CHAPTER IV

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Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family. (www.brainyquote.com)

This chapter undertakes the study of the theme of ‘education’ and the consequent ‘enlightenment’ it brings about on individuals and the society at large as reflected in the fictional works of Achebe and Karanth. The chapter is divided into two parts for the sake of convenience. The first part concentrates on Achebe’s Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God and Karanth’s Return to the Soil, while the second part focuses on Achebe’s No Longer at Ease and A Man of the People in a subtle way.

Modernity, like electricity has no independent existence of its own but manifests itself through various indicators. It makes its presence felt through various manifestations like education, medicine, science and technology, politics, social life, religion, business etc. This chapter examines in detail the meaning, types, features and objectives of education, its role in traditional societies and how it can be taken as a pivotal indicator of ‘Modernity’.

The term Education calls for an explanation. Etymologically the word education has its origin in the Latin educare meaning ‘to bring out, bring forth what is within’ (http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/learning). Wikipedia equates Education with learning, meaning acquiring new knowledge, behavior, skills, values, preferences or understanding and involves ‘synthesizing different types of information. In a broader sense education is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability of an individual. In its technical sense education is the
process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills and values from one generation to another. (http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/learning)

Considering the various ways in which education is defined we can arrive at a general meaning of education as any learning which helps one to think, analyse and interpret anything so as to make use of it in making a living. However the prime importance is being given to knowledge both theoretical and practical. In other words it could be a skill development which has a three folded utility: knowledge/ skill, improvement in terms of attitude, behavior etc and earning for livelihood.

This then leads to the types of education. Education can be broadly classified into two types:

1. Formal education and
2. Informal or Alternate education.

Formal Education is the usual, regular class room teaching. Knowledge / information are imparted systematically through institutions/persons recruited for the said purpose with fixed syllabi to be covered in a fixed time. The advantage here is that any person interested in any type of learning irrespective of his parentage, heritage, caste, community or even social status can acquaint and acquire the same knowledge/information. After successful completion of the said period he/she is declared and certified to be qualified and can make a career out of it. Thus a farmer's son can become a teacher and a teacher's son can become a Vakil or a Doctor if he fulfills the criteria. In other words learning is standardized or universalized.

Learning or developing of interpersonal skills through institutions helps people in various ways to improve themselves. Usually in ancient India it was the temples and purohits called Aigalu who imparted knowledge and it was usually
conventional knowledge only i.e. the scriptures and other related things. Even in the western countries, churches played a major role in imparting learning.

Good examples of this formal education seen in the fictional works of Achebe and Karanth are Lachha, Rama, Nagaveni’s brothers and others attending school at Mangalore and later at Madras for graduation; Sunalini and Bhagirathi are English educated; Nwoye attends the missionary school; Obi is educated in missionary school and also overseas; Odili, Beatrice, Ikem are all university educated. Most significant is that even the Godman Ezeulu sends his son for the new learning.

Informal or Alternate education focuses on learning by seeing, listening, doing out of interest and out of need. Here we don’t have a teacher and taught structure or any institutional teaching. Any new knowledge or learning is acquired by seeing others doing it or hearing about it or even by self learning. In fact this is what would happen in the olden days, wherein children would acquire skills of their family from their parents, elders, near and dear ones and also friends. That is how a farmer’s son would learn farming from his elders and a weaver’s son would become a weaver only. Children would perfect the skill they learnt by constant practice. Children never had to face any tests, examinations, approvals or any challenges either.

Ample examples of this are seen in the texts of Karanth and Achebe. Rama learns music just by seeing his mother playing on the violin in Return to the Soil; Kencha learns hunting and catching a prey from his grandfather and Tukra in Headman of the Little Hill; Belli learns basket weaving from Choma in Choma’s Drum; Manjula is adept in dance, music and fine arts which has come to her from her mother Bhavani in The Woman of Basrur; Nwoye learns the art of tapping palm wine and reed flute making from Ikemefuna and Ezinma learns fire making from her
mother and others in Things Fall Apart. Thus knowledge / skill are passed on by practical learning.

Taken in a different perspective education means not only learning, but also unlearning and re-learning. To elaborate, the capacity of man to learn new things, acquire new knowledge/skill, explore new avenues, develop the spirit of enquiry and the like, all enlighten a person and lead him to progress. Just as we try to acquire any new knowledge, some of our existing ideas and knowledge not in use are eliminated or unlearned. For instance earlier all entries and calculations were done manually. But with the invention of calculators and computers manual work has become easier and handy. Similarly, to improve, one needs to learn good habits and unlearn bad habits. So it can be concluded that unlearning is also a step forward towards positive learning or education. Learning also means adjustment, accommodation, flexibility and adaptability. Be it in textual learning, behavioral patterns, manners or mannerisms any constructive learning is always for development and betterment. For instance learning of any new language or skill definitely widens the scope of knowledge of a person.

The third step in education is re-learning meaning repetitive, intensive or modified learning. Re-learning aims at perfection just as repeated or constant practice of any skill makes one perfect in that particular skill.

Does education bring about ‘enlightenment’ or even ‘Modernity’ is a debatable question? Going by the simple analogy that education enhances the understanding and adaptability of a person towards changing situations, opens up new avenues, develops the spirit of enquiry and broadens the outlook of an individual, we can infer that education does enlighten a person. When a man’s attitude changes, it brings about a change in his speech and action too, thereby bringing about an all round change in the person. When the people or the public change, the society in turn
changes. Hence we can logically conclude that education definitely modernizes an individual and the society as a whole. It rationalizes a person towards various issues, brings about an attitudinal change, accords an upward mobility in the social structure as a result of which many from the lower class graduate to the middle class. Thus education helps in modernizing and uplifting the entire society, envisaging a better life at the individual level and gross progress and betterment at the societal level.

But, at the same time there are ample examples and instances history has shown us that the so called education has made man greedy, avaricious, has disintegrated the families, and has lead to the destruction of humanity. The global killer wars, the recent 9/11 tragedy, flight hijacking etc are relevant examples to quote a few. Such instances have been apathetic and detrimental to human progress. Hence, one cannot out rightly conclude that education can mean enlightenment and progress or even perverted progress. It is definitely a combination of both.

Before analyzing the impact of education on societies we need to know the position of education in traditional societies so that the two set ups can be compared.

**Education in Traditional Societies**

The Traditional societies gave importance to life skills and family vocation rather than the standardized European education. For example, in India all that was prevalent before formal education started was the family vocational training/education. As per this, a carpenter’s son was always trained in carpentry and a priest’s son was always trained in priestly activities, scriptures, astrology and the like. It was unheard of that a person took to any profession other than that of the family profession. Thus Rama Ithal in Karanth’s *Return to the Soil* being the only priest in the surrounding area, in the beginning wants his son also to take up priesthood. Even the family also is very keen about the same. Similarly in *The Woman of Basrur* Shari
wants her daughter Chandri to follow the family tradition of courtesans. For her, education is secondary or has very minimum significance compared to the family profession.

As Emmanuel Obiechina points out in his book, *Culture, Tradition and Society* in the West Africa;

In case of Africa, earlier to the introduction of western literary education children were inducted into the traditional ways of life in two ways:

(a) By formal teaching in initiation ceremonies, and

(b) By informal teaching in seeing and following the examples of grown ups—through “watching and imitating” as Phoebe and Simon Ottenberg have called it. (1975 p4)

By participating in the everyday life of the community, children would come to know the rights and duties of the individual, the values, beliefs and the likes of the community; the sanctions and etiquettes of social behavior; and in the same way they acquired a knowledge of the material repertoire of the culture. Any type of learning was usually through contact only and it was rather hard to think of any learning outside the immediate culture. Moreover, traditional learning accorded mobility only within a fixed radius and was always with reference to the individuals’ particular milieu. As a result of this restricted mobility the traditional individual tended to be more and more insular. Traditional learning was more oral in nature and also vernacular, be it the Yoruba, Igbo, the Huasa and the like. As such myths, fables, songs and everything was passed on from generations to generations in the oral mode only thus, in *Things Fall Apart* the tribe knows no formal education and all that the children learn are from their elders or peers. The narrator, regarding the life skills
learnt by Nwoye says, “Nwoye learns fashioning out flutes from bamboo stems, and even from the elephant grass; learns the names of all birds and sets clever traps for the little bush rodents; knows which trees make the strongest bows”. (1996, p26)

Similarly Ezinma learns the domestic chores of the house by watching her mother and other aunts like carrying the fire for cooking and other things. Thus we find that no importance is given to formal education. It is only later i.e. after the entry of the English that schools are opened and emphasis is given for the promotion of formal learning.

Thus we can conclude that traditional societies like India and Africa during the pre-colonial age did not give much importance to formal, standardized education system. Let us see how Achebe and Karanth treat ‘Education’ in their novels and the impact it has on the Igbo and Indian traditions. Both were born and brought up in societies which valued informal education earlier and opened up themselves for formal English education only later with the contact of the English.

**Colonialism and Education**

Pages of History reveal that strong versus the weak, haves versus have nots, the rich versus poor is not a new concept. Attempts by powerful states to establish sovereignty over less powerful states have been there since time immemorial. Commenting on the strategy of the imperial power Viney Paulkar says:

Subjugation and control of territories either through direct occupation or through indirect control in the form of economic, political or military aid is imperialism and Great Britain was the main imperialistic power. (1989 p9)

Going to the causes of colonialism, one finds that the European powers had several motives in stretching their territories. It could be economic motives like
expansion of business and trade by buying the raw materials and marketing the finished goods as in the case of India; could be politically motivated as in the case of France which resorted to colonial adventures after the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 in order to regenerate a sense of glory and grandeur; could be to exercise the basic human instinct of supremacy as in the case of Hitler, Mussolini and the like; could be in a liberating and refining spree as in the case of American intervention in Vietnam to liberate it from communism, and also the Whites who wanted to educate and improve the natives, which was the Whiteman's burden as Kipling sang. Deadlar the French political philosopher analyses the development of imperialism in these words:

A struggle which may originate in economic competition may gradually evolve into a political power and prestige as in the case of the entry of Britain into Asia and Africa or alternatively what may begin as a moral quest may with time develop political and economic contours as in the case of Russian imperialism in Czechoslovakia.

(1989 p104)

Thus we find that for whatever reason the British colonized Asia and Africa the impact they had on these two continents were both beneficial and detrimental. On the one hand colonization modernised these societies in terms of new modes of production, liberal ideas and education. In this regard it is worth recalling Romesh Chander Dutt's words:

The British introduced the native to new modes of production that utterly changed the economic structure; it introduced the native to an alternative religion, (the alternative religion worked as an escape for the depressed classes – for example for the untouchables in India, whom it freed from the rigid Hindu caste system, that otherwise only
death could have released them from) and in general to liberal ideas
and education enabling him to examine critically traditional. 1906
(p149)\textsuperscript{8}

On the other hand the colonizers considered education as an important tool in
enlightening the natives not just generally but also regarding the British History,
British culture, British achievement, British language and also kindled awakening in
them. This had a two folded impact on the natives. One set of natives who were
exposed to the new learning were carried away by it and accepted the colonizer as the
best and mimicked the colonizers lifestyle in terms of easily recognizable external
symbols like racing cars, flaunting English, fashionable outfits etc. Such people went
a step further and started degrading their own mother culture, admonished everything
native as mean, backward and below dignity. Frantz Fanon in his *The Wretched of the
Earth* writes of how an inferiority complex was systematically built into the colonial
mind:

> These societies have shown little progress except in the acquisition of
> expensive, cognizable external indicators of progress, like air
> conditioned offices, high rise buildings, industrial complexes, cars
> airplanes and so on. But they have failed to confront the basic
> problems of poverty, unemployment, over population hunger, illiteracy
> and disease. (1967 p16)\textsuperscript{9}.

Commenting on the educated set of native Indians Macaulay says:

> The other set of people (the educated elite) were those who due to a
> broadened exposure started realizing the drawbacks and limitations of
> their native cultures and took to corrective measures in order to set
> right or at least plug the loop holes. It is worthwhile to recall
Macaulay’s words in dubbing the new set of people who sprang up as, “Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions and in intellect “(1971 p 291)\textsuperscript{10}

Good examples of such people in India are Rajaram Mohan Roy, Dayananda Saraswathi, Ranade and others who took to the reformation of their societies: Even writers partook the role of contributing their mite for the improvement of their respective societies. Such educated elite also kindled the spirit of patriotism and nationalism among the masses. In this way we can say that colonialism had multifarious effects on the colonies.

**Education in Africa**

In the pre-colonial Africa formal education was never given any emphasis. Nobody seemed to be bothered about formal education. It is only later i.e. after the entry of the English that formal education is initiated in Africa. On entering into Africa the English start schools, hospitals and also open their place of worship – churches. In the beginning the natives are reluctant and even skeptic to join the new schools. But later on gradually more than the need or utility it is the fascination for the new that makes youngsters like Nwoye take to formal learning by attending the English school. It is only gradually that the natives taste the benefits of English education as it could provide the locals an entry into civil services. So great is the importance assigned to education that in *No Longer at Ease* the Umuofia Progressive Union even pools money to educate the intelligent students of their community. Another reason being, if the young boys are educated and get into civil services they could at least help their fellow natives in getting a job.

**Education in India**

During and earlier to the colonial rule the type of education prevailing in India
was the vernacular, sanskritised and Hindu scriptic education. Sanskrit fixed and canonized the language of the Hindu law, religion and culture. Religion played a pivotal role in educating the public. For example, the Hindu temples had their own priests - *Aigalu* who imparted the basic education that too only for the boys; the Muslims had the moulvis who did the same. Thus education was a part of religion.

Apart from this, there were a few schools which combined religious and secular learning, in which pupils in addition to the religious instructions also learnt other languages. Public instructions were never the business of the states. Main support of the schools and colleges were the “free will” offerings of the people. It was common in the Sanskrit school for the Pandit to support himself by the dakshinas, customary gifts of the community, to house and feed without charging the pupils who sat at his feet. In the madarasas or Arabic schools, the poor student coming from a distance could ordinarily obtain the necessaries of life from a pious family in the neighborhood. The problem was that the lower castes or even the tribals were deprived of this learning under the pretext of un-touchability.

During the Colonial rule, the English took up the business of education in better interest. A committee was appointed which was entrusted the duty of public education, the introduction of useful knowledge and improvement of moral character. Macaulay, Lord William Bentinck from the Europeans and some of the local learned Indian scholars like Rajaram Mohan Roy, the Tagore family, Vidyasagar, Dayananda Saraswati, Keshavchandra Sen etc. played a major role in the establishment of public English schools for the benefit of Indians. Soon these English schools became very popular as they spread uniformity, scraping of caste and class distinctions and accorded an upward mobility. These schools were welcomed by the natives. This opened a new chapter in the lives of Indians rightly points out:
The study of the English language and the use of English text books drew the Indian mind into an entirely new line of development. Along that line lie utterly novel conceptions like: freedom of speech and the pen, criticism of authority, the questioning of accepted dogmas etc. The growing familiarity with these has brought a new spirit into Indian life, the strings of skepticism instead of a stagnant authoritarianism.

(1941 p 44)\textsuperscript{11}

Now let us examine the effects of modernity and change as exemplified in the traditional Nigerian and Indian culture as implied in the fiction of Achebe and Karanth.

**Things Fall Apart and Modernity**

*Things Fall Apart* (1958) is the debut novel of Achebe which brought him wide acclaim. It has been translated into nearly fifty different languages of the world. The novel is in three parts. The first two parts of *Things Fall Apart* are an example of a typical traditional society, while the later part depicts the entry of Modernity through the advent of the White man. Modernity makes its entry into Achebe's fiction through *Things Fall Apart* in terms of the 'entry of the Whites', their 'new learning', 'new religion', and 'new power'. The introduction of the new learning or English Education is a landmark in the history of Nigeria as it brings about an all round change in all spheres of life. It replaces the hitherto existing oral tradition with literacy. Riesman David in his work 'The Lonely Crowd' assigns a significant role to literacy and written literature in shaping the values and attitudes of the individuals.

Literacy definitely increases the individual awareness and knowledge of a person and is a very potent force which widens the intellectual horizons of a person. It is this literacy which we find lacking among
the tribesman of Nigeria when we meet them for the first time in Things Fall Apart. The people who brought literacy into Nigeria are the Whites and the first reference to an Englishman is in the thirteenth chapter wherein reference is made to a Whiteman riding a horse”. (1996 p123)\textsuperscript{12}

The first reference to the Whiteman is by Obierika on his visit to Okonkwo at Mbanta, when he narrates the wiping out of Abame (13\textsuperscript{th} chapter). During the planting season, a white man had appeared in their clan. He was not an albino because he was quite different. “He sipped his wine and was riding an iron horse” (1996 p123)\textsuperscript{13}

In Umuofia while all the natives drank wine from their horns, this Albino sipped wine which the locals find it odd. ‘sipping wine’ and ‘riding a bicycle’ both are considered very strange by the locals that they look at him with ‘awe’. So new and different the ‘albino’ appears to the people that they consult the oracle and it tells them that “the strange man would break their clan and destroy them”. So they kill the Whiteman and tie the iron horse to a tree lest it would run away by itself and call the other friends. The oracle also tells that the other White men are on their way and this first was their ‘harbinger’ who had come to explore their terrain.

With the coming of the White a lot of changes set in. As the oracle says, the White like locusts comes into Abame, Umuofia and Mbanta. The Whiteman lures the natives by saying that he would bring many more iron horses and that even they could ride it.

In fact English education enters into Nigeria only in the second half of the novel through Mr. Brown who is the successor of Mr. Smith, Mr. Brown thinks of ways and means to popularize his mission of religion among the natives and feels that a direct frontal attack on the tribe is not sensible. In order to popularize the church, he
builds schools and hospitals, thereby introducing English education and western medicine.

Mr. Brown, the missionary, is a level headed person who follows the soft skills to win over the natives. Unlike Mr. Smith, he follows the soft and impressive ways and as such is even respected by the clan. Mr. Brown follows a middle path neither overzealous like Mr. Smith who is on a conversion spree at any cost, nor does his talks and acts provoke the wrath of the clan. It is mainly due to the soft skills that Mr. Brown employs which succeed in winning and convincing Acunna, one of the great men of the clan to send his son to be taught the Whiteman’s language. In fact in the beginning he goes from door to door counseling the natives on the importance of literacy. The narrative voice says:

Mr. Brown begged, argued and prophesized. He said that the leaders of the land in the future would be men and women who had learnt to read and write. If Umofia failed to send her children to school, strangers would come from the distant town of Umuru on the banks of the great river where the Whiteman first went. They could already see that happening in the native court where the D.C. was surrounded by strangers who spoke his tongue. (1996 p164)

Slowly Mr. Brown’s argument begins to have an effect. More and more people come to learn in his school. He lures the natives by giving them singlets and towels. Even adults working on the farm start going to schools in the evening. Mr. Brown’s schools produce quick results. It is a threefold effect that these schools have on the people.

Firstly, a few month’s study is enough to make one a court messenger or even a court clerk. Secondly those who study longer become ‘teachers’. Okonkwo’s son
Nwoye after learning in the school gets further trained to teach others, and lastly, from Umuofia laborers go into the Lords Vineyard to work there, which in turn increases the mobility of the workers.

In case of Nwoye, he was always bothered by some of the customs of the clan which he was finding difficult to digest like the throwing away of the twins into the forest and the killing of Ikemefuna. Whenever the missionaries came to preach in the market place or the village playground Nwoye was there. He was already beginning to know some of the simple stories they told. He finds a relief away from the clan and starts inclining towards it secretly. One positive impact of this is that Nwoye starts thinking in a different way from the clan. He comes to think that the new faith offers a comparatively better opening. Thus, in Nwoye the seeds of the new learning, new language, new knowledge and ‘Modernity’ in turn are sown secretly and they start germinating and in no time develop into a seedling.

The missionaries who arrive in Umuofia and Mbanta try to win over the natives in various ways. They first look for king or the Chief in order to seek permission to establish their church. In the beginning the natives undermine the missionaries and sanction the ‘Evil Forest’ as a place for them and their activities. The evil forest is a place where evil men are buried- people who die of evil diseases like leprosy and small pox. It is also the dumping ground for the potent fetishes of the medicine men when they die. The evil forest is alive with sinister forces and powers of darkness. They offer the missionaries a place which no one would accept. The idea of the natives’ is that the white man would perish within three to four days. But to their amazement they find that the white man is still alive. Everyone is puzzled. This makes them believe that the white man’s fetish has unbelievable power. He wore glasses on his eyes so that he could talk to evil spirits. The narrative voice says:
The white men slowly and gradually try to win over the locals. They begin their rollicking music, which is all powerful in plucking a silent and dusty chord in the heart of an Igbo man. Some of the audience is enthralled. The poetry of the new religion is the one which captivate the locals. For instance, Nwoye starts secretly admiring the new religion. He attends market preaching. It was not the mad logic of the Trinity that captivated him. He did not understand it. It was the poetry of the new religion something felt in the marrow. (1996 p134)

Moreover, Nwoye was always perturbed by certain customs and practices of the clan which were enigmatic to him. In the hymns of the new religion he seems to get a vague solution. The narrative voice continues:

The hymn about brothers who sat in darkness and in fear seemed to answer a vague and persistent question that haunted his young soul — the question of the twins crying in the bush and the question of Ikemefuna who was killed. He felt a relief within as the hymn poured into his parched soul. (1996 p 134)

The hymns of the new religion have a soothing effect on Nwoye and he seems to develop a secret liking for the new religion, more so because he dislikes some of the existing practices:" The words of the hymn were like the drops of frozen rain melting on the dry palate of the panting earth. Nwoye's callow mind was greatly puzzled. Mr. Kaiga who was in charge of the infant congregation would preach every Sunday. After seven market weeks they win a handful of natives who are ready to follow the White. Usually the converts are not men of title or successful men. But they are worthless empty men, who neither have recognition, nor fame in their own clan. Six types of natives take to the new religion:
The failures and the misfits of the native religion who have no recognition whatsoever as the Igbo society is driven by focus on strength, valour, achievement and accomplishment.

Those that are silently against certain inhuman practices of the clan like the throwing away of the twins. For instance Nneka, the pregnant lady who has lost several of her twins to the 'evil forest'.

The discarded sect, like the Osus who are deprived of many privileges of their own clan.

Those like Nwoye who are carried away by the rollicking tune of the new religion and at the same time dissatisfied with the clan for unreasonable and inhuman killing of Ikemefuna.

Even worthy men like Ogbueifi Ugonna who have taken titles also join the new religion.

Those that believe the new religion is all powerful as nothing untoward has happened to them even after several days of building the Church on the discarded land.

The Whiteman terms all Ibo Gods as deceitful, heathen and that there is only one God and that it is their God. That is how Nneka – wife of Amadi who is pregnant with a child becomes the first woman convert. She was fed up with the inhuman practice of the clan which considers the birth of twins an abomination. Her earlier children were all twins and thrown into the forest. Similarly the Osus are the next converts. They are being accepted by the missionaries. They are directed to shave their heads and are very well accepted as any other converts. Mr. Kaiga reasons with the Osus about the religion and tries to convince them that the heathen speaks nothing but falsehood. The Osus who are the unlucky lot in their native clan find a welcoming
chord here and follow the instructions of Kaiga and try to go against each and every norm of the clan. For instance, while the Royal Python is revered and considered as a father in the clan, the church totally admonishes the idea as the Python was responsible for poisoning the mind of Eve in the Bible. One of the converts challengingly goes to the extent of killing it that too in the public.

In certain exceptional cases not only the low-born and the outcastes but worthy men also join the church like Ogbueifi Ugonna who has taken two titles but casts them aside and joins the church. One of the clan chiefs even starts sending his son to the English learning. Along with the religion, the white man has also built a trading store and for the first time palm oil and kernel become things of price and much money flows into Umuofia. Even in front of hospitals, a small store is opened to satisfy the needs of the people. Thus we find that the Whiteman sets his foot in all spheres of life in Umuofia, and brings about a lot of changes, some good, better and best while the others are for the detriment of the community while still others are ambivalent.

The Igbo society is one which is totally closed to the outer world in all respects, or whatever illness or sickness, the Igbos have their own way of treating it. For instance when Ezinma falls ill Okonkwo prepares a concoction of various herbs and gives her which cures her. We hear that Umuofia has powerful medicine men among all the surrounding nine villages. When the Umuofians wanted their market to grow the medicine men prepared a powerful medicine and every market day before the first cock crowed, the medicine which was in the form of an old lady with a fan in the hand would beckon in all directions. The narrative voice records:

Umuofia was feared by all its neighbors. It was powerful in war and magic, and its priests and medicine men were feared in all the
surrounding country. Its most potent war medicine was as old as the clan itself. Nobody knew how old. But on one point there was general agreement: the active principle in that medicine had been an old woman with one leg. In fact the medicine itself was called *agadinwayi*, or old woman. It had its shrine in the centre of Umuofia, in a cleared spot. (1996 p 12)

Thus we find that the coming of the English at once creates apprehension, doubts and at the same time inspires awe among the natives. Gradually the new comers win over the natives not at the tip of the sword but through tact and thought. The dissatisfied lot of the local clan fall an easy prey to the new religion while some others voluntarily walk into the new faith secretly in the beginning and later openly. Whatever the cause, the English successfully establish themselves in the native 'evil forest', win over the natives, proselytize them and bring about disintegration within the natives themselves. Okika, one of the important persons of the clan who is being imprisoned by the Whiteman along with Okonkwo appraises the impact of the Whiteman in the following manner, “They (the White) have broken the clan and gone their several ways, we who are here this morning have remained true to our fathers, but our brothers have deserted us and joined a stranger to soil their fatherland.” (1996 p183)

This very clearly indicates the disintegration that has already set in the Igbo community and that the natives are aware of it. The Igbo society is no longer a united whole with unison in thought, mind and action. Things have fallen Apart in the society.

The impact of the new contact leading to the next significant change is again voiced in the words of Okika when he says that the Igbo society now has to be ready
for something which their forefathers had not done, meaning one needs to change with the changing times for survival, much against tradition. It is no longer the policy of ‘live and let live’, but ‘survival of the fittest’. Now that they have been irritated, insulted, provoked and enraged they cannot sit quiet and need to avenge the insult. In a booming voice he says:

If we fight the stranger we will hit our brothers, and perhaps shed the blood of a clansman. But we must do it. Our fathers never dreamt of such a thing. They never killed their brothers. But we must do it. A white man never came to them. So we must do what our fathers would never have done. Eneke the bird was asked why he was always on the wing and he replied: ‘Men have learnt to shoot without missing their mark and I have learnt to fly without perching on a twig’. We must root out this evil. And if our brothers take the side of evil we must root them out too. And we must do it now. We must bale this water now that it is only ankle deep. (1996 p 183)\(^{19}\)

G.D. Killam very aptly sums up the impact of western civilization on the African natives in the following words:

One of the consequences of the impact of the western civilization on Africa is the disaster brought about upon the African psyche in the period of subjection to alien races. Africans were induced to prefer western culture and to regard their own with contempt. (1975 p 44)\(^{29}\)

The English education no doubt disintegrates the Igbo lot and brings about a disparity among them. Yet one cannot totally deny that the same western education also opens up the natives to some of the inhuman and baseless practices of the native
clan. At least a set of people develop the individuality to see beyond the realms of the clan and custom.

Some of the natives never approve of certain customs of the clan even earlier but they never voice it openly like Ezeudu who does not approve the custom of throwing away the dead bodies infected with disease when he says:

'It is a bad custom which these people observe because they lack understanding. They throw away large numbers of men and women without burial. And what is the result? Their clan is full of the evil spirits of these unburied dead, hungry to do harm to the living. (1996 p.29)'

In the end we find that the Igbo society is all set for change though with an admixture of reluctance, apprehension, skepticism and willingness by a few to an extent.

Judiciary

The English who set foot on the Nigerian soil bring along with them their school, hospital, religion and an all powerful administration. Not only that, but they also build a place of judgment in Umuofia to protect the followers of their religion.

Earlier in Umuofia feuds, fights and disputes were settled by the elders of the clan who commanded a lot of respect. This was usually done by the beating of the Ogene by the town crier. The town crier would blow his Ogene in the streets of the town and give his message, be it death, war, any emergency meeting or anything else which called for an assemblage of the elders of the clan. A good instance of this is Ogbuefi Ezeugo narrating how a daughter of Umuofia - the wife of Ogbuefi Udo was killed in the market of Mbaino.

The issue is being brought to the notice of all the elders, discussed about and a
decision is arrived at. Accordingly an ultimatum is issued to Mbaino to choose between war and the offer of a young man and a virgin as compensation. This is how Ikemefuna the lad comes to Umuofia and starts living in the household of Okonkwo.

A similar example is that of Uzoulu and his wife. The discord between the two is settled by Egwugwu, the spirit of judgment along with the other elders. The duty of the Egwugwu is, not to blame or praise the groups, but to settle the dispute. The natives though devoid of formal education, courts of law etc have their own code of conduct like any messenger who brings messages however harsh are to be treated with respect and responded.

The missionaries who arrive in Umuofia build a court where the District Commissioner is the judging authority. He tactfully appraises the group lead by Okonkwo and others on the importance and high handedness of the Whiteman’s law in the following way:

We have brought a peaceful administration to you and your people so that you may be happy. If any man ill-treats you we shall come to your rescue if you co operate with us. But we will not allow to ill treating others. We have a court of law where we judge cases and administer justice just as it is done in my own country under a great queen. I have brought you here because you joined together to molest others, to burn people’s houses and their place of worship. That must not happen in the dominion of our queen, the most powerful ruler in the world. (1996 p 175)²²

The white man is one who neither understands the language of the natives nor their ways of living. So whatever verdict is given by him is not considered congenial by the natives. The narrator speaks of how the law is executed by the white man:
The District Commissioner judged cases in ignorance. He had court messengers who brought men to him for trial. Many of these messengers came from Umuru on the bank of the great river, where the white man first came many years before and where they had built the Centre of their religion and trade and Government. (1996 p 174)

Thus we find that a new judicial system which takes no cognizance of the local customs and practices makes its entry into the Igbo society which is most unwelcome and unsought for. The impact of this is that the society shrugs and shrivels at the new government and its executors utterly helpless and deeply wounded. Unable to withstand its pain Umuofia displays a silent protest in a startling way:

Umuofia was like a startled animal with ears erect, sniffing the silent, ominous air and not knowing which way to run. It was the time of the full moon. But that night the voice of children was not heard. The village Ilo where they always gathered for a moon play was empty. The women of Iguedo did not meet in their secret enclosure to learn a new dance. Young men who were always abroad in the moonlight kept their huts that night. Their manly voices were not heard on the village paths as they went to visit their friends and lovers. (1996 p 177)

Religion

The missionaries who arrive in Umuofia and Mbanta try to win over the natives in various ways. They first look for a king, men of high titles and the chief priest and the elder. They want to consult the king or the chief in order to seek permission to establish their church. In the beginning the native chiefs undermine the power of the missionaries and sanction 'the evil forest' as a place for their activities.

The evil forest is a place where evil men are buried – people who die of evil
diseases like leprosy and smallpox. It is also the dumping ground for the potent
fetishes of great medicine men that died. The evil forest is said to be alive with
sinister forces and powers of darkness. The locals offer the missionaries this place
which under normal circumstance no natives dared to accept. Their idea being that the
wise man would soon perish within three to four days. But even after several market
days nothing happens to the wise and the natives are puzzled.

The natives have their own religion and principles. Every household has a
'shrine' of his own where the wooden symbols of his personal God and of his
ancestral spirits are kept. The householder worships them with sacrifices of Kola-nut,
food and palm wine and offers prayers to them on behalf of his entire family. With the
coming of the White, they convince the converts that offering sacrifices to idols is
heathen.

The natives follow the 'Week of Peace' which is considered as sacred and
anybody who breaks the Week of Peace, knowingly or unknowingly is to be punished
by the priest of the earth Goddess. Before planting any crops in the earth 'Week of
Peace' is observed in which a man doesn't say a harsh word even to his neighbor let
alone his family members. They live in peace with their fellows to honor their great
goddess of earth without whose blessings their crops will not grow. Anybody who
flouts the 'Week of Peace' is considered to have committed a great evil insulting the
earth Goddess. In order to make good the wrong and also appease the wrath of the
earth goddess the person who has wronged has to offer to the shrine of Ani goats,
hens, a length of cloth and even cowries. In some clans it is an abomination for a man
to die during the 'Week of Peace' like Obodoani. If a man dies at that time, he is not
given a ceremonial burial, and the body is cast into the evil forest. Some of the
natives themselves do not approve of this practice.
Similarly during the funeral of Ezeudo’s death, Okonkwo’s gun explodes inadvertently and Ezeudo’s son is targeted. This calls for a punishment and penalty from the clan. Okonkow and his family are to be exiled for a period of seven years from Umuofia. Now, the only course open to Okonkwo is to flee from the clan. It is considered a crime against the earth goddess to kill a clansman and a man who commits this kind of crime must flee from the clan. But Obierika, one of the leaders of the clan sits down in his Obi and mourns his friend’s calamity. He often thinks as to why a man should suffer so grievously for a crime that he has committed inadvertently.

Twins are considered an abomination. The moment twins are born, they are put in earthenware pots and thrown away into the forest. A few who do not approve this particular practice of the clan have no courage to voice it openly. Hence Nneke, wife of Amadi who was pregnant with a child was dissatisfied that three of her twins were already thrown into the evil forest. Now, she didn’t want to lose this also. So, when she finds that the new faith is all powerful, she feels that even her twin children may find a place in the new religion and becomes the new convert. Whenever a dead child is born its body is being mutilated and thrown into the forest, if not the dead child is believed to enter the womb again and again. Taking precedence of all the others even two Osus enter the church thinking that they also may be accepted. When the native converts oppose this, Mr. Kaiga the missionary, tries to convince both, the Osus as well as the local converts saying-

The same God created you and them. But they have cast you out like lepers. It is against the will of God who has promised everlasting life to all who believe in his Holy name. The heathen say you will die if you do this or that and you are afraid. They also said I would die if I
took care of twins. I am still alive. The heathen speaks nothing but falsehood. Only the word of our god is true. (1958 p 133)

The Whiteman thus slowly and gradually tries to win over the natives. They begin their rollicking music which is all powerful in plucking a silent and dusty chord in the heart of an Ibo. Some of the audience is enthralled. The poetry of the new religion is the one which captivates the locals. Nwoye, for example, secretly starts admiring the new religion. He attends the market preaching. Mr. Kaiga, who is in charge of the infant congregation, would preach every Sunday. After seven market weeks they win a handful of natives who are ready to follow the Whiteman. Usually the converts are not men of titles or successful men. They are usually worthless empty men who have no recognition, name or fame in their clan. Thus the Whiteman marches forward in no time. He make a beginning with the failures, the weak, the outcastes and other weaklings of the society and later on have men of titles also.

**Medicine**

The Ibo society is one which is totally closed to the outer world in all respects. Physically barred from the rest of the neighborhood, mainly because of the dreadful weather conditions as the fever infecting pests and insects. And even psychologically the natives are a conservative lot who are more or less locked up in their own ways. The narrator comments thus in this regard:

> Umuofia is feared and considered to be strong in medicine. It is feared by all its neighbors because it is powerful in war and in magic and its priests and medicine men are feared in all the surrounding country. Its most potent war medicine is as old as the clan itself. Nobody knew how old. But one point of concurrence by all is that the active principle in the medicine is an old woman with one leg. In fact the medicine...
itself is called Agadinwayi or old woman. It has its shrine in the centre of Umuofia in a cleared spot. (1996 p11) 26

This is but one part of the medicine aspect. On the other hand certain deadly and contagious diseases are considered evil and people who die of such diseases are dumped in the evil forest. There are certain medicine men that treat the sick with decoctions and concoctions of herbs. For example, when Ezinma falls sick Okonkwo prepares a concoction of various herbs and gives her which cures her. The medicine men are powerful in many other respects too. When the Umuofians want their market to grow, they make a powerful medicine every market day before the first cock's crow in the form of an old lady with a fan. With this magic fan she beckons in all directions. That is how the Umuofian market has grown as big as to swallow up the markets of their neighbors.

**Arrow of God**

Arrow of God is set in 1920s by which time the Whites have already taken deep roots in Nigeria and a generation of English followers have rolled on.

Arrow of God (1964) is Achebe’s third novel and won him the first New Statesman Jock Campbell Prize. While the lavish praise showered on Joyce Cary’s *Mister Johnson* prompted Achebe to write his first novel *Things Fall Apart*, his second novel of traditional Ibo life *Arrow of God*, is set near to the Joyce Cary Epoch; its events cover the greater part of 1921. *Arrow of God*—Achebe’s richest book to date presents itself as the documentation of a way of life which is confirmed in all its details by historians and anthropologists. (1979, p181) 27

Thematically speaking *Arrow of God* is more or less an extension of *Things Fall Apart*. *If Things Fall Apart* deals with the first intrusion of the whites on
Umuofia, in *Arrow of God* the English have already established themselves and have even set up an office in Okperi six miles from Umuaro the seat of the novel. In the words of Emmanuel Obiechina, the theme of:

*Arrow of God* is the presentation of a particular society one alleged by European invaders to be ‘primitive’ but shown by the novelist to have philosophy, poetry and dignity”. Achebe here presents the picture of the Nigerian society as perceived by the Europeans and as experienced by himself as an insider. (1979, p176)⁹

The theme of *Arrow of God* is in accordance to what Raymond Williams expresses, “Culture is not based only on literary aspect; even illiterates have their own culture; and it can be treated on par with the illiterate culture.” (1958, p146-148)²⁹

On the one hand *Arrow of God* displays the pain, confusion, dilemma, hatredness and an intermingling of all these put together experienced by the natives in contact with the Europeans. On the other hand it reveals the various changes that the native society undergoes. This portion highlights the varied changes that the local community undergoes with respect to education, the outcome of such a change and the consequent imprint it leaves on the society.

By the time of *Arrow of God*, we find an attitudinal change among the natives. Some of the natives voluntarily send their children to the new schools. The idea behind is not because the new system is in anyway better or good, but because some are fascinated by the ‘all powerful’ nature of the new faith. Still others feel that if one grows in that way at least they can have one of their own people among the English and also their power. Emmanuel Obiechina in his “The Human Dimension of History in *Arrow of God*” very beautifully sums up the African mentality:
The Chief Priest who as a symbolic head should be the rallying point of resistance to the colonial authority is unwittingly an instrument for sub-version of the traditional system. At Winterts bottom’s promptings, he sends his young son Oduche to join the Christian sect and attend the village school. Oduche is to become Ezeulu’s ‘Eye’ in the new situation. (1964 p55)^30

Emmanuel Obiechina concurs with the idea and reasoning of Ezeulu when he says:

One must change with the changing times. Several times this pragmatism finds outlet in a recurrent proverb; ‘A man must dance the dance prevalent in his time, and more poignantly in the extended metaphor of the elusive bird, ‘I am like the bird Enneke-nti-oba’, he asserts – “When his friends asked him why he was always on the wings he replied “Men of today have learnt to shoot without missing and I have learnt to fly without perching. (1964 p 55)^31

In other words, the Chief Priest sees the strength of the new forces and is fascinated by the power vested in the hands of the Englishman. He thinks that writing in the left hand makes a person powerful. Hence he tells his son Oduche “to be a Roman in Rome” and attempts in his own way to come to terms with them with his son Oduche as a look-out in the enemy camp. In sending his son to the new learning Ezeulu has a threefold motive: he wants Oduche to be his ‘Eye’ in the enemy camp. He wants his son to imbibe the power of the Whiteman, and wants his son to become wise like the White man. As he believes “The Whiteman has power which comes from the true God and it burns like fire” (1964 p 85)^32

Ezeulu nourished a feeling that the Whiteman was wise. He had seen how
Winterbottom had intervened and solved the Okperi and Umuaro land issue, by giving back the land to Okperi. The Chief Priest is prudent enough and has a futuristic view when he says:

If there is nothing in it he will come back, but if there is something there he will bring home my share. The world is like a mask dancing.
If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the Whiteman today will be saying had he known him tomorrow. (1964 p189)^^

On the one hand the Chief Priest is opening individualistic, rational and modern enough to welcome the new learning. While on the other hand, he plays the role of a typical dominating husband when he snubs his wife, Oduches' mother, who opposes her son being sacrificed at the altar of the 'new learning'.

Thereby he alienates the mother totally from any decision making regarding the son. Ezeulu differs ideologically also from his first wife. While Ugoye, Oduche's mother considers her son's learning the new faith as 'a sacrifice to the Whiteman, Ezeulu contests her ideas as:

How does it concern you what I do with my sons? You say you do not want Oduche to follow strange ways. Do you not know that in a great man's household there must be people who follow all kinds of strange ways? There must be good people and bad people, honest workers and thieves, peace makers and destroyers; that is the mark of a great obi. In such a place whatever music you beat on your drums there is, somebody who can dance to it. (1964 p 46)^^

Thus we find that Ezeulu substantiates his stand on the learning of the Whiteman's language for whatever reason. Even the first and famous convert of
Umuaro also endorses the same view. Umachakwu learns the art of carpentry from the
white missionaries at the Onitsha industrial mission. In his youth he was conscribed to
carry the loads of the soldiers who were sent to destroy Abame as a reprisal for killing
a white man. Umachakwu very soon learns that the Whiteman is not a thing of fun.
So, after his release instead of returning back to Umuaro, he straight away goes to
Onitsha, where he becomes a houseboy to the carpenter missionary J.P. Hargreaves.
Later he is the only carpenter in the entire Umuofia who makes wooden boxes of
which Oduche owns one too. He is the one who builds almost single handedly a new
church in Umuaro.

Umachakwu’s reputation in Umuaro rises to unprecedented heights, when he
is being chosen by Wright, the road builder, to help him in organizing the road
building activity. Umachakwu not only claims to speaking the Whiteman’s tongue but
is also being seen doing so. The story of Umachakwu’s proficiency in the language
spreads throughout the six villages and his reputation boosts overnight so much so
that Ezeulu even regrets for a moment that nobody from his village was entitled for
such a reputation and immediately thereafter consoles himself, that one day his son
Oduche also would earn the same reputation.

It is quite amazing that Oduche who represents the next generation has no
stand of his own in this regard. Neither is he very keen in learning the ways of the
English like Nwoye of Things Fall Apart nor does he totally oppose his father’s
intention like Edogo or Obika, his half brothers. He follows the instructions of his
father rather with reluctance in the beginning, but later on alters his attitude towards
the same. The narrator says:

If Oduche had any reluctance left after his father had talked to him it
was removed as soon as he began to go to the church. He found that he
could learn very quickly and he began to think of the day when he could speak of the language of the Whiteman, just as their teacher Mr. Moluku had spoken with Mr. Holt when he had visited their church. But there was somebody else who had impressed Oduche even more. His name was Blackett, a West Indian missionary. It is said that this, although black, had more knowledge than white men. Oduche thought that if he could get one tenth of Blackett’s knowledge, he would be a great man in Umuaro. (1964 p 46)

In going in for the Whiteman’s learning both Ezeulu and Oduche have their own reasons. While Ezeulu wants Oduche to be his ‘Eye’ in the Whiteman’s Government, Oduche does not have any such high hopes, but he is zealous and fascinated in hoping to speak the Whiteman’s language. He is satisfied just on learning the language. He dreams “of the day when he could speak the language of the Whiteman”. Oduche feels he could be “a great man in Umuaro” by gaining the speaking knowledge of the Whiteman’s learning for the parameters for considering one great in the Umuaroian society has also undergone a change.

Now greatness is associated not with individual valour, strength or achievement as in the case of Okonkwo in Things Fall Apart, but is associated with the knowledge of the Whiteman’s learning. And Oduche also cherishes the same ambition what the society cherishes (1964 p 46)

It is quite natural that he makes good progress in the new learning and also becomes very popular with his teachers and members of the church. He is one of the youngest members of the church.

English education gradually metamorphosised the mentality and attitude of
the natives towards a more progressive, more mobile and more adaptive mentality. They start developing a different attitude in terms of self improvement and progression. Earlier, the native community was agriculture based and never did it cherish the notion of following / developing any other vocation. But with the entry of the whites, we find people looking at other than the family based or clan based profession. For instance, Nwodika who starts working for the White secretly nourishes the ambition of becoming a businessman. He wants to market tobacco. Finally, he even succeeds in doing so. His travel, from Ummeneora to Okperi has transformed him to such an extent that he is a changed man and no longer nourishes any ill will towards Ezeulu, the onetime enemy of his father.

When Akuebue, Ezeulu's friend visits him at the Whiteman's office in Okperi, is a shocking revelation to him that Ezeulu is being taken care of by Nwodika's son, the onetime common foe of Umachukwu. He very well expresses that and the response he gets from Nwodika's son is equally interesting when he says:

Akuebue : When they told me that a man of Ummeneora was looking after you I told them it was a lie. How could it be, seeing the war we rage at home?

Nwodika's son : That is for the people at home. I do not carry it with me when I travel. Our wise men have said that a traveler to distant places should make no enemies; stand by it (1964 p 44)³⁷

Even Ezeulu contends that 'Even a hostile clansman is a friend in a strange country'. Thus we find that, Nwodika's son who is born, and brought up in the native culture, later on imbibes the new culture, is better exposed and has become more
sagacious, and marches forward with the native base only but follows the ancient saying with a new spirit and devotion. Moving away and staying separately for a while has made Nwodika's son tougher, more independent and has developed his individuality. He is not of the type who would continue in the same old trodden path. He wants to join the race for the Whiteman's money. The race of the Whiteman's money would not wait till the next day till the natives are ready to join; if the rat cannot run fast enough it must at least make way for the tortoise. He sees very high and says:

My eye is on starting a small trade in tobacco as soon as I have collected a little money. People from other places are gathering much wealth in this trade and in the trade for cloth. People from Elemelu, Aninta and Mbaino control the great new market. Is there one Umuaro man among the wealthy people here? Sometimes I feel ashamed when others ask me where I come from. We have no share in the market; no share in the Whiteman's office; we have no share anywhere. That is why I rejoiced when the Whiteman called me the other day and told me that there was a wise man in my village and that his name was Ezeulu. I told him 'yes'. I said to myself that this is our chance to bring our clan in front of the Whiteman". (1964 p189)38

Few aspects of 'Modernity' are clearly evident in Nwodika's words. First of all Nwodika, a native starts cherishing the dream of becoming a businessman. He wants to deal in tobacco and cloth. This is something like Choma of Choma's Drum aspiring to become the owner of a piece of land. He is aware of the fact that people from other places are already in the race and that he has to catch up or else sooner or later he will be left behind. He is a person who is flexible enough to open to the new
trends of the world around, very contemporary yet one who retains the flavor of his tradition.

Secondly he is one who is ashamed to call himself an Umuaroian as they have no identity of their own – they neither have any share in the market nor or they reputed in any way. This is rather very humiliating for him. Yet it is this humiliation which prompts him to somehow achieve something. Instead of disowning and alienating from the clan, Nwodika encashes the slightest opportunity to bring his clan to the forefront.

Thirdly he goes beyond the parental rivalry of the past and extends a cordial hospitality to the chief priest and rejoices when he is being identified as the wise man of the clan by the English. Here is evident that the prestige of the clan takes precedence over personal feuds in front of alien people. This is definitely a matter having far reaching consequence as for the first time the feeling of ‘my clan’ and ‘our people’ matters most.

If, in Okonkwo we find the thinking of ‘everything alien is bad’, Ezeulu of Arrow of God is one who goes by the way of the world – “The world is changing, I do not like it. But I am like the bird Eneke-nti-oba” When his friends asked him why he was always on the wing, he justifies his stand.

Though being the chief priest, Ezeulu is not stuck and stagnant with just tradition. He is flexible and prudent enough to see beyond his time and on to the future. He is for improvement and progress and stands out separately amongst the rest. In Achebe’s own words:

Ezeulu the Chief character in Arrow of God is a different kind of man from Okonkwo. He is an intellectual. He thinks about the ‘why’ of things. Of course as a priest you see his office requires this – so he
goes into things, the root of things and he is ready to accept change intellectually. He sees the value of change and in his reaction to the Europeans is different from Okonkwo. He is ready to come to terms with the new – up to a point – except where his dignity is involved. (1996 p 16)^39

In this aspect Ezeulu is comparable to Rama Ithal, the priest of Kodi in Return to the Soil. Rama Ithal also wants his son Lachha to take to English Education. Both, Ezeulu and Rama Ithal are priests in their respective societies. Yet are able to foresee the time ahead and are ready to change. They go be the equation of English education = progression and want their son to take to the new learning which promises money, status and knowledge.

Apart from these we do come across a few other aspects of 'Modernity' the concept of 'fixing appointment', the presence of 'telegraphic office', introduction of 'khaki', the concept of 'policeman coming with handcuffs considered as iga ' only to name a few.

From Things Fall Apart to Arrow of God the journey is just a matter of four years. Both are typical representative works of the pre colonial eras of Nigeria. From retaliation in Things Fall Apart to reluctance, and reluctance to realization and realization to reconciliation the natives travel a long way, in their journey towards 'progress' and 'Modernity'.

We now see how Karanth has considered education as an indicator of Modernity in his Return to the Soil.

Return to the Soil

A.N. Murthy Rao has rendered Shivaram Karanth's original Kannada version Marali Mannige (1941) into English as Return to the Soil (1955) and again Padma
Ramachandra Sharma has translated the original as *Return to the Earth* (2002). For all practical purposes the references made and taken in this work pertain to the translation of A.N. Murthy Rao. Regarding *Return to the Soil*, C.N.Ramachandran comments:

Return to the Soil is the story of the saga of three generations of a family. "Karanth's 'Return to the Soil' is a 'regional novel' in the many senses of the term. It documents the social history of rural coastal Karnataka on a vast canvas ranging from 1850 to 1940. It is a mature fictional account of the implosions caused by history in Coastal Karnataka and the impact it has on a family of three generations who live struggle, leave and return to Kodi (2001 p35)".

Shivarama Karanth was born and lived at a crucial juncture when India was undergoing a lot of socio political and religious turmoil. Regarding the various influences of the era on Shivarama Karanth, T.B.Siddalingaiah comments "The socio cultural transformation of that period and the spirit of Indian Renaissance deeply influenced Karanth, The field he chose to respond to these influences was literature." (2002 p 50)

Commenting on Shivarama Karanth and the milieu in which he lived Keerthinatha Kurthakoti contends: "It is true that Karanth launched a new era in Kannada literature. It is equally true that a new era formed the base for his writings." (1983p 9)

This very clearly surmises that, Karanth lived and wrote in a peculiar and critical juncture of Indian history, which witnessed the confluence of varied forces, both concurring and contradictory to each other working simultaneously.
Karanth experienced these changes drastic and simple, exogenous and endogenous during his life time. He has chosen the novel form of literature to record the changes that swept through the Indian society in the latter half of the nineteenth and early part of twentieth century. In his fiction one finds that Karanth at times opposes, at times concurs and at times maintains an ambivalent attitude to the inevitable changes around.

*Return to the Soil* is the story of the saga of three generations of a coastal Karnataka brahmin family – Rama Ithal, the father, Lachha, the son and Rama, the grand son. The novel is set against the period when English education has already entered urban India. And a set of people are English educated also. The impact of this English education on the urbanites and the rural crowd and also the various generations is quite interesting. If education is for progress then we need to know the impact education has on various characters, generations and the society as a whole.

Rama Ithal is the family priest of several families of a small hamlet in and around Kodi. He is a devoted priest and a stickler to scriptures. His family of four, i.e., Parvathi and Satyabhama (two wives) and sister Saraswathi has been living in Kodi for several years. The entire family is an ardent follower of Hindu philosophy.

When his son Lachha, is of the age of four, he feels that he has to be initiated to education and plans to give English education to him. Much against the conventional practice of children continuing the family tradition, Ithal doesn't want his son to be a mere *Vaidik*. Whereas Saraswathi, his sister, is in favour of the family vocation of priesthood, Ithal wants Lachha to attend the Government school.

Ithal had just heard that Vasudeva Gurikar's first son had completed his education and set up practice as a lawyer at Kundapur. He had a perpetual stream of clients pouring money into his coffers. Why
shouldn't Lachha also become a vakil? While Ithal was not discontented with his own lot, he did not want Lachha to be a mere Vaidik. Seena Mayya's sons were earning heaps of money in Bangalore, and Mayya was now a Gurikar. If they made, money by washing coffee cups, his son might learn English and earn money as a lawyer without going to Bangalore. (1955 p67)\(^42\)

The brahmanical community during the colonial period had realized that English education paved the way for better future in terms of career, money and lifestyle. Hence they looked forward to it even at the cost of compromising certain aspects though not totally discarding them. So, Ithal has ample reasons for sending his son to English school. It is not just fascination for the new learning that Ithal has, but it is more the visible progress and prosperity which it brings along those matters to him. Be it the vakil profession or the hotel keeper business, Ithal sees the money and respect one commands with English education and decides to initiate Lachha to the new learning much against the wish of the women of the family.

When Ithal takes his son to the Government school, seeing the chair, benches and black board there, his ambition for his son rises sky high. He dreams as though Lachha has become a munsif. Thus we find an attitudinal change in a person from traditional set up in opening up for the new English learning voluntarily. Ithal's family members and the Kodi surroundings react to this act of Ithal in a very different way. Ithal comes under severe criticism for sending his son to Government school: The narrator records the various criticisms that Rama Ithal had to face in the context:

Ithal came in for a great deal of criticism and sarcastic laughter at the hands of the villagers on account of sending his son to the Government school. Mayya went about saying; of course Mayya had already
married a Shivalli girl. It only remains that he should renounce his standing as a Vaidik. Now that he had put his son to school with low caste people the tale is complete (1955 p69)\(^{44}\)

Ithal’s sister Sarasothi does not approve of Ithal’s arrangement either. But she says nothing. This is what the first generation of natives thinks of the English learning. People like Ithal, Seena Mayya or even the elders of Padumannur, acknowledge the significance and importance of English learning and aspire to get their children the new learning. “English education is considered the pass port for success. English becomes a marker of status” (2002 p37)\(^ {45}\)

Added to this is their zeal of getting whatever they personally lacked. They consider English education as a gate way to better and higher jobs like the civil services and the legal profession. Even here, the ladies of the generation are against English education for the simple reason that it enables co-mingling of all levels and castes of students indiscriminately.

The next generation represented by Lachha, is privileged enough to get English education, is very proud and becomes head strong.

He was proud that he was studying English and soon acquired the off hand manners and smart talk of the town. To show off his knowledge he would speak to his friends in English and flaunt it before his parents whenever he went to Kodi. Ithal’s delight knew no bounds. He already imagined Lachha arguing cases in the court. (1955 p70)\(^ {46}\)

Not only this flaunting Lachha slowly starts disliking Kodi and even dislikes the delicacies prepared at Kodi. Even during holidays, he rather prefers to wander off to Udupi than staying at Kodi. During Subbi’s wedding, he hardly shows any interest and alienates himself from his family members and Kodi as well. When Ithal takes
him to Kundapur he tramps all day long and comes back dead tired. He takes two to three days to recover from the fatigue of the journey. While, Ithal thinks that English education has made weaklings of boy, Lachha is contemptuous of his father's hardship and calculative nature. This is well expressed by the narrative voice thus: “Father is a hopeless miser. Why shouldn’t he get all his work done by servants?” (1955 p75)47 Thus we find that the father and son start drifting apart not only physically but ideologically also and fail miserably in understanding each other.

Lachha spends most of his time on the beach tracing patterns on the sand and at dusk gets back muttering ‘it is time to go back to prison’. As long as he is in Kodi he behaves like a total outsider, an indifferent onlooker. Even at the time of Subbi’s marriage, Ithal is so proud and boastful that his son is in the High School studying English and very much expects his son to mingle with the guests and attending to tiny tasks. Throughout the wedding Lachha moves around with sealed lips and exhibits a total detached attitude. Ithal is disgusted

“What is your English for?” “Can’t you let fall some yes pas?” he says.

But the animal so well trained refuses to perform and avoids the gathering whenever he could, spending most of the time either on sands or the honne grove. There are a host of little things that Lachha could have done to help his father, such as running on errands, distributing coconuts etc. It is just that Lachha doesn’t seem to involve himself in anything. Ithal is very disgusted with his son. The narrator expresses this disappointment of Ithal against, not only Lachha, but the English education itself in the following words: “What sort of English education is this? English educated children are no good in a household”. (1955 p76)48

Ithal gives vent to his dissatisfaction and anxiety about Lachha in front of his father in law. Ithal, who had high hopes on English education and his son, now gets
disillusioned. It pains Ithal that Lachha has turned out to be a simpleton whereas Seena Mayya’s sons have gone into the hotel business and are earning heaps and heaps of money. Ithal is utterly disillusioned about the future of Lachha.

Further Lachha always goes by glamour. He likes Kundapur as it has the glamour of novelty. It provides all sorts of cheap entertainments, like playing cards, chatting and rambling with friends in the streets, eating in Konkani hotels etc. More than education Lachha develops all the associated interests of pleasure. In speaking about the cultural dissociation of the New Education C.N. Ramachandran says:

English education, synonymous then with modernity, while it lured many like Rama Ithal with its promise of wealth and social position, also threatened them with the prospect of alienation. (2001 p38)⁴⁹

In no matter of time Ithal is disillusioned. He almost loses all hopes of him. The hope that Lachha with his English education would raise the prestige of the family is now turning dead; but Ithal could not reconcile himself to the idea that his son should be nothing more than a matriculate. The only good that Lachha’s passing of matriculation does is that even a groom from the Vaidik’s family is sought after by urbanite girls. English Education becomes a gate way for matrimony. For, earlier a groom from the Vaidik’s family was not held in high esteem. But now as things change ‘English Education’ is the only thing now.

Lachha marries Nagaveni but is not interested to stay in Kodi. By staying in Kodi he feels all his education would be a waste. Moreover Lachha’s attitude towards various aspects change too. People who have migrated to Bangalore have returned with money and built tiled houses. But it is only Lachha who sees no meaning in Ithal building a tiled house at Kodi. He voices his resentment by passing sarcastic comments.
Overall the English educated Lachha sees no sense in anything old or rustic. He is always for the new, fashionable and glamorous. He has grown a moustache and wears foreign looking dress being the emblem of his new life. Lachha likes Kundapur as it has the glamour of novelty. It provides vent to all his ill acquired habits. More than learning Lachha develops all the peripheral interests of pleasure.

In short as things go on the English educated first generation represented by Lachha, Orata (Seena Mayya’s youngest son) and the like grow into willful wayward youth good for nothing. U.R. Ananthamurthy considers Lachha “the wicked useless man as a product of modernization” (2007 p340). In other words Lachha has become an archetype in Kannada literature for a spoilt young man.

This is exactly what Frantz Fanon the Algerian Psychiatrist says about colonization in his The Wretched of the Earth (1961). He speaks of a pattern of cultural evolution among the colonists during the different phases of colonialism. He traces three stages of cultural assertion. (1967 p175)

We can identify Lachha and Orata, one of Seena Mayya’s sons to be the so-called first stage of assimilation phase wherein the native learners of the new education give / show the proof of assimilating the culture of the colonists. Lachha here assimilates the new culture’s fashionable attire and other superficial attributes. It is only the fascination of the new that attracts Lachha, Orata and the like leaving behind the good intrinsic qualities. Lachha finds freedom in squandering wealth if not in earning it. He has the least respect for women and people in general. Neither do we find any preference for art, beauty or even culture.

A striking contrast to Lachha and his generation is the immediate next generation youth of whom Rama is a representative. He is a responsible, diligent, educated and a caring person and an asset to the society. His profound interest in
everything he sees, hears and does is amazing. He is very concerned about the well
being of his mother and never wants to burden her on any issues.

Rama is partially educated in Mangalore and completes his graduation in
Madras. He lives up to the belief of Vasudevayya, his grandfather who says
"Educated men do not always turn out to be Lachhas. (1955 196)\textsuperscript{52}. In Rama, we find
the spirit of change and development right from the beginning. His inquisitiveness on
various things, love for the sea and nature around and affection towards his mother
are evident right from the beginning and develop further as he grows up.

Once he starts going to school, Rama develops a circle of life outside the
realms of his mother and grandparents. He proceeds further in studies with a zeal of
dedication and sincerity. He develops into a person with a sense of responsibility and
moral commitment so much so that he feels embarrassed to be a burden on his uncles
for long. He moves to Madras and even there he is not ready to be bound by the
obligations of his uncle Madhava. He somehow tries to eke out his living by giving
tuitions and music classes. It is the time when the country is being swayed by the
Gandhian Movement of nationalism, patriotism and satyagraha. He plunges into the
Satyagraha Movement and is even being imprisoned and loses one year. Due to this
Rama suffers utter cash crunch. In this context Nagaveni cautions her son –
"Satyagraha" is noble Rama, but it is not for us starving people". (1955 p196)\textsuperscript{53}

Even Madhava advises Rama not to shout ‘Inquilab’ meaning common man
like Rama who struggle to meet both ends cannot just jump into satyagraha, freedom
fight and such other movements. They are only for people who are satisfied as far as
their daily bread is concerned. Involvement in public affairs is right, sensible and
pragmatic only when private life is at peace.
What we find in Rama, the son of Lachha and Nagaveni is rather a diametrically opposite character full of life, zest, quest and spirit in life. He is a total foil to Lachha in all respects. While Lachha is irresponsible, non committal and shameless as far as borrowings and money is concerned Rama is responsible, diligent and very careful and calculative as far as expenditure of every pie is concerned. He neither wants to burden others nor does he want to borrow unnecessarily. He is one who is neither fascinated by English education like Ithal nor is carried away by the glamorous life as Lachha. He is a pragmatic person who accepts reality as it is and reconciles to it. He gets English education, graduates and even realizes that graduation does not promise any golden life. At the same time he does not become cynical like some of them at the ‘Friend’s Room’. He moves ahead along with the tides of change and never complains about anything or anyone. Neither is he pessimistic about the future. He has all the traits of a modern man highly individualistic, respects others, is committed and a person with very high self esteem. The modern man is one who has varied interests. And Karanth has portrayed Rama as a lover of nature, and music. Both Nagaveni and Rama spend several evenings and nights on the sea shore enjoying the moon lit nights and the tidal waves. Amidst their penury and poverty, Kodi, with its sea shore, the sea, the woods around all provide a soothing intimacy to the saddened souls. Nature becomes a part and parcel of their life when estranged from the family members.

During his younger days Rama had seen his mother playing on the violin and himself develops taste for the same secretly. He even makes use of his musical knowledge to some extent to earn his livelihood while in Madras. He is not a person stuck to one point, one place and one idea only. He is a progressive young man who thinks, knows and realizes how to proceed further in spite of pitfalls.
Rama is very contemporary too, in the sense he is able to think much beyond himself and sensitise himself to the contemporary world around. He is swayed by the Gandhian nationalistic feelings and plunges into it and is even imprisoned. In farming also, instead of going by the conventional crops he cultivates tobacco so that it is lucrative, makes good profits and buys back the lost lands of the family. He is more of a prodigal son who returns to the soil of his grandfather Rama Ithal and makes a living, not as a priest but a progressive young farmer and an educated teacher. Here again Fanon’s pattern of cultural evolution in colonial societies is to be considered wherein he says, “In the second cultural nationalist phase the active intellectuals remember their own cultural identity and begin romanticisation of the past.” (1967 p16)\(^5\)

Rama though doesn’t glorify or romanticize the past he has realized the need for freedom and is ready to think much beyond him. Gandhi’s nationalistic movements infuse patriotism in him and he sensitizes himself to the political situation. He is carried away by the eloquent speeches of Gandhi and the other leaders.

Somehow with much difficulty Rama completes his graduation only to be greeted by a hostile ‘unemployment’ board everywhere. He even goes to Bombay in search of a suitable job but to no use. There are scores of young graduates like him who are unemployed and Rama too feels the pinch of it. Unemployment problem becomes too acute. In one of his letters to his mother, Rama writes:

I am getting to know a number of people. One or two have better job. But though they are all free with promise speak of the influence they have, so far they have done nothing. My own unaided attempts have also failed. I have applied for every post advertised. It was just so
much money wasted on postage. Everywhere it is the same story – one
must be somebody's somebody to get a good job. (1955 p241)\textsuperscript{55}

This letter of Rama very clearly indicates the growing unemployment problem
and how even educated graduates find it very difficult to hook themselves on to a job.
It also throws light on the importance of recommendations and influences in securing
a job. Gone are the days wherein mere English education or graduation could fetch a
job. The words of Madhava very realistically sum up the pathetic plight of graduates
wherein he says that B.A.s are a drug on the market and that they sell themselves for
even twenty rupees a month.

Rama's visit and stay in Bombay for a year to secure employment proves
futile. All the efforts of his friends from Friend's Room yield no success. As a result
of which even after a year he finds himself exactly in the same condition as when he
had left Kodi. Rama is really disappointed that his efforts to seek a job in all the three
cities of Bangalore, Madras and Bombay prove unfruitful

Nagaveni, Rama's mother writes to Rama inviting him back to Kodi,
telling him that 'A bird in hand is worth two in bushes'. She writes to
him a graduate can surely earn fifteen rupees. "If you come here you
will at least be avoiding the misery of seeing the idle rich. Poverty
would be more endurable without that contrast" (1955 p261)\textsuperscript{56}

Another important aspect highlighted in the words of Nagaveni is the
conspicuous gap between the rich and the poor.

One of the trends of modernity is economic instability leading to
'unemployment' and we see that being presented by Karanth in an indirect way. In the
beginning of the English rule the natives felt that English education was a passport for
entry into jobs and hence many took to the new learning. But the subsequent
generation finds all the jobs filled up and the problem of unemployment rampant every where. The new generation also faces the problem of recommendations in getting into new jobs, as Rama expresses to his mother. This very clearly indicates that unable to find a suitable job even after several attempts and heeding to his mother's advice, Rama gets back to Kodi and is successful in securing a job as a school teacher in a nearby village. Later on as luck favours him he gets back all the lands which his mother had lost and starts farming.

One noteworthy and creditable aspect of Rama is his rational flexibility and open mindedness. He rises to the situations as they come and adapts himself to the changes. That is how when he doesn't find any better option, he accepts to work for the Mayyas in their hotels in Bangalore and Mysore, though it was never lucrative and attractive. Again, when all his efforts to secure a job in Bombay proves futile he heeds to the words of his mother and gets back to Kodi and takes up a teacher's job in a nearby village. Later on when times change he even takes to farming. All these prove beyond doubt that Rama is a very practical person, who can think and act rationally and objectively and adapt accordingly. He never considers farming below his dignity for an educated person. He applies his education and the resulting enlightenment he gets from it to real life and tries to make the best out of it.

It is quite significant here that while the first generation of Ithal is fascinated by English education as though something wonderful would come from English education, the second generation of Lachha, in spite of being educated squanders all the wealth and leads a miserable life. They bring about the downfall not only of themselves but the entire family. The third generation of Rama becomes very responsible, sensible and down to earth.
The first signs of modernity we notice in Rama Ithal, is in marrying Satyabhama who comes from a Shivalli Brahmin family. He goes beyond the prevalent custom of striking an alliance within the Kota sub-sect and brings in the Shivalli Satyabhama. The next aspect is that of education and career of his son Lachha. What is noteworthy here is that if we equate modernity = English education = progression as C.N. Ramachandran opines,(2001p 25) then we can conclude that Ithal is definitely on the way to modernity as we find an attitudinal change in him. Himself not English educated, being a priest by profession deviates and aspires to educate his son, in spite of stiff opposition from his family. He values the 'vakil' or 'munsiff' profession more than his own priesthood in terms of money, respect and dignity.

In Lachha what we find is not 'modernity' or 'progression' in the true sense of the word but more an external Westoxication which is evident in his flaunting of English and wearing fashionable and glamorous dress. He never gets into the depths of progression, but is satisfied at the surface level itself. All that he imbibes is smoking, playing cards, enjoying delicacies in Konkani hotels and acquiring costly habits. He finds 'freedom' in squandering wealth not in acquiring, earning or maintaining it. He has the least respect for individuals, be it his parents, aunt Sarasothi, wife Nagaveni, sister Subbi or even the Padumannur family. Relationships matter nothing to him and weighs everything only in terms of money. Neither do we find evidence of any perception for music, art, beauty or even culture in Lachha. Neither is he responsible to himself nor to his family and is a real burden to the society as a whole, devoid of any scruples and moral commitment. He never gets into the depth of true progression but is satisfied with the surface level itself by mimicking costly habits completely. Hence what we find in Lachha is a mere surface scar of
modernity reflected in external paraphernalia rather than modernity in the true sense of the word.

Another result of English education is that it creates an urge among the educated Indians to move towards the city leaving their home towns for a twin purpose. It could be either for higher studies or in search of better jobs or even start any lucrative business like hotelary etc as in the case of Seena Maiyya’s children. As a result the villages are left with only the aged, women folk and small children devoid of any youth force. In the words of Upadhya’s wife:

“People do not come from cities to villages. You see the village now. All the boys run away to Bangalore or Mangalore immediately after upanayanam. Only girls and old women like me are left her” (1955 p206)

Once youth leave villages for studies, it is very unlikely that they come back to their home towns again except for vacation. Then there is also the educated unemployed stream of youth who nourish a totally different view. They are totally against capitalism and speak against the Birlas and the Bajajs in the ‘Friend’s Room’. Unemployment makes them cynical and makes them lose faith in everything and everyone.

We find traces of change and modernity in Sarasothi, Ithal, Lachha, Nagaveni and Rama. Barring Lachha who does not change for the better, but ruins himself wholesale, all other major characters exhibit ‘Modernity’ in varied ways. Sarasothi, though uneducated takes the freedom and courage, to express herself openly and even contests her brother’s decisions;

Rama Ithal in spite of being a staunch Vaidik thinks differently and progressively by getting his son English educated; Nagaveni displays ‘Modernity’ in
the fundamental sense, meaning the exemplary courage she exhibits during fortitude and her non compromise regarding her self esteem and individuality in her decisions. These are but aspects of 'Modernity' not visible outwardly but embedded deep within. Taking responsibility, and owning responsibility for one's mistakes is another trait of 'Modernity' and in Nagaveni we find this manifesting off and on. Be it in taking the responsibility of the two grannies Sarasothi and Satyabhama or even blaming herself for yielding to temptations and bequeathing everything to Lachha she condemns and curses herself. Her incessant courage, patience, endurance and fore bearing keeps her going and pays off at the end. Amidst all these adversities she develops interest in music, spends time on the sand beach often, has a deep conviction in herself and in the almighty and is committed to life and herself and her duties.

Karanth's *Return to the Soil* is a significant treatise on the contemporary socio political and cultural conditions of pre- independent India. It gives an insight into the perception of three generations regarding the new education, resulting enlightenment, materialistic culture, dissociation of moral values and a host of other contemporary issues. *Return to the Soil* does not just mean getting back to one's roots physically as Rama returns back to Kodi from Bombay. Neither is it progressing towards the past. It is definitely much more than that. In the context, Rama is educated and at the same time exposed to the urban way of life. He is one who has tasted both - the serene native surroundings as well as the competitive, challenging, and at times cynical outer world also. He is a pragmatic young man who is able to weigh one with the (not against the) other and strike a balance between the two.

Through *Return to the Soil* what Karanth really conveys is that one need not out rightly reject all that is old as out-dated, neither mimic everything new as the best.
Karanth understands the dichotomy and confusion faced by the various generations at the onset of social changes and reflects the same in the novel. In a way this is true not only in one family in a remote village but could be deemed as the reality in the entire Third World. T.P. Ashok the great thinker and critic considers Karanth a meticulous artist who, through *Return to the Soil* reveals the metamorphic changes that the entire third world has undergone.

The Kannada writer, V. Inamdar also endorses the view of T.P. Ashok in a way when he says:

The three generations of the family Karanth depicts live vividly in these pages but in the reader’s imagination they assume a wider significance. They become representative and the life they lived becomes the life of a whole region. Further the story becomes almost symbolic of the changes that have overtaken the Indian rural communities during the past century. The earliest generation with its fixed pattern of thought and conduct within the framework of accepted values inevitably yields place to the next which is subjected to new impacts and compulsions, a generation caught between the dying past and the emerging future and struggling in migration towards a new life. This in turn makes room for the youngest whose individuality is pitted against an environment more complex and demanding. (1973 p59)\(^{59}\)

*Return to the Soil* does not necessarily mean going back or retrogression, or even clinging to the past. It rather means progressing towards the future along with the past. A.N. Murthy Rao in this regard recollects the words of Karanth “The source of *Return to the Soil* is in the story narrated by my grandmother”.1969 p454)\(^{60}\)
Symbolically, it means that Karanth of the contemporary generation took the inputs of his granny of the double previous generation to weave a story which could give an insight for posterity. One wonders how Karanth is close to Hardy and Pearl Buck when one makes an in depth comparison of Karanth’s Return to the Soil and The Good Earth. Such a study throws more light on the writer’s attitude to the changing trends in society.

No Longer at Ease

_No Longer at Ease_, published in 1960 is Achebe’s second novel and is set in Lagos in the late 1950s. Apart from other things, it portrays the changed attitude of the Umuofians towards the new learning. From _Things Fall Apart_ and _Arrow of God_ to _No Longer at Ease_ the Igbo society undergoes a full circle of change from a steadfast ‘No No ‘for English education to ‘Yes we want English education’ by the time we come to _No Longer at Ease_. If _Things Fall Apart_ portrays a rather traditional society ‘struggling to change’, _Arrow of God_ is ‘accommodative to certain changes’, while these changes culminate into a changed lot’ in _No Longer at Ease_. In this regard G.D. Killam remarks:” _No Longer at Ease_ continues this theme of colonialism as this alone is held to account for the changes that have taken place and are still taking place in the African society.” (1977 p40)

The theme of the novel is represented by the song the traders sing.. Killam sums up the theme as “the world turned upside down” (1977 p42). It symbolically indicates that Umuofia is no longer the same as it was but has topsyturvyed. There has been a total turn over in every sense at the individual and the social level.

The title _No Longer at Ease_ is a phrase from T.S. Eliot’s _Journey of the Magi_ which symbolically suggests that things are no longer what they used to be: the society, the people and individuals change for the worse. There is a moral degradation
and loss of ethical values. The three Magi’s predictions in Eliot’s poem are applicable to Obi’s personal and social situation, psychological conflict and inability to handle it after his return from England.

Earlier in Things Fall Apart the natives are very much against the whites and his learning, at least in the beginning. Anybody seen going to the new learning center is condemned, ridiculed, outcast and even disowned as in the case of Nwoye. But later at the time of Arrow of God, things change and the natives acknowledge and realize the power of the white man and his learning. Earlier Umuofia would have expected a young man to fight in wars and bring human heads, in days of darkness. Those were the days wherein: “a man was judged according to his worth; age was respected and achievement was revered.” (1996 p1)^63

Individual achievement, titles, fame, and skill in felling of palm wine all these were considered great. And a man was judged according to the number of titles he earned barns he owned and the number of wives he had. But now time has changed so much that ‘greatness’ has been redefined says Odogwu on Obi’s homecoming from overseas:

“Today greatness has changed its tune. Titles are no longer great; neither are barns or large number of wives and children. Greatness is now in the things of the white man and so we too have changed our tune”. (1960 p9)^64

Hence the entire community is now bent upon sending their bright sons to ‘bring knowledge’. Many had contributed to the scholarship fund for the cause of community even with whatever meager income they earned.

The first scholarship from the fund is awarded to Obi. The Umuofians want him to read law so that he can handle their cases. But Obi is interested in studying
English. The Umuofians though disappointed console themselves that at least he can get a European Post in civil services. Obi is a proficient student from the beginning. He is a village celebrity. So, he is the first recipient of the scholarship. Obi’s going to England is celebrated not as a private farewell party but a public affair with such gusto that the clansmen gather at the Okonkwo household and bless Obi for health, well being and prosperity amidst singing and praying.

The natives are fascinated by the non-resident Umuofians staying outside, spread all over Nigeria who would return to the hometown every two years to spend their leave. When they saved enough money – they would tell their elders to look around for a suitable bride or even build a zinc house.

A son of the clan returning home after higher studies is considered such a great event that a royal welcome is accorded to him and a pleasure car waits to receive him: “A big reception is arranged to which press reporters and photographers are invited. An invitation is also sent to the Nigerian Broadcasting Service to cover the occasion and to record the Umuofia Ladies’ Vocal Orchestra”. (1960 p28)

The President of the Union lauds the efforts of Obi who had brought social equality and economic emancipation. The Secretary speaks highlighting the importance of overseas education:

The importance of having one of our sons in the vanguard of this march of progress is nothing short of axiomatic. Our people have a saying “ours is ours but mine is mine. Every town and village struggles at this momentous epoch in our political evolution to possess that of which it can say ‘this is mine’. We are happy that today we have such an invaluable possession in the person of our illustrious son and guest of honour. (1960 p28)
The Government funds this scholarship 'so that an endless stream of students will be enabled to drink deep at the pierian spring of knowledge'. Overseas English education is considered "The Pierian Spring of Knowledge". The Umuofians consider spending money on education, 'an investment which would yield heavy dividends.' Awakening has dawned on the natives that if well educated, even their own kith and kin can get in to the ruling class and also decide legal matters.

Many young Nigerians had set their eyes on University education. By late fifties people consider university education as a passage to get power, status and money. The narrative voice says:

A University degree was the philosopher's stone. It transmuted a third class clerk on one hundred and fifty a year into a senior civil servant on five hundred and seventy, with car and luxuriously furnished quarters at nominal rent. To occupy a European post was second only to actually being a European. It raised a man from the masses to the elite whose small talk at cocktail parties was how's the car behaving?" (1960 p84)  

Obi is assigned a job on the Federal Scholarship board which awards grants to deserving students to study abroad. So great is the zeal and demand for overseas higher education that many ambitious students seeking higher education resort to unethical means to secure a seat and scholarship. Some try to bribe Obi while still others, especially girls visit his apartment and offer to do anything he wishes provided he will use his influence to send them or their brothers or sisters to an overseas University for higher studies.

Obi's overseas education moulds him into a strong individual, ideologically different from his people. He develops into a hybrid person, a man of two cultures.
J.P. Clark's comments in this regard about the 19th century Nigerian is very relevant: “The nineteenth century youth swims in a double current - Traditional and modern”. (1970 p52)

While in England Obi longs for his motherland driven by nostalgia he even writes a poem on Nigeria which he keeps reading:

How sweet it is to lie beneath a tree
At even time and share the ecstasy
Of jocund birds and flimsy butterflies;
How sweet to leave our earthbound body in its mud,
And rise towards the music of the spheres,
Descending soft with wind, And the tender glow of the fading sun  (1960 p14-15)

Obi craves to eat Nigerian food and is sick of eating boiled potatoes. He craves to eat pounded yams. “It was in England that Nigeria first became more than just a name to him. That was the first great thing that England did to him”. (1960 p11)

Obi's stay in England alters his perspectives regarding many issues. He starts looking at his own country, his own people and his own life in a new light. His stay in England fills him with a sense of high values and sentiments. He develops a high sense of patriotism, spirit of reviving his country and countrymen. But when he returns, a corrupt, disdainful and morally degraded Nigeria welcomes him. He is disillusioned at the corruption, chaos and nepotism rampant at each and every stage and becomes cynical also. Obi attributes this socially and morally unhygienic situation in Nigeria to corrupt and irresponsible senior public officials at the top. His theory is, “The public service in Nigeria would remain corrupt until the old Africans
at the top were replaced by young University graduates was first formulated in a paper read to the Nigerian Student’s Union in London” (1960 p35)

Achebe thus highlights the case of Obi Okonkwo and the likes of him in his lecture ‘The Role of a Writer in a New Nation' he feels that Obi fails at the individual level whereas the Igbo society also fails at the social level. As a novelist his sole desire is to show what they have lost during the colonial encounter. ‘It was the loss of a clear code of moral values’. He adds

We need a set of values – a new frame of reference – anyone who has given any thought to our society must be concerned by the brazen materialism one sees all around. I have heard people blame it on Europe. This is utter rubbish. In fact the Nigerian society I know best – the Igbo – as always been materialistic. This may sound strange because Igbo life had at the same time a strong spiritual dimension control by gods, and sisters, personal spirits or chi and magic. The success of the culture was the balance between the two, the material and spiritual --- today we have kept the materialism and thrown away the spirituality which should keep it in check. (1960 p68)

Higher education has a two fold impact on Obi. On the one hand his spirit of nationalism is roused and his love for the community is all the more great. At the reception hosted by the Umuofian Progressive Union he speaks of the value of education not in terms of white collar jobs and comfortable salaries but as a means to serve one’s society, He gives a call to aspiring youth to be prepared to serve the country well and truly.

The newly educated Obi doesn’t approve of corruption bribery and other fund malpractices. He finds it disgusting to see the truck driver bribing the police. The
paradox is that the truck driver himself doesn’t oppose while Obi opposes this. On the other hand the driver condemns Obi himself for intervening him and the police.

There arises a conflict in Obi between his earlier upbringing, the contemporary situation in Africa and also his stay in England. One overlaps over the other and he finds it very difficult to balance between the two. As Roderick Wilson says- “In a society with such complex and contradictory qualities and demands, it would be hard enough for a moral man of unified vision to survive intact; but for the vacillating and disorganized Obi it is impossible”. (1979 p168)

This very clearly indicates that fresh educated Nigerians have very high ideals in the beginning and aspire to be perfect in all respect. But the irony is that they stoop to much lower level than the others driven by greed, malice and callousness and become cynical.

Modernity in A Man of the People

_A Man of the People_ written in 1966 is a post independent Nigerian novel by Achebe. Many African writers like Achebe, Ngugi and T.M. Aluko have written about the socio political situation of the Nigeria during the sixties. Nigeria got independence from the British in 1960 and became federal republic in 1963. Then, began a power struggle between the four internal ethnic groups of Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa and Fulani. The political situation in Nigeria had gone from bad to worse. Street battle, looting, clashes, strikes, feuds and arson were the order of the day. _A Man of the People_ portrays the sad saga of West African oriented democratic setup unfortunately crumbling at the end of the first term in office. Rosemary Colmar puts it thus: “the true subject of the novel is the corrupting power of the privilege, position and money”. (1980 p89)
If the first two novels *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* portray resistance to the alien rule, *No Longer at Ease, A Man of the People* and *Anhills of Savannah* portray the other side of the Nigerian society- a society which is corrupt, diseased and decadent. In the words Rosemary Colmar:

> The issue is not directly political but moral corruption is a vital concern, and issues specifically connected with politics are raised, like the question of popular representation in government. In a sense it can be regarded as a novel of disillusionment. (1980 p90)

In *No Longer At Ease* Obi the protagonist feels that the senior officers at the top are all corrupt and that they need to be replaced by young educated Nigerians. But in *A Man of the People* Mr. Nanga the minister who belongs to what Claude Ake calls 'exploiter by class' and Odili Samalu a school teacher who is also the narrator of the story are the two major characters.

Odili, a one time student of Mr. Nanga, the erstwhile teacher, is one who dislikes and nurtures hatred against Nanga since school days. Odili hates his snobbishness, hypocrisy and is least interested even to talk to him. Both of them form specimens of two opposite groups who run parallel to each other. In the words of David Carroll: 'Chief Nanga and Odili occupy opposite ends of the political spectrum and their relationship defines the basic problems of political morality'. (1966 p265)

Mr. Nanga the minister is most approachable. The Prime-Minister and his cabinet hold a meeting and the Prime-Minister declares that the University educated Minister is all corrupt to the core and hence dismissed. Contrary to the earlier belief that education that brings about enlightenment and straightens lives of people, here university educated people are looked down upon, abused and dismissed from the
cabinet. The minister has a perverted intelligence. The Prime-Minister dubs the university educated minister as nefarious and proclaims:

From today we must watch and guard our hard won freedom jealously. Never again must we entrust our destiny and the destiny of Africa to the hybrid class of western educated and snobbish intellectuals who will not hesitate to sell their mother for a mess of pottage. (1966 p14)

In short, we find that the Nigerians are against themselves- the uneducated against the educated, the less educated against more educated and the native educated against overseas educated. There is a sense of personal vengeance and public antagonism throughout. There is also sense of conflict here. On the one hand the overseas educated university graduates are condemned and criticized yet opportunity for overseas studies and training is most welcomed.

The novel also juxtaposes the city politician Nanga versus the village teacher Odili, the city people against the village people, the city men with their Italian type shoes and tight trousers, well dressed city girls with their lipsticks and pressed hair, sophisticated guys against simple village folks, Boric against Urea, parlor wife against peasant wife, water closets against pit latrines and so on.

One major contrast in *A Man of the People* compared to the earlier novels is the change in the perception of education as an indicator of ‘Modernity’ in the three different phases of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Nigeria. Tracing the entry and development of English education, by the time we come to *A Man of the People* there is a 360 degree change in the attitude of people and the society towards education and its impact.

Starting from *Things Fall Apart* the graph of English education as an indicator of ‘Modernity’ is almost horizontal till we reach *Arrow of God* and from thereon takes
a gradual upward swing to reach *No Longer at Ease*. It is here that there is a steep rise simultaneously followed by a downswing in *A Man of the People* till it reaches a denouement in *Anthills of the Savannah*.

It is quite appalling that the natives first exhibit a strong negation of English education in the beginning, slowly start tasting it, gradually aspire for it, wholeheartedly accept and at the same time go overboard in misusing it.

The natives are exposed to schools and colleges and even nursing schools, and colleges for higher education are opened. With more and more people coming under the umbrella of education the competition for jobs also increase. Earlier, a boy who had studied fourth or fifth standard would get a job as a messenger, but now he is fit to be a steward, in a minister's house. Slowly even the glory of English education wanes such that Dolly's father even advises him not to pursue higher studies but to start a career in a government office and later buy a car. The underlying meaning behind is that higher studies has lost its charm and secondly career in a government office is more lucrative not just with the salary but with the other side sources so that the income of even a few day's working could be sufficient to buy a car.

The implication of this is two fold. Firstly owning a car is a matter of pride and prestige and secondly corruption is so rampant that any person who got into a government job could afford to buy anything easily.

It is quite significant that Ezeulu of *Arrow of God* wants his son to learn the new learning so that he can also be one among the Whiteman with an air of superiority. By the time of *A Man of the People* this has already been achieved it is left to be seen as to how the natives respond. Achebe here exposes the corrupt nature of the English educated natives. *In No Longer at Ease* Mr. Green the European higher up of Obi despises and condemns him for his corrupt nature as 'The native has
become corrupt through and through’. But by the time of the next novel the English educated native is condemned and criticized by his own people.

The English educated natives are despised in politics, in administration and everywhere else. The minister is very critical about native educated intelligence being consulted on any matters even road making, contemptuously he remarks that the youth of the day are ungrateful. One effect of education on Odili is that he is shrewd enough to realize that Nanga the minister has humiliated him and that his self esteem is bruised. Then realization prompts him to take revenge on the minister and from then on begin a new chapter in the life of Odili – the revengeful act.

What mattered to Odili was the fact that a man had treated him AS NO MAN HAS A RIGHT to treat another not even if he was the master and the other slave. Hence he decided to take revenge.

Achebe presents diabolism in the character of Odili. On the one hand the ‘enlightened’ and ‘modern’ outlook in him makes him realize that he cannot forego his self esteem at any cost. On the other his bruised ego, provokes him to take revenge, in spite of his educated background.

Achebe projects another contrast in the attitude of Odili that his intention in going to the university is neither to seek knowledge nor to get into any office but to emerge as a member of the privileged class and buy a car. He admits this very frankly.

Odili’s intention in going to the university was to come out after three years as a full member of the privileged class whose symbol was the car. He had already taken a driving license and underwent intellectual crisis by the lectures of an Irish lecturer. So, it is not education for enlightenment or knowledge or refine oneself or even to make a career that Odili wants to get into the university but more so for upward mobility in the social start. He and his father both aspire for a better image, prestige
and dignity in public eye, and they know that this could be achieved by buying a car. 
\('\text{Car}' is more a prestige symbol than vehicle for mobility.\)

To sum up \textit{A Man of the People} looked at in the perspective of 'Modernity' in the backdrop of education is diametrically in contrast to what education is and was considered in his earlier novels. The natives have come a long way in modernizing their language and learning as such the secondary effects of the impact of English education are explicitly seen. The weaknesses and negatives of the new learning overshadows its strengths and virtues, or rather more than the new learning the users of the new education do not employ it wisely. The new learning never recommended unhealthy habits and practices or any sort of antipathy to the common people but the beneficiaries take it so.

No doubt the new education enlightens the natives both in India and Africa as reflected in the novels of the respective writers. Like the orientalists the educated natives acknowledge, criticize and despise many of the inherent flaws in their native set ups; yet one cannot deny its side effects which germinate the ideas of progression in the beginning culminating in alienation from their own roots, one of the secondary tenets of modernity. The next stage of course drives the natives into the Foucaultian principle of over avariciousness and greed.

This leads us to the next aspect of modernity in power, politic running of the government and administration which will be handled in the next chapter titled \textit{Power Paradigms and Politics}. 
END NOTES

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