CHAPTER III

SOCIOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

OF THE CHARACTERS

3.1 Preliminaries

In this chapter, an attempt is made to study the sociological background of the major and minor characters in the novels in order to study the impact of it on the linguistic expressions of the characters. The novels of Chinua Achebe are sociological in nature. Most of the characters have rustic background and are uneducated. Besides, they are influenced by colonialism and their own traditional beliefs.

The chapter relates the sociological background of the characters to their linguistic behavior as it has a bearing on the development of the plot of the novels under examination. It is observed that a person’s sociological background affects his linguistic expressions. In this context, it helps in understanding the characters and their linguistic expressions. This also helps to interpret the novels under consideration in proper perspective.

It is felt essential that the presentation of the critical appreciation of each novel, social structure and Igbo family setting is required to be discussed. It is followed by the study of sociological background of the characters.

Each of Achebe's novels throws light on a different period in the recent history of Nigeria. *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is set in a traditional Igbo village community at the turn of the century when the first European
missionaries and administrative officials were beginning to enter the colonizers’ land. Achebe switches to an urban scene in *No Longer at Ease* (1960) in order to present a picture of the life of an educated Nigerian in the late nineteen-fifties. In *Arrow of God* (1964), the action takes place in a similar setting, the major difference being that the colonizers, missionaries and district officers have by this time become quite firmly deep-rooted. Achebe brings the historical record right up to contemporary times in *A Man of the People* (1966), a devastating political satire that ends with a military rebellion. Achebe's novels read like chapters in a biography of his people and his nation since the coming of the white man. *Anthills of the Savannah* was published in 1985. It was the political discontent continued to dictate Nigeria. Responding to the growing discontent of the people, the disposal of the existing authoritarian military regime took place.

Achebe presents the society as one that has positive qualities of its own. The coherence and order make social life ceremonial. The Igbo society, its significant tradition, structure of families, role of family heads, status of women, rituals and influence of colonialism are studied in detail. This helps to understand the social structure in the novels under consideration.

Igbo social structure varied from place to place throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, but its characteristic nature remained the same. The basic unit of Igbo life was the village group, and the most universal institution was the role of the family head, the oldest man of the oldest surviving generation. His role mainly involved settling family disputes, and because he controlled the channel of communication with the all-important ancestors, he commanded great respect. In some areas, the government of chiefs and elders was composed of a governing age grade, in others; the council of elders was made up of the oldest members of particular families in the region characteristically bound by the periphery of
six villages as in *Arrow of God* and of nine villages of Umoufia as in *Things Fall Apart*.

Secret societies were also an instrument of social control. Their members would appear at night, masked, in the guise of supernatural beings. Any wrongdoers in the community would be condemned. The secrecy of the members and their supernatural atmosphere meant that this whole performance was taken with great seriousness. The old female priestess in *Things Fall Apart* illustrates this type.

Usually, the kinds of decisions that had to be taken in traditional Igbo societies were either judicial or connected with relations with other groups. In a judicial case, it was the responsibility of the family head to try to settle the matter before bringing it to the elders, who would hear the case in public. A decision that affected the whole town, such as the declaration of war, would generally be put to all the free adult males of the town. The nature of these institutions was extremely flexible. For instance, a man who had proved his skills at war in the past might be selected to lead the people through this time of crisis yet would be expected to surrender this leadership once the time of crisis was over. If the facts of a case were unclear, then in some cases the Igbo would turn to an oracle or to prophecy. The family, the group of families, the village made of such small and large groups and the small regional autonomy constituted the social, political and cultural organization in which mutual trust, respect for the elders and the sense of integrity made the entire population a homogenous entity as reflected in all the novels by Achebe. Perhaps it was the small scale of their political institutions that made Igbo land such a good example of what a democracy should be. Some of the first European visitors to this region were struck by the extent to which direct democracy was truly in practice. A combination of common sharing and real respect for those
with ability and experience led to the smooth running of political institutions through representational democracy.

Igbo families generally lived in compounds, each a small part of the village group. The head of the compound was usually the oldest male and within each compound were clusters of huts belonging to different domestic groups. The head of each domestic group is responsible for its members. These aspects have been described in the case of Okonkwo household in *Things Fall Apart* and Ezeulu household in *Arrow of God*.

Titles played a major role in Igbo society. There was a ladder of rising titles that were to be taken in order, accompanied by arising scale of payments. The system acted as a simple form of social security, in that those who acquired titles paid a particular fee, and then were entitled to share in the payments of those who later acquired titles. A titled man’s life was dominated by numerous religious limitations, and it was expected that these would be strictly followed. A political institution that was common but not universal was that of the age-grade. Each age-grade was responsible for specific areas of community service, and this often encouraged enmity between the groups.

In the Igbo society, seniority by age controlled social placement. Married life was the normal condition for adults, and polygamy for men was the ideal. In fact, it acted as an important indication of status. Wives were ranked according to the order in which they married the common husband. Another important feature of Igbo relationship apart from the precedence given to the male is the idea of seniority by birth. The first male and female children of the domestic group, irrespective of the ranking of their mothers, were given special status, and occupied very significant and accountable social positions in the family.
Social rituals are an important aspect of any culture, and they can be especially helpful in revealing the fundamental values of many societies. The sharing of kola nuts is perhaps one of the most important aspects of social and ritual roles in the Igbo society. The kola is the most prominent symbol of hospitality. There is also a belief in kola nut prophecy, which is the routine way of reading how the nuts land after they are tossed. Kola can be given as an offering to the spirits, churches, mosques, or even strangers on the street. The various ideas related with kola permit it to be a part of almost all traditional parts of the Igbo life. The Igbo make distinctions based on the color of the kola nut, as the white kola nut represents prospective abundance and social distinction. The four-cotyledon kola nut is more sought after for ritual reasons – the number four being sacred to the Igbo.

The presentation of a kola nut is an important ceremony with three stages. It is an honor of the host and an honor denied to women, involves passing the nut with the recitation of appropriate proverbs and then followed by a prayer from the eldest member of the host’s family who is present. The second stage, the breaking of the nut, separates the kola into its various cotyledons, follows different patterns depending upon area. For the northern Igbo, the breaking should never be deputized to a junior or social inferior, but for the southern Igbo, the parting is labor and thus acceptable for a junior to do the breaking as a service to the host.

Palm wine, the alcoholic drink of choice for the Igbo, is present at almost all ceremonies and rituals, and is of chief significance at all social occasions. Rituals and sacrifices are meant to encourage spiritual kindness and power. Kola nuts and palm wine have significant cultural symbolic value as those are almost inseparable from Igbo life-style.
Historically, it is important to recognize that Igbo females traditionally enjoyed significant socio-economic status in their own right. Traditional Igbo society can be accurately described as male-controlled, and men did pay a bride wealth to effectively buy their wives, but women were by no means completely subordinate to men.

The division of labor according to gender is an important feature of the Igbo society. Men are the providers, and their ability to provide for their family is of huge social significance. Their tasks in the labor division reflects this predominant theme; their household tasks are largely outdoor and they are responsible for paying bills. Within the community, men do maintenance, harvest crops, and settle differences. Female labor tends to center around the home and tends to be related to cooking and cleaning. Women nurse children but discipline is divided between the parents.

Chastity is not a chiefly significant value in traditional Igbo society. Marriage is extremely important and fertility and child raising is vital. Women are most admired when pregnant or after giving birth, especially to sons. Within marriage, women can leave their husbands or summon them to tribunal for a multitude of sins, mainly relating to failure to provide for the family. Sexual impotency or simply a wife’s dissatisfaction with her husband’s sexual performance can lead to divorce, which shows the stress placed on male sexual prowess in Igbo culture. It follows, therefore, that disloyalty is accepted and expected and polygamy is common. The best example is of Chief Nanga in the novel *A Man of the People*. Some wives welcome the addition of new wives to the household because it comforts their domestic load. Since men pay a bride wealth and effectively purchase their wives, their wife’s wealth and property becomes officially theirs. The reason for accepting polygamy was that it was advantageous to a primary wife that she then had more time to carry her private trading. Women are also considered powerful on the sexual level.
The social setting of the Igbo community, their families, individuals and their relations with each other are discussed here to understand the roles of different characters in the novels. In each of Achebe’s novels, there are some major characters; some of them are from diverse backgrounds; and the minor characters that generally belong to the rural background. They are simple and honest, straightforward but unsophisticated. The first novel of this type is *Things fall Apart* (1958).

### 3.2 *Things Fall Apart* (1958)

*Things Fall Apart* opens with a description of Okonkwo’s life and background. He is presented as a talented farmer and warrior. He has earned two titles in his clan, and has three wives, two outhouses full of yams, and a large living complex all of which speak of his personal success. Okonkwo’s greatness as a man is overstated through a description of his father’s failures. Through his hard work, he has received an important rank among his people, as social status is defined through the work of men. According to Igbo customs, age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered. As the elders said, *if a child washed his hands he could eat with kings.* This is how Achebe introduces the awareness of the identity among the Igbo women.

In Igbo culture, a man’s social status is based on merit rather than inheritance. A man can gain reverence by his gallantry in war, his athletic skill as a wrestler, and the productivity of his yam fields which is directly related to hard work. Thus, if a man has one “title” – or two or three titles – then he has earned an increased societal status. Okonkwo has two titles, which proves that he is both extremely hard working and physically capable. Okonkwo’s father, on the other hand, never earned any titles. It
shows that he is both lazy and generally useless. Achebe in the novel *Things Fall Apart* portrays the Nigerian culture in the most realistic manner. M. Mani Meitei (1994:43) points out:

“Chinua Achebe, while trying to represent his African culture in the most realistic terms in *Things Fall Apart* (1958), has used materials from culture as the most effective and efficacious fictional techniques. The culture he reproduces is not only first hand but also an exquisite representation of the complex ramifications of the Nigerian culture.”

The social structure of the Umuofia consists of a pecking order of skill and strength. Okonkwo is the richest and strongest warrior in the Umuofia tribe. He shows this strength by not only supporting three wives but by being one of the village’s most successful warriors. When a wife of the Umuofia tribesman is killed, Okonkwo is asked to threaten the Mbaino tribe with war if they do not provide his tribe with a virgin and a boy. Okonkwo's money, power and strength help to make his standing in the tribe superior to that of any other men.

Okonkwo, the protagonist, is strong, hard-working, and strives to show no weakness. Although harsh with his three wives, children, and neighbors, he is wealthy, courageous, and powerful among the people of his village. He is a leader of his village, and he has obtained a position in his society for which he has worked hard all his life. He brings honor not only to himself but also to his clan. Ponnuthraj, C. S. (1974: 97) points out:

*Okonkwo knowing his culture intimately, seeks to maintain it and live up to its standards.*
Okonkwo is selected by the elders to be the guardian of Ikemefuna as the great regard in which the village holds him. Ikemefuna is a boy taken prisoner by the village as a peace settlement between two villages after Ikemefuna's father has killed an Umuofian woman. The boy lives with Okonkwo's family and Okonkwo grows fond of him. The boy looks up to Okonkwo and considers him a second father in every respect. The Oracle of Umuofia eventually pronounces that the boy must be killed.

The oldest man in the village warns Okonkwo that he should have nothing to do with the murder because it would be like killing his own child. Okonkwo participates in the murder of the boy despite the warning from the old man. In fact, Okonkwo himself strikes the killing blow as Ikemefuna begs his ‘father’ for protection.

Shortly after Ikemefuna's death, things begin to go wrong for Okonkwo. When he accidentally kills someone at a funeral ceremony when his gun explodes, he and his family are sent into exile for seven years to calm down the gods he has insulted. While Okonkwo is away, white men begin to arrive in Umuofia with the determination of introducing their religion.

Returning from exile, Okonkwo finds his village a changed place because of the presence of the white man. He and other tribal leaders try to reclaim their hold on their native land by destroying a local Christian church. In return, the leader of the white government takes them prisoner and holds them for deal for a short while, further humiliating and insulting the native leaders. As a result, the people of Umuofia finally gather for what could be a great mutiny. Okonkwo, a warrior by nature and adamant about following Umuofian custom and tradition, scorns any form of timidity and campaigns for war against the white men. When messengers of the white government try to stop the meeting, Okonkwo kills one of them. He realizes with
depression that the people of Umuofia are not going to fight to protect them.

When the local leader of the white government comes to Okonkwo's house to take him to court, he finds that Okonkwo has hanged himself. Among his own people, Okonkwo's action has ruined his reputation and status, as it is strictly against the teachings of the Igbo to commit suicide.

Achebe in his novel *Things Fall Apart* depicted women dominated by men. They had no important role to play and whatever domestic role they had, they played it passively. Most of the women characters were combined to household duties. They were born in a society in which they were required to follow their husbands and never to question their authority. They were destined to satisfy men's desire for sex, give birth to children and bring up them. In addition to her womanly duties, she had to work with men during sowing and harvesting seasons. Man's crop was Yam and woman's crops were maize, beans and vegetables. She reared poultry and goats to provide to the family food-supply. It was her duty to clean every day and whitewash and decorate their houses on the occasions of festivals and ceremonies. She had to go to market to make purchases of household things.

As per the tradition of the clan, a man could marry several women. There was a tradition of paying bride-price to the parents of the girls from the suitor's side. Okonkwo could not marry Ekwefi in the first instance because, he was too poor to pay bride-price then. If a woman wanted to give up her husband, her parents had to give back the bride price. Before marriage, girls had sexual freedom. Giving birth to twins was considered to be ill omen and the twins were thrown into the Evil Forest. Making preparation for marriage ceremony fell within the sphere of women's duties. Several wives of a man lived in full co-operation with one another. They were one to share the joys and sorrows of the family. When the husband
beat or ill-treated any of his wives, other wives of the same husband came forward to check his anger. It is the miserable stage of women's fate as highlighted by Achebe.

Women controlled certain spheres of community life, just as men controlled other spheres. Women were supposed to possess superior spiritual well-being and headed many of the traditional alternatives and shrines. In Achebe's novel, for example, the oracle is served by a priestess. Women also gained status by gathering wealth through trading, farming or weaving.

Like an Igbo man, every Igbo woman began her life as a trainee. From a very young age a girl helped her mother at home, on the farm, or in the market place. As she grew older, she learned from experience that hard work, marriage, and membership of certain associations enabled women to advance socially.

The downfall of Igbo society is a product of both the white man’s external influence and increasing internal divisions. The situation is similar to that of a tragic hero whose tragic fall is necessitated only by the combination of a tragic flaw in his character and the uncontrollable forces working against him. Obviously, Igbo society would have continued to prosper if the white men had not arrived and attempted to control the Igbo society.

Igbo society can be compared to a tragic hero; its irrational beliefs would be its tragic flaw. It directly isolated members of society, such as Nwoye, and created a rift within the Igbo community. Igbo beliefs and customs are certainly an indication of the depth of Igbo culture. Ironically, it is these beliefs – the presence of a social structure, the development of a religion – which not only show the richness of Igbo culture, but also lead to its downfall. Women are responsible for many things in the Igbo culture. Their duties are nearly matching to men but they also include housekeeping, farming, bearing and raising children, washing clothes, and
making meals. They also take part in courts, the market, and worship of the gods. Generally, they are implied to be passive to their husband's will. Some women can become priestess of the gods, as is the case of priestess to the Oracle of Agbala.

The five novels by Achebe present the political, religious, social and cultural history of southern Nigeria inhabited by the Igbo community dominated by men. The stages from the period of colonization to the post-independence are covered in this fictional biography of Igbo culture and Nigeria’s heritage.

In the view of Kate Turkington (1977: 35):

_Achebe’s novel exposes the need for tolerance, practical wisdom, and flexibility in a period of social transition as well as demonstrating the tragic ambiguity – public and personal- of such situation._

The period of transition marks the fall from integrity to disintegrity as in _Things Fall Apart_. The nation is no longer at ease as it is struck by arrow of God. The views of the scholars reflect the similar image of deterioration in the novel. _Things Fall Apart_ analyses the destruction of African culture by the appearance of the white man in terms of the devastation of the bonds between individuals and their society. Achebe, who teaches us a great deal about Igbo society and translates Igbo myth and proverbs, also explains the role of women in pre-colonial Africa.

Nwoye, a son by Okonkwo’s first wife, reminds Okonkwo of his father Unoka, he describes him as woman likewise. After hearing of Nwoye's conversion to the Christianity, Okonkwo contemplates how (he), "a flaming fire "could have begotten a son like Nwoye, "degenerate and effeminate". On the other hand, his daughter Ezinma "should have been a boy". He favoured her most out of all his children. Yet "If Ezinma had been a boy
[he] would have been happier". Okonkwo’s father, Unoka is womanly because of his laziness and Okonkwo’s son, Nwoye is effeminate because of his conversion to Christianity.

In keeping with the Igbo view of female nature, the tribe allowed wife beating. The novel describes two instances when Okonkwo beats his second wife, once when she does not come home to prepare his meal. He beats her severely and is punished by the priest but only because he beats her during the week of peace. He beats her again when she refers to him as one of those "guns that never shot." Women are beaten but they are given respect on certain occasions. Achebe shows that the Igbo gave important roles to women. For example, women painted the houses of the egwugwu.

Furthermore, the first wife of a man in the Igbo society is paid some respect. This reference is illustrated by the palm wine ceremony at Nwakibie's Obi. Anasi, Nwakibie’s first wife had not yet arrived and "the others [other wives] could not drink before her." This ambiguity in judging women is due to the denial of full equality to women in all walks of life and on all occasions.

The significance of women's role is observed when Okonkwo is exiled to his motherland. His uncle Uchendu noticing Okonkwo's distress, convincingly explains how Okonkwo should view his exile:

"A man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness, he finds refuge in his motherland." (T.F.A. p.122)

An attempt is made here to discuss the structure of the Igbo society, its tradition, roles and status of male and females to show how each of these aspects affects the linguistic expressions of the characters. Major and
minor characters in the novels under consideration throw light on the impact on sociological background of their linguistic behaviour.

3.2.1 Major Characters

The major characters from the novel *Things Fall Apart* are: 1. Okonkwo, 2. Nwoye, 3. Ezinma, 4. Ikemefuna, 5. Mr Brown, 6. Uchendu, 7. the District Commissioner. These characters are studied against their sociological background.

1. Okonkwo

Okonkwo is an influential clan leader in Umuofia. Since early childhood, his embarrassment about his lazy, extravagant, and womanish father, Unoka, has driven him to succeed. Okonkwo’s hard work and expertise in war have received him a position of high status in his clan, and he accomplishes wealth sufficient to support his three wives and their children. Okonkwo’s tragic flaw is that he is terrified of looking weak like his father. As a result, he behaves rashly, bringing a great deal of trouble and sorrow upon himself and his family.

The Igbo people are one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa, they emphasize on personal achievements, and taking titles which means leadership and respect as Okonkwo does. Okonkwo is affected by the influences of the Igbo society and vows to become a man of the highest title and to gain respect from all the lands. Okonkwo and his family live in male dominant society where men are superior to women. Therefore, Okonkwo thinks he is the owner of his household, and constantly beats his three wives and children.

Okonkwo develops arrogant characteristics and a fear of being weak from the traditions of the society, and throughout the book he puts up a hard exterior and beats his son Nwoye, because he thinks Nwoye is lazy and
weak. In the end, Nwoye betrays Okonkwo because of his father’s cruel attitude towards him and the fact that his father murders his adopted brother, Ikemefuna. It is due to the influences of the Igbo society, Okonkwo is afraid of being a man without a title and being buried without dignity, so he strives hard.

Individuals derive strength from their society, and societies derive strength from the individuals who belong to them. In Things Fall Apart, Okonkwo builds his fortune and strength with the help of his society's customs. Likewise, Okonkwo's society benefits from his hard work and determination.

Okonkwo is cruel to his son Nwoye who later on deserts him getting converted to Christianity. Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna who was his adopted son because of his pride and fear of being weak. Okonkwo does not adapt to the changes of his village because of his characteristics and it results in his self-destruction.

2. Nwoye

Nwoye is Okonkwo’s oldest son. Okonkwo believes Nwoye is weak and lazy. Okonkwo continually beats Nwoye, hoping to correct the faults that he perceives in him. Influenced by Ikemefuna, Nwoye begins to exhibit more masculine behavior, which pleases Okonkwo. However, he maintains doubts about some of the laws and rules of his tribe and eventually converts to Christianity, an act that Okonkwo criticizes as “effeminate.” Okonkwo believes that Nwoye is distressed with the same weaknesses that his father, Unoka, possessed in plenty. As a child, Nwoye is the frequent object of his father’s criticism and remains emotionally unfulfilled.

Eventually, Ikemefuna comes to fill that void and Nwoye, in his admiration of his adoptive brother, begins to compete with him. In a strange way,
Ikemefuna fills the role of both father and brother for Nwoye, providing him with a peer to share his thoughts and a role model.

More than any other character, Nwoye puts in a nutshell an innocent child who is very sensitive to his surroundings and is confused by the seemingly indiscriminate cruelties being committed around him. His dominant characteristic is his incredible ability to feel and sympathize, even more so than some of the female characters. Though considered positive traits by modern women looking for a “sensitive man,” Okonkwo is not impressed and aggressively tries to keep his son from acting like “a woman.”

After Ikemefuna’s unjust murder, Nwoye grows increasingly isolated from his father and seems to lose respect for him. Without Ikemefuna’s companionship and influence, and with a loss of faith in his father, Nwoye reverts to his former gentle nature, instead of adhering to the false masculine one he pretended to have in Ikemefuna’s presence. Increasingly, Okonkwo comes to view Nwoye as a disappointment and extremely effeminate. Neither father nor son is unable to see and understand the other on his own terms.

Ultimately, Nwoye is unable to excuse Okonkwo for his betrayal in killing his adopted brother. Nwoye’s betrayal of his father by converting to Christianity can be read as an attempt to get back at his father for his crime. Christianity, too, has its appeal for Nwoye.

The missionaries’ hymn about brothers living in “darkness and fear, ignorant of the love of God” touches Nwoye deeply. This missionaries’ message seems to speak of another way to live that Nwoye never knew about – a way of life in which fathers do not kill their adoptive sons and twins are not abandoned to die in the Evil Forest.
3. Ezinma

Ezinma is the only child of Okonkwo’s second wife, Ekwefi. Ezinma is the center of her mother’s world as she is the only one of Ekwefi’s ten children to survive past infancy. Their relationship is uncharacteristic: Ezinma calls Ekwefi by her name and is treated by her as an equal. She is also Okonkwo’s favorite child, for she understands him better than any of his other children and reminds him of Ekwefi when Ekwefi was the village beauty. Okonkwo rarely demonstrates his affection, however, because he fears that doing so would make him look weak. Furthermore, he wishes that Ezinma were a boy because she would have been the perfect son.

4. Ikemefuna

Ikemefuna is a boy given to Okonkwo by the neighboring village. Ikemefuna lives in the hut of Okonkwo’s first wife and quickly becomes popular with Okonkwo’s children. He develops a close association with Nwoye, Okonkwo’s eldest son, who looks up to him. Okonkwo too, becomes very fond of Ikemefuna, who calls him “father” and is a perfect clansman, but Okonkwo does not show his fondness because he fears that doing so would make him look weak.

Ikemefuna is a fifteen-year-old boy from a neighboring clan, Mbaino, who is given up to Umuofia as a sacrifice for killing one of the women of Umuofia. He lives with Okonkwo’s family for three years before the elders order him to be killed. In those three years, he grows very close to Okonkwo’s family, especially Nwoye. Okonkwo even prefers him to his true son Nwoye, considering Ikemefuna to be a promising, hard-working young man. His murder, in which Okonkwo takes a part, haunts Okonkwo throughout the book.

From the very beginning, Ikemefuna is the ultimate victim. His fate is completely out of his control since he is taken away by his family so early
in life for a crime of which he had never been a part, nor he had any knowledge of. In his new life, Ikemefuna is a subject to the whims and vagaries of his new father and the Umuofia elders, in whose hands his fate ultimately lies. Ikemefuna is a prime example of how Okonkwo’s fear of being like his father drives him to take a poor, lamentable decision.

Okonkwo joins in killing Ikemefuna because he is afraid of being weak, yet he is haunted by his decision. It permanently and emotionally distances him from Nwoye.

5. Mr. Brown

Mr. Brown is the first white missionary to travel to Umuofia. Mr. Brown introduces a policy of compromise, understanding, and non-aggression between his flock and the clan. He makes friendship with prominent clansmen and builds a school and a hospital in Umuofia. Unlike Reverend Smith, he attempts to appeal respectfully to the tribe’s value system rather than harshly impose his religion on it.

6. Reverend James Smith

Reverend James Smith is the missionary who replaces Mr. Brown. Unlike Mr. Brown, Reverend Smith is inflexible and strict. He demands that his converts reject all of their original beliefs, and he shows no respect for original customs or culture. He is the stereotypical white colonialist, and his behavior represents the problems of colonialism. He intentionally provokes his congregation, inciting it to anger and even indirectly, encouraging some fairly serious disobediences.

7. Uchendu

Uchendu is the younger brother of Okonkwo’s mother. Uchendu receives Okonkwo and his family warmly when they travel to Mbanta, and he advises Okonkwo to be grateful for the comfort that his motherland offers.
Uchendu himself has suffered—all but one of his six wives is dead and he has buried twenty-two children. He is a peaceful, compromising man and functions as a foil to Okonkwo, who acts impetuously and without thinking.

8. **The District Commissioner**

The District Commissioner is an authority figure in the white colonial government in Nigeria. The typical racist colonialist, the District Commissioner thinks that he understands everything about native African customs and cultures and he has no respect for them. He plans to work his experiences into an ethnographic study on local African tribes, the idea of which embodies his dehumanizing and reductive attitude toward race relations. The District Commissioner never understands the glory of the good of Okonkwo’s society. He calls it as one of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger.

3.2.2 **Minor Characters**

The minor characters from the novel Things Fall Apart are: 1.Unoka, 2.Oberika, 3.Ekwefi, 4.Ezeudu, 5.Chielo and 6.Akunna. they are discussed against their sociological background as depicted in the novel.

1. **Unoka**

Unoka is Okonkwo’s father. Okonkwo has been ashamed of him since childhood. As per the standards of the clan; Unoka is a coward and an extravagant. He never takes any title in his life, he borrows money from his clansmen, and he rarely repays his debts. He never becomes a warrior because he fears the sight of blood. Moreover, he dies of an abominable illness. On the positive side, Unoka appears to have been a talented musician and gentle. He may well have been a dreamer, ill-suited to the narrow-minded culture into which he was born. The novel opens ten years after his death.
2. Obierika

Obierika is Okonkwo’s close friend, whose daughter’s wedding provides cause for festivity early in the novel. Obierika looks out for his friend, selling Okonkwo’s yams to ensure that Okonkwo will not suffer financial ruin while in exile and comforting Okonkwo when he is depressed. Like Nwoye, Obierika questions some of the tribe’s traditional strictures.

3. Ekwefi

Ekwefi is Okonkwo’s second wife, once the village beauty. Ekwefi ran away from her first husband to live with Okonkwo. Ezinma is only her surviving child, her other nine having died in infancy. Ekwefi constantly fears that she will lose Ezinma as well. Ekwefi is good with Chielo, the priestess of the goddess Agbala.

4. Ogbuefi Ezeudu

Ogbuefi Ezeudu is the oldest man in the village and one of the most important clan elders and leaders. Ogbuefi Ezeudu was a great warrior in his youth and now delivers messages from the Oracle.

5. Chielo

Chielo is a priestess in Umuofia who is dedicated to the Oracle of the goddess Agbala. Chielo is a widow with two children. She is a good friend of Ekwefi and is fond of Ezinma, whom she calls “my daughter.” At one point, she carries Ezinma on her back for miles in order to help purify her and appease the gods.

6. Akunna

Akunna is a clan leader of Umuofia. Akunna and Mr. Brown discuss their religious beliefs peacefully, and Akunna’s influence on the missionary advances Mr. Brown’s strategy for converting the largest number of
clansmen by working with, rather than against, their belief system. In so doing, however, Akunna formulates an articulate and rational defense of his religious system and draws some striking parallels between his style of worship and that of the Christian missionaries.

The Igbo people are quite superstitious from a Western perspective. They believe in such supernatural creatures as ogbanje, for example. Some of their social practices seem extraordinarily cruel as well, particularly the rejection of twins at birth and the damage of infant corpses thought to be ogbanje. However, behind such practices lies a society which, while quite different from European cultures, is nevertheless refined and composite.

Any reader of Things Fall Apart is struck by the complexity of rituals in Igbo society. The wedding ceremonies, for example, or the trials at which the egwugwu preside over legal disputes. The preparation of food is also quite important, and specific foods have precise values. Yams are the most difficult crop to harvest and therefore are considered the king crop. While cassava and beans are easier to harvest and thus, less worthy than yams. Yams are the centerpiece of important feasts, furthering their cultural importance. Greetings between hosts and visitors center on the breaking of a kola nut, revealing the hospitality of the Igbo.

The most noteworthy idea is that every man in Igbo society has the same chance to rise within that society and gain success through his own efforts. people of Umuofia do not regard Okonkwo in the same fashion. As the narrator tells us in chapter one:

"among these people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father."

T.F.A. (p. 07)
In Igbo society, worth is based on individual accomplishment and hard work, not on class systems or connections with powerful figures. Okonkwo achieved his powerful status in Umuofia because of his persistent work on his farm.

*Things Fall Apart* follows Okonkwo, a village leader who becomes one of the most powerful men in Umuofia, his ancestral village. As Okonkwo struggles to rise from anonymity to importance, he brings along with him the traditions that his village requires of him. Even though Okonkwo faces hardship throughout the novel, Achebe shows us that the cultural expectations and beliefs of this region are complex and difficult to understand, but more powerful than the Western world portrays it.

Thus, the sociological background of the characters moulded them and consequently their linguistic expressions. Okonkwo for example, being the most powerful hero speaks using the commanding expressions. On the contrary, the female characters are always timid and are defensive.

This study of the characters reveals the social environment in which they live. The male dominant society, blind faiths, typical Igbo culture, ethnicity, power struggle, deliberate inclusion of various rituals, ceremonies and customary events which lay emphasis on the social behavior of the characters and their use of language as well.

### 3.3 No Longer at Ease (1960)

The second novel, *No Longer at Ease* is studied here from the perspective of the sociological background of the characters. It is observed that the sociological background has an effect on the behavioral pattern of the characters and consequently the linguistic abilities.

Chinua Achebe has directed his main socio-political criticism against corruption. It is his serious concern for offering the portrayal of Nigeria in
his novels. In *No Longer at Ease*, from the beginning, the main character, Obi Okonkwo, is confronted with the issue of bribery. The moment he arrives at customs to the point where and when he gives in to taking bribes himself, the voice of Achebe lingers in the backdrop through the presentation of Nigerian life after independence.

At first Obi refuses to take bribes and finds it necessary for himself to be a "pioneer" in Nigeria. He desires to bring down corruption in the government and initiate change. It seems that corruption runs extensively and that everyone in Nigeria from the "white man" to the Umuofian Progressive Union (U.P.U.) participates in "seeing" people about what they need to be done. Men offer money, and women offer their bodies, in return for favors and services.

Obi believes that by not taking bribes he can make a difference. He had written a paper, while at the university in London, in which he imagined on what would change the corruption of high positions in Nigeria. He believed that the "old Africans" at the top of civil service positions would have to be replaced by a younger generation of idealistic and educated university graduates like him.

Achebe, however, is not as optimistic as Obi because he has Obi a failure. Achebe takes the readers through the path of how someone like Obi can come to take bribes. The book begins on a negative note: *starting with Obi's trial*. It is as if Achebe says that Obi was condemned from the start. Obi's position is a difficult one. The central character of the novel, Obi, falls into a dreadful and corrupt act what he once had believed. He always feels guilty at taking any bribe. He had decided to stop taking it. Achebe further exemplifies the pretense of all who have participated in bribes and now throw stones at Obi. And, at the same time, it tells us that, although he got caught, Obi is still a pioneer because he has sworn not do it again. It
may be that his beginning as a "pioneer" is a rough one. One of the most important aspects of Obi's life is that he was educated in England. The education he holds dear is also one for which he has felt guilty and one which has often made him an outsider in his own Nigeria.

After Obi returns from England, he secures a position in the civil service, is given a car, money, and reverence. However, he seems to be making constant mistakes because of what he has learned to be like and what he has come to understand. For example, when Obi first arrives, he is given a welcome by the Umuofian Progressive Union (U.P.U.) at which he makes several mistakes. He has forgotten how to act in his home or simply does not agree with its ways: he wears a short-sleeved shirt and sees nothing mistaken with it, for it is hot, and he speaks casually in English.

The education has given him the status and has placed him in a position where others expect the most and best of him. No one can understand, in the end, how a man of "his education and promise" could take a bribe. Of course, Achebe says this defiantly since many who have accused him and who also hold high positions are guilty of similar transgressions. Ironically, the only thing his "education" did not teach him was how not to get caught.

Another important aspect of education, besides the inconsistencies mentioned above, is the fact that Obi's generation uses the education as a tool, in contradiction, against colonialism. Sam Okoli, the Minister of State and an educated man, expresses the position of the general public by saying that, the white man has brought many things to Africa, but it is time for the white man to go. In other words, a man like Obi is able to use his education to take his country back into his own hands, even if his education is something that the colonizer gave him. Being educated, Obi is at the crossroads as he has to use the colonizers’ gift for the benefits and reformation of those who were colonized.
It is important to remember that the only way to survive in a world where two cultures have met is to allow a certain amount of mixture of it to be used in a positive regard. While Obi is in England, he misses his home, longs for his family, and writes regretful poetry about Lagos, the sun, and the trees of his homeland.

Obi is in love with his local language, and it holds a high regard in his heart. At the same time, however, he is also at ease with the English language. The struggle of language is just one of the many examples of how African tradition and English culture run into in this novel. Obi loves his family deeply, and since his family is symbolic of his roots, it can be said that he loves his roots dearly. The cross-cultural encounters put Obi in this predicament of being in love with his roots and being attached to the English way of life.

This is not to say, however, that he will not rebel against his roots because of things he has learned elsewhere. Obi possesses the more liberal, and even "European," belief that he may marry anyone he wishes, even though his family and his countrymen oppose it. And, even though he wishes to marry Clara in the end, despite her history, he is tied to his mother through a symbolic traditional root … his blood.

It is this struggle between tradition and European ways that is exhibited throughout the novel and that is further enlarged by the European presence of characters like Mr. Green. There are also the more subtle occurrences of Europeans at drawing rooms and restaurants throughout Nigeria serving English food and importing European beers. Some of these colonial introductions are good, as is shown by the scene about the radiogram between Obi and the Minister of State. However, the struggle exists, and it is clear that Achebe has a strong negative opinion about colonialism as a whole.
Throughout the novel, there are songs and poetry that mean different things at different moments in time. When Obi is away at school, his poetry is a kind of attraction toward Nigeria, a calling and memory of home and yet, he writes these poems in English. While he is in Nigeria, there are many songs sung in his presence, some of which Obi also separates using the English language but not without the Igbo pulling at his heart. He has studied poetry in England, but poetry also links him to home. These poetic contradictions are all apt to the novel's decisive struggle. It is like the young man living under the end of a long colonial rule.

Allusions to English literature are constantly driving towards England. The constant allusion to proverbs drives the Igbo back to Africa. Achebe sprinkles his novel with proverb after proverb, making the novel specifically and purposefully African. Achebe, like Obi, uses the tools of colonialism for his own purposes. He is makes the European form of the novel his own.

The issue of language is universal in the novel and is simply one of the many issues that arise out of a colonial society. Obi struggles between two tongues, Igbo and English just as he does between two cultures. He was born into one language, and he obtained ‘knowledge’ in the other language. C.L. Innes argues that the novel is very much akin to European mode. Still, Achebe explores the story with Igbo proverbs and African oral tradition. In the words of C.L. Innes (1990:171):

“No longer at Ease, despite its continuing use of proverbs and its reference to Igbo traditions, is much closer in form and plot to a modern European novel, with a love story as its focus.”

04
It is observed that the love story of Obi and Clara add to the success of the story along with the use of proverbs and other factors. The characters in the novel play their roles in such a setting and the sociological background that both their behavioral and communicative approach get influenced by the sociological background of Nigeria during the transitional period from colonial period to the period after Nigeria became independent.

3.3.1 Major Characters

The major characters in the novel are: 1. Obi Okonkwo, 2. Clara, and 3. William Green. These characters are studied in detail against the sociological background in which they move. The critical views of some of the experts are also studied thoroughly.

1. Obi Okonkwo

Obi's birth name is Obiajulu which means "the mind at last is at rest," and this naming is an impending irony, considering the title of the novel and Obi's predicament. Obi is ill at ease in both of his cultural experiences.

The central character of the No Longer at Ease, Obi Okonkwo, is a young man born in Igbo in the Eastern Nigerian village of Umuofia. He was well educated and in due course sent to study law in England, a course of study he eventually changed to English. He stayed in England for nearly four years, at times longing for the warm weather of home and all the other sentimental qualities his memory supplied him during long winters abroad. Nevertheless, his arrival is less warm than what he has expected.

He often feels himself as an alien in his own country. He has lost his love because of the rule of the past, he has suffered under great financial distress, and he has put forth himself because of the expectations of others. He also has lost his mother.
He is educated, therefore, he is given a "European post," and he works in an office whose morals he finds revolting. His views are firmly against the bribery that goes on and is opposed to his boss, a very old, white, and English colonial man called Mr. Green. Obi finds himself in a constant combat between traditions of the world into which he was born, the village and his traditional African roots, represented by the Umuofian Progressive Union, and the conventions of a changing world. Bernth Lindfors (1980:65) observes:

“Thereby perpetuating the tradition of public corruption he had earlier so despised.”

As opined by the above critic, Obi finds himself at the commencement of a generation of change, caught between two worlds. He is unable to marry the woman he loves because she is considered an outcast. He wishes to want to marry her anyway because he feels by the time he has children, the world will have changed. He is also of the opinion that it will not matter, as his father is a convert to Christianity.

Achebe (1977:16) in his interview says:

*I do not accept the idea that Obi was a weak character. I think he is very strong; it is just that his strength is not the kind that is particularly appreciated in the West. He was more an artist than an activist, but he was weak.*

He has almost forgotten how to perform in his own home or simply does not agree with its ways. He wears a short-sleeved shirt and sees nothing wrong with it, for it is hot, and he speaks casually in English, instead of the kind of heavy English that the Umuofians appreciate in the President of the Union. His education has brought him the status and has placed him in a
position where others expect the most and best of him. No one can understand, in the end, how a man of "his education and promise" could take a bribe. Of course, Achebe says this cheekily that many who have accused him and who also hold high positions are guilty of similar transgressions. Ironically, the only thing his "education" did not teach him was how not to get caught.

Still, Obi loses his girlfriend, his mother, and finds himself in serious debt throughout the novel. He must pay back his scholarship loan and is responsible for sending money home. Eventually, Obi breaks down under all of this pressure and gives in. He begins to accept the bribery he had been against so ideally. He does not give in without guilt. At the end, he even determines to be finished with bribery. He had even decided to be right before he is caught. Somehow, it is too late, and his situation, his position of being caught between two shifting worlds, becomes almost impossible. Robert M. Wren (1981:38) is of the opinion:

“Through the grandson of Okonkwo, the novel becomes a parable of modern Nigeria, a commentary on apparently universal corruption and on the colonial judgments of the new African generation.”

Obi is a man who is caught between the two worlds and therefore he is no longer at ease with himself and with the world around him.

The memorable event in Obi’s life is: he received a scholarship to study law in England from the Umuofia Progressive Union (U.P.U). It was the scholarship that Obi has to pay back upon his return. Thus, he leaves for England, stopping in Lagos on the way out. While in England, he comes across several things. First, he changes his course of study to English and gives up law. Secondly, he finds himself nostalgic for home, writing poems about Nigeria. Finally, he meets a girl named Clara at a dance in
London but fails to make a good impression. However, the girl is Nigerian also, and on Obi's boat rides back home, after nearly four years in England, he meets Clara once again. This time, they begin a relationship.

Once back in Nigeria, Obi stays, once again, in Lagos with his friend Joseph, trying to find a job and a place of his own. He also visits his own home village of Umuofia. Obi is quickly given a post on the Scholarship Board of the Civil Service and is also quickly introduced to the world of bribery, which is a world he wholeheartedly rejects with a strong idealism at first. This is indicated early on when a man offers Obi money in order for Obi to "pull strings" for his little sister's scholarship. Obi is appalled and rejects the offer, only later to be met at home by the little sister herself who offers Obi her body in return for the scholarship favor. Again, Obi rejects this offer.

Although Obi begins his life in Nigeria in an honest way, events do not go as he has planned. First, Clara tells him that she cannot marry him because she is an osu, an outcast. Obi decides to ignore this and go against what most of his fellow countrymen believe to be a major violation of custom, and he decides he will marry her anyway. Still, his economic hardship worsens, given that he has to send money home and that he is in debt. Obi then receives a letter from his father telling him that he must go home. When he arrives at home he sees that his mother is very ill. And, his parents tell him he must not marry Clara because she is an osu. In fact, Obi's dying mother gives him an ultimatum: she tells him that if he insists on marrying Clara, he must wait until she is dead because if he marries Clara while she is alive, she will kill herself.

Obi, therefore, returns to Lagos and tells Clara all that has come to light. Clara becomes angry and breaks off the engagement, afterwards hinting at the fact that she is pregnant. It is at this point when Obi arranges an
abortion. He does not have the money and needs to borrow it. Complications arise out of the operation, and Clara is hospitalized, after which she refuses to see Obi. He then returns to work, only to be notified that his mother has died. He does not go home for the funeral, and the U.P.U. discusses this failure on Obi’s behalf as a sign of his not having cared about his mother’s death. The truth, however, is that he is terribly saddened by her death, feels terrible remorse and guilt, and has entered into a state of mental unrest. However, Obi awakes from this unrest with a new sense of calm. He feels like a new man, and it is at this point that he takes his first bribe, not without a certain degree of guilt.

Obi allows this acceptance of bribes to become habitual. He continues to take bribes until the end of the novel, when Obi decides he cannot stand it anymore. He has paid off all of his debts and can no longer be a part of the corruption. It is at this moment, however, when he has taken his last bribe, that he is caught, which brings the readers back to the beginning of the novel.

At the end, he even claims to be finished with bribery, right before he is caught. Somehow, it is too late, and his situation, his position of being caught between two shifting worlds, becomes almost impossible.

2. Clara

Clara is another character in the novel that is harassed in the changing world of pre-independence Nigeria. She being educated abroad has a career as a nurse. She is self-oriented and is often determined. She shows herself to be quite caring. The first conversation she has with Obi is regarding Obi’s sickness. She had gone to his cabin, on their journey home; when she saw that he was feeling ill. She is also willing to compromise, and, although she finds Obi’s poetry boring, she is prepared to listen to it. She is also willing to meet Obi’s friends whom she dislikes.
Even though she finds it quite spoiled at times, she goes for her shopping in the slums. During the troubled times, she is willing to sincerely give Obi money to save him from trouble. She does not worry whether he is unwilling to take it or not.

However, the truth is that she is a difficult person, perhaps because she finds it difficult to let go of her past. She is a strong-minded girl. She is not intellectual however, she finds herself bound to a tradition that seems biased to both her and Obi. She is troubled by the fact that she is an osu, which means that because of her ancestral past, she is an outcast. It is for this reason that she cannot marry the man of her choice.

Though Obi claims he does not care, he esteems the last word of his mother, which is that he must wait until she is dead, or she will kill herself if he marries Clara while she (his mother) is alive. This disappoints Clara, and it is after this that they have their final break-up, after which Clara is hospitalized because of problems during an abortion. During this time Clara refuses to see Obi.

From the beginning, Clara's romance with Obi was not on any balanced ground. Symbolically, it only needs to be seen where Clara and Obi first began their relationship: in the water, on stormy and unsettled grounds.

3. William Green

The character of Mr. Green is the representative of the white, European presence in Africa that resulted from the spread of English empire and its colonial hold on Nigeria. He is a proud man, who believes that the average African is "corrupt through and through" and that it is the British who have brought Africans civilization and education.

Nevertheless, Mr. Green appears to be committed to Nigeria, and there are characters in the book such as his secretary, Miss Tomlinson, who
constantly supports him in spite of his "strangeness." Miss Tomlinson, however, is also a white English person living in Nigeria. The narrator tells the reader that Mr. Green works long and hard hours, but this "quality" is constantly being evacuated by reminders of his colonial attitude and superiority complex. He, thus, has a challenging association with Obi, who is an educated African holding a European post. Still he believes in education, which makes it both ironic and fitting that he pays for the education of his estate manager's sons.

Mr. Green finds it problematic that Africans ask for weeks off at a time for vacations. However, this custom was actually started by the very Europeans who held these high posts in civil services prior to the Africans themselves. These ambiguities are continually arising out of the character of Mr. Green. He is a representative figure of patriarchic colonialism that finds it difficult to give up such a position. In fact, when he thought Nigerians would achieve liberation, he had threatened to resign.

Significantly, Mr. Green is a symbol of an older world that is continuously present in the Nigeria of the late fifties, which Achebe represents, only some years before its eventual liberation, when a figure like Green will remain a problem but will eventually become obsolete.

The fight between tradition and European ways is shown in the novel and it is further intensified by the European presence of characters like Mr. Green. And, aside from the obvious Mr. Green, there are also the more refined occurrences of Europeans.

If Mr. Green stands for Europe in Obi's struggle between tradition and European ways, then the UPU stands for the stubborn traditional ways of the past.

The study of the sociological background of the characters is mostly responsible for influencing their approach to life and their reactions are
studied in the next chapter on sociolinguistic features of the novels. The first novel by Chinua Achebe *Things Fall Apart* is about Okonkwo, an Igbo village leader around the turn of the 20th century when Britain was turning Nigeria into a colony. *No Longer at Ease* picks up the story two generations later in the mid-1950s, as Nigeria moves towards liberation. Its central character is Okonkwo’s grandson Obi. Obi is the son of Isaac Okonkwo, who (in the first book) disclaimed his father's ancestral traditions and converted to the colonists’ religion. A recent graduate of a British university, Obi no longer practices Christianity. His passion is for education, achievement, and moral rectitude. Obi wants to clean up Nigeria and, as he tells his friend Christopher, he knows how it should be done:

"The civil service is corrupt because of these so-called experienced men at the top," said Obi.

"You don't believe in experience? You think that a chap straight from university should be made a permanent secretary?"

"I didn’t say straight from the university, but even that would be better than filling our top posts with old men who have no intellectual foundations to support their experience."

"What about the Land Officer jailed last year? He is straight from the university." *N.L.E.* (Pp. 22-23)

At first, everything seems to be going his way. His Western education has qualified him for one of the coveted "European posts" - a senior-level government job usually reserved for white people. He lives in one of the better districts of Lagos. He has a car, a driver, a houseboy, and a woman
he loves. In many ways he is more like the colonizers than his countrymen. Having spent four years abroad, he sees his country with new eyes, and it looks shabby. He will not grease any palms. He will not allow the tribal council, his father, or ancient customs to dictate his behavior. He is independent and will make his own decisions about education, money, and whom to marry.

His Western leanings tend to isolate him from family and friends. Members of the Umuofia Progressive Union do not understand his clothing, his speaking style, his taste in food, and – especially – his intransigence when they object to his fiancée. His parents are hurt that he so readily flouts ancient traditions. Eventually, Obi walks out on just about his entire support system.

Yet, his British employers and associates do not see him as one of themselves (his boss has a primitive dislike for Africans). They do not support him get the practical information he needs to function in their society.

In the end, he is on his own, and no one - not the learned judge, not the British Council man, not even the Nigerian men of Umuofia – can understand why Obi would compromise his principles.

3.4 Arrow of God (1964)

The novel is set amongst the villages of the Igbo people in rural Nigeria during the 1920s in a southern part of the country. Ezeulu is the chief priest of the god Ulu. The six villages of Umuaro worship the god. The title Arrow of God refers to Ezeulu's image of himself as an arrow in the bow of his god.

The novel begins with a war between two neighboring regions of rural Igbo land: Umuaro and Okperi. Umuaro is made up of six villages though the
boundaries of Okperi are not known. These six villages are connected by their worship of a common god, Ulu. These six villages formed the entire world in the eyes of the inhabitants there.

The novel begins with Ezeulu and Umuaro getting in a battle with a nearby village, Okperi. The clash is abruptly resolved when T.K. Winterbottom, the British colonial overseer, intervenes. After the clash, a Christian missionary, John Goodcountry, arrives in Umuaro. Goodcountry began to tell the villagers different tales of Nigerians in the Niger Delta who gave up their traditional "bad customs," in favor of Christianity, stimulating hatred from his traditional community. Initially, it is the competition between the two priests: Ezeulu of Umuaro and the priest of Okperi.

Ezeulu is called away from his village by Winterbottom. He is offered to become a part of the colonial administration, a policy known as indirect rule. Ezeulu refuses to be a "white man's chief" and is thrown in prison. In Umuaro, the people cannot harvest the yams until Ezeulu has called the New Yam Feast to give thanks to Ulu. When Ezeulu returns from prison, he declines to call the feast in spite of being pleaded by other important men in the village to make a compromise. Ezeulu reasons to the people and to himself that it is not his will but Ulu's; Ezeulu believes himself to be half spirit and half man.

The yams begin to rot in the field and a famine follows for which the village blames Ezeulu. Seeing this as an opportunity, John Goodcountry proposes that the village offer thanks to the Christian god instead so that they may harvest what remains of their crops with ‘protection’.

Many of the villagers have already lost their faith in Ezeulu. One of Ezeulu's sons dies during a traditional ceremony, and the village takes this as a symbol that Ulu has abandoned their priest. The village converts to
Christianity rather than face another famine. The abandonment has started as the input of the colonial rule.

The people of Umuaro start a war with Okperi over the land they wish to claim; they are cheered to start the war by a wealthy man named Nwaka, who challenges Ulu. This war is launched against the advice of Ulu's chief priest, Ezeulu. The colonial administration steps in to stop the war and rules in favor of Okperi after discussing the matter with Ezeulu, the one man in Umuaro who tells the truth. Captain Winterbottom, a British colonial official who commands the local station, breaks and burns all the guns in Umuaro, becoming a legend. Meanwhile, the people of Umuaro become irritated with Ezeulu because he did not take their side.

Five years later, life in Umuaro has returned to normal. Christian missionaries have made major inroads into society, forming converts and trying to show that the old gods are useless. Ezeulu is sending his son Oduche to church, to be his eyes and ears, and to learn the ways of the white man like his spy.

Enmity between Ezeulu and Nwaka and their respective villages has grown to the point called *kill and take the head*. In other words, things have come to the point where men in the two villages attempt to kill each other using poison. Nwaka is encouraged and strengthened by his relationship with Ezidemili, the high priest of the god, Idemili. Though Idemili is a lesser god in comparison to Ulu, the competition between the two priests is dividing Umuaro, creating doubt and ill will among brothers.

But the competition is not restricted to within the Igbo religion; the missionaries call the Christian Igbo, including Oduche, to kill the sacred python. Oduche runaways out at the last minute, putting the snake in a box instead, but his family finds a terrible feat when he is at church. Doing anything to the royal python is considered a disgrace. The royal python
belongs to the god Idemili, and as soon as the priest of Idemili hears about it, he sends a messenger to scold Ezeulu, and to ask what he proposes to do to cleanse his house. Ezeulu responds by telling Ezidemili to die literally and the matter rests there, uneasily. The completion rises to a higher pitch and to the point of kill and take the head.

The colonial administration has ordered a new road to be built, connecting Okperi with Umuaro. In spite of the inadequacy of funds, they need to complete the road. Therefore, Mr. Wright, the overseer, appeals to recruit labor. He receives permission and Umuaro is the unlucky recipient of the demand for free labor. One day, Ezeulu's son Obika is late getting to work. He had too much palm wine to drink the day before. But when Mr. Wright whips him, it stirs up the resentments of all the men. They have every argument as why they are forced to work without any payment, when Okperi men are paid for their labor and why they should be treated like this.

Though they complain among themselves, they are never able to come to a decision about what to do. As Ezeulu assumes that Obika has done something to deserve the whipping, he brings on a crisis in his own household. Edogo, his eldest son, begins thinking, and decides that the old man's tendency to choose favorites among his sons has created a problem. He believes that Ezeulu has tried to encourage Ulu's verdict about which son will be the next priest. By sending Oduche to learn the religion of the white man, Ezeulu has essentially taken Oduche out of the running.

And Ezeulu has trained Nwafo in the ways of the priesthood, so he is clearly venturing his claim on Nwafo as the one Ulu chooses. However, Edogo begins to wonder what will happen if Ulu does not choose Nwafo, if he chooses Edogo or Obika. It will create struggle and partition in the family and Edogo, as eldest son, will have to deal with it. He goes to Ezeulu's friend, Akuebue, and asks him to speak to Ezeulu.
Akuebue finds that Ezeulu is not interested to a talk about the divisions within Umuaro. He blames the people of Umuaro for the white man's coming. The people of Umuaro try to blame Ezeulu because he told the white man the truth when Winterbottom stepped in to stop the war between Okperi and Umuaro.

Ezeulu is also disinclined to reports of divisions within his own household. He confesses that he sacrificed Oduche, not so much to put him out of the running for the priesthood, but because he sees the threat to Umuaro and to the Igbo posed by Christianity. Such a situation requires the supreme sacrifice, that of a human being.

Captain Winterbottom has another kind of stress. He is under direct orders to find a chief for Umuaro as "Indirect rule" is the ideology that rules the day. He chooses to send a messenger to fetch Ezeulu as he feels Ezeulu is just the man for the job. Ezeulu refuses to come, saying that the Priest of Ulu does not leave his hut, and sends the messenger back to Winterbottom with the message that if he wants to see Ezeulu; he will have to visit Ezeulu. As a result, Winterbottom issues an order for Ezeulu's arrest and sends two police officers to fetch him.

After consulting with the elders and men of title in Umuaro, Ezeulu decides to set out for Okperi the next day. This makes him get angry as Umuaro continues to blame him for the white man’s presence, and they do not show Ulu any respect. His rival, Nwaka, continues to challenge Ulu and the people react nothing about it. The two police officers attempt to arrest Ezeulu pass him on the way, but do not realize it until they reach his compound and learn that Ezeulu has gone to Okperi.

In Okperi, Winterbottom suddenly falls ill. The African servants decide that Ezeulu must have a lot of power because Winterbottom is struck ill only after he issues the warrant for Ezeulu's arrest. Therefore, at the arrival of
Ezeulu, the servants are scared. They do not want to lock him up as per the order; instead, they pretend that the guardroom is a guest room and try to make him comfortable.

On the first night in Okperi, Ezeulu has a dream and becomes conscious that his real battle is with his own people, not with the white man at all. In his vision, he sees Nwaka challenge Ulu, and the people spitting on him (Ezeulu), saying he is the priest of a dead god. He begins to see that the white man has been able to take advantage of Umuaro's division to sow further seeds of ruin. He hopes Winterbottom holds him up for a long time, so he can better plan his retaliation.

Ezeulu is detained for a couple of months. First, Clarke decides to teach him a lesson by making him wait. Then, he offers Ezeulu the position of chief, but Ezeulu refuses. Angry, Clarke thrusts him in prison, and Winterbottom acclaims him, saying he should keep Ezeulu locked up until he learns to cooperate. However, Clarke begins to suffer pains of conscience, realizing that he does not have a genuine reason to keep Ezeulu confined. He is relieved when he hears from Winterbottom's superior advising against creating new Warrant Chiefs. This gives Clarke the excuse to let Ezeulu go. Ezeulu returns home. Everybody is glad to see him again and Ezeulu realizes that his anger was directed not against his real neighbors but against an idea that they were mocking Ulu and disrespecting Ezeulu. However, he lays low and sets his plan in action. When the time for announcing the Feast of the New Yam comes, he fails to announce it. His assistants come to ask if he has forgotten his duties. He gets mad and sends them away.

Next, the elders of the village come and ask, cautiously, why he has not announced the Feast of the New Yam. Ezeulu tells them that he has three sacred yams left. He cannot announce the Feast of the New Yam until he
has finished all the sacred yams. He was unable to eat the sacred yams while imprisoned in Okperi, and now he has to follow the rules – one yam a month. The men are shocked. If they wait three months before they are allowed to harvest their crops, the crops will be ruined and the people of Umuaro will suffer widespread famine.

The elders tell Ezeulu that he should just quickly eat the yams and if there are any consequences, they will ask Ulu to let it fall away on their heads, not Ezeulu's. However, Ezeulu is committed. Such a thing is unheard of. Anyway, no matter what their intentions are, as chief priest he will be the one to suffer the consequences of breaking the rules. He cannot do it. They must wait.

The Christian catechist, Mr. Goodcountry, recognizes this as an opportunity. He says that anybody who wants to offer their yams to the Christian god instead, they can harvest their yams; they will receive the security of the Christian god as well. As people begin to suffer, they do just that. Meanwhile, Obika – who is sick – is asked to help in the funeral preparations for Amalu, one of the elders in the village who had died some months back. He helps with one of the funeral rituals by carrying the mask for Ogbazulobodo, the night spirit, and chasing after day. He runs so hard and so fast, however, that he drops dead when he returns.

The people say it is a judgment against Ezeulu. His god, Ulu, has spoken: Ezeulu has become persistent and proud, and the god has not sided with his priest against the people. But it was a bad time to disgrace the priest. It allowed the people to take "liberties." That year, many of the yams were harvested in the name of the Christian god; and the crops reaped afterwards were also reaped in the name of the Christian god. The book concludes with Ezeulu's power receding as Christianity takes precedence. Bernth Lindfors (1986: 24) opines:
The religious drama in *Arrow of God* was played out against the backdrop of the colonial drama in Nigeria.²⁸

Bernth Lindfors (1980: 75) also speaks about the novel as:

"*Arrow of God* is Achebe’s longest, most complex and most successful novel. It possesses a richness of texture, depth of characterization and ambiguity that cannot be found in his other fiction. The ambiguity derives from Achebe’s enigmatical depiction of Ezeulu."²⁹

The above mentioned sociological background, a brief summary of the novel and the expert opinions of the scholars help in understanding the roles of the characters, their language, culture and their intentions. The study of sociological background of the major and some minor characters throws light on the probable impact on the language and behaviour of the characters.

### 3.4.1 Major Characters

An attempt is made to focus on the major characters in this novel. These characters and the social background in which they live extend maximum assistance for the target work. The major characters such as 1.Ezeulu, 2.Nwaka, 3.T.K.Winterbottom, 4.Obika and 5.Oduche are discussed here along with their sociological background.

#### 1. Ezeulu

Ulu, the god that rules Umuaro, has the chief priest named Ezeulu. Ezeulu's being proud motivates him throughout the novel. Ezeulu plays a prominent role in Umuaro, a place of collection of six villages in southeastern Nigeria.
As the chief priest, Ezeulu feels grateful to offer his advice, even though the people do not seem to pay attention to him. When they pay no attention to him, his gets offended. He believes that the people do not have proper reverence for Ulu, and when Nwaka challenges Ulu, suggesting that he may be a useless god and the people should get rid of him, Ezeulu is repentant. Ezeulu's faithfulness to duty means that he tells Winterbottom the truth when Winterbottom asks how the war with Okperi began. The people of Umuaro are annoyed with Ezeulu, especially since it causes Winterbottom to rule in Okperi’s favor. They are further disturbed when Ezeulu sends his son Oduche to school and to church to learn the ways of the white man. They blame Ezeulu for bringing the British to Umuaro. Ezeulu feels bitter about all the unkind remarks of his neighbors, friends, and kinsmen, and identifies that it is coming from one source, Nwaka, who is helped by the priest of Idemili.

As things start to go badly in Ezeulu's household, the tension worsens between Ezeulu and his rivals. Ezeulu's son, Oduche, commits a disgrace against the royal python. It causes a trouble. This belief plays an important role.

Ezeulu is further frustrated when Captain Winterbottom sends a mysterious message that Ezeulu should appear before him in Okperi. As chief priest of Ulu, Ezeulu does not wander far from his hut. But the elders and men of title convince him that he should go, and he sets out the next day, unaware that Winterbottom has put out a warrant for his arrest. Limitations of Ezeulu as a priest are notable. Ezeulu is detained in Okperi for several days. He suddenly understands that his combat is with his own people, not with the white man at all. David Carroll (1990: 99) rightly observes in this connection:
“Mutual misinterpretation is the chief structural device of the novel. Ezeulu misunderstands the intentions of Winterbottom and misinterprets it. Winterbottom on the contrary narrates with misinterpretation about the war between Umuaro and Okperi.”

The longer Ezeulu is detained, the better he can plan his retaliation. He knows that he is Ulu's arrow of punishment. He believes the people need to be taught a lesson. While imprisoned for several months, Ezeulu plans the punishment carefully.

When Ezeulu finally proceeds home, the people of Umuaro welcome him. Ezeulu’s anger concedes, but not completely. He continues to plan his retaliation in secret. It is interesting about Ezeulu's retaliation that he clearly attempts to isolate himself from this retaliation; he does not see it as revenge for his own sake, but for Ulu's sake

The moment for revenge finally reaches. Ezeulu informs the people that he cannot name the day for the Feast of the New Yam until he has finished the sacred yams. There are three yams left, which will take three months to eat. The people are panic. After three months, their crops will be ruined, rotted away in the ground. They beg him to reconsider, but Ezeulu is steadfast. He has to do what Ulu asks him to do. The Yam ceremony and religious faith of people have influence on the characters like Ezeulu.

Famine settles into Umuaro. Ezeulu's family also suffers. When Ezeulu's son, Obika, dies suddenly, the people see it as a judgment against Ezeulu, who is too proud, impulsive, and stubborn. This is an example of the people’s blind faith. It gives them the freedom to turn to Christianity, to a god who seems less unpredictable in his need to punish the people.
Ezeulu's pride is what breaks him in the end. Shocked that Ulu would allow Obika to die, Ezeulu begins to wonder if he is being punished. But he cannot understand what he did to deserve punishment. He was only following Ulu's will, no matter how much he personally suffered as a result. His mind wanders, and he becomes deceptive.

2. Nwaka

Nwaka is Ezeulu's rival. Every time it is seen that Nwaka is challenging Ulu or criticizing Ezeulu, Ulu's high priest. Nwaka believes strongly that Ezeulu is power-hungry and tries to snatch more power than he is due. This is a common desire of every Igbo man to acquire power and compete with others.

Nwaka appears to be inspired by his friendship with Ezidemili, the priest of a lesser god, Idemili. Ezidemili strengthens Nwaka in his attacks on Ezeulu's character. Nwaka might be power hungry himself, or he might be handled by Ezidemili, who may be hoping to destroy Ulu so that Idemili can take his place.

Though there is not seen that any growth in Nwaka's character over the course of the novel, he does accompany the other men when they visit Ezeulu to request him to announce the day for the Feast for the New Yam. On the contrary, he squeezes whatever enmity he has towards Ezeulu for the good of all of Umuaro.

3. T. K. Winterbottom

Winterbottom is old dutiful, patriotic, and obedient who commands from his superiors, even when he disagrees with their orders. At first, Winterbottom simply likes his powerful position when he brags about his reputation in Umuaro. But soon it is discovered that Winterbottom really believes in the African projects. And not only that, but he also holds
himself to very high moral standards because he wishes to be an example to the Africans around him.

It is also observed that the Administration's stubbornness and lack of esteem for experienced men like Winterbottom who have lived in Africa for years has been decreased. In the final scene, Winterbottom expresses total contempt for the orders of his superiors. The following quotation may attract attention to the stories told by the priest, Winterbottom and the relations between the characters, self-interest in exercising power. C.L. Innes’ (1990: 151) observation in this regard throws more light on this issue:

“In Arrow of God, stories are told and retold in differing modes not only by the Priest Ezeulu and the Captain Winterbottom but also by other members of each society, so that once again the reader must become involved in the problem of judging the relationships between knowledge, language and self-interest and the responsible exercise of power.”

4. Obika

Obika is Ezeulu's son and is a reckless young man who drinks too much and acts thoughtlessly. One example of his thoughtless behavior is the time when he almost kills his half-sister’s husband. Drinking wine has been a common experience of the Igbo people. Everybody agrees Obika gets away with his hasty actions. Obika is found changing in the novel in due course of time. Two things bring a change in him: the humiliation of being whipped publicly by the white man and getting married. Obika’s marriage in particular seems to help him to grow. However, Obika does not have a chance to explore his newfound maturity and wisdom. However, as soon as he obtains it, he dies all of a sudden.
5. Oduche

Oduche is Ezeulu's next to youngest son. He is proud to be his father's "eyes and ears" in the white man's culture by attending church and school. Soon, he finds his reliabilities are divided. On the one hand, he wishes to please his father; and he wants to please the catechist at church. He cannot do both at a time. There are two critical moments in Arrow of God when Oduche chooses the church over his father, and Ezeulu interprets it as a disloyalty.

The first moment is when Oduche locks the royal python up in his box, hoping it will suffocate and die. It is an act of revolt but, more importantly, it is a moment when Oduche tests the prohibitions of his culture. He realizes that there is no real punishment to his actions. Though Ezeulu wraths against him, and though the village talks about what he has done, Oduche suffers no serious cost.

Because there seem to be no effects for his actions, Oduche commits a second act that his father considers a betrayal. When the catechist decides to take advantage of Ezeulu's stubbornness and the famine to encourage people to leave the old religion and become Christians, Oduche does not mention it to his father. Although Ezeulu intended Oduche to be his eyes and ears, he does not realize that Oduche's exposure to another way of life and another god will change him into somebody who no longer fits in his own culture.

Thus, the social background received by the above characters creates a great impact upon them. The factors like being power hunger, religious faith and beliefs are responsible for the continuous unrest in the Igbo society.
3.4.2 Minor Characters

The minor characters like 1.Edogo, 2.Tony Clarke, 3.Moses Unachukwu, and 4.Mr. Wright are essentially discussed along with their some special features as below.

1. Edogo

Edogo seems like a good-hearted man. He loves his wife and his child however, he worries about their health. He is respectful to his father and fulfills his duties to his family. However, deep down inside, he resents the way his father, Ezeulu, favors Nwafo over all his other sons. Though Edogo does not wish to be the chief priest of Ulu himself, he realizes that his father may be creating confusion by giving Nwafo the impression that he will be the new priest. Ulu is the one who chooses the new priest, not Ezeulu. Because Ezeulu sent Oduche to school and church to learn the ways of the white man, Edogo realizes that his father may be sacrificing Oduche in order to clear the way for Nwafo.

Edogo finally approaches Ezeulu's best friend, Akuebue, and asks him to speak to his father. Akuebue hates Edogo in that moment. He also suggests him that he is cowardly and weak; he hints at that Edogo really wants to be priest and that he is hiding behind this excuse. At least on the surface, though, Edogo seems to be an honest man, with only one desire – to be a renowned mask carver.

2. Tony Clarke

Tony Clarke starts out with some progressive ideas about colonialism in Africa. He feels the call of duty to "civilize" Africa, but he believes there must be some good in indigenous institutions, and that they should be
preserved. Though he belongs to the officer class, he feels more comfortable with men like Wright, who may be morally questionable but seem to have less of a superiority complex than men like Winterbottom. Ultimately, however, Clarke begins to realize that he is surrounded by men who are corrupt in some way or another. However, there is no resolution to this aspect in his character. In the end, it seems that Clarke is slavishly obedient to the whims of the Administration, despite his moral uncertainties.

3. Moses Unachukwu

Moses Unachukwu is the first Christian in Umuaro. Having spent several years on a mission station in a neighboring region, and as the only man in all of Umuaro who speaks English, he feels like something of a local expert. The people do admire Moses for his skill, but the new catechist at the church, Mr. Goodcountry, thinks he is snobbish. The two clash over whether Christians should try to destroy the royal python, a taboo in Umuaro. Moses believes they should leave those symbols alone, while Mr. Goodcountry argues that Christians need to be willing to be martyred for their faith.

Moses wins by writing to the bishop and asking for his support. The bishop does offer his support, and Moses wins that round of the battle. In the due course of time, the men settle and Moses supports Mr. Goodcountry when he decides the church can profit by inviting the people of Umuaro to sacrifice their yams to the Christian god instead of to Ulu. The aspect of ethnicity plays a role in making the characters proud and dominant.

4. Mr. Wright

Mr. Wright provides a great contrast with Mr. Clarke and Captain Winterbottom. As a fellow Briton, he is just as absorbed in the colonial project. But he chooses a different way. Though he clearly feels superior to
the Africans he works with, he is not bound by any ethical considerations to treat them fairly. He uses strength when it suits him, and he sleeps with African women when it suits him. He feels little solidarity with his fellow countrymen. M. Wright is not himself a colonizer but has to adopt the same attitude in the sociological environment in Nigeria. The characters of Winterbottom, Wright, and Clarke are shaped by the requirements of their social position as British subjects in Nigeria. All three men behave in accordance with their social position: Clarke and Winterbottom as colonial officials, and Wright as a contractor who does not have to answer to the British Administration.

The standards of behavior are high for both Winterbottom and Clarke. Clarke rubs against those standards but ultimately agrees because he has no other choice. Wright is a contractor; his social position is lower than that of Clarke and Winterbottom. He also feels that it gives him the liberty to behave however, he wants with exemption. Winterbottom reprimands him for sleeping with African women, but Wright does not change his behavior.

Instead, he ups the wager by beating one of the unpaid laborers under his charge of abusing Obika, Ezeulu's son. Clarke likes Wright's honesty and lack of pretension and does not want to believe he would do such a thing. Winterbottom, on the other hand, believes that if Wright's moral standards are low.

A lust for power inspires many of the characters in *Arrow of God*. As the power of British administration rises, the men in Umuaro discover that their power is diminishing. All the men find that their power is limited when the British administration steps in and stops the war with Okperi.

The power struggle between Ezeulu and the people of Umuaro gives the Christian catechist, Mr. Goodcountry, the opportunity to win converts. In *Arrow of God*, the main character Ezeulu's pride gets him in trouble from
the very beginning. Since Ezeulu is the priest of Ulu, the highest god in Umuaro, Ezeulu should not worry about his jealous pride for his status eventually causes him to take revenge against the people of Umuaro. Ezeulu is not the only one who is proud. Winterbottom accuses all Igbo men of putting on airs; he argues that if you give an Igbo man a little bit of authority, he will soon be abusing even his own relatives. Emmanuel Obiechina (1993:170) speaks of the multi-dimensional conflict which has a concern with the thrust of power, religious rituals, blind faiths etc. of both the major and minor characters in *Arrow of God* and observes:

“The conflict in *Arrow of God* develops around the person of the Chief Priest of Ulu, who is the ritual and religious leader of Umuaro. On the one hand, there is the conflict between the local British administration represented by the old-fashioned administrator, Winterbottom and the native authority represented by the Chief Priest. On the other hand, there are the internal politics of Umuaro and the conflict between the supporters of Chief Priest and those of his rival, Ezidemili. On yet another level belongs the conflict taking place within the Chief Priest himself...... All these are handled in the main plot. A subsidiary plot deals with the domestic tensions and crisis in Ezeulu’s own house, the tensions and stresses between the father and his grown-up sons and between children of different mothers in his polygamous household.”

In *Arrow of God*, differences between Africans and the British are interpreted racially by both Igbo and British characters alike. Race is associated with culture and, thus, is offered as one of the identifying characteristics of British power. Winterbottom argues forcefully that white men in Nigeria must behave in a certain way in order to maintain their
political superiority. The colonizers’ point of view is adopted by Winterbottom and the other representatives of the colonial rule.

Much of *Arrow of God*’s plot is precipitated by revenge. If Umuaro had not sought to claim ownership of that land, they would not have sent a representative to Okperi who was clearly bent on starting a war. That representative causes his own death, but Okperi fails to send a courteous message about it, so Umuaro must respond by starting the war. Just as entire regions seek revenge, individuals seek satisfaction for real or perceived wrongs. Ezeulu seeks revenge on the people of Umuaro, who fail to give him proper respect as the priest of Ulu. Ezeulu's revenge results in famine and ultimately causes the demise of his own deity.

### 3.5 *A Man of the People* (1966)

According to the critic D.A.N. Jones (1981:28):

> The novel a *Man of the People* is a modern comedy as distinguished and as relevant to his society as those grander essays in homage to the past.\(^{13}\)

The above view of the critic and Achebe’s statement (1976:20):

> Europe conceded independence to us and we promptly began to misuse it, or rather those leaders to whom we entrusted the wielding of our new power and opportunity.\(^{14}\)

reveal the concern of the deterioration of the culture. The above-cited quotations aptly criticize the novel, *A Man of the People*. It is a fictional account that recalls events that took place in post-Colonial Nigeria in the
1960s. Its central social concern, also a political concern, is the effect of corrupt government on the daily lives of Nigeria's people.

Odili Samalu, is a teacher who himself has been taught by the man who now rules the country, Chief Nanga, Member of Parliament. The title is weakened by irony at every turn, for Nanga has put the people last and misruled the country for personal gain. In the episode that opens the novel, he fires a well-educated finance minister advises to cut coffee prices to curtail inflation. The power struggle between generations is a central theme of the novel. Odili is a simple character who has refused a government post in favor of a teaching job in the "bush," a rural area. He thinks that he can escape from any political connections, but inevitably, he is drawn in to the whirlpool of political activities.

At first, Odili, the narrator and a school teacher, is charmed by the politician, Chief the Honorable M.A. Nanga, Member of Parliament, but eventually he recognizes the extent of Nanga's abuses and decides to oppose the minister in an election. Odili is beaten, both physically and politically, his appeal to the people heard but ignored.

The novel also deals with sex in a variety of ways. Even the nominally Christian portions of Nigerian society practise polygamy and not merely so that important figures like Chief Nanga can have a presentable young wife to display. Hezekiah Samalu has several wives and fights with his son about adding another. More than sixty children speak for themselves. Nanga boasts of his many sexual conquests and tells tales about a jealous husband who put juju on his wife's breasts to keep her faithful. Odili goes to bed with a nurse he meets at a party within an hour and they begin a long-term relationship with no intention to marry. Odili sleeps with the hostess of another party after dancing with her sensuously.
It is observed that free love was widespread in Nigeria of the 1960s. Sex provokes the break between the realism of Achebe’s 1967 novel *A Man of the People*. It is demonstrated by the fact that events portrayed in the novel actually went on to occur in Nigeria in 1967: a military coup placed the politicians behind bars.

The novel may be called a fictional account that recalls events that took place in post-Colonial Nigeria in the 1960s. Its central social concern, also a political concern, is the effect of corrupt government on the daily lives of Nigeria's people.

The description of Nanga as a practical politician, and of Odili as an isolated young man, is realistic to the core. These characters arise powerfully in the novel. Nanga represents the opportunist, the rogue of the cities while Odili is a nostalgic young man and “the romantic hero with his heightened sensitivity and divided consciousness pulling him into … tragedy.” Other characters such as Edna, Mrs. Nanga, and Josiah are credible; and the reader never gets the impression that they are far-fetched. This kind of authentic characterization constitutes a basic quality of Achebe’s novels, and is one of the reasons they are so widely read and accepted not only by Africans but also by readers from all continents.

Bruce King (1977:01) has aptly pointed out:

“*Achebe was the first Nigerian writer to successfully transmute the conventions of the novel, a European art form, into African literature*” in such a way that the “*European character study is subordinated to the portrayal of communal life; European economy of form is replaced by an aesthetic appropriate to the rhythms of traditional tribal life*”. 15
Achebe’s repute reposes on his impartial interpretation of the post-independence Nigerian environment and his ability to intricate this through his novels. In this way, his works have the ability to inspire a revolution. T.R.S. Sharma (1991: 125) in this regard says:

“The novel comprises many strands, registers and multiple voices and is wrought much more intricately than his earlier fiction.”

The above scholars have closely explored the characters and the social and political environment during the time when the novels were being written. The major as well as minor characters in the novel are studied against the backdrop of the society in which they lived.

3.5.1 Major Characters

The study of major and some minor characters focuses light on the impact of sociological background on the language and behaviour of the characters. The major characters such as 1. Odili Samalu, 2. Chief Nanga, 3. Mrs Nanga and 4. Hezekiah Samalu are studied against the socio-political and socio cultural background as below.

1. Odili Samalu

Odili, the narrator and protagonist of A Man of the People, is a native of Urua village, where his father Hezekiah is a wealthy and widely hated district interpreter and leader of the People's Organization Party (POP). Odili has graduated from the Anata Grammar School, where he was Nanga's favorite student and is a disaffected member of the students’ branch of POP. Having chosen to teach at a government school, Odili wants to continue his training in London. It too, without accepting any political assistance in getting a scholarship. Odili arranges to spend the holidays with his lover, Elsie, a nurse near the capital. Nanga's invitation to stay with
him and explore scholarship opportunities makes getting together with Elsie at Christmas more convenient. Odili’s father believes he should quit teaching and take a profitable government job.

Odili Samalu is a gifted young man with high ideals that are likely to be destroyed by reality. He works as a teacher in a regional school when he meets Chief Nanga. With him is a beautiful girl, Edna, his unavoidable second wife. Chief Nanga needs a "parlour wife", because his first wife is too rustic for his exalted position. In order to follow Nanga's invitation, Odili goes to stay with him in the capital city, while the Nanga’s family is away in the country. When Odili brings a girl-friend home, Chief Nanga manages to seduce her with Odili sitting helplessly by. He decides to get even with Nanga by running against him in the elections and seducing in turn his wife-to-be. His campaign fails miserably, even tragically, but he gains Edna in the end. These events show how the novel deals with sex.

Sexual competency is important for Odili, too. Women are basically sexual objects for him as well as for Nanga. However, Odili’s satisfaction is badly shattered when his lover Elsie sleeps with Chief Nanga. It is a matter of his manhood being called in question by another man, who is also a kind of surrogate father, so he has to prove to himself that he is indeed a man. Significantly, he wishes to take his revenge by getting back at Nanga through his intended second wife. When Odili shows politeness to Edna, he blames himself for his "un African" behavior. He quite clearly only intends to use her as a tool for his revenge.

He advises Edna against marrying Chief Nanga, giving as his reason that he is an ancient polygamist. He also tries to impress her by his courage when he comes to see her father despite the latter's having warned him off and actually threatening him with a matchet. It is only now that Odili
realizes he wants Edna for herself, not for his revenge. This reflects the male dominated sociological aspect of the Nigerian society.

Odili also realizes that his political activity is mixed up with his feelings for Edna. It is more because of his wish to see her again than anything else that he goes to Nanga's election party and gets beaten up. This foolish act proves his sincerity and courage and therefore finally gets him Edna. It also turns him into a man in his own eyes and those of his relatives. Jonathan A. Peters (1978:144) observes:

“Odili’s character is the only one that undergoes some development... In the matter of his thoughts and reflections on the corruption and cynicism in the country, the narrator and the author usually speak as one. But as far as his individual actions are concerned, the fact that Odili bears sole responsibility enables Achebe to satirize him.” 17

2. M. A. (Micah) Nanga (Chief Nanga)

In the novel Chief Nanga, is mentioned by the narrator, Odili, as a man of the people, and the most available politician in the country. He is the minister of culture and his speeches to the public represent everything that a politician should do and be. However, as Odili tells the story, it becomes clear that Chief Nanga does not practise what he preaches. The money that is supposed for helping his community is used to build four-storey buildings, which he rents out for his own profit. Thus, the theme of corruption begins from him. The difference between the appearance and reality is reflected in Nanga’s public and private life.
Chief Nanga is supposed to be standing up for the traditions and beliefs of the pre-colonial African culture. It is by defending the common man and opposing the European-oriented post-colonial intellectuals. Achebe explains in detail various rituals, artistic creations, clothing, beliefs, politics, and a sense of community and disagreement among tribes in Africa. However, in *A Man of the People* Achebe centers more on the politics of West African communities. Achebe shows the switching of power between the old and new styles of politicians and how the old style politician, Chief Nanga, is becoming more and more avaricious as he learns the political system.

The politicians in this novel stand as a transitional element between the government and the common people but are represented by Achebe as the evil side. Chief Nanga learns to be greedy and learns how to win elections through the corrupt system of politics. The important thing for Chief Nanga is that the people trust him. He relates to them more, because he considers himself closer to the common man and far away from the intellectuals, who represent a more European style of living and thinking.

By representing his country after colonialism, he is motivated to stay as far away from the European style of life and politics as possible. As Odili explains the story, however, Chief Nanga only tells the people what they want to hear about defending their culture and way of thinking, and Nanga acts in a voracious way to obtain what he wants in his personal life; money, power, and women. To attain the private ends he uses the public image.

Chief Nanga's corrupt way of leading the people by telling them one thing and doing another is what eventually ends his reign. Nanga taught Odili when he was young and Odili respected and liked him as a teacher.

He learned many things from him and was happy when he heard he was first elected. However, as Nanga grew more powerful within his office and
country, Odili began to grow smarter and he became more aware of the corrupt reality. It was not finally realized though, until he actually had the chance to live with Chief Nanga and witness how Nanga abused his money and power by over-spending his money and having his way with the women he desired.

3. Mrs. Margaret (Mama) Nanga

This character is of the progressive woman. The Minister of Culture marries her in his schoolteacher and scoutmaster days. She is always dominated by her husband. She knows every misdeed of him. Yet, she cannot bring any change in the situation. Her life as any other woman is limited to the domestic work only. Her character represents the oppressed Igbo women who are always dominated by the male characters.

4. Hezekiah Samalu

This character is a retired district interpreter in Urua. He is Odili’s father. The position has made this character very wealthy and widely hated. In retirement, he is content to drink and dabble in local politics. Currently he has five wives and sixty-five offspring. He thinks Odili to take a government job and grow rich by any means. In short, he encourages Odili for corruption. As discussed above, he represents the polygamy also.

3.5.2 Minor Characters

Minor characters such as 1. Mrs. Agnes Akilo, 2. Boniface, 3. Elsie, 4. Josiah, and 5. Mr. Jalio play some roles in the novel are discussed below.

1. Mrs. Agnes Akilo

Mrs. Akilo is a sophisticated solicitor. When she arrives at Nanga’s home, he wants to install her in his wife’s bedroom but she goes to a hotel. Nanga
pays Akilo for her services. She represents a common working woman who is obedient and loyal to her duties.

2. Boniface

He is the chief bodyguard of Odili. Boniface takes great interest in radio news and demands the CPC respond to POP and such dirty tricks.

3. Elsie

Elsie is a beautiful student nurse. Odili meets her at the Students’ Christian Movement party and has sex with her within an hour. She presently works in a hospital twelve miles away from the capital. She is seduced by Nanga on their visit to him. Odili listens with disgust to the sound of their lovemaking and storms from the house dismissing her as a prostitute.

4. Josiah

He is the proprietor of popular drinking establishment. He loses his business after attempting to steal the stick of the blind beggar, Azoge. He vanishes from Anata for a while. He is seen again four months later. He volunteers for Odili’s electoral campaign against Nanga. When Odili foolishly attends Nanga’s election rally in disguise, Josiah points him out to the chief, which leads to the savage beating of Odili.

5. Mr. Jalio

Mr. Jalio is the president of the National Writers’ Society. He is Odili’s friend from the University days but the success of his first novel, The Song of the Black Bird turns him into a vain conformist.
3.6 *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987)

Achebe experienced the social upheaval and political instability in Nigeria and how it upset every side of the society. He was born during Nigeria's colonial years, a period of terrific conflict and sociopolitical change.

Achebe grew up during the ensuing period of nationalist protest. When he left his position with the Nigerian Broadcasting Company in 1966, he accepted the position of Biafran Minister of Information. It is likely that this experience informed his creation of Chris, the Commissioner of Information in *Anthills of the Savannah*.

The Republic of Biafra was a short-lived Igbo state created upon withdrawal. The Igbo decided to set up their own state after witnessing the massacre of thousands of their people by Islamic Hausa and Fulani people, rival ethnic groups. Anticipating further bloodshed, the Republic of Biafra announced its independence in 1967. Unfortunately, the announcement was not acknowledged, and a civil war followed that lasted until 1970, when Biafra surrendered. A food shortage caused by the war brought about the deaths of close to a million people.

At the time *Anthills of the Savannah* was published, political discontent continued to dictate Nigeria. In August of 1985 a military coup, responding to the growing discontent of the people, deposed the existing authoritarian military regime. The new leader accepted the role of the president.

It is important to study the historical background to understand the social realities. There is a need to know society. The historical background gives to a piece of literature a sense of historical reality. It has often been said that literature influences society. The other way round is also true. In many cases, the interactions between African traditions and the contemporary social context determine African literature. Khayoom, S.A. (1998:133) observes:
“The success of the Anthills of the Savannah is due to its supposedly postmodern literary qualities and its technique which have their origin in the Nigerian oral narrative tradition.”

The political and historical background as discussed above helps in understanding the novel as a whole.

The setting of *Anthills of the Savannah* is Kangan, an imaginary country in West Africa, where Sam, a trained military officer also known as His Excellency, has taken the bridle of power. The national tragedy – considered as the essence of this fictive work is principally communicated by three friends: Ikem, Chris and Beatrice. The complicated postcolonial discontent is captured here by Beatrice:

“For weeks and months after I had definitely taken on the challenge of bringing together as many broken pieces of this tragic history as I could lay my hands on I still could not find a way to begin. Anything I tried to put down sounded wrong – either too abrupt, too indelicate or too obvious – to my middle ear.” (A. O. S. p. 78)

The political crunches in the novel intensify the power game, political assassination, feminist agitation and other figures of unwholesome state of affairs. However, the political disorder in the novel basically shoots from class struggle and power play, which are arguably fuelled by cultural materialist imperatives. The prefatory exchange between Sam, His Excellency and Chris Oriko, the Commissioner for information is a sign of power play and class war, which are fully developed as the novel progresses:

*You are wasting everybody’s time, Mr. Commissioner for information.*
I will not go to Abazon. Finish! Kabisa! Any other business?

‘As Your Excellency wishes. But…”

‘But me no buts, Mr. Oriko! The matter is closed, I said.

How many times, for God’s sake, am I expected to repeat it?

Why do you find it so difficult to swallow my ruling? On anything?

‘I am sorry, Your Excellency. But I have no difficulty swallowing and digesting your rulings.’ (A. O. S. p.1)

From the above conversation, it is observed that Chris ultimately pretends not to have approved victory to Sam - but he eventually promises to His Excellency’s (Sam’s) commands, as consequently seen in the novel.

It could be seen that the national dissatisfaction emphasized in the novel rises above the limitations of the fiction. *Anthills of the Savannah* is a part of fiction centered on power play in the gendered postcolonial Nigeria, where women have been kept at the zero level for a long time. Therefore, to move Nigeria forward, cultural materialist method is critical, as it will help to light up the vision and goal towards re-writing the dehistoricised explanation of the burdened, the women, particularly in the cultural and socio-economic domains. This is basically one of Chinua Achebe’s artistic concerns in the novel. The masculine tendency to de-emphasize women’s true, worth and the historical damage done to their rights and power have been given manifestation by Sheila Rowbotham’s (1997:03) opinion:

“‘Women’s history has been part of a pervasive impulse …’”\(^{19}\)

Along with a third-person narrator, the author also uses three main characters who in turn narrate the story. They are Christopher Oriko, the Commissioner for Information, Ikem Osodi, the editor of the National Gazette, and Beatrice Okoh, Senior Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Finance. Each of them enables the reader to learn more about the others and
about His Excellency (Sam), the General and Head of State. Achebe aims at
the increasingly complex social situation in the Republic of Kangan from a
multi-dimensional point of view.

Social class in Kangan is known by the amount of education that one has
received. Those who have a European educational background are in a
more beneficial position to attain a government job. In addition, they may
even seek political power. Kangan society is clearly separated into two
main opposing social classes: the ruling class and the oppressed class. The
representatives of the former social group are “His Excellency” and “his
cabinet members” who actually control the country. The latter contain the
urban work force--messengers, taxi-drivers and students, and the rural work
force, such as peasants and market women. The situation in Kangan is similar
to any newly independent country that is faction-ridden and therefore, ruled
by an autocrat like Sam the President.

There is also a "hybrid class" of intellectuals that slowly yet intentionally arises
from the force of the ruling class. It functions as a middle of some kind between
the ruling class and the oppressed class. Notably, this hybrid class competes
with the dictatorship of the ruling class, and promotes settlement among
various social classes.

The workers and peasants are shown as a social class with huge potential. This
group actually wobbles the rule of “His Excellency” and frightens him. They
are unwilling to remain affected, but would rather choose to fight consciously
against the lies, corruption, and tyranny of the ruling class in order to protect
their interests. They may not have the knowledge of books, but they have
experience and wisdom. It is best sugarcoated in the words of the white-
bearded leader from Abazon. When Ikem is accused at the Harmony Hotel by
one of the speakers of not joining in their monthly meetings and other social
activities. The white-bearded leader comes to his rescue. He trusts the
traditional Igbo proverbs to defend Ikem.
Both Chris and Ikem deliberately and willingly give up their social positions by doing things not to please the President but to be responsible for the interests of the people. Yet to have solid interaction with the people and become part of them proves no easy task. Chris and Ikem have to experience a painful process before they become cohesive with the ordinary people, and truly fight for the sake of the poor. In this connection David Carroll (1980:168), rightly observes:

“Frequent episodes document the harsh realities of military rule: the public execution, the police searches, the sycophantic cabinet meeting, the roadblocks, the inevitable counter-coup. These create the texture of life as it is experienced by and recorded through the points of view of the protagonists in what is a basically realistic fictional mode.”  

3.6.1 Major Characters

The characters such as 1. Sam, 2. Chris, 3. Ikem and 4. Beatrice Okoh are major characters in the novel Anthills of the Savannah. They play significant roles in the making of this novel. They are influenced by the socio-political instability in the country. These characters are discussed below in detail.

1. Sam

Sam is a colonel, becomes His Excellency, the Head of State. Chris and Ikem are his former classmates and friends at Lord Lugard College. They occupy the leading positions in Kangan after a military coup. The main concern of “His Excellency” is to retain his position as the supreme leader of Kangan. He takes on the policy of despotism by handpicking twelve
intelligent and well-educated men to his cabinet of government instead of choosing his cabinet members through democratic means. His Excellency finds it tough to believe in Chris and Ikem, his boyhood friends. In order to protect his social status, he allows no different or opposite points of view, but insists on unconditional enslavement.

2. Chris

In the early days of the military coup Chris, the closest advisor of Sam, is now a disaffected Minister of Information, and Ikem, poet and intellectual, has taken over Chris's position at the National Gazette. Chris has become disappointed with the administration and dictatorship of His Excellency and the government. In his words, he has:

"Thought of all this as a game that began innocently enough and then went suddenly strange and poisonous." (A.O.S.p.1)

He realizes that it is the intelligent and well-educated men, or "the cream of our society and the hope of the black race, who actually have had a hand in the poor management of the country. Thus, he consciously detaches himself from these ruling elite and takes an attitude of "pure, unadulterated disinterest" (p. 4)

Chris condemns Ikem for lacking solid contact with the poor people of Kangan. He considers Sam, Ikem and himself as the main leaders in running the country. Actually, it is only after Ikem has been murdered by the secret police that Chris has some close and direct contact with the people. Chris being a man of conscience decides to find the pulse of the people and becomes in the land of the anthills a man of the people.

A strange change is found into Chris's life when he has to be disguised as a poor motor mechanic and is forced to escape Bassa together with Emmanuel, the student leader, and Braimoh, the taxi driver. He wears
Braimoh's daily clothes, and speaks pidgin, a common language among the lower-class people. Chris symbolically becomes one of them.

3. Ikem Osodi

Ikem has always had a heart for the lower-class people. As an editor of the National Gazette, he speaks in the interests of the people regardless of his personal safety. He has profound knowledge of and deep sympathy for the lower-class people. Nevertheless, in reality, or at least, on a personal level, Ikem is a class-biased character. He has contrasting attitudes regarding Elewa and Beatrice.

Ikem undergoes a great change though, especially after he meets the two taxi-drivers whom he has bullied in the traffic jam. They come to apologize for that road contest, and at the same time, thank him for his inspiration as editor of the National Gazette. Ikem understands of the roles of peasants, workers and students in his society. As a writer and intellectual, a member of that special hybrid class, Ikem also understands his own restrictions. Therefore, he avoids offering remedies for the social problems in Kangan. Like Chris, Ikem has identified the discrepancy of the President, and understands that "worshipping a dictator is such a pain in the ass."(A.O.S.p.45) Chris, however, does not become disillusioned, but rather resolves to fight with his pen.

4. Beatrice Okoh

Beatrice is Chris's girlfriend. In the form of Beatrice Achebe presents, his most fully developed female character. She works for Sam and is an old friend of Ikem. Through her contacts with Chris, Ikem, and Sam, she plays an important role in the action of the novel.
She is the fifth daughter to her parents. One of her sisters has died. Her father had been hoping for a son, so she was named Nwanyibuiife, meaning "A Woman Is Also Something." As an adult, Beatrice is well educated. She has earned a degree with honors in English from the University of London. She holds an important civil service position as an administrator in a State Office. She also enjoys writing short fiction, which Ikem reads and admires for its "muscularity" and "masculine" qualities. Beatrice is characterized by complexity, intelligence, and independence. She is known as BB.

3.6.2 Minor Characters

Some minor characters like 1. Emmanuel Obote, 2. Abdul, 3. Adamma, 4. Agatha and 5. Elewa have some kinds of roles to play in the novel. The social and economic background causes an effect on their linguistic and behavioral approach. These characters are studied thoroughly as below.

1. Emmanuel Obote

Emmanuel is a student who is a leader at his University and a great admirer of Chris. When Chris flees for his life, Emmanuel accompanies him and helps make the complex plans involved in trying to get Chris out of danger. He is also with Chris when he is killed and returns to tell Beatrice of his dignity even at the moment of death.

Emmanuel stands in contrast to the typical students described by Ikem during his speech at the University, in which he referred to students and workers as the most derelict in their civic duties. Achebe seems to suggest that Emmanuel will continue Chris's work in encouraging people to think for themselves regardless of environmental hardship.
2. Abdul

Abdul is a cab driver and family man sympathetic to Chris's plight. He uses his cab to help Chris get out of the city and works with Emmanuel to make the plans to get Chris up north. He is loyal to his master and his own duties.

3. Adamma

Adamma is one of the passengers on the bus taken by Chris, Emmanuel, and Abdul as they leave Bassa and head north to safety. Adamma is about to be raped when Chris steps in to save her. As a result, Chris is shot and killed, and Adamma returns to Kangan with Emmanuel.

4. Agatha

Agatha is Beatrice's flighty, religious, and judgmental house girl. She is a devout Christian who attends services regularly and does not hide her disapproval of Beatrice's allowing Chris into her bed. Beatrice is often impatient and short with Agatha, but as the novel progresses, she begins to feel more compassionate for her.

5. Elewa

Ikem's pregnant girlfriend, Elewa represents the common people. Unlike Chris, Ikem and Beatrice, she is semiliterate and works in a shop. She is highly emotional and expressive. Through Elewa, Beatrice comes to understand that coming from humble origins does not necessarily make a person frail or insecure.

All these minor characters belong to average families. They are either socially depressed or suffered. Some of them are servants or drivers or office boys. It is bound in their cases to be socially, educationally or financially backward. Their roles are not major yet they present themselves prominently. These characters hardly speak any English. They are a great
support to the major characters. Most of the minor characters are orthodox. They have faith in supernatural powers, religious customs and traditions. They are hard workers and loyal to their duties.

3.7 Conclusion

The chapter studies the Igbo society, its significant tradition, structure of families, role of family heads, status of women, rituals and influence of colonialism. An attempt is made to relate the sociological background of the characters to their linguistic behavior as it has a bearing on the development of the novels. As observed, a person’s sociological background affects his linguistic expressions and it is a clear indication of his social background. Therefore, the chapter helps the readers in understanding the characters and their linguistic expressions and enjoy the world famous novels of Chinua Achebe.

The chapter also discusses the socio-cultural and socio-political background of the major and minor characters in the novels. Most of Achebe’s characters come from a certain background. It has varied nature such as social, political, cultural and economic. They are predominantly rustic, dwelling in certain regions of Nigeria. Achebe’s characters reflect this background. Therefore, the detailed discussion about these characters in view of the background mentioned above is presented in this chapter.

Characters who received some education, such as Odili Samalu, Chief Nanga, Obi Okonkwo, Chris, Ikem and Ezeulu speak Standard English in certain situations for social cause. Minor characters are the rustics who support the action or even add to its effect, such as the driver and liceman in No longer at Ease, Elsie, Mr. Jalio, Josiah in A Man Of the People, Oduche’s mother Ugoye, Boniface from Arrow of God and the driver, Abdul, Agatha, Adamma from Anthills of Savannah are explained.
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9. Ibid.(p.75)


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