Preface

J. M. Coetzee and Chinua Achebe are the two most prominent contemporary writers from Africa. While Coetzee has won the Booker Award and Nobel Prize, Chinua Achebe’s works are equally famous. Though racially the two writers belong to different races their experiences of colonialism are the same. They vibrate with the human passions that are not confined to some part of the world but are universal in nature. That is why these two writers rule our hearts. For this reason these two writers are taken together in this study.

Both the writers, J. M. Coetzee and Chinua Achebe, portray the racial conflicts which are never missing in their society. The writers are sad about the deplorable conditions in their respective nations and are trying to bring out the pain and the suffering of their people. The present study attempts to bring out the racial conflicts in the works of these authors, which is the purpose of the study.

Coetzee was born in Cape Town, South Africa on 9 February, 1940 to parents of Afrikaner descent. He is a novelist, a literary critic and a translator. Coetzee has won the Booker Prize twice and was awarded the 2003 Nobel Prize in Literature. Life and Times of Michael K won the Booker Prize in 1983 and Disgrace won it in 1999. He is said to be one of the greatest living writers of English language. His works have been translated into many languages and he has received many more awards other than the Booker Prize and the Nobel Prize for literature.

J.M. Coetzee is a writer who is strongly influenced by his own personal background of being born and growing up in South Africa. Although a white writer living in South Africa during apartheid, Coetzee grew to believe in and write with
strong anti-imperialist feelings. His international writings tended to set him apart from fellow authors in South Africa and is said to be mostly influenced by the postmodernist writers of Europe and America. These writers also contained many anti-imperialist sentiments as a reaction to the Vietnam War. Many of Coetzee's personal experiences and beliefs can be seen in his works. Coetzee describes his sense of alienation from fellow Afrikaners in his biography, *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life*. Coetzee also writes in his biography and his novels about the laws that divided him and others into racial categories that served to further alienate him.

This is evidenced in his first novel *Dusklands*. In this novel Coetzee focuses on two settings: one, the US State Department during the Vietnam era and two, stories of the exploration and conquest of Southern Africa in the 1760’s by a man named Jacobus Coetzee. These two vastly different locations work together to bring out the alarm and paranoia of aggressors no matter what the location and to show the unthinkable ways in which dominant groups impose their ways upon other cultures.

His first novel to win the Booker Prize, *The Life and Times of Michael K*, is set in Cape Town, a city on the verge of racial wars, and centers around a gardener who attempts to transport his dying mother to the farm of her youth. Although she dies during the journey, Michael K continues on to her farm with her ashes. He lives quite happily in solitude on her old farm until he is captured and accused of aiding guerillas. The great weight of the novel relies on the fact that it does not focus in on racial separations but is more concerned with saving humanity as a whole.

In *Disgrace*, Coetzee deals with a South African Professor named David who goes out to visit his daughter, Lucy's farm. While he is there, a gang of two men and
one boy rapes his daughter. When he later sees the boy at a party thrown by Lucy's neighbor, Petrus, he demands justice. Petrus refuses, and promises protection from further attacks to Lucy only if she marries him. The issues in this novel deal with many of the current plights of South Africa. Land, crime, rape, lack of police protection and racial divides are all themes of the novel and problems in modern day South Africa. The proposed study aims at analyzing these sociological problems with Coetzee’s works as reference.

All of Coetzee's writings are similar in that they often centre on a solitary character. No direct moral is ever given, but rather situations are set up for the readers to think about. Coetzee’s aim is not to provide solutions, but to highlight problems and have the reader form their own conclusions. More often than not, these problems concern the racial divides which plague modern South Africa. The study strives to look for the causes of these racial conflicts in the works of J. M. Coetzee and will delve into the grievances of the victims of the racial prejudice through the psychological and emotional journey of Coetzee’s characters, which in turn reflect the citizens of South Africa.

Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) is known the world over for having played a germinal role in the founding and development of African literature. He is considered among the most significant world writers. He is most well known for the groundbreaking 1958 novel *Things Fall Apart*, a novel still considered to be required reading the world over. It has sold over twelve million copies and has been translated into more than fifty languages.
Professor Achebe's global significance lies not only in his talent and recognition as a writer, but also as a critical thinker and essayist who has written extensively on questions of the role of culture in Africa and the social and political significance of aesthetics and analysis of the postcolonial state in Africa. He is renowned, for example, for *An Image of Africa*, his trenchant and famous critique of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Today, this critique is recognized as one of the most generative interventions on Conrad; and one that opened the social study of literary texts, particularly the impact of power relations on 20th century literary imagination.

Prior to joining NBC, in 1958, Achebe published his first novel *Things Fall Apart*. The groundbreaking novel centers on the cultural clash between native African culture and the traditional white culture of missionaries and the colonial government in place in Nigeria. An unflinching look at the discord, the book was a startling success and has become required reading in many schools across the world.

The 1960s proved to be a creatively fertile period for Achebe. It was during this decade that he wrote the novels *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964) and *A Man of the People* (1966), all of which address the issue of traditional ways of life coming into conflict with new, often colonial, points of view. In a related endeavor, in 1967, Chinua Achebe and Christopher Okigbo, a renowned poet, co-founded a publishing company, the Citadel Press, which they intended to run as an outlet for a new kind of African-oriented children's books. Okigbo was soon killed, however, in the Nigerian civil war. Two years later, Achebe toured the United States with Gabriel Okara and Cyprian Ekwensi, fellow writers, giving lectures at various
universities. The 1960s also marked Achebe's wedding to Christie Chinwe Okoli in 1961, and they went on to have four children.

When he returned to Nigeria from the United States, Achebe became a research fellow and later a Professor of English (1976–81) at the University of Nigeria. During this time, he also served as Director of two Nigerian Publishing Houses, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. and Nwankwo-Ifejika Ltd.


While back in the United States in 1975, at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Achebe gave a lecture called ‘An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*,’ in which he asserted that Joseph Conrad's famous novel dehumanizes Africans.

The work referred to Conrad as a thoroughgoing racist, and, when published in essay form, it went on to become a seminal postcolonial African work. This along with other things brings out the thoroughgoing themes of racial conflict in his novels.

The year 1987 would mark the release of Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*, which was shortlisted for the Booker McConnell Prize. The following year, he published *Hopes and Impediments* (1988). The 1990s began with tragedy. Achebe met with an accident in Nigeria that left him paralyzed from the waist down and would confine him to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Soon after, he moved to the
United States and taught at Bard College, just north of New York City, where he remained for 15 years. In 2009, Achebe left Bard to join the faculty of Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, serving as Professor of Africana Studies as well as the David and Marianna Fisher University Professor. Chinua Achebe won several awards over the course of his writing career, including the Man Booker International Prize (2007) and the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize (2010). He also received honorary degrees from more than 30 universities around the world. Chinua Achebe died on March 21, 2013 at the age of 82 at Boston, Massachusetts. His is an enduring legacy which brings out the racial conflict still persistent in Africa which is a legacy of the colonial times.

Unlike Achebe, Coetzee’s works never make a direct statement. Even his Nobel speech is not direct. He always blurs the boundaries of non-fiction and fiction, history and myth, reality and imagination. This is called as metafictional discourse, a literary technique in the modern novel, in which the novelist is self-conscious of the act of novel writing, a technique in which the fiction goes one step beyond.

For the sake of clarity, the thesis is divided into seven chapters. An outline of these chapters is given below.

**Chapter I** introduces the life and works of John Maxwell Coetzee and Chinua Achebe.

**Chapter II** discusses the socio-cultural and historical background to the works of J. M. Coetzee and Chinua Achebe. The South Africa of Coetzee is a complex place as is Nigeria of Achebe. The history in South Africa is multi-layered and conflicts simmer just below the surface. It has been racially overrun on a large
scale, not once, but twice. The indigenous hunter-gatherers were overrun by the Bantu farmers, darker in complexion. So, even before the arrival of Europeans there were racial tensions in South Africa. The next big wave to hit this troubled land was European colonialism. Like many other places, South Africa was twice colonized, first by the Dutch and then by the British. Racism did not end with freedom, but continued with the Apartheid regime. This socio-cultural history is discussed in this chapter. Nigeria is a colonially carved out country with a Christian majority but a growing Muslim minority which makes it a cauldron of religious riots. This chapter will deal with the historical background of Nigeria too with its Christian, Muslim and pagan conflicts.

Chapter III analyzes in detail the colonial conflicts vs. native themes in the works of John Maxwell Coetzee and Chinua Achebe. It discusses the nationalities and races the authors are talking about and analyzes how their life as well as their conflicts is portrayed.

Chapter IV deals with the issues of racism in Africa, and more specifically Nigeria and South Africa. It also discusses the response of Africans and Africa, as portrayed by the works and characters of the two writers, who are the subject of this thesis, Chinua Achebe and J. M. Coetzee.

Chapter V tackles with the problem of racial conflicts in Nigerian and South African societies and Ethical responses of the two authors under discussion in this thesis Chinua Achebe and J. M. Coetzee. Discussing issues such as masculinity and femininity in the native Igo culture of Nigeria, it also deals with the Igbo-centricity of Achebe and the problems of racism and postmodernist reaction to it in South Africa.
Chapter VI researches into the post-modernist art and the post-colonial themes in the writing of Chinua Achebe and J. M. Coetzee, which have emerged after 1960s in two of the most prominent and influential nations of Africa, i.e., Nigeria and South Africa. It discusses the intersections between the native pagan cultures and the imported religion of Christianity. It delves into the meta-fictional discourse and the destruction of fictional illusion of J. M. Coetzee. It discusses the themes of change and tradition in Nigeria and how modernity and education are affecting it, and also how these changes are affecting the racial profile of the nations.

Chapter VII concludes the thesis with a summing up of the findings of the present research work. It will sum up the comparative study, which is done in this thesis, of the racial conflict of J. M. Coetzee and Chinua Achebe.
Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to my Supervisor Dr. Sadhana Agrawal, Assistant Professor, MLB Govt. College of Excellence, Gwalior, for her insightful guidance. I thank her for her support and encouragement throughout my research work.

I am very grateful to the Head of the Department of English, M.L.B. Govt. College of Excellence, Gwalior, Dr. Archana Agrawal. I am also grateful to my teacher, Dr. Bharati Karnik, Professor of English, M. L. B. Govt. College of Excellence, Gwalior, for her continual support in academic and other areas. Many other members of the Department of English of M.L.B. College, who are professors and eminent scholars, continuously guided me throughout the term of research. I express my heartfelt gratitude to them.

I am grateful to the Librarian of my Research Centre, M.L.B. Govt. College of Excellence for giving me full access to the extremely rich library of the college. I am also grateful to the Chief Librarian of the British Council Library, Connaught Place, New Delhi for giving me access to the vastly rich library and hence helping me with supplement texts.

I am also thankful to Dr. D. S. Shitole, the Principal, M.L.B. Government College of Excellence.

Special thanks are extended to my friends, who continually supported me mentally and otherwise, Ramlakhan Dhakad, Bunty Dhakad and Pankaj Saxena. My heartfelt reverence to my family, whose continuous support and affection made it possible for me to complete my thesis.

Mahesh Kumar Kushwah