PREFACE
PREFACE

An attempt is made in this thesis to highlight the impact of "Modernity" and the consequent changes on traditional societies. It has been written with reference to the conservative African and Indian societies as portrayed in the writings of the two eminent writers Chinua Achebe of Africa and Shivarama Karanth of India respectively. Achebe has written in English while Shivarama Karanth has written in his local language Kannada. Both these writers have enriched the treasury of their respective languages through their writings. They have traced 'the pleasures and pitfalls' and 'trials and tribulations' of their contemporary societies in their writings. The views that are provided in the works of these two novelists definitely have a bearing as they are quite honest, authentic and reflect very sincerely the contemporary worlds around. The thesis tries to explore the two traditional worlds of India and Africa as depicted in their fiction. Living in a colonial world they have tried to portray their societies of the past and the present. This study envisages an in-depth analysis of the multi-dimensional concept of 'Modernity' that changed the very outlook of the colonized societies. It focuses on the different processes and perceptions of change as reflected in the writings of these two writers. Though they share some similarities in the presentation of their respective societies, there are differences in the preoccupation, styles, attitudes and forms of fiction employed by them.

A close look at the literary works of these two writers gives us a record of the colonial experiences of their societies. It is a complex web of human relations placed at a transition period in the histories of their countries. Their fictional world has a large canvas and is multi-dimensional. They perceive change not just as a law of life but observe it as a pattern that affects all layers of social existence.
Achebe in his fiction concerns himself with the pre-colonial and post colonial set ups in Nigeria but with a broader perspective. He perceives a symbiosis between pre and post colonial Africa. He attempts to evolve an adequate concept of change effected by colonial experience. He explores the social and cultural phenomena within a political framework which is imposed on the native African society. His first novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) appropriately projects a textured traditional society with closely knit bonds of human relationships. It portrays a system slowly imbibing aspects of change. His second novel *No Longer At Ease* (1960) is placed in Nigeria just before its independence and the hero of the novel is the grandson of Okonkwo of *Things Fall Apart*. Achebe's third novel *Arrow of God* (1964), set in Nigeria, at the turn of the century, aims at showing that the African past with all its imperfections was vulnerable to change. His next novel *A Man of the People* (1966) placed in an unnamed independent West African country in the 1960s, records how freedom divides and leads the new generation political leaders into corruption and illegal amassing of wealth. *The Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) presents Achebe's reaction to post colonial Nigeria, the corruption rampant and the chaos prevailing. Achebe through his writings, comprising of poetry, novels and critical essays, reflect the African society by and large in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Africa. Colonization, English education and the associated African encounter no doubt created social and psychological conflicts among the natives but it also brought with it their English education which exposed the natives to western or modern education in the name of modern civilization. In short, through his writings, Achebe penetrates deep into the Ibo culture and brings into focus the matrix of the African tradition.

On the other hand, Shivarama Karanth, the Indian writer writing in Kannada, is pre-occupied with predominantly a feudal setup of pre-independent India in all its
complexities. He depicts a system rooted in an indigenous culture experiencing an inevitable transition. The conflict and the confrontation between the old and the new, the traditional and the modern, the collective and the individual, the religious and the secular, is woven into a complete social fabric which conforms change. His novels are set in the Colonial India and portray the rural and urban life of nearly two hundred years of India in a very realistic and authentic way. He very sensitively portrays the divide between generations, traditions, value systems, colonial rule and institutions.

Karanth’s *Visions of Mookjji* (*Mookkajjiya Kanasugalu* 1977) documents from an anthropological point of view, the nature of religion, changed attitude to God and sex, and also exposes the issue of reality and fantasy. Another novel *Choma’s Drum* (*Chomana Dudi* 1978) deals with a feudal setup of pre-independent India in all its complexities and the social problem of untouchability. In *Return to the Soil* (*Marali Mannige* 1955), Karanth documents the cultural alienation resulting from English education. His *Woman of Basrur* (*Maimanagala Suliyalli* 1970), deals with the changing attitudes of the society towards the natural instincts of the physical body and also the business and trade in the tiny hamlet of Basrur. His other novels such as *Head Man of the Little Hill* (*Kudiayara Koosu* 1979) and *The Shrine* (*Sarasammanama Samadhi* 1937) deal with the various contemporary burning issues and document the suffering, anguish and alienation of the people of South Kanara district of Karnataka caught in the swerving waters of change. Novels like *Alida Mele, Bettada Jeeva, Chomana Dudi* — to name a few, deal with various issues of the individual and the society at large and also the agony and anguish of women in Hindu society.

No doubt Shivarama Karanth has not left any form of literature untouched. His novels themselves total to forty five. But for all practical purposes, only the six English translated novels are considered here while the others are just glossed over.
with self translation wherever necessary. As far as Achebe is concerned, the study includes his fiction, while references are made to his essays and interviews also.

**Objective of the Thesis**

The primary objective of this thesis is to study the writings of Chinua Achebe and Shivarama Karanth in the light of 'Modernity'. The focus is only on the concept and aspect of 'Modernity' and the impact it has on traditional cultures as revealed in the fiction of the two writers. Though emphasis is mainly on their fiction, yet their other writings like essays, lectures and interviews are also considered. While both the writers have tried their hand at almost all forms of writing, emphasis is here laid on the fictional part only while all other forms are just glossed over.

In case of Achebe all his five novels are considered for the study, whereas in the case of Karanth, only his novels translated to English are focused while the others are touched upon in a very subtle manner.

'Modernity' is a multi-dimensional concept which is highly imprecise and contested. It is understood by different people in different ways. Modernity is often equated with 'Progress'. English education is often considered one of the channels of progress. In places wherever the Whites established their colonies they brought those places under the broad umbrella of progress 'or 'Modernity'. Literature of any language is not an isolated entity. It is rather a reflection of the surrounding socio political situation, smeared with the writer's own ideology and response to the contemporary situation.

Chinua Achebe and Shivarama Karanth do not directly make any comment on 'Modernity' or its consequent changes. But through their writings they trace the various stages of 'Progress' under the banner of 'Modernity'. Their works speak of their traditional native cultures, the cultural conflict which they underwent and also
the inevitable changes that followed. Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God offer themselves for such an enquiry. The tribal society that is depicted in these two novels speaks of a society which has its own way of life. In No Longer at Ease and A Man of the People Achebe traces the colonial and postcolonial Nigeria with all its imperfections, while The Anthills of Savannah is a total replica of the modern political scenario.

The novels of Chinua Achebe and Shivarama Karanth under study are great creative works of art and they have evoked a lot of interest in the readers over the last fifty years. The study of their creative works in the light of modernity 'definitely' will be of immense help to posterity.

Mapping of the Thesis

This thesis is schematically planned and divided into Six Chapters with an Introduction and a Conclusion. The bibliography, appended at the end of the thesis, includes both the primary and the secondary sources. While mapping the study, some suitable measure had to be conceived. Chronological base seemed rather unsatisfactory. Hence an alternative scale had to be thought of. The chapters have been categorized thematically based on the major indicators of modernity like education, politics, religion and judiciary and socio cultural values as depicted in the novels of the writers concerned.

The Introduction specifies the theme and objective of the thesis. An attempt is made to explain the scope, justification of the title, and the means through which it is going to be achieved. Ample reasons for selecting the writers and also their writings are provided in detail. A brief biographical note of the two writers is appended towards the end.
The First Chapter entitled *Past Pristine and Present Progressive* introduces the theme of Modernity, its genesis, development and impact. Some definitions of eminent thinkers in this regard are taken into consideration to support the main idea. The meaning, types and features of Modernity are analysed in detail contrasting them with traditionalism. Modernity by itself is abstract and has no identity of its own. But it manifests through several indicators. The indicators of Modernity like education, science and technology, religion, power and politics, trade and commerce and lifestyle of the people are handled.

The Second Chapter captioned *The Global Canvas* deals with the environment of the period, the happenings around the world, the various events and incidents like the Industrial Revolution, The French Revolution and so on which had a bearing on world politics, trade and socio religious aspects. In doing so, emphasis is laid on African and Asian Colonies. At the micro level African and Indian milieu of the times is studied too.

The Third Chapter titled as *The Artist and his Art* deals in detail about the link between society, literature, the writer and his surroundings. How Chinua Achebe and Shivarama Karanth view society and their surroundings and the commitment they have towards writing is studied. The conception of each of them regarding the Role of a Writer in Society is dealt with. An attempt is made here to examine the role of the writer not only as a creative genius but also as a chronicler reflecting the changes of the society and their perceptions regarding various contemporary issues.

The Fourth Chapter named *Education and Enlightenment* discusses in detail the meaning, and definition of Education, its impact and the consequent Enlightenment it brings upon the individual with reference to the works of Chinua Achebe and Shivarama Karanth. Since Education is one of the major indicators of
modernity and is conspicuous in almost all the novels of the concerned writers, for the sake of simplicity and convenience the chapter is divided into two portions. The first portion focuses on Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* and Karanth’s *Return to the Soil*. Whereas the second portion includes *No Longer at Ease* and *A Man of the People*.

The Fifth Chapter entitled *Power Paradigms and Politics* discusses the prevailing political situation in Nigeria and India during the period of the concerned novels as also the post-colonial political situation. The vastness of the theme and its handling calls for further sub division of the chapter. The first portion deals with Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease and a Man of the People*, and *Anthills of the Savannah*. Here the European political concepts imposed on Africa, and Achebe’s reaction to post-colonial scenario in Africa is studied. The Second portion deals with Karanth’s *Headman of the Little Hill* and *Choma’s Drum*. *Headman of the Little Hill* is considered a novel of transition wherein the tribal Government slowly sees the colonial master’s interference. *Choma’s Drum* gives a glimpse of the comparison of native masters and the colonial heads, in the backdrop of the Whiteman’s religion.

The Sixth Chapter titled *Love and Liberty* examines in detail, the changing attitudes of people towards love and freedom. Here the three novels of Karanth *Mookaji’s Vision*, *Woman of Basrur* and *The Shrine* are taken up for study.

The Concluding Chapter attempts to compare and contrast the attitudes, sentiments and thoughts of the two writers as revealed in their writings with respect to Modernity. The major observations and arguments of the previous chapters are reviewed and conclusions are drawn. The overall contribution of Achebe and Karanth to the literary world and thereby to the society in general is analysed in the backdrop of Modernity. The various similarities and differences between the two writers are
explicitly stated. The need for such a comparison and its value addition to the literary world as also the future generations is examined.