message so that they can achieve the expected goal. For instance, Coetzee writes, “It strikes me that the snowman will need arms too, but I do not want to interfere” (Waiting 170). The very words make Coetzee’s intention apparent that he wants his readers to develop within them the art of self-examination and self-evaluation and warn that “forgetting forfeits learning from the lessons of the past” (Meskell 88). Similarly Achebe says, “I have no more to say to you” (Things 127), except “What we need to do is to look back and try and find out where we went wrong, where the rain began to beat us” (Novelist 43). He believes that it is the role of the writers to awake their fellowmen and make them aware about their own drawbacks so that they can reform the society. In his opinion the writers “cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and
regeneration that must be done” (Novelist 45), they “don’t give prescriptions”, but
“headaches!” (Anthills 153). They cannot turn their back on the social problems of
their contemporary age. Similarly, in an interview, pertaining to the question of
Begam, Coetzee opines, though he finds few, that the writers should think beyond the
narcissism. They “ought to be wary and ask themselves every now and again whether
they are not cutting them-selves off from real human concerns” (430). He believes
that “art is born out of burning issues, issues felt deeply, whether these issues are
specific (political issues, for instance) or general (questions of life and death, for
instance) or internal to the medium” and he further criticizes the novels written in the
U. K. and U. S. with “no ambitions” (Begam 431). But his own novels “labor in
memory of the hope of a just future” and their characters “attempt to mourn their own
loss, to tell the story of their own eclipse. And in so doing, they open out onto a wider
history of loss, a history that is not their own and that indeed cannot be owned, a
history that ungrounds them as individual subjects” (Durrant, Bearing 446, 439).

The works of Achebe and Coetzee give “voice to the dead” (Age 192) i.e. the
inactive government and indifferent people, and seek “reclamation of space through a
replacement of the imperialists’ accounts by discourses which resist colonial
appropriation” (Das 87). They claim for the unbiased allocation of the constitutional
rights which ought to be equal to all without any kind of discrimination. Confining
themselves to their own nations, they show how first the land was confiscated by the
European intruders which made the natives helpless, then one by one, they assaulted
the native manpower, native strength of unity in integrity by applying their very
handy tool, i.e. divide and rule policy, native dignified culture by the missionary
activity, native social system, native federal governing system, and the poor native
could do nothing to protect their motherland. Achebe and Coetzee have depicted all
these characteristics of the postcolonial literature in their works. But at the same time they have given a crystal clear picture of post-colonial and post-apartheid period which are expected to heal years old wounds. Unfortunately they have brought no change to the living standard of the people. Achebe’s prudence can be noted in his following observation:

Experience and intelligence warn us that man’s progress in freedom will be piecemeal, slow and undramatic. Revolution may be necessary for taking a society out of an intractable stretch of quagmire but it does not confer freedom, and may indeed hinder it. (Anthills 94)

Thus, we find a revolutionary zeal in the works of Achebe and Coetzee. They show both the sides of the same coin. They do not confine their writing to expose and attack injustice done by colonialist and on the old theme of racial injustice, but also write on the new injustice which have sprouted all around them in their nations. If Achebe’s Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God and Coetzee’s Waiting for the Barbarians and Age of Iron show the atrocious colonial and apartheid periods then their A Man of the People and Anthills of the Savannah, and Disgrace and Life and Times of Michael K show post-colonial and post-apartheid periods. And raise a lucid question if the prefix ‘post’ has brought any changes to the life standard of the people after freedom. In fact it gives a kaleidoscopic picture of the failure of independence in both the nations. Achebe gives answer to this question in his work, The Trouble with Nigeria:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the
responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership. (1)

And Coetzee, through the medium of literature appeals to the reader, to the people for the dire need to change the system; it is not going to be changed automatically; it is their right and duty to challenge the men in power if they have failed to satisfy the public expectations. After independence the leaders were expected to accomplish the desired agenda. But they all took framework of the Nation for granted and gave priority to the personal gain. In Thomas’ words, “independence [in African countries] brought in only a change of masters. The new black leadership took over the privileges of the vacating colonial powers and soon black faces appeared in Mercedeses plying on the streets of Africa” (37). This is the main reason behind the failure of all the four republics of Nigeria and racial crisis in South Africa.

Achebe believes that Nigeria can change only when she has the leaders “who have the will, the ability and the vision” and in his observation “Nigerians are what they are only because their leaders are not what they should be” (Trouble 1, 10). He believes that Nigerians should reject all those things that inhibit the chance of Nigeria to becoming a modern and attractive country. They should engage their strength in selfless and productive task. Criticizing to those leaders who often say “this great country of ours” Achebe does not hesitate to say,

Nigeria is not a great country. It is one of the most disorderly nations in the world. It is one of the most corrupt, insensitive, inefficient places under the sun. . . . It is dirty, callous, noisy, ostentatious, dishonest and vulgar. In short, it is among the most unpleasant places on earth! (Trouble 9-10)

The selected authors have bequeathed many such powerful messages to their fellowmen through the medium of literature in English language. Use of English
language is but natural in the case of Coetzee, as he is a white South African, but the eccentricity lies in its use in favour of the black South Africans. This shows his love for humanity and introduces him to the world as a philanthropist. His diction is not of that fervent writer. He has presented even the burning issues of his period in the most simple and sober, however, in a very appealing way. It seems to be unpretentious to his pen. He has “a very self-conscious, highly allusive, and playful approach to language and literature” and in his works, we find a very strange fusion of “dry humour” with “utter seriousness and attentiveness” (Coetzee, Text 587). But Achebe is a revolutionist in his use of English language to produce Nigerian Literature/National Literature. He knows very well that “English has been historically subject to a large variety of uses and has therefore become an efficient tool for conveying cultural complexity, as well as functioning as an interregional language” (Ashcroft 39). His writings play enormous and ambiguous role in post-colonial literature. He has used English as paraphernalia to revolt against the very concept of colonialism. Achebe provokes the reader to think what it is that has conspired to place English in the position of national language in many parts of Africa. Using English language, he boldly gives credit to the British for the creation of Nigeria of present. He writes,

Yet the fact remains that Nigeria was created by the British—for their own ends. Let us give the devil his due: colonialism in Africa disrupted many things, but it did create bit political units where there were small, scattered ones before. Nigeria had hundreds of autonomous communities, [but] Today, it is one country. (English 344)

Thus, Achebe believes that the colonialism brought together many peoples that had previously gone their several ways, and gave them a language with which to
talk to one another. “If it failed to give them a song, it at least gave them a tongue for sighing” (English 344). Thus, he looks upon the use of English in a positive way. He does not consider the writers using English unpatriotic. Instead he suggest that even while using a foreign language the African writers must have the dexterity to convey their ideas in the most appealing way that can stimulate the inner sense of the reader and raise empathy to re-thing about Africa and Africans who were subjugated for years by the Europeans. He writes, “I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home, but altered to suit its new African surroundings” (English 349). That is why there is no point of departure from Africanness and from the Igbo culture in his use of English language, especially in his most typical Igbo novels, like Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God, which deal with the post-colonial issues. At the same time his works are not the translation of Igbo tone, but the transcreation of a new English language. We find “infusion of Igbo cultural patterns into English linguistic structure” (Madubuike 148), however, “Englishness of English” (Barrell 154) is maintained. The ancestral knowledge and the wisdom of Igbo culture can be felt in his expression of Igbo proverbs in English language. For instance:

- “. . . a man who brings home ant-infested faggots should not complain if he is visited by lizards” (Arrow 61).
- “Whenever you see a toad jumping in broad daylight, then know that something is after its life” (Things 192).

The proverbs, mentioned above, are in the form of warning. The first is an indirect warning of Nwaka to Ezeulu who has sent Oduche to learn the art of the white man, while the second one is in the suggestive tone, that every event has a
particular reason and one needs to go to the root why it has happened. Achebe blends the native languages like Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo with the new English. In *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*, he depicts a class speaking Pidgin English to show the influence of English language on Africans and their gradual move towards it. Khairnar Bharati makes a detailed study of language in Achebe’s novels and concludes that Achebe has so successfully created a new form of English with an African coloration that “his Igbo characters establish their speech as the norms against which the language of the colonialists . . . seems bizarre and unnatural” and “African words and concepts have been rendered into English without losing their flexibility” (170-171). Thus, his works have presented the reader “with an aesthetic that critiques the European, exclusivist connection of nationalism with language and literature” (Snead 247).

Thus, there are many parallels and dissimilarities in Achebe and Coetzee, for which their different nations, geographical areas, races and social classes, the cultural identities that they carry, political histories, literary trends, causes and urges for literary writings, passion for national identity in the world, burning desire to bring about changes in the life of their fellowmen, etc. are responsible. In spite of dissimilarities in many things the important thing is their ideology and philosophy which meet at the crossroads and lead them to a common goal: “My people, that is all we are doing now. Struggling. Perhaps to no purpose except that those who come after us will be able to say: *True, our fathers were defeated but they tried*” (Anthills 123). The genuine proof of their success lies in their acceptance by the readers in bulk in all over the world, where Achebe is honoured as the Father of African Literature, while Coetzee is honoured with the Nobel Prize for Literature in
2003. Thus, here, we find the association between the written words within the text and the world without the text.

The next chapter will be consolidation of the preceding chapters. Having examined both the authors and keeping various issues pertaining to the African life after independence in the center of the comparison, the conclusions will be derived.
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