CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

...We should keep before us the prerogatives of the present as signposts and paradigms for the study of the past. If I have insisted on integration and connections between the past and the present, between imperializer and imperialized, between culture and imperialism, I have done so not to level or reduce differences, but rather to convey a more urgent sense of the interdependence between things. So vast and yet so detailed is imperialism as an experience with crucial cultural dimensions, that we must speak of overlapping territories, intertwined histories..., past as well as present and future.

Edward W. Said,
Culture and Imperialism

Said's ideas about the complexity of the relationship between past and present are particularly suggestive in the discussion of post-colonial Third World literature, an area of study so fraught with all kinds of questions, doubts, polemics and ideological premises as nearly to resist use altogether. More than three quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism. Though its general influence on the perceptual framework of contemporary people is not successfully defined, literature offers one of the most
important ways in which these new perceptions are exposed and recorded. They exhibit a pervasive concern with myths of identity and authenticity as a feature common to all post-colonial literatures in English, which could be summed up as "the alienation of vision and the crisis of self-image" as experienced by post-colonial societies. Thus when marginality became an unprecedented source of creative energy, there emerged the idea of a 'post-colonial literary theory' consequent to the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural problems of post-colonial writing. It has to operate in a cultural system which, while not denying ancestral affiliations, sees the individual or national destiny as inescapably enmeshed in a contemporary, multi-cultural reality. And hence it has begun to deal with the problems of transmuting time into space, with the present struggling out of the past, and, like much recent post-colonial literature, it attempts to construct a future, which could be viewed as offering a way out of the historical and philosophical impasse.

Thus while we convey in a language that is not our own the spirit that is our own, we find many thematic parallels across the different Third World literatures in English, recurrent structural patterns which unravel the existence of shared concerns. In African countries and in India, generally in post-colonial countries where viable
alternatives to English continue to exist, an appeal for a return to writing exclusively, or mainly in the regional languages has been a recurring feature of calls for decolonization. (Decolonization is not to be confused with the reconstitution of pre-colonial reality.)

Frantz Fanon speaks in definitive terms about the predicament of the native intellectuals, who make their appearance at a certain point in the development of the political consciousness of the natives. For these individuals, the demand for a national culture and the affirmation of the existence of such a culture represent a special battlefield. It has been remarked several times that this passionate search for a national culture which existed before the colonial era finds its legitimate reason in the anxiety shared by native intellectuals to shrink away from that western culture in which they all risk being swamped. But, as Fanon observes, "those who condemn this exaggerated passion are strangely apt to forget that their own psyche and their own selves are conveniently sheltered behind a French or German culture which has given full proof of its existence and which is uncontested." This need for shelter either in a national or communal framework, enjoyed by developed countries, is often expressed inadequately by tribals, though it is part of man's struggle to make meaning out of his existence.
Fanon argues that this passionate search is kept up or at least directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation and abjuration, some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others. In the cultural estrangement brought about by colonialism, the natives were caught in an existential dilemma, and in their attempts at self-affirmation, they felt the need to go back to their past, to assert that there was nothing to be ashamed of it, rather there was dignity, glory and solemnity. So it becomes a historical necessity, in which the men of colonized nations tend to racialize their claims and speak more of their own culture in their attempt to affirm their uniqueness. This stated belief in a national culture is in fact an ardent, despairing turning towards anything that will afford him secure anchorage in the midst of haunting contradictions. In his attempt to trace in the works of the native writers the different phases which characterize an evolution, Fanon offers the following three levels:

1. The native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power. His inspiration is European and we can easily link up his works with definite trends in the literature of the mother country.
2. In the second phase we find that the native is disturbed; he decides to remember what he is... Old legends will be reinterpreted in the light of a borrowed aestheticism, and of a new conception of the world.

3. Finally in the third phase, which is called the fighting phase, the native, after having tried to lose himself in the people and with the people, will on the contrary shake the people... he turns himself into an awakener of the people; hence comes a fighting literature, a revolutionary literature, and a national literature.

'Colonialism' or 'colonial consciousness' is in itself a term which needs to be examined. Edward Said in his celebrated book *Orientalism* has stressed the limitations which colonial consciousness imposes on a nation. Here a social situation is created where one is compelled to look at oneself through the eyes of the colonial masters and to judge oneself by their standards by measuring oneself against their yardsticks. There is a desire to adopt what is handed out, an eagerness to identify with them, imitate with great cleverness. Though not entirely different from Fanon's analysis, Said comprises the development of colonial consciousness into two stages--one of acceptance of the imperial model and the other a turning away from it. Both are dependent and imbalanced relationships, and they
eventually lead to a final stage of moving away from these secondary positions to a position of critical identification of one's own culture, of being in a position to sift and to criticize, a stance which is marked by an adult maturity. This may be said to be a transition to the real post-colonial awareness which is characterized by an ability to step outside the given and to reject simplistic divisions of the 'good' and 'bad', and to forge an independent identity.  

Hence the 'colonial experience' may mean, broadly, the experience of countries and people under the British rule, and there are a few factors which bring together the literatures of all the commonwealth countries under one banner. First, they are all literatures in English produced outside England; secondly, they are literatures which have been brought into existence through an interaction between the English language and the English literary tradition with the languages and the literary traditions of the subject countries; and thirdly, they are literatures which have received much of their inspiration, sustenance and force from what may be called the colonial experience in its broadest sense. This experience took place at different levels through political, economic, social, ethnic and cultural encounters and interactions between the colonizer and the colonized. The colonial experience included the acquisition of English as a medium of communication and creative expression too. Creative writing in English in
these countries was particularly well defined and powerful where it involved the struggle for freedom, expatriation, cultural confrontations, uprootings and displacements, alienation and a search for identity. In the early stages it gave rise to a literature of protest, conflict and anger, and it is in this kind of writing that we find a sharp reaction to 'colonialism' as a phenomenon.

Literature has always been a sensitive, responsive medium, creating and reflecting the attitudes and values of society. And the writings grounded in the cultural realities of those societies whose subjectivity has been constituted at least in part by the subordinating power of European colonialism stand a class apart. Colonial literatures present their most striking aspects when there is an evident difference in tradition—a difference that manifests itself in such matters as religion, customs and language. A remarkable feature of modern times is the retention of its existing linguistic situation by a subjected people, and the transformation of the imported literature of a colonizing people. This is seen especially in situations like those of India and West Africa where traditions of English writing have developed among people who still use another language in their daily lives or (as in the West Indies) among people who customarily speak an English vernacular that has already become so distinct with characteristics of a new language.
As a result of this linguistic development, some of the best writers of English in the mid-twentieth century have come from countries where the English themselves lived only as a small class of imperial rulers, governing and exploiting people who were Asian or African by birth, and where the traditional cultures continued largely unchanged in the shadow of the empire. Richard Hoggart's formulations about two kinds of literature do seem relevant here. He says that we may roughly speak of two kinds of literature—conventional literature and live literature. Hoggart further develops this distinction explaining that conventional literature usually reinforces existing assumptions, an individual's or group's ways of looking at the world. On the other hand, properly read, live literature—even the quietest or most light-hearted—may be very disturbing indeed, may deeply subvert our view of life. The literatures coming from the African, Indian, West Indian and Caribbean countries may be called 'live' as they could be disturbing indeed. As Susnigdha Dey would have it, "call it the Third World or developing nations or the non-aligned, there will be a lot of debate generated in the terminology. But one thing is certain that there is a common bond, a broad identification, among the struggling humanity in Asia, Africa and Latin America."10

This acute awareness among the subject population about the political, economic and cultural hegemony of the
alien power naturally finds expression in the fictional creation of the subject people. Edward W. Said in *Culture and Imperialism* affirms that fictional works as 'cultural forms' were immensely significant even in the formation of imperial attitudes, references and experiences during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and he cites the example of *Robinson Crusoe*, which is about a European who creates a fiefdom for himself on a distant, non-European island. The power to narrate or to block other narratives from forming and emerging is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them. And so Said thinks that Conrad is the precursor of the western views of the Third World which one finds in the works of novelists like Graham Greene and V. S. Naipaul. On the other hand, as we find in the course of history, narrative fiction also becomes the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history. The grand narratives of emancipation and enlightenment mobilized people in the colonial world to rise up and throw off imperial subjection. This process of 'decolonization' has been enhanced after the massive intellectual, moral and imaginative deconstruction of western representation of the non-western world, after the works of Frantz Fanon, O. Mannoni (*Prospero and Caliban*), Albert Memmi (*The Colonizer and the Colonized*) etc., after the creative writings of Chinua
Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiongo, Wole Soyinka, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and many others. 14

And Yet, the observation of Bruce King that Post-Colonial writing "is more strongly linked to imperial literature than is usually acknowledged"15 points at the dilemma often experienced by national writers. This conforms to the basic paradox within nationalism of both "wanting to modernize and wanting to be authentic."16 He adds that certain writers of the 1890s, 1920s and 1930s share characteristics of the British literature of their period, so much so post-colonial literatures seem to fit into international periods and styles. This is perhaps only to be expected, and we need to consider how far national literatures have progressed towards independence, and what might make real post-colonial literature possible.

According to Achebe, who first set the tone for a powerful, different African writing (that is different from British or American literature), the purpose of writing in his particular context is to teach. This, he feels, the writer could perform in two ways: first, by asserting the beauty and dignity of his own culture, and secondly, by educating the masses in the new directions the country must take as a mature, independent nation. It is interesting to note that these leading African writers are among the intellectuals of the country who have taken upon themselves
the responsibility of awakening through their writing the ignorant, indifferent, inert masses to the challenges of belonging to a free country after hundreds of years of subjugation. In his famous statement in "The Novelist as Teacher," Achebe signals his intention to set his texts against derogatory interpretation of Africa, against the novels, anthropological accounts, histories, all of which have captured the nation's past and present:

I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers 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. Perhaps what I write is applied art as distinct from pure. But who cares? Art is important but so is education of the kind I have in mind.17 (emphasis added)

Added to his intention of 'decolonizing' the mind of his people, there was a further instigation to resort to 'applied art' in the form of Joyce Cary's novel. Achebe frankly admits:

... and one of the things that set me thinking was Joyce Cary's novel set in Nigeria, Mister Johnson, which was praised so much, and it was clear to me
that it was a most superficial picture of not only of the country--but even of the Nigerian character, and so I thought if this was famous, then perhaps someone ought to try and look at this from inside.\textsuperscript{18}

Hence looking at post-colonial writing from this particular perspective, the element of self-affirmation becomes an integral part of it, supporting it with a vision. Thus, referring to the idea of protest, Achebe provides it with the meaning of protesting against something in order to 'recreate'. He says that the need for protesting will never end: "I don't think it's a question of protest against Europe or simply protest against local conditions. It is protest against the way we are handling human society in view of the possibilities for greatness and the better alternatives which the artist sees."\textsuperscript{19}

Again it was Ngugi Wa Thiongo (East Africa) who in his novels made a similar attempt to sensitize people to the fact of their own identity, dignity and tried to awaken them to the need to free themselves from complexes. He emphasized in literary terms the need to resurrect their self-respect in their efforts to take their country forward, to development and progress. In \textbf{The River Between} (1965), for example, Chege, the tribe's wiseman and visionary, bequeaths to his
son Waiyaki, in a moment infused with ceremoniousness and urgency, the important mission of "regenerating" his fallen clan and country:

Now, listen my son. Listen carefully .... Arise. Heed the prophecy. Go to the mission place. Learn all the wisdom and all the secrets of the white. But do not follow his vices. Be true to your people and the ancient rites.20

Colonization stretching over three to four centuries in the Third World countries--especially in Africa, India and the West Indies--has had its positive as well as negative impacts on the colonized people, besides in many ways affecting the native sensibility. On the one hand, colonization has modernized these societies, introducing a system of liberal education, new modes of production, new ideas which have helped them to reconsider traditional modes of thought. But on the other hand, the colonizer has consciously developed in the natives a sense of dependance and inferiority, constantly harping on their 'savage' customs and primitivism. Thus in the long run, "colonization has meant not just geographical-political occupation or economic plunder of today's Third World but also a spiritual and moral stunting of the natives character and confidence that has left him incapacitated to meet the challenges of running a country independently."21 Hence at
this critical juncture, the 'native intellectual' who is very much a product of the colonial experience, but endowed with a keener sensibility and perception, is prompted to respond to the subversive impact colonialism has had on the colonial consciousness.

But as is obvious from later writing, we see that Third World literature on the whole has moved farther away from their initial major preoccupation with protest and conflict. Margaret P. Joseph, the author of Caliban in Exile observes that though African and Indian writers dealt with the experience of empire in their literatures, both countries have lost no time in going on from there. "They have shown resilience and dynamism in assimilating the colonizer's language and genres, and adapting them to their own vision."22

Among the African writers, Achebe, Okara, Ngugi, Soyinka and others have responded strongly against western hegemony through their creative writing, and have gained remarkable success in affirming their national identity—which was, in fact, their declared aim. But the post-colonial scenario has been significantly different in the case of India. Very often in Indian Writing in English, the slavish mentality of the colonial is depicted in the attitudes of the different Indian characters belonging to the hybrid 'East-West class', and the need to explore the
total Indian self in a historical, cultural sense does not find articulation. On the whole, however, "unlike his African and West Indian counterparts, the Indian writer in English and in the regional languages has not concerned himself with the colonial experience as a major force that has shaped the national consciousness...."23 K. R. Shirwadkar also makes a similar observation that though clouds of despair are extensively spread over the Third World, the Indian scene presents a slightly different picture: "The typical Indian novel in English shows few examples of social or existential despair--even though India also goes through gruesome experiences in a gloomy world."24 Even a novel like Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* which depicts a direct encounter between the east and the west, is too metaphysical rather than socio-political, more romantic rather than rooted in reality. The sense of history displayed by the Indian novelists either in English or in the regional languages often is confined to the theme of "the individual's inability to bring about a qualitative change"25 in the political, social and economic situation of the country. And in general they have avoided exploring the socio-political reality of India, in a manner the African or West Indian novelists have done, with the deliberate intention of discovering a historical, political definition of the Indian. The fiction of earlier Indian writers in English like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and
R. K. Narayan do show a general awareness of the socio-political situation of early twentieth century, but this awareness becomes only incidental to their works, and does not constitute the core of it. Viney Kirpal sounds slightly ironic when she comments that Raja Rao and Narayan, instead of concerning themselves with the crisis of India, have turned for inspiration and consolation to the Hindu view of the world as illusion. She says that "In the India they depict, nothing has gone really wrong because in the ultimate sense the socially or politically turbulent is only a temporal, ephemeral manifestation of the Real."^{26}

II

This brings us to the analysis of a key sociological concept which forms the basis of this study—the capacity of societies to face change and the manifold ways in which it responds to change. Colonialism, as we have seen, exploits the natural and human resources of the colonized nation, and perpetuates itself with the support of a social organization, a judicial system, an administrative pattern and an educational policy. In this process it "throws the colonized out of history-making process, calcifies his society and deadens his culture which in turn helps maintain the myth of the superiority of the colonizer over the colonized."^{27} A distinct ideology and philosophy developed
around this conception systematically eliminates the very *raison d'être* of the colonized whose historical past is distorted, disfigured and finally destroyed, if it is not strong enough to hold itself intact. And here we are reminded of Memmi's observation that "for a number of historical, sociological and psychological reasons, the struggle for liberation by colonized peoples has taken on a marked national and nationalistic outlook" as they are plagued by intense doubts and profound uneasiness.  

Due to this historical process that changes the socio-economic structure of a society, a new type of "social character" in the Erich Frommian sense of the term happens to take shape. This implies that consciousness being a social product, is thus altered and reshaped by colonialism. The assumption made by Riesman that "character is socially conditioned" bears a significant relevance here. He affirms that "since the social function of character is to ensure or permit conformity, it appears that the various types of social character can be defined most appropriately in terms of the modes of conformity that are developed in them." And it leads to the conclusion that any prevalent mode of conformity may itself be used as an index to characterize a whole society. Thus we are compelled to take account of the possibility that people may be persuaded to behave in a particular way although their essential character structure may be inclined to behave differently.
Riesman's argument is that since society may change more rapidly than character or vice versa, there arises "a disparity between socially required behaviour and characterologically compatible behaviour" which is one of the great levers of change. Hence it is unlikely that the social character types have been totally content in their character roles, and consequently it results in confusion of group and individual identities.

Riesman's classification of society into three categories, suggesting three different phases of evolution, namely tradition-directed, inner-directed, and other-directed, helps us to specify the characteristic features associated with each of these. His main argument is that each of these three different phases appears to be occupied by a society that enforces conformity and moulds social character in a definably different way. Thus a society of high growth potential develops in its typical members a social character whose conformity is insured by their tendency to follow tradition. The society of transitional population growth develops in its typical members a social character whose conformity is insured by their tendency to acquire early in life an internalized set of goals, forming a group of inner-directed people. Finally, the society of incipient population decline develops in its typical members a social character whose conformity is insured by their
tendency to be sensitized to the expectations and preferences of others, forming a community of other-directed persons.

In viewing such a society, we inevitably associate its relative stability with the tenacity of custom and social culture. However, Riesman says that, we must not equate stability of social structure over historical time with psychic stability in the life span of an individual, because the latter may subjectively experience much violence and disorganization, but learns to deal with life by adaptation rather than by innovation. And consequently our perceptions are often narrowed down by cultural conditioning, creating a pattern of conventional conformity which is reflected in many societies which are tradition-directed. Since this type of social order is relatively unchanging, the conformity of the individual tends to be dictated to a very large extent by power-relations among the various age and sex groups, clans, castes, professions, etc., which have endured for centuries and are modified, if at all, but slightly by successive generations. Thus behaviour patterns tend to be culture specific, and rigid codes govern the fundamentally influential sphere of kin relation. Moreover, the culture provides ritual, routine and religion to occupy and orient everyone in the society, and little energy is directed towards finding new solutions to age-old problems.
This does not mean that in these societies, where the activity of the individual member is determined by character-grounded obedience to tradition, the individual is not valued much or encouraged to develop his capabilities though within rather narrow limits. Riesman believes that the individual in some primitive societies is far more appreciated and respected than in some sectors of modern society for "the individual in a society dependent on tradition-direction has a well-defined functional relationship to other members of the group." There is a distinct sense of belonging in these societies which is often found lacking in modern societies. But by the very virtue of his 'belonging', life-goals that are his in terms of conscious choice appear to shape his destiny only to a very limited extent, just as only on a small scale is there any concept of progress for the group. So much so, he is drawn into roles that make a socially acceptable contribution, while at the same time they provide the individual with a more or less approved niche.

Accordingly, in western history, the Middle Ages can be considered a period in which the majority were tradition-directed. But the term tradition-directed refers to a common element, not only among the people of pre-capitalist Europe but also among such enormously different types of people such as Hindus, Zulus, the Chinese, North
There is comfort in relying on the many writers who have found a similar unity amid diversity, a unity they express in such terms as "folk society" as against "civilization", "a status society" as against a "contract society", "gemeinschaft" as against "gesellschaft". Though the societies envisaged by these terms are different, the folk, the status, and "gemeinschaft" societies resemble one another in their relative slowness of change, their dependance on family and kin organization, and their relatively tight web of values.

Emmanuel Obiechina in his elaborate study on "culture contact and culture conflict" notes that in traditional society, the present life of the people, their norms of behaviour, customary beliefs, attitudes and values have come down to them with as little modification as possible from the immemorial past. According to him, the institution of societies have evolved in such a way that fundamental changes did not take place. Hence, where all aspects of cultural life are protected by religious sentiment and great store is set on social conformity, the existence of a traditional culture depends on the existence of a community which experiences "a certain fusion of individualities in a common whole, so that one's very self, for many purposes at least, is the common life and purpose of the group." The same idea is expressed with greater attention to details by Robert Redfield when he lists the attributes of a typical
community: physical proximity of the members, smallness of the group, the enduring character of its social relationships, the relative similarity of activities and states of mind of the members, the relative self-sufficiency of the community and the self-perpetuating propensity of the groups forming the community. The German sociologist F. Tonnies gives a more specific explanation for the two German terms used earlier. For him, community (gemeinschaft) is an "intimate, private and exclusive living together" as opposed to association (gesellschaft) based on the "rational pursuit of individual self-interest." These theories about societies in transition can be applied to many Third World novels. It is interesting to note that Okonkwo's Umuofia, Ezeulu's Umuaro, Okolo's Amatu, Praneshacharya's Durvasapura--all exhibit the attributes of a community, especially the fusion of interests and the relative similarity of activities and states of mind of the members.

We know very little about the cumulation of changes that can eventuate in a break up of the tradition-directed type of society, but its slow decay subsequently leads to the rise of a type of society in which inner-direction is the dominant mode of ensuring conformity. As Riesman observes, such a society is likely to be found in the phase of transitional growth. Critical historians sometimes deny that any decisive change occurs even in this phase,
but it would not be wrong to conclude that the greatest social and characterological shift of recent decades did indeed come when men were compelled to break their primary ties that bound them to tradition-directed society. There is a visible decline in the attention focussed on securing external behavioural conformity, and this society is further characterized by increased personal mobility, the greater choices it offers to its members, and the greater initiative it demands in order to cope with its novel problems. In fact, at the transitional phase, too many novel situations are presented in the socio-economic-religious levels, situations which a code cannot encompass in advance, and which consequently leads to the problem of personal choice and highly individualized characters.

At the same time it would be misleading if we were to conclude that the force of tradition has no weight for the inner-directed character. On the contrary, he is very substantially bound by tradition: they limit his ends and inhibit his choice of means. But he becomes aware of competing claims and as a result possesses a somewhat greater degree of flexibility in adapting himself to ever changing requirements. He is expected to keep a delicate balance between the demands upon him of his life-goal and the pressures of his external environment. As has been observed earlier, the tradition-directed individual hardly thinks of himself as an individual, and it never occurs to
him that he might shape his own destiny in terms of personal, life-long goals, or that the destiny of his children might be different from that of the family group, as he is not sufficiently separated from himself, his clan or group to think in these terms. But in the phase of transitional growth, however, people of inner-directed character do gain a feeling of control over their own lives and see their children also as individuals with careers to make. 41

Elaborating on similar lines, sociologist Ortin E. Klapp argues that the identity problems of a society depend upon the stage of its advancement. Like Riesman, he too divides the human society into three categories on the basis of its technological advancement: traditional, transitional and technologically advanced societies. 42 A traditional society with a closely knit village, tribal and family life faces hardly any or very few identity problems and hence is very stable. But a transitional society with extensive introduction of technology makes a population mobile and urban-oriented. Their movement from village to cities in search of fresh opportunities also gives 'psychological mobility' to the people meanwhile weakening group solidarity. "The transitional society, therefore, faces the problem of redefining its identity. The individual in this society is divided in his loyalties to himself and to his community," facing identity problems at the individual level. 43
In a technologically advanced society with its high standard of living and leisure, identity problems multiply. Though technology has a mystique of its own, it has not evolved any reference symbols to help replace the rituals of a traditional society. Klapp comments that this lack of rituals in the technologically advanced society has "deprived an individual of messages of reassurance." And he seeks this reassurance in finding an identity in profession, or career or even by joining a group activity which helps him participate in a collective search for identity. Thus in a transitional phase, both the individual and the community are under great stress and feel the need to redefine their identities individually and collectively.

Applying this particular sociological stance to the present study, we observe that as the historical conditions of colonialism were different in various parts of the world, the form of the corresponding change in the social structure also differed. In the traditional, tribal societies of Nigeria and Kenya, the colonial consciousness had to grapple with the problems of collective consciousness as their social structure started breaking down under the pressure of colonial forces of disruption, mainly because of the acceptance of a new religion and language. Hence the African novelists depicting either a tribal world or a transitional world are compelled to take up the question of collective identity.
Almost all the heroes of Chinua Achebe, Ngugi and Aluko living in the colonial world are at peace with themselves, but are at war with the world which is falling apart under the forces of colonialism and all that goes with it—alien culture and religion, western education, a social structure based on individualistic values, a new administration, an economic order with consumer economy etc.

But despite this sociological impasse, Achebe as a representative writer reveals a vibrant optimism when he says: "If I did not believe that change were possible, leading to the betterment of the lives of people, there would be no point in writing." Achebe's comment could be viewed as a recognition of the antithesis his novels try to explore and attempt to reconcile. Killam further elaborates this peculiar reality when he says that "oppositions between traditional culture and modern experience, between individualism and collectivism, between the personal and public self, between masculine and feminine codes are revealed through multiple narrative voices and forms that reveal the dualities and complexities of the human condition in general and the Nigerian condition in particular." And to that extent we may presume that his novels are largely concerned with the problem of reconciliation to a different mode of thinking and existence. It definitely implies a movement away from 'stasis' to a relatively more flexible system, with promises of a new vision. Thus one
could see that the philosophy that underlies most of these novels is that change is possible, that 'no condition is permanent', an idea that relieves them of much of the negativity that is explicit in the texts. The variously unhappy endings of Achebe's first four novels—suicide, conviction for bribery, madness, a military coup—are suggestive of the need for fundamental change and new directions; it also offers coincidentally an opportunity for the re-examination of a system of beliefs that must meet changing circumstances.

In Ananthamurthy's Samskara too, the movement in a different direction is set afloat by an individual, Praneshacharya, who reconsiders his identity in terms of a community that has become rigid, static and ossified. Here we are reminded of two Sanskrit terms used to denote the two dimensions of change in any culture. 'Smruti' refers to the changeable and changing values whereas 'Shruti' denotes the enduring and unchanging values. Any kind of change in a tradition-bound society has to strike a delicate balance between these two. Ezeulu in Arrow of God tries to strike this balance very judiciously by his willingness to allow society to change to a certain extent, but genuinely wanting to retain its core. He sends his son to be his eye among the white men, but wants to retain the dignity of the tribe, which adds a heroic dimension to his inner conflict. Viewed in a broad perspective we notice that he is
not foolish like Okonkwo, who blindly resists all change, which is detrimental to any community. And through the mature wisdom of Obierika, Achebe reveals that he does not totally subscribe to the views held up by Okonkwo.

Subjective disagreement with an existing system and the longing for more acceptable modes can ultimately lead to an extreme form of individualism. This is artistically explored, though in radically different ways, in Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* and Arun Joshi's *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*. Their inability to conform to the inherited structures and 'irrelevant' values leads them to an idealism which eventually results in actual displacement. Passing through the different stages of estrangement, alienation and isolation, they both happen to be outside the prevalent structures, and ultimately face death. Their case too further reinforces our assumption that the crisis inherent in social transition creates 'unrecognized martyrs', outsiders, and that in tradition-oriented communities the individual can define his identity only in terms of the collective reality.

III

A closer view of the actual process of cultural contact, both in the case of India and West Africa, would be beneficial for a better understanding of the texts analysed
in this study. Dorothy Spencer is right when she observes that Indian fiction in English is a major source for "a systematic study of cultural contact and cultural change, with Indian worldview at the focus," which will increase one's "knowledge of the acculturation process." 47 With the introduction of European technology and English education, the Indian society changed itself from traditional to the transitional stage in the Klappean sense of the term. So in this transitional, and to some extent technologically advanced society, the question of identity attained a new significance. It is true that while a large majority of Indians remained institutionally loyal and committed, some did feel alienated under the impact of western rule. But what makes their conflict distinct is that the reasons for their alienation, unlike their African counterparts, were cultural. Hence, as we see in most of the Indian novels in English, their search for identity, whether collective or individual, tends to be psychological or philosophic in nature.

William Walsh maintains that it was "in the 1930s that the Indians began what has now turned out to be their very substantial contribution to the novel in English and one peculiarly suited to their talents." 48 And ever since, the development of Indian English novels seems to follow certain definite patterns and consists of well-defined stages.
It was after World War I that Indian English novels became determinedly more realistic and less idealized, where the novelists made deliberate attempts to depict the distress of the downtrodden classes, portraying India as she really was. The novels written between the two world wars were primarily concerned with the contemporary social milieu and were greatly influenced by the Gandhian ideology, whereby the novel proved to be highly beneficial to the nationalists and social revolutionaries for popularising and disseminating their cause. (For example, Kanthapura, Waiting for the Mahatma, The Untouchable). On account of the surging nationalist feelings prior to independence, the content of the novel underwent profound changes and it had to cater to new demands. Thus though the novels upto the 1950s could be viewed against the larger background of Indian socio-political reality, after the 1950s, however, the Indian novelists' interest moved from the public to the private sphere. Being a nation of relatively inward-looking people compared to the Africans or the westerners, the Indian novelists began to delineate in their works the individual's quest for the self and the accompanying inner anguish in all its varied and complex forms. Most of them, in their eagerness to find new themes in the absence of challenging sociological issues, "renounced the larger world in favour of the inner man" and engaged themselves in "a search for the essence of human living." Novelists like Anita Desai, Arun
Joshi, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande and regional writers like U. R. Ananthamurthy have very powerfully grappled with the problem of the individual in quest of his self against dominating collective claims, and have significantly altered the face of the Indian novel.

Novelists of the last three decades have made daring experiments with fictional techniques, innovative in respect of discourse, forging new idioms that would suit them most. It implies a conscious attempt to redefine Indian English novels by infusing myths, humour and fresh themes which were not familiar to the world at large. It also means an effort to reinterpret and rewrite the history of post-independence modern man, who is faced with greater mobility, choices and cultural interaction. Novelists of the second generation like Kamala Markandaya, Manohar Malgonkar and Bhabani Bhattacharya also reveal a perceptive understanding of the predicament of the modern man who has been taken out of the comfortable niche provided by convention and conformity, and bear witness to the profound changes that have taken place in the Indian society. This contemporary reality which has charted out new experiences, aspirations and challenges for the modern man does mirror in the novels written in the second half of the century.

The large corpus of Indian novels written in English, spread through nearly six decades and revealing certain
definite stages of growth, confirm our supposition that most of the Indian novelists do not have a set theory of colonialism. In fact they do not deal with a typical colonial situation as we find in the African context. East-West encounter in the Indian fictional world mostly takes the form of cultural encounter, and even the white characters like principal Brown in Narayan's *The English Teacher* are mostly peripheral, and there was much for the white man to learn from the ancient religions and traditional richness of this country. It was more a 'give and take' in the case of India and the West whereas in Africa the westerner was eager to 'pacify the primitive tribes of the lower Niger'. Hence "while the British gained a strategic base for the expansion and maintenance of their empire and a ready market for their goods and commodities, they also learnt about an ancient culture and religion as well as a rich variety of customs, manners and languages of the Indian peninsula." In spite of the internal political and economic unity brought about by the Raj, and the technological innovations like the railway and the printing press, only a relative minority was influenced by European thought, for "India clung to her own philosophic background considering it superior to the West" as Nehru remarks in *The Discovery of India*. He further adds that "the real impact and influence of the West were on the practical life which was obviously superior to the Eastern." So much so, for the vast majority of people, no
deep impact was felt in terms of their thought patterns or life style; it was just living in two worlds with nothing in common.

On the other hand, volumes have been written about the devastating impact Western (Christian) religion had on the African mind and modes of thinking because "Christian missionaries had a roaring business in the African market," unlike India where the impact never went beyond the periphery. Ancient Hindu religious tradition with its well established sacred writings had always provided an average Indian with a strong philosophy to live with. Even the social stratification prevalent in India based on Varnashrama dharma too is to a large extent based on the caste system dictated by the Hindu ethos. It was not within the powers of the white man to disturb a system so deeply rooted in a strong tradition. So while colonialism totally disrupted the tribal social structure of Africa by their conquest in the religious sphere which eventually extended to the economic and cultural sphere as well, in India the change was more perceptible in the economic and political life of the people. Perhaps as a reaction to an unwelcome alien presence in their midst, "the institution of family and religion became calcified and petrified resulting in blocking the dynamics of social structure. Caste system which now justified itself through racism made the Indian society sick and stagnant. The Hindu society thus tended to become non-
flexible, rigid and even tradition-ridden..." as has been well-exemplified in Anand's Untouchable and Coolie.

Though the main cause of the alienation of the colonized might be political, it however operates because of the psychological, social and cultural conflicts between the two contrasting worldviews of the colonizer and the colonized. It draws our attention to a major difference in the impact of colonialism on the Indian and African psyche. Having received a peripheral and glamorous view of the colonizer's culture through the colonial education, the colonized, prone to permanent dependance, evaluates his own culture, only superficially, and thus often develops a 'marginal personality'. A few characters of Achebe and Aluko are perhaps the most representative of this phenomenon. These characters get uprooted because of their marginality. But the major characters of Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan have their roots deep in the Indian traditions with a strong written literature to support their worldview in contrast to the oral literary traditions of the Africans. Raja Rao's Ramaswamy in The Serpent and the Rope is so preoccupied with metaphysical questions, he ignores the sordid realities of life. He oscillates between the East and the West, Hinduism and Buddhism, materialism and spiritualism before he comes back to India, marking the end of his search. His homelessness has both a physical and metaphysical dimension to it, and it ends only when he attains spiritual maturity, rooted in
philosophical convictions. Padmanabha Iyer in *Comrade Kirillov* struggles hard with multiple identities before he finally resolves his crisis by becoming a marxist intellectual. Similarly Govindan Nair in *The Cat and Shakespeare* keeps himself busy with metaphysical problems and exhibits a rare equanimity of mind by which he can live in the corrupt world of the war-time ration shop in colonial India and also in the metaphysically real world of the *Upanishads*. The India we find here is one which is being exploited politically, economically and socially by the colonial forces, but he reveals a philosophic non-attachment, that rare quality of mind advocated in the *Bhagvat Gita*. Thus "though living in the colonial India, he has his being in the traditional Hindu community which is stable and has not undergone much societal change. He has no identity problems at all because he realizes himself fully within the traditional Hindu culture."55 In *Kanthapura*, things fall apart disastrously and the entire village with its poetry and romance is totally destroyed. Ranga Gowda reports, "there is neither man nor mosquito in Kanthapura" (267). Yet his heart does not lose hope because "a spiritual communion is established between the villagers and their leader Mahatma Gandhi."56 Achakka describes it beautifully when she says:

"Kenchamma forgive us, but there is something that has entered our hearts, an abundance like the Himavathy on Gauri's night, when light comes
floating down the Rampur corner... and they will go down the Ghats... and the Mahatma will gather it all." (Kanthapura 265)

It is obvious that in contrast to the African situation, here the centrality of religion or of ideology or of both holds together something more meaningful than the mere materiality of a village. Even if the village is physically destroyed, its soul is not; it remains unaffected at the core. And it ultimately provides the villagers with a sense of contentment that satisfies them because they know that even if they are rooted out from temporal realities, they are not totally uprooted. Even in Anand's The Untouchable, Bakha's social alienation ends when he sees that the great Mahatma is with him and that a new social order based on machine may end his humiliation. Kamala Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve (1954) comes very near to pessimism for 'hope without an object cannot live.' Here Rukmini, the narrator-heroine, is stripped of all possible happiness and finally estranged from her house which was an embodiment of her past. Though she loses everything in the end, she challenges fate by adopting a son and hoping to rebuild fortunes. Thus though the clouds of ignominy and frustration pervade Third World writing in general, the Indian scene presents a basically different picture as in the typical Indian novel in English we hardly come across incidents of things falling apart or consequential social/existential despair. Thus
colonialism, for these writers as well as their characters, is an extraneous condition which has affected only the ephemeral aspects of the Indian reality, only the external ramifications of the essential core.

With these broad perspectives about the colonial experience of Africa and India, and a study of the characteristics of societies in transition, we move on to a symptomatic analysis of the five novels selected for study here—Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964), Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* (1964), U. R. Ananthamurthy's *Samskara* (1978) and Arun Joshi's *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (1971). These novels, each one in its own unique way, deals primarily with the inner turmoil and conflict of characters, who feel torn between competing loyalties. Being very much part of a collective ethos, they are not the totally estranged heroes of the Western fiction; but individuals who commute between the corporate world of an integrated society and the lonely world of the individual consciousness. Despite the disparities of their socio-cultural milieu and the ethos which nurtured them, they all share the same predicament in their quest for a personalized truth, they all turn non-conformists, experience anguish at a very deep level and find themselves disowned by their collective codes. Achebe's Umuofia and Umuaro have very strong identities of their own; unified and strengthened by a collective consciousness, they enjoy.
security and stability in a communal way, with its own communal ethic. Characters of Achebe who reveal traits of individualism in contradistinction to the common will are being pulled by two opposite drives—the communal and the individualistic. Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* therefore moves at two levels—the level of Okonkwo, the intense individual with a passionate belief in all the values and traditions of his people and the level of Umuofia’s collective will which has decided to accept change in its stride. Similarly in *Arrow of God*, the tension is built up around the pursuit of Ezeulu’s ambitions and the commitment he owes to the community. *Arrow of God* concludes with this remark which sums up the main argument here:

> So in the end only Umuaro and its leaders saw the final outcome. To them the issue was simple. Their God had taken sides with them against his headstrong and ambitious priest and thus upheld the wisdom of their ancestors—that no man however great was greater than his people; that no one ever won judgement against his clan. (Arrow of God 238 emphasis added)

The fact that the individual is part of the corporate life of the community, and that an individualist, despite his noblest intentions, is frowned upon and viewed with suspicion, is once again highlighted with extreme pathos in
Gabriel Okara's *The Voice*. His individualism, if any, and his quest, is looked down upon by his townsmen as he struggles to find the meaning of 'it'. The whole town of Amatu (except for the outcaste woman and the cripple), led by Chief Izongo and the village elders find him a threat to the prevalent solidarity and expel him from their clan, tied to a canoe to be drowned in the whirlpool. He is given no burial, no tears are shed for him and we hear no more about Okolo, which means 'the voice'. The 'alienation' and 'isolation' experienced by these characters from their land and its people sharpens our awareness about the solidarity and social cohesions of African life. For them the village community is an extended family to which all the villagers belong; they share their pains and pleasures. And an individual has his place within well-defined limits which are not to be ignored.

A similar motif does emerge very powerfully in Indian novels as well. In Ananthamurthy's *Sanskara*, Praneshacharya's journey from Durvasapura to the anonymity of the world outside his *agrahara*, to segregated communities beyond his familiar world, is in a sense part of his struggle to redefine his identity. In a state of confused identity and consequent inner turmoil, he decides to reject the codes of the community of which he formed so far a significant member; eager to forge a new image for himself, he opts for a revolt at the level of consciousness, plunging himself headlong into
obscurity. The total 'isolation', 'alienation' from the collective consciousness which hitherto sustained him, and the encounter with a new reality that is entirely unfamiliar and alien to the ethos and values of the agrahara, offers him much light after a prolonged period of darkness. But this light which brings his uncertainty to an end, is symbolic of the inner vision of the typical outsider; it is the privilege of the outsider, and not to be seen or shared by people who do not share the turbulence of his soul.

The case of Bimal Biswas is indeed a 'strange case', characterized by a constant quest for a reality beyond the immediate. Prompted by the intangible bond that exists between him and the tribals, he disappears from the camp to join the community of the tribals. Unable to cope with the demands of the society, he decides to pursue his solitary quest even if that means expulsion from or disowning by inherited structures. He takes upon himself the mantle of the outsider, escapes from the mundane world to an unconventional solidarity which could be qualified as rather 'primitive', but finds contentment there. His refusal to abide by the prescriptive norms of the established collectivity ultimately leads to his total estrangement and tragic end.

This study hopes to examine the nature of the crises experienced by these heroes at very critical periods of their
self-realization. The problems associated with it get further complicated as they are all part of communities which are relatively static and ossified; it fails to provide them with a definite, positive identity. From the sociological point of view, "a society fails to supply adequate identity when symbols are disturbed to the extent that they no longer give reliable reference points which can locate themselves socially, realize themselves sentimentally, and declare (to self and others) who they are."57 Thus, passing through a crisis for diverse reasons, and feeling at the experiential level the inadequacy of the community to supply its members with a definite image, the protagonists go through the anguish of an 'identity crisis', and pay for it with their lives or with rejection by the collective codes.

It is also to be kept in mind that these characters can neither be judged nor appreciated by the criteria set by the Western discourse, because their conflicts, problems and responses are rooted in the complex social fabric in which they operate. Hence this study proposes a different approach to the understanding of human character within the contextual framework of a changing society, which is a post-colonial reality. Even other novels which employ a post-colonial discourse need to be read in a similar manner to grasp its full implications. Hence familiar conceptions like 'flat' and 'round' characters or 'static' or 'dynamic' plots, or even the western concept of changing characters are not
particularly relevant to novels and characters set in a post-colonial milieu. Meenakshi Mukherjee's observation about the complexity of the determinants of the Indian novel seems relevant here and could be applied to African novel as well with necessary variations:

It is my contention that the novel in India can be seen as the product of configurations in philosophical, aesthetic, economic and political forces in the larger life of the country. Despite obvious regional variations, a basic pattern seems to emerge from shared factors like the puranic heritage, hierarchical social structure, colonial education, disjunction of agrarian life and many others that affect the form of the novel as well as its content.  

Her contention briefly suggests that due to this substantial difference in the nature of the social reality of post-colonial Third World societies, the western concept of 'realism' is not really suited to the study and appreciation of the literary works produced in these countries. Rather our attempt here would be to view them as repositories and propagators of a particular worldview, generated by factors peculiar to these nations. Makarand R. Paranjape argues that the difference between the Third World novel and the western novel is "more strategic than real," aimed at many things
other than merely literary or cultural. He adds that this difference is invoked "to escape universalization and subordination; it is used to secure power and identity; to create an alternative space from which to function; to redefine the rules of the game that someone else is making; to survive in a meaningful manner in a system of international economic and cultural competition and exploitation."59 However that is, the initiative at least as far as the novel is concerned, has passed from the west to the Third World. And the most exciting novelists today hail from the Third World, though a good number of them might live in the West.
NOTES


2 Ashcroft et al. 9.


4 Fanon 168.

5 Fanon 168-69.

6 Fanon 178-79.


Achebe violently reacts against the treatment of negroes and the African culture in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and calls it "an offensive and totally deplorable book" which plagues us still. He says that it is a book "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." Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa," *Research in African Literatures* 9. 1 (1978): 11

Fanon describes 'decolonization' as 'the veritable creation of new men... the thing which has been colonized becoming man during the same process by which it frees itself' (*The Wretched of the Earth* 29-30).


```
....You sty me
in this hard rock, while you do keep from me
The rest o' the island.
```
Caribbean novelist George Lamming, in his *Pleasures of Exile* (1960) has turned Caliban into a metaphor for the West Indian, who, he says, is 'exiled from his gods, exiled from his nature, exiled from his own name.' So just as Caliban in Shakespeare's play bemoans the loss of his island, his language, and his gods, so do Caribbean intellectuals bemoan the loss of their identity due to colonization. Margaret P. Joseph, author of *Caliban in Exile: The Outsider in Caribbean Fiction* does not think that the symbol of Caliban can be applied to other parts of the Commonwealth, because "Africa and India had their own culture and history before the advent of colonization" unlike the Caribbean or West Indian island. ("Writers Away from Home", interview, Jaiboy Joseph, *Span* Jan. 1994: 33).


16 Bruce King 57.


23 Viney Kirpal 16.


25 Viney Kirpal 16.

26 Viney Kirpal 17.


31 Riesman 6.

32 Riesman 7.

33 Riesman 9-17.

34 Riesman 12.

35 Riesman 13.


40 Riesman 13.

41 Riesman 17-18.


43 Om P. Juneja 13.

44 Klapp 123.


46 G. D. Killam 9.


51 Om P. Juneja 15.

53 Om P. Juneja 15.

54 Om P. Juneja 15-16.

55 Om P. Juneja 17.


57 Ortin E. Klapp, viii.
