INTRODUCTION
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The evolutionary movement of HUMANITY does not proceed in a straight line. Its course is spiral. That is to say that the wheel moves round and round, yet it goes upward and forward also. The cyclic revolutions of humanity on the move ensure thoroughness, a meticulous care to pick up every possible gain made on the way, now advancing, leaving some elements aside which are not ready, now returning to assimilate those that are mature (1959, p28).

Human society has never been static. Ever since the dawn of man on earth, there has been changes – changes slow and rapid, simple and complex, progressive and devastating. Some changes are so minute and mute that they go unnoticed and are termed evolutionary as in the case of human civilization from ape to man. While still other changes are so rapid, morbid and in such a fast pace that they upset the very flow of life as in the eighteenth century from ‘manual age to machine age’.

Slow and gradual changes are cognizable only on a large span whereas rapid changes are noticed even in a span of decades.

The effect of these changes later on bring about a sum total larger change leading to a ‘newness’ or in other words ‘modern’ way of life.

Newness or ‘modernity’ is often equated to ‘progression’ or ‘betterment’ of life (2001, p 114).

This change need not always mean ‘progress’ only. It could even be ‘devastating’, and so powerful that it can even affect the regular rhythm and balance of life leading to changes in culture and religion, politics and education and thereby the private, public and professional life of the individuals concerned.

Further, ‘change’ is a highly dynamic process and it is pointless to try to tie it
down to any specific date, time or geographic area. ‘Change’ is not the monopoly of any one community, nation, caste or creed. It has a universal presence. The only underlying fact being that it is rapid and wide at certain period and place, and slow and localized at certain other places. For example, the changes that were brought by the industrial revolution were very rapid in all European countries, whereas in the other parts of the globe it slowly trickled down.

Whatever it is, the effect of ‘modernity’ on men, mind and the surrounding milieu culminating into ‘changes’ both morbid and rapid is the objective of this thesis. It is aimed at highlighting the impact of ‘change’ resulting in ‘modernity’ on ‘traditional societies’. It has been written with special reference to the African and Indian societies as reflected in the writings of two eminent writers, Chinua Achebe of Africa and Shivarama Karanth of India, in their writings have traced ‘the pleasures and pitfalls’, and ‘troubles and travails’ of a society and a people at the cross roads of European Colonialism. The views that are provided in the works of these two novelists are not only the ideologies of the respective writers but could also be a good source of history as they are quite authentic and reflect very sincerely the contemporary worlds around.

What is attempted in this thesis is only a literary perspective of the ‘mutation’ as envisaged in the novels of Chinua Achebe and Shivarama Karanth. Further the scope of the thesis is restricted to the fiction of Achebe and Karanth and their other literary forms are just glossed over. In case of Achebe, all his writings are in English, whereas in case of Karanth, emphasis is essentially laid on the English versions of the novels available and the original Kannada versions are hinted upon wherever necessary.

Coming to the theme, the canvas of the thesis is spread over the various
aspects of 'modernity' and its indicators and its effect on the socio-religious and socio-political aspects. The word 'comparison' also calls for an explanation. This study encompasses not a one to one listing of similarities and differences between the writings of the concerned writers, but all possible major thematic comparisons are drawn and analyzed. The rationale behind the selection of the writers concerned is also discussed.

Selection of the Topic

There is a reason for choosing African and Indian literature only and not literatures of any other countries. Literatures of any two heterogeneous countries could be compared. But nations with some commonality definitely can have significant comparisons. Though it is true that no culture is analogous to any other culture, yet within a nominal unitary culture distinctive regional sub cultures exist. Instead of analyzing the concept of modernity in any one nation and any one writer, the study in a similar nation of some commonality definitely reinforces the concept in a much better way and comparison can be more effective. It is worth remembering King Bruce's words in this regard:

The literatures of the erstwhile British colonies or the newly independent nations reflect the origin, theme and context of creative writing in newly independent nations, especially the effect of political and social change on culture, and suggest parallels between the third world and that of the older dominions of the British Empire. (1980, p 41)³.

The new literatures often began at approximately the same time, followed similar courses of evolution, shared similar styles in each decade and reflected locally whatever international political and social changes took place in the western world. It
is found that the characteristic problems, themes and context of each literature have applicability. Although writers from each nation will respond according to their own perspectives, modern means of communication, travel and the effect of industrialization, urbanization and western education on most societies result in similar problems and impact.

As such it is quite but natural that the writers from the new nations often express similar themes and are concerned with analogous problems; sometimes the problems reflect a common history. Often the resemblances are local expressions of movements of western culture and social changes that took place throughout the English speaking community during a decade. The outburst of creative literatures in the new nations can be attributed to the effects of the last war and the subsequent British withdrawal from their colonies.

Firstly, both India and Africa are erstwhile British colonies who share their one time allegiance to the British crown. This is the first most valid reason for harking upon Indian and African literature. The literature of both these Countries comes under the banner of Commonwealth Literature or Third World Literature as it is called these days. The Commonwealth represents a significant cultural and historical link with different nations with diverse social and religious backgrounds. Mostly due to their history of British rule, many Commonwealth nations share identifiable traditions and customs that are elements of a shared Commonwealth culture. K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar in his Two Cheers of the Commonwealth says:

Commonwealth literature is quite obviously a multi-linguistic, multi-literary heritage — and it is a living and growing literature the literature of one Commonwealth nation is no exact mimicry of the literature of another. In India, for example there are literatures each of which has
its own distinctive quality. Likewise in Africa, the Nigerian, the Kenyan and the Yoruba each have its own distinctive features. Yet there is also some sort of underlying pattern - at least rhythm in Commonwealth literature (1950, p 12)⁹.

And this common factor or rhythm can definitely be attributed to the factors of Europeanization. The English education imparted, has made later writers of these countries use English as a common medium to reach a wider audience outside the country of their origin. This does not mean that the native writers wrote with the primary aim of reaching out to the wider world only. Moreover, the Commonwealth literature is a growing literature. Any work or research with respect to Commonwealth literature is definitely invaluable to posterity. And this common factor or rhythm can definitely be attributed to the factors.

Secondly, these colonies faced the pressure of twin movements of ‘European Colonization’ and ‘Christianization’. The civil order was disrupted not only by the colonial invader but because their invasion made it possible for the distressed to find vent outside their clan. In other words, both the countries experienced internal disruptions due to external pressures and conversely internal dissatisfactions also triggered external acceptances leading to changes.

Thirdly, both in India and Africa there is a cohesion born out of a spirit of community i.e. a common language, a sense of ethnic kinship, a common historical experience and a frame of political thought and sometimes the fear of a common foe also.

Fourthly, India and Africa both have been benefitted and disturbed by the advent of the British. On one hand if colonialism brought about a disruption among the hitherto unseen people, on the other hand it also brought the smaller units under a
single banner. Especially in a country like India with a lot of diversities based on caste, creed, color, community, custom and language, the English education brought about a commonality among the various communities.

Both Achebe and Karanth consider the role of writer as ‘an interpreter’, ‘a reformer’ and ‘an educator’. Both of them wrote at a time which demanded commitment from writers. Both concurred regarding their views on the role of literature and the socio political situations of the world around. Both fought for freedom. Achebe questions ‘if writers escape, who is to meet the challenge?’ (1975, p 19) while Karanth says ‘not to be interested in politics is to shirk one’s responsibility’ (1989, p 8).

Lastly, both India and Africa, though culturally rich were closed to the outer world due to the lack of a common lingua franca. With the advent of the Europeans and their English language, they started opening themselves to the western and wider world. Earlier, “West Africa was regarded only as a place where books were sold” (1994, p 11) says Allen Hill, which is endorsed by Hugh Trevor Roper, Professor of Modern History, Oxford University when he said - “There is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness - and darkness is not a subject.” (www.nytimes.com). But, later during the colonial period, Africans exposed to western languages began to write in those tongues. In 1911 Joseph Efrain Casley (also known as Ekna Agiman) of the Gold Coast (Ghana) published the first novel written in English - *Ethiopia Unbound* - *Studies in Race Emancipation* and Bankimchandra Chatterji serialized the first novel *Rajmohan’s wife* in 1864.

In India the situation was not much different. India being a multi cultural and multi linguistic land, the natives were writing in their own regional languages – Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam etc. Even Hindi was spoken and understood
only in the northern part of India, while the major part of India lacked one common, coherent link. Hence the advent of the English and their English education paved the way for a common language which could be negotiated through the length and breadth of India.

T.P. Ashok, the Kannada critic, endorses that revolutionary changes have their genesis or at least are triggered by certain momentous events or incidents of the Age. It could be a war, like the global war, which shook the very stability of the world in various ways, or new scientific inventions like the invention of the steam engine which made mobility possible, or any discovery like Galileo's unraveling of the universal mysteries, writing like Darwin's 'Origin of Species', great work of literature or Karl Marx's treatise on working labour and the like. In the words of T.P. Ashok:

In case of France it was the French Revolution, and in case of Europe it was the Industrial Revolution which brought about 'modernity'. Whereas, in the case of Africa and India, it was 'colonization' through its various indicators which brought about that widespread wave of change leading to 'modernity' (1992, p 93)^. In fact this is what Cartey Wilfred means when he says- "Colonization is a force that has changed the lives of Africans and Asians. It is a fact of history and its impact is irrevocable" (1969, p 64)^. 'Colonization' is the common experience which both India and Africa experienced, but the response of each of them were similar at times and varied at some other times. And both the countries provided a fertile ground for the Europeans to establish themselves.

In both the countries, English education entered with the Colonial agenda. The English education, on the one hand, opened up great vistas to the natives, enlightened them, exposed them to the world beyond their little towns, and awakened their
conscience and even created a new set of intellectual elites who developed high hopes, images and aspirations about a new independent country. On the other hand at the same time it also did make them idealistic, sometimes selfish and headstrong and even alienated them from their roots and traditions. It also created a third set of people who were torn between the two cultures – who could neither imbibe the new values and life style wholesale nor stick to their roots rigidly.

Certain social set ups like hospitals, schools and law courts entered both the countries with the coming of the English. Trade and business also took to new turns and cash crops like tobacco, sugarcane, cotton etc came to be cultivated. Coffee culture gave way to club culture and simple living led to the life of luxury in those days. Both India and Africa underwent all these changes though, not exactly at the same time and pace.

In spite of the various similarities between the two countries with respect to colonization, Europeanization and Christianization, yet relatively India was somewhat better. One very bitter experience which the African community underwent was the inhuman slave trade. In the essay, *The African writer and the Biafran cause* presented at a seminar at Makarere, Achebe observes:

In the last four hundred years, Africa has been menaced by Europe. We may break the four centuries into three important periods: Slave trade, Colonization and De-colonization. Under the European colonization, the African continent did suffer a lot. The attitude of the European colonizer to Africa and its people was one of arrogance, contempt and levity. This contempt is very well summed up in the words of the great imperial poet Rudyard Kipling when he called the African ‘half devil, half child’ (1975 p 82)\(^1\).
At least to that extent, India was fortunate enough as it was spared from the bitter agony of slavery, and its aftermath. Hence, there are ample reasons to choose India and African literatures for a comparative study.

We can sum up saying that Achebe and Karanth have been selected for the discussion as their fiction is focused on the past and the present of their respective societies, the transition and transformation of their societies. The basic task of this researcher is to arrive at an integrated view of the accounts of their respective societies. This is possible only by studying the various factors underlying the society like education, religion, ethics and socio-political scenario among other things. All these factors are so inter related that it is not possible to isolate any of these factors from the other but consider them as an integrated whole.

**Justification for the Selection of Achebe and Karanth**

Shivarama Karanth and Chinua Achebe are contemporary writers living thousands of miles apart, yet with the same deep insight and concern for the societies in which they live. The writings of these two writers give an authentic record of the distortions these colonies experienced during the colonial regime.

Both the writers present through their writings a total world and a total life as it is lived in that world. They write about their people in the past and in the present. Through their writings, they create the world in which they live and move and have their being.

Both the writers are born into societies that have suffered the ordeal of transition and transformation. Though both of them write in different languages, their authorial positions are the same. They both face similar conflicts and identity crisis in a transforming society. Hence their texts too depict the turmoil that originated due to the clash of the 'self' with the 'other'. This similarity of the recording of the internal
disintegration and the external factors that brought about the change, allows these
texts to be compared from a literary angle.

Both the writers have dealt very objectively in their writings about themselves in writing. In the sense, Karanth for example was personally swept away by the Gandhian principles of ‘Nationalism’ and ‘Satyagraha’ and has reflected the same in his ‘Return to the Soil’, wherein Rama of the third generation plunges into the Satyagraha Movement and is being imprisoned too. In case of Achebe, he personally upheld the Biafran cause for independence. In fact many of the poems published by Achebe in the volume Christmas in Biafra are responses to the scenes, experiences and attitudes he encountered during the Civil War. But later he was disillusioned by the native bureaucratic corruption developed within the native system and withdrew himself. In his text, No Longer at Ease he handles the theme of colonial native corruption.

Thus both Achebe and Karanth are not just silent spectators to the on-going happenings of their surroundings, who write just by seeing and hearing, but have a first hand experience of the world around, feel it intensely and later record the same in their writings with an earnest and true sensibility.

The next important reason in choosing Achebe and Karanth is that both the writers view life and thereby literature very seriously. Primarily they are with a heightened sensibility that has a lot of concern for the community they lived in. Be it politics or any societal changes, both take them seriously and respond to them sincerely. In another context Achebe says:

It is clear to me that an African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant – like that absurd man in the proverb who
leaves his burning house to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames (1975, p78)\textsuperscript{12}.

This same concern, care and commitment towards life and their respective societies is also reflected in their writings, they never take to writing as ‘art for art’s sake’. They never view writing just for pleasure. Through their writings, they highlight the changes and transformation that their communities are undergoing the inevitable pain that befall the locals etc.

Both Achebe and Karanth are up to date and respond realistically to their contemporary societies in a relevant and significant way through their writings. They are very much aware of and realize the positives of English education brought in by colonialism as also the inherent loopholes of their own native culture. As such they do not totally brush aside English education or even its aftermath under the staunch ‘No, No’ banner but accept it with a more accommodative spirit. They realize that English education is the key to a brighter and wider world of tomorrow. In one of his interviews Achebe sums up the dynamic aspect of a live culture very neatly thus: “There is, the need for a culture to be alive and active and ready to adjust and to ‘take challenges. A culture that fails to take challenges will eventually die”(1981, p 4)\textsuperscript{13}.

Both the writers took to writing not just to express themselves but to educate, enlighten, and inspire their readers. Sometimes they even criticized their societies. They relentlessly expose through their writings the rigidity and sometimes even the cruelties of their native cultures like ‘the throwing away of the twins into the forest’, and ‘Osus’ not being accepted as in the case of Africa and the ‘sati’ and the ‘untouchable’ system as in the case of India.

In fact, they have acted as critical insiders who have tried to pinpoint, expose and criticize certain prevalent social evils and consider them detrimental to the
healthy development of a society. For Achebe, the greatest task ahead was to expose and attack the flaws and injustice inherent in one’s own society. Both the writers though have a lot of respect and reverence for their deep rooted culture and tradition, are flexible enough to respond positively to the inevitable changes brought about by the colonization. Both of them partake the ‘be a Roman in Rome’ policy and sway with the contemporary breeze. They change their outlook and attitude to the changing contemporary situation and approach every political and social problem from a totally different angle. They look at the ‘progressive’ aspect of English education with the hope for personal and social elevation. In case of Africa, English education enabled the natives to get into civil services whereas in the case of India, it enabled the natives either to pursue the legal profession or even start and develop the profitable hotelary, thereby according a better and upward social mobility.

Both writers reveal a complex awareness of the fact that change originates from within the culture and is catalyzed by factors outside it. In their fiction they explore how the external forces make an onslaught both culturally and politically on a system which is tough rooted in tradition but not altogether closed to positive change. Both view the process of change as slowly operative from inside but manifest outside on the so-called components of ‘Modernism’ like English education, food and fashion and by the entry of Christianity etc.

Both are renowned writers in their respective countries and prominent among their contemporaries. In this regard, the critic T.P. Ashok comments “Karanth is such an influential writer that his novels though centered around coastal Karnataka, could be taken not only as a representative of India but the entire Third World ”(1992, p 92). Meaning, Karanth’s writings could be considered as representative writings of the Third World.
In case of Chinua Achebe, though Nigeria has produced many other novelists, Achebe stands a titular deity among Nigerian novelists. Abiodun Aletugbo's rightly points out, "Nigeria has many other novelists, but Achebe may be used as the standard of comparison in discussing the achievements of other novelists. (1971, p 179)". Eustace Palmer also opines the same when he says-

When output is more prolific and varied and often rises to the heights of brilliance to which Achebe never aspires; yet, Achebe is regarded with greater affection and veneration by readers and fellow writers alike. One of the main reasons for this is that he is central to all the preoccupations of Modern African writers and has given more thought than most to the problems confronting them. His novels taken as a whole, embrace the major issues the African novel has been concerned with. (1980, p 39).

It is not just similarities between the two that have made Achebe and Karanth comparable. There are points and areas in which they differ totally too. The first glaring point of difference is that Karanth basically writes in his local language Kannada whereas Achebe writes directly in English in order to reach out to a larger audience. A few important works of Karanth are translated into English. But, in spite of differences in language and culture, both the writers remain the same deep within and they speak not just through the literal language but through the language of their mind and heart.

The next aspect of difference is with respect to the number of their writings. While Karanth has penned forty five novels spanning varied issues and themes apart from numerous other forms of literature, Achebe has to his credit just five. Of course quantity is never a matter of utmost significance and has a lesser relevance.
Karanth shows superb skill and exemplary expertise in delineation of his woman characters. All his woman characters are patient and perseverant from the beginning, very subtle and supportive throughout and stoic at times. His Parothi, Sarasothi, Venkajji, Mookajji etc., are all not just characters but life size statures that live life intensely and with an optimistic view of life. They are not deterred by the vagaries of life, though at times they shrivel at the adversities of life. This aspect of a strong woman character is lacking in Chinua Achebe, with the exception of Beatrice in *Anthills of Savannah*.

As an early writer in a developing society a writer has a multi-dimensional task to perform. He could be educating the public, entertaining them or even enlightening them or even instructing. The other phase of it is also there which highlights the foils and foibles of the society as was done by the 18th century writers like Dickens and Hardy who exposed the negatives and limitations of their societies at a particular time.

Both Karanth and Achebe have done either one or the other or several duties. Both of them considered their vocation seriously. And both have enriched the realms of literature beyond the geographical boundaries, and have provided a deep insight into their contemporary worlds which could be of immense significance to posterity.

Before proceeding further it is necessary and inevitable to have an idea of the upbringing and social background of these two stalwarts.

**Shivarama Karanth**

Shivarama Karanth is one of the most widely acclaimed literary genius India has ever produced. He was not only a writer but a great artist, painter, educationist, environmental activist to name a few. Though his writings center around coastal Karnataka, yet they find an expression into the intricacies and complexities of human
mind all over. Considering the myriad minded personality of Shivarama Karanth, C.N.Ramachandran finds an apt expression in Kannada proverb: “Aadu muttada soppilla, Karantaru madada kelasavilla”, meaning “There lies no green untouched by goat; no work undone by Karanth” (translation by the researcher). Further, C.N.Ramachandran epitomizes the attributes in him as:

Kota Shivarama Karanth was an extraordinary multifaceted Man.
Filled with tremendous creative energy; he was a writer, painter, dancer, yakshagana artist, educationist and environmentalist and anti nuclear activist. A college dropout and a widely traveled man, he swore by science and modernity but fought against colonial cultural hegemony through a fierce assertion of his past. (2001, p 42)^17.

So vast has been his creativity, universality and human interests that the Kannada proverb: “Aadu muttada soppilla, Karantaru madada kelasavilla”, meaning “There lies no green untouched by goat; no work undone by Karanth” is true to the core. “Had it been possible to render some of his books aptly in English language, Dr. Kota Shivarama Karanth would have been regarded as a genius of the twentieth century” writes Jyotsna Kamath. (www.kamat.com)^18

Shivarama Karanth, the great Kannada writer hailed from Kota, a tiny hamlet in coastal Karnataka. He was born into an agrarian family of Shesha Karanth and Lakshmi. He was born at a time when education was still traditional and English education was still slowly entering Indian villages and towns. C.N.Ramachandran gives a glimpse of Indian villages during the time of Shivarama Karanth thus:

In the first two decades of the last century education was still traditional and English education was but slowly entering Indian villages and towns. Very few families in Kota sent their children to
Government schools and one of them was Karanth’s family (2002, p 25)^19

Karanth learnt English in Government school during Colonial days. It was during his High School days that Karanth’s love of reading Kannada literature was kindled by one of his teachers named Shivaramaiah. Karanth had his college education in Mangalore which was then a hub of all activities. It was here that Karanth was drawn towards freedom struggle and nationalistic activities. Those were the days when India was undergoing dramatic changes in all spheres of life under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and other national leaders. Gandhi’s non-cooperation and satyagraha movements were sweeping across India and Karanth was one of those who was drawn towards the freedom movement and was even imprisoned. This personal experience of Karanth about the spirit of nationalism and the consequent imprisonment of Karanth finds expression in his novel Return to the Soil, wherein Rama one of the third generation characters also plunges into the satyagraha movement during college days. In the words of S.K.Inamdar: “In almost every novel of Karanth, there is at least one character which suggests Karanth’s thoughts or implies his preferences.” (2002, p 50)^20

The characters of Karanth are neither just imaginary nor just fictitious but drawn from real life situations. They are either what Karanth had seen, heard or experienced in real life situations. Karanth was very much inclined towards Gandhian ideals and plunged wholeheartedly into social work. He was always on the move from place to place. It was during this period that Karanth came in touch with great leaders like Karnad Sadashiv Rao, N.S.Hardikar and R.R.Diwakar.

The impact that Karnad Sadashiva Rao had on Karanth was so great that Karanth created his characters in the name of Dayananda Rao in one of his ambitious
novels *Audaryada Urullalli*. The vastness and variety of Karanth’s life and works defy any definition. Constant traveling often resulted in a deeper understanding of man and nature. Karanth makes a pertinent comment in this regard when he says:

> These experiences taught me, that a river is not lifeless; even the hills and rocks are not lifeless……each aspect of nature has supreme energy within it; each has a personality of its own……. Am not I a child of nature? (1977,p 38).

During pre-independent days many writers in India turned to journalism to voice their views and draw the masses towards the national movement. Karanth also turns towards journalism and in 1924, along with one of his friends Devanna Pai launched a new Kannada monthly called ‘*Vasanththa*’ which had unfortunately a very short life. Karanth’s strong urge to reform the society around prompted him to use theatre as a popular means. He even managed a small theatre troupe for a short period and around ninety seven skits/plays were created most of which were staged. Karanth then under the patronage and pressure of a prominent advocate Molahalli Shiva Rao settled in Puttur where he conducted a lot of progressive training camps for the public of his village naming them ‘*Shanti Shibiras*’ (Peace Camps). He used these training camps to educate, inform and reform the public. During this period he undertook an extensive survey of the Harijan colony of Puttur Taluk which again paved the way for one of his major novels *Choma’s Drum*.

Karanth tried his hands at cinematography also and produced a film on ‘Untouchability’ called *Domingo* which failed to reach the target. He then launched an innovative method to educate children in a special method called *Balavana* wherein book reading and learning were substituted by multi-tasks. He then took to writing a children’s encyclopedia *Baala Prapancha* in Kannada running to about
1800 pages in three volumes in 1936 followed by an encyclopedia of science, *Vignana Prapancha* (parts 1 to 4) and a series of graded texts for elementary education like *Kalaa Prapancha, Prani Prapancha, Sirigannada Arthakosha* etc. In all the endeavors of Karanth, he was ably being supported by his better-half Leela Karanth. She was a talented multi linguist who also translated many Marathi novels to Kannada.

Most of Karanth’s novels vary in themes, techniques and their presentation. *Return to the Soil* (1950) deals with the theme of three generations of a family in coastal Karnataka who face hardships of life with courage and adjust to changing times. ‘Bettada Java’ depicts the extraordinary life of Brahmin farmers who accept challenges of nature and will with equanimity. *The Woman of Basrur* brings out attempts of a talented woman with a creative mind to attain fulfillment of physical and intellectual cravings and her partial success in it. *Mookajji’s Visions* which fetched Karanth ‘The Jnanapeet Award’ in 1977, deals with the visions of an eighty year old who has undergone widowhood for seventy years and suffered in innumerable ways but still has not lost faith in life. The entire novel runs in the form of a dialogue between Mookajji and her grand nephew interspersed with her ‘musings’. Mookajji verily represents Indian ethos in a nutshell.

The themes of Karanth’s novels are as varied as the form he has employed in his writings. The novels of Karanth can be grouped under various heads for the sake of convenience on the basis of the inherent dominating themes.

With the passage of time and experience, each and every novel expresses the writer’s outlook gaining depth and varied dimensions. Writing about the themes employed by Karanth, V. Inamdar writes:
Criticism of man's behavior in society has been with Karanth a dominant and persistent motive. Whether direct or oblique, ironical or satirical social criticisms make the backbone of half a dozen novels. (1983, p 50)\textsuperscript{22}

Karanth suffered many ups and downs in his life due to financial stress and the death of his eldest son Harsha. In spite of all these, Karanth's creative energy was in full flow. *Yakshagana* the most popular and vibrant performing art of coastal Karnataka had a profound impact on him. He even published a treatise on it entitled *Yakshagana Bayalaata*. This work of his won him accolades from everywhere.

Karanth's prodigious literary output of over eighty years encompassed over four hundred written works. They include forty five novels, two hundred and thirty one tales for children, four short story collections and two volumes of poetry. He wrote ninety seven plays, nine operas and many ballets. His non-fictional work include eight volumes of stray articles, six travelogues, one dictionary, nine encyclopedias, two autobiographies, thirteen critical works on art and eight works on science. Among his many awards are the fellowships conferred on him by the Central Sahitya Academy and Sangeet Natak Academy, the Jnanapeet Award in 1978 and the Padmabhushan in 1968. It is quite significant that he returned it in 1975 to protest against the implementation of Emergency.

A widely read man, he visited several countries. Yet, global trotting and great honors did not affect his simple habits and love of nature and rural life. As the President of the Karnataka Literacy conference held at Mysore in 1955, he declared:

*It is true that a number of experiments are being tried in literature. But techniques, style and form all find their fulfillment only in their power*
to carry the mind and the heart of the reader the message, emotion and vision of the writer. (1983, p 50)\textsuperscript{23}.

That was his approach throughout.

Anything said and written about this ‘Literary Giant’ appears meager. Considering the enormity of Karanth’s contribution to the literary world and the mankind in toto, Ramachandra Guha, the contemporary literary critic and environmentalist calls Karanth- “The Kannada Tagore”. Commenting on the multifaceted personality of Karanth Mr. Guha says:

A cat has nine lives, Vishnu has ten avatars. But Shivarama Karanth has as many as sixteen careers-nationalism, social reform, commerce, journalism, photography, acting, dance, painting, music, cinema, experiments in education, rural upliftment, novels, plays, environmentalism and science(\url{en.wikipedia.org})\textsuperscript{24}.

**Chinua Achebe**

Chinua Achebe is one of the most popular and acclaimed writers of Nigeria. He is often hailed as the doyen of African literature writing in the ‘language of the colonisers’. In fact, Achebe took to writing as a response to Joseph Conrad’s *The Heart of Darkness*. He criticized Conrad as a “thoroughgoing racist” in one of his lecture titled An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Achebe’s writings focus on the traditions of Igbo society, the native - western clash, precolonial, colonial and postcolonial African plight and a host of other socio political issues. His writings are pregnant with proverbial Igbo language and rich oral tradition. Lauding the literary skills of Achebe, Elaine Show Alter, one of the judges in the award committee of Man Booker International prize for fiction in 2007 says:
Chinua Achebe dedicated himself (as he declared in his introduction to the journal African Commentary) "to reclaiming the rich heritage of Africa, every inch of it", and redrawing the contours of African history". He has at the same time been a novelist on the world stage, which has reclaimed the rich heritage of Western literature, redrawn the contours of the novel Joyce created for the twentieth century, and brightened the path for other writers seeking new words and forms for new realities and societies. He has given readers the illumination we sought changed imperishably the way we see and understand the world. (www.the manbookerprize.com)

Chinua Achebe was born as Albert Chinualumogu Achebe on 16th November 1930. He was raised by evangelical protestant parents in the Igbo village of Ogidi in south eastern Nigeria. While most of their relatives were the followers of the Ibo religion and customs, his parents stood at the "cross roads" of traditional culture and Christian influence. This made a significant impact on the children. Achebe in his autobiographical essay *Named for Victoria, Queen of England* writes:

On one arm of the cross we sang hymns and read the Bible night and day. On the other, my father's brother and his family, blinded by heathenism, offered food to idols. That was how it was supposed to be anyhow. But I knew that without knowing why, that it was too simple a way to describe what was going on......What I do remember was a fascination for the ritual and the life on the other arm of the crossroads. And I believe two things were in my favor- that curiosity, and the little distance imposed between me and it by the accident of my birth. The distance becomes not a separation but a bringing together like the
necessary backward step which a judicious viewer may take in order to see a canvas steadily and fully. (1975, p 68)\textsuperscript{26}.

Achebe excelled at school and won a scholarship for undergraduate studies. Modeled on the British Public school and funded by the colonial administration the government had established a degree college at Ibadan in 1928 to educate Nigeria’s elite future. It had rigorous academic standards and was vigorously egalitarian, accepting boys purely on merit. The language of the school was English not only to develop proficiency but also to provide a common tongue and communicate in the language of the colonizers.

Achebe did his graduation from the University of Ibadan which was an associate college of the University of London. While at the University, Achebe wrote his first short story, \textit{In a Village Church} which combines details of life in rural Nigeria with Christian institutions and icons. Other short stories he wrote during this time include \textit{Old Order in Conflict with the New} and \textit{Dead Man’s Path}. Both these stories examine the conflict between tradition and modernity with an eye towards dialogue and understanding on both sides.

It was during his studies at Ibadan that Achebe came across the works Joseph Conrad and Joyce Cary in addition to the great litterateurs of English like Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Keats and others. In this regard, C.L.Innes remarks:

Conrad’s \textit{Heart of Darkness} and Cary’s \textit{Mister Johnson} portrayed Africa As a dark continent, a symbol of the irrational nourishing undifferentiated and childlike peoples governed by fear and superstition rather than reason, people only too ready to welcome and indeed worship the Whiteman. (1978, p 3)\textsuperscript{27}
Achebe wanted very much to project an African portrait of *Mister Johnson* and hence the outcome of his desire was to "set the record straight". In an interview with Lewis Nkosi, Achebe said:

I know around 51, 52, I was quite certain that I was going to try my hand at writing, and one of the things that set me thinking was Joyce Cary's novel, set in Nigeria, *Mister Johnson*, which was praised so much, and it was clear to me that it was a most superficial picture of - not only of the country - but even of the Nigerian character, and so I thought that if this was famous, then perhaps someone ought to try and look at this from the inside. (1978, p 4)\(^{28}\)

After his University education Achebe took to teaching in the beginning but later worked for the Nigerian Broadcasting Service when an opening cropped up there at Lagos.

While working at the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, Achebe wrote his first novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) at a time when Nigeria's prose fiction was represented solely by the fantastic folklore of Amos Tutuola. It is set in the early days of colonization and tells the tragedy of a traditional village big man Okonkwo who rigidly identifies himself the values of the traditional Igbo society. For this reason he lacks the required flexibility of mind to adapt to changing conditions under incipient European impact. *Things Fall Apart* proved such a big hit both inside and outside Africa that by the early sixties many educational institutions in West Africa had adopted it as a prescribed text in English courses.

Among Achebe's later work is *Anthills of the Savannah* a polyvocal story with multiple narrators. Set in an imaginary West African state, its central character is Sam
a Sandhurst trained military officer, who has become the President, who manipulates and interprets the events, incidents and even friendship to further his selfish ends.

Achebe's novels range in subject matter from the first contact of an African village with the Whitman as in Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God to the educated African's attempt to create a firm moral order out of the changing values in a large city as in No Longer at Ease and A Man of the People. Several critics consider the novels of Achebe as a trilogy documenting Nigerian history between 1890 and 1965.

Achebe has also written collections of short stories, poetry and several books for children. He found other writings like essays and poetry more feasible, appropriate and relevant than novels at times.

Many of the poems published in Christmas in Biafra are responses to the scenes, experiences and attitude he encountered during the Civil War. Achebe's other works include Girls at War and Other Stories (1972), a children's book Chike and the River (1966) and a collection of essays and lectures, Morning yet on Creation Day (1975).

The essays of Achebe, starting from The Role of a Writer in a New Nation (1964) to Africa and Her Writers (1973) reflect Achebe's deep concern, conviction and commitment towards the society, and also the need to establish the African criteria for writing in Africa. In this regard what C.L. Innes contends is very apt when he says:

Both as a creative writer and as a critic, Achebe have had a great influence, particular on younger African writers. His novels have made an especially powerful impression upon young Igbo writers. In fact Achebe has successfully created a "School of Achebe" in Nigerian fiction (1978, p 3)
Abiola Irele and Bernth Lindfors and other critics have revealed Achebe's fundamental theme in his novels as the *demonstration of the dignity and validity of Igbo culture*. Concurring with them David Carroll affirms:

> With great skill, Achebe in his novels of traditional life combines the role of novelist and anthropologist synthesizing them in a new kind of fiction. This is where his essential genius lies' (1990, p 183)

Moreover, Achebe is a careful and fastidious artist who is in full control and commitment towards his art, which is lacked by many contemporary novelists both African and Non-African. He feels that the fundamental theme with which the African writers should concern themselves is their native theme of depth and culture, value and beauty and above all a life full of dignity.

Achebe is the recipient of several awards and honors like *The Margaret Wrong Memorial Prize* (1959), *The Nigerian National Trophy for Literature* (1960), *The New Statesman Jock Campbell Award* (1965), and the *Commonwealth Poetry Prize* in 1972. He is the recipient of Nigeria’s highest award for intellectual achievement – the *Nigerian National Merit Award* 1987. His novels have been translated into some thirty languages and he has been awarded over 20 honorary doctorates by Universities in North America and Britain. He has also been elected an honorary fellow of the Modern Language Association. Apart from this, he holds the membership of several prestigious Academies like *the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, Association of Nigerian Authors, Commonwealth Arts Organization, etc.*
END NOTES


12. Ibid, 78


16 Palmer Eustace, *Review: World Literature Written in English*, (vol.19, No.1) 39


18 kamat’spotpourri:kannadawritersandpoets.www.kamat.com/kalranga/kar/write r/shivaram_karanth


20 Ibid, p50

21 1977, p38

22 V.M.Inamdar/Govinda Pai *Kannada Writers and Their Works* (Mysore: University of Mysore, 1983) 50

23 V.M. Inamdar, *Karanth's Visions* (Mysore: Institute of Kannada Studies, University of Mysore 1983) 50

24 kiranaveerhu.blogspot.in/2009/05/poets-about-shivaramkaranth.html.

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25 www.the manbookerprize.com


28 Ibid, p4

29 Ibid,p3