CHAPTER – V

SUMMATION

From the systematic study of Achebe’s novels the readers may understand that Achebe is aware of what he meant to achieve by his labours; he has stated unequivocally that he considers the restoration of African ‘dignity’ and ‘self-respect’ as his, as well as what ought to be every African writer’s responsibility.

The theme put quite simply - is the African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period and it is this that they must now regain”.  

From Achebe’s point of view nothing can happen to a people which is worse than a loss of dignity and self-respect. Accordingly, part of a writer’s duty in Africa is helping his people, former colonial subjects, to regain their lost dignity. Here the reader must note that the terms which Achebe is using confirms the historical dimension. The function of the novelist is to explain ‘what happened’ and to show his people ‘what they had lost’.
An important part of Achebe’s achievements is the way in which he successfully creates a feeling of authenticity in the speech and thought of his characters by a sufficiently accurate transcription of the modes of expression of non-English people. Without transcription of the novel pattern of English, he convincingly creates the awareness that English is merely the telegraphic line across which the vernacular speech is being simultaneously committed and translated to the reader.

**Arrow of God** is a complex novel, with the complex meaning; but it is essentially both a continuation and a completion of a project that begun with **Things Fall Apart**. It brings to the surface an underlying trend in Achebe’s traditional novels, which is a continuous attempt to recreate the African past as a living drama in which the readers can appreciate much that was noble and worthy of respect, while recognizing some of its weakest features; it is also an attempt to paraphrase the history of the colonial mission in Africa. This history is as complex as Achebe’s novel, its interpretations just as varies, but the essential message in **Arrow of God** emerges quite early in a debate between Mose Unachukwu and his fellow classmen. The novel harks back to an earlier time in **Things Fall Apart**.

“Before any of you here was old enough to tie a cloth between the legs. I saw with my own eyes what the whiteman did to Abam.
Then I knew there was no escape. As day-light chases away darkness, so will the Whitemen drive away all our customs"².

Three paragraphs later Unachukwu sums up:

“Yes we are talking about the whiteman’s road. But when the roof and walls of a house fall in, the ceiling is not left standing. The whiteman, the new religion, the soldiers, the new road – they are all part of the same thing. The whiteman has a gun, a matchet, a bow and carries fire in his mouth. He does not fight with one weapon alone”³.

It is this united visas of the combined effects of the internal and external pressures on African traditional society that became the driving force of these two novels. In Arrow of God, the handling of the colonial theme has become distinctly more brittle, less chary, the malice, that are in Achebe, lies just below the surface of the narrative which threatens repeatedly to break out into full fledged satire, especially in the Winterbottom section of the novel.

Yet in an almost paradoxical way, just because its debt to actual historical interpretation is very clear, Achebe’s attempt to portray the system of ‘indirect rule’ with the aid of large sketches of imaginary documentation is less than satisfactory; the passages have too often the feel of having been discussed in the University seminars on African history; slightly hackneyed from
past handling, they lack their wild imaginative touch as is to be found in the confrontation between Christian missionaries and African traditionalist in *Things Fall Apart*. The colonial ‘types’ too seemed to be cut to order, too much indebted to a long tradition of fictional creation from Joyce Cary to Graham Greene.

To discuss all this is not to minimize Achebe’s achievement in a complex task, which is the dramatization of African history in such a way that the readers can extract meaning from it without losing sight of the living drama in which real men and women were involved. Achebe has sometimes been criticized quite unfairly it seems, for his version of this ‘history’. According to Achebe, reclamation of the past can only come to the readers through novels as social history.

It is sometimes said that this judgement of both the British colonial administration and the activities of Christian missionaries are unnecessarily harsh and frequently a distortion of what were after all benign intention. This is hardly borne out by any careful reading of the novels. In both *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, a reader can note that there is constant shift in the amount of blame assigned to either of the two sides in the confrontation:

“Achebe is more of a ‘realist’ in his treatment of African history than some rigorously trained historians”⁴.
Achebe in *Arrow of God* follows the course of history with accuracy and at the same time manages to confirm that fiction is a great deal more true than fact.

It is slightly similar inadequacy of ancestral wisdom that gives Achebe’s work sometimes wry humour. In *Things Fall Apart* the men of Umuofia heard news of men with white skins and no toes, they treat it with levity, dismissing it with flippant allusions to lepers. It is no laughing matter when the whiteman turns up with his guns.

Such inadequacy is present when the men tie the “iron horse” of a murdered whiteman to a tree to prevent it from running away to call other whitemen. The incident is not really comic because its uncomfortable humour rests on our knowledge that the villagers’ action is not completely foolish. Since it arises from ignorance rather than naivety, it does not permit the readers to feel superior to the victims of this self-betrayal. The more serious purpose of Achebe’s novels often reins in the comedy:

“It is the awareness of the historical significance of local events which dictates the form of the village novels of Achebe. The form is not merely episode, but is made sufficiently loose and flexible to incorporate the details of social life. That is why Achebe can evoke a society whose complexity and self-sufficiency are realized
within two hundred pages. Achebe’s works are an important interpretation of his people’s history.”

Achebe is concerned with survival at the historical level. His first three novels are studies in defeat; the two so-called village novels examine in turn the inadequacy of unyielding strength and then of a fine intelligence stubbornly applied, in coping with the problems of social change. Both novels show the inevitability of change and consequently the necessity for adaptation.

In Things Fall Apart, Okonkwo’s strength of will is shown to be an extreme reaction to his experience of a weak father. The author shows his disapproval of such inflexible strength by making it operate against socially approved codes as when Okonkwo beats his wife during the week of Peace or his killing of his ward.

Ezeulu, the hero of Arrow of God is defeated for a similar inflexibility of will. From the start he is shown to possess the fine perception that is necessary for survival in this kind of situation. His intelligence is at its finest when he proposes to enrol his children in the whiteman’s school, a mode of adaptation which Achebe evidently approves of:

“The world is changing. I do not like it. But I am like the bird Eneke-nti-oba when his friends asked him why he was always on
the wing he replied. “Men of today have learnt to shoot without missing and I have learnt to fly without perching”. I want my sons to join these people and be my eye there”.

Ezeulu is ruined because either he is unable to sustain this perception or he refuses to let it guide his actions. His determination to avenge his wronged god blinds him to the established adaptive process of his society. The people of Umaro can cite “numerous examples of customs that had been changed in the past when they began to work hardship on the people’. Ezeulu’s hubris is his refusal to eat the new yam in spite of these precedents.

Inspite of the heroic tone and the elegiac mood, these novels are not nostalgic. The elegiac mood comes from the author’s original intention to show that the African past “with its imperfections was not one long night of savagery’ and is artistically necessary for creating a society that will become familiar without footnotes or explanatory asides within the text. If the tragic mood indicates an affirmation of the validity of the past, the movement of the plot indicates an acceptance of the present as it is.

At the end of both novels the fate of the hero is played in counterpoint against the general social adjustment which takes place. In Things Fall Apart the sympathy is weighted in favour of the hero because of the patent
cowardice of the crowd.

The men of Umuofia were merged into the mute backcloth of tree and giant creepers, waiting... Okonkwo's matchet descended twice and the man's head lay beside his uniformed body... He knew that Umuofia would not go to war.

And yet, in spite of this faint heartedness the inexorable character of the people's experience shows that there is wisdom in their action.

As a novelist Achebe is not obsessed with adaptation at all costs. In the village novels, the historical processes which made adaptation a condition of survival also destroyed the heroic last stand for tradition and prepared the grand for the moral decline of the present. This is the link between Achebe's novels of the past and the two novels about contemporary life.

The anti heroes of Achebe's urban novels are willing to roll in the immoral dirt if it will enable them to survive. In his examination of this other side of the coin of survival, Achebe does not give artistic approval to the kind of adaptation which demands not only a renunciation of idealism but also of social morality. It can be concluded that what Achebe offers us in the novels is a briefly encapsulated version of the nature of Colonialism in Africa. He also offers us its strategies, its impact on traditional novelty, and in the face of this near total physical as well as psychological annexation of the African, the
reactions of the indigenous population, with his customary direction. Achebe confines himself in the small Ibo clan rather than generalize about the whole of Africa. It is clear that the picture he gives the reader here of both colonialism and Christianity at work is intended to act as a paradigm for the whole of Africa.

Achebe’s artistic sense underlies his realization of his aim to educate the world about the historical past of his people. His artistic sense makes the education of all the more forceful in imaginative terms. His conscious plotting transforms historical past into an imaginative apprehension of life. It is imaginative penetration of life itself in the historical past that imbues the trilogy with a sense of permanent meaning—in particular the two novels analyzed.

All his five novels Things Fall a part, Arrow of God, No longer at Ease, A Man Of the People and the Anthills of the Savannah present a bird’s eye view of the history of his people and depict the necessary end to the confrontation between the Africans and the Europeans. The last three novels deal with a society during the independence struggle and the post-independent times. There is a steady disintegration in the society after independence.

The traditional values practiced and upheld by the leaders of Umufoia and Umuaro are long forgotten. Achebe’s short story “Girls at War” describes the tragic impact of the African civil war, which is prophesied by him well in
advance on the population. The full development of the community is obstructed by the corruption and turbulent armed struggles even as colonialism vanishes from a tribe whose range spreads over with energy, sheer variety and vivacity. About the transition Achebe says:

“I am not the one who would say that Africa has gained nothing at all during the Colonial period, I mean this is ridiculous … every society has to grow up, every society has to learn its own lesson”.

Achebe has great admiration for his Igbo traditional culture. Nevertheless he underlines the fact that its destruction is inherent in the community itself. A society which builds barriers against an outside influence will naturally disintegrate.

Strong men like Okonkwo and Ezeulu are destroyed where as corrupt court messengers and political turncoats like Nwaka flourish escape. The need for change is largely indicated and it transforms the traditional culture. Igbo individualism is deeply rooted in group solidarity. The important factor that unites people is communal cooperation and achievement. It is against this principle a reader must set the transition in the society.

A reader has seen Achebe developing his characters through action in his novels. Okonkwo, Ezeulu and Obi are distinct from other characters due to their contributions to the destruction of the historical of the traditional culture.
They hasten the annihilation of the traditional culture and allow the transition towards modernity in which an alien culture takes deep root.

The heroes possess some similarities – Okonkwo is sumptuous and gregarious where as Ezeulu’s is enigmatic and dreamy. Both of them are misunderstood by friends and relatives. They are also proud, obstinate, quick-tempered and are determined not to bend to sane words. There is another unifying thread that governs the leading characters of Achebe. They are lonely inspite of the enviable lead they enjoy. Neither Okonkwo nor Ezeulu is able to understand people because both of them possess the strongest convictions.

In the same way Obi is exceptional in his society because he is blessed with a scholarly foreign degree and is looked up to by the people. Towards the end Obi is shamelessly indecisive. Ezeulu is insane and Okonkwo is friendless and deserted. Even the lead roles in Achebe’s later satirical novels are not very different from the others. A Man of the People and Anthills of the Savannah may not be classified with the other three but they do convey the pathetic end of a society in its slide.

Normally the inspiration for a novel originates from the collective experience of a society in which a novelist lives. Achebe’s intention to develop these novels is fully realized by the transition that occurs in the tribal society.
The individualism that has replaced the community life sets the background for the novel and the novel move largely from rural to urban environment. The transition from the traditional culture to the modern catastrophe is built up superbly by Chinua Achebe.

**Things Fall Apart** portrays the initial conflict with colonization and its religions. And this conflict paves the way for the exodus of the traditional Africans to a different culture in **Arrow of God**. After the society has undergone a massive change – rural to urbanization – the reader now comes across another novel **No Longer at Ease**. The Post-Independence era - a Nigeria of increasing political corruption, moral degradation and sycophant populace is shown in **A Man of the People** and at last the pathetic life of an individual in **Anthills of the Savannah**.

The traditional Igbo life is presented by Achebe in **Things Fall Apart** and **Arrow of God** and the readers read how people in Lagos, especially Umuofia Progressive Union members in **No Longer at Ease** recall their glorious past and their leaders. The communal solidarity of the tribe is extended in urban society in the latter novel. Traditional culture in the first two novels is sprinkled with numerous communal behaviours like the importance of the titles, the values and the law that governs everyone, the relationship between husband and wife, the place of family and the popularity of wrestling matches, occasion for communal recreation etc.
In the same way as Achebe depicts the good behaviour of his people, he paints the ugly faces of the community also. It is terrifying to read in the twentieth century about the practices of the tribals throwing twins into the forest. Nwoye develops a revulsion to his community at the killing of the twins and the proverbial last straw is none other than the murder of his only friend Ikemefuna.

So also it is horrifying to read how people like Unoka, with incurable diseases were left to die in the Evil forest. Indian readers will not find anything strange in the behaviour of the tribe in No Longer at Ease towards Osu, an unacceptable people among themselves. Achebe voices through Obi his disagreement over the so called outcastes of his society.

In the same way as he gives the two different sides of his society, Achebe portrays two extremes of characters in his novels. Okonkwo can be contrasted with Obierika. Obierika is not impulsive or tempestuous as Okonkwo. He is a man of thought. He is one who can look at things with perfect equanimity. He does not take part in the murder of Ikemefuna, not because he is afraid, but because he does not want to antagonize the whiteman because he knows who is superior in power. Sometimes he is analytical about his own traditional values and is ready to adapt himself to the new dispensation. Moreover, it would seem to the readers that Achebe is trying to show them that the future lies with those who can adapt themselves to the situation like Obiesika who can view things objectively.
Achebe is again successful in showing the tension that exists between the individual and the community. An awareness of being governed by the personal conduct versus the impossibility of existence without the other members of the community that is governed by the traditional convention is elaborately discussed. If it was within his reach, Okonkwo certainly would have bulldozed against the social sanctions he had to undergo. Obi again would have preferred to breakaway from his family, his traditional society, and Umuofia Progressive Union to marry Clara.

Even a society that has come a long way from tradition to modernity cannot accept his individuality. So also Ezeulu is torn between his personal desire to dominate his traditional society and his tacit desire to soft pedal on Christianity. That leads to his downfall and simultaneously to the transition from the conventional practices to modernity.

Thus though the traditional forces seem to be stronger than the individuals, the customs, conventions and the traditional practices are at peril in the face of the stronger forces of modernity when the so called guardians of the society are selfish and individualistic.

Most of the African writers are bilingual, even multilingual. They are perfectly fluent in English and have no difficulty in expressing themselves in English. There are some writers who have not mastered English language but
write in English; for example Tutola, who does not speak or write in English has an attraction for native English speakers and he creates unusual effects by juxtaposing words that are not normally brought together as misused words to create striking effects.

The African novel, in general, is known for its depiction of various cultural tensions and conflicts arising out of a clash between tradition and modernity, the real and the occult. But it is the conflict between the individual and the society and the way in which it is resolved that seems to lend a typical African flavour to the African novel, thus differentiating it from the European counterpart.

To be explicit, in the event of clash between the individual and the society, the scores are more commonly settled in favour of the individual as against the society in the European novel, as could be seen in the case of Dorothy in George Eliot’s Middle March. The reverse is always the case in an African novel in which society, the larger entity emerges triumphant as against the individual who dissociates or delinks himself from the society to assert his pride and individuality.

There the question is not so much about the right or wrong of the individual’s conviction or credentials as about the necessity of the people to adhere to the society with its roots in a traditional faith. The people happen to
be aware of the unifying and sustaining capacity of the society. They believe and depend on its power to hold them together at the “centre”.

In Africa, the most impressive talent is shown in the novel and the play, particularly in the novels of Chinua Achebe and the drama of Wole Soyinka. Historical circumstances again account for the English connections of these writers, but not for the remarkable quality of the achieved work. The talent of Wole Soyinka has the fullness and substance of Achebe’s but is more richly and elaborately orchestrated. He, too, like Achebe has a profound feeling for peasant life, but has a much more sophisticated literary culture and a worried and anxious contemporary consciousness.

Chinua Achebe concludes his Triology which brings the historical record right down to contemporary times and deals with the single theme: the moral relation of the individuals with the society. As in the earlier novels, Achebe deals with a central character who is regarded by most of his society members as a misfit.

**Things Fall Apart** examines the traditional Ibo deal by sharing how Okonkwo, who aims to embody it, in fact fails to realise it. **Arrow of God** shows a man exalted by his community who abrogates to himself the power which is in the gift of the community. **No Longer at Ease** investigates the modern ideal by comparing the practical expectation of the Umuofians through Obi’s failure (both
in relation to the bribery charge and in his behaviour towards Clara) the sort of social pressures which have produced the Umuofian way and against which Obi’s idealism must be strong enough to stand, if it is to justify itself.

In *Arrow of God* "serious" politics, symbols and supernatural signs seem superficial. Yet, where other option and modes of recompense are steady or have failed, symbols stand for points of intersection with, as Achebe would have it, the very present divine: an intersection of spirit “transactions” between the market place and goddess.

Achebe’s basic philosophy regarding the use of the English language by the African writer has not changed. There is, for instance, a clear distinction between the language of relatively uneducated people like Agnes, Beatrice’s housemaid and Elewa, Ikem Osodi’s girl friend. These characters consistently speak Pidgin unlike Beatrice, Chris, Ikem and His Excellency all of whom belong to the educated elite and would normally use standard English.

It is also clear that the bearded old man who is one of the readers of the Abazon delegation that meets Ikem at Harmony Hotel in Chapter – IX in *Anthills of the Savannah* is reminiscent of the likes of Ezeulu, those who represent traditional wisdom and are blessed with the gift of eloquence. His English is meant to be Achebe’s rendering of the Igbo he would have spoken. This is all familiar to Achebe’s readers but there are some new elements now.
Achebe is a master of English language that he is able to skillfully combine what sounds like conventional English spoken and written by linguistically talented mother-tongue speakers with a local educated variety of the language and the idiom of non-English speaking characters. Thus he is able to produce a style which is almost classical but almost with an underlying informal touch that saves it from being stilted.

One of the major indications of Achebe’s development in the historical consciousness is his portrayed of women in his novels. In the earlier novels of Chinua Achebe, they were given minor roles and all the major parts have been taken by men characters. There is one significant exception to this and that is Clara in *No Longer at Ease*. While she is a fully developed character, she finds herself acting in a world dominated by men, and while Obi genuinely loves her he tends to patronize her and is portrayed as her intellectual superior.

Beatrice on the other hand is neither intellectually inferior to Chris or dominated and patronized by him. Their relationship is a relationship of equals who have a natural attraction for each other. While she rejects the Western concept of Women’s Liberation, she is certainly of the view that woman is equal to man and a woman can live a complete life without a man’s support.

The major theme in Achebe’s fictions is the primacy of the collective consciousness. Achebe portrays this in all his works and shows “a clan which
once thought like one, shared a common awareness and acted like one”. (TFA, p.6). The life of the individual like Okonkwo and Ezeulu and the beliefs, rituals, ceremonies of the community are merged into an order and significance. Though the individuals exist, they are deeply aware of the communal aspect of their very existence and no individual can think of detaching himself from the way of life or religion of his clan, for to do so is to be severed from its roots.

Okonkwo declares the value of kinship in a provincial statement: “An animal rubs its itching flank against a tree a man asks his kinsman to search him”. (TFA, p.151). This close association between members of the family teaches them the value of mutual support, giving them internal satisfaction of the mind and providing them with extended power of labour which in turn results in the prosperity of the clan.

But it is a community which also values individual achievement. The clan judges a man according to his worth, and not his father’s. Okonkwo at eighteen is declared the greatest wrestler in the nine villages, the owner of two barns of Yam, three wives, two titles and has shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars. But whatever be the individuals’ achievement, even if he is the chief priest, they must accommodate themselves to communal morality. This explains why Achebe’s characters while being individuals, collectively symbolize a way of life. It is this folk consciousness that allows Achebe to create fiction out of the trivialities of life. Ezeulu’s remark that “a man must
dance the dance prevalent in his time”. (AOG, p.189) can be regarded as the basic metaphor, for this dance symbolizes the cohesion and Orchestration of a united communal life.

This cohesiveness of the village is maintained through its unwritten laws. Though laws are not written, there is no lawlessness. The Igbo community acts as a unit and purifies itself. For instance, the excommunication of Okonkwo is very significant communal action of the village cleansing itself of the sin Okonkwo commits by spilling the blood of a clansman. Thus in this society where even an individual conflict acquires communal dimension, the belief is that the individual’s sin can affect the entire clan for “as the elders said, if one finger brought oil it soiled the others. (TFA, p.114).

Chinua Achebe can be considered as a social realist in this phase as he highlights realistically the different situations in their respective societies. Achebe portrays the realism that existed in the traditional Igbo society and depicts the transition from a communal to an independent, individual existence in his fiction Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God.

Achebe in Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God reveals the depth and inclusiveness of the pre-colonial Igbo society and shows a clan of people who live a rich and rhythmic way of life that gradually becomes frozen. Through the stories of Okonkwo and Ezeulu, Achebe pays a tribute to the dignity of the Ibo
tribe and their ancestors. He recaptures the vigour of traditional life, where the life of individual, the beliefs, rituals and ceremonies of the community are merged into an order and significance. They are in the end as they were in the beginning. They never give up their “sense of life” though life and society deal hardly with them.

Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* laments the loss of a rich and glorious past. Society throws light on a different kind of collective system. The novelist depicts a peaceful, well-knit communal Igbo society. His objectives in writing the fiction begin to evolve from their different convictions. Thematically Achebe depicts the crisis of the collective soul. He holds up a gripping plot and property almost unique, which portrays the individual’s struggle against a society which attempts to overpower them.

Achebe’s protagonists succumb to the social norms of their society. The individual is destroyed physically not mentally or spiritually. Okokwo of *Things Fall Apart* is unable to accept the flexibility of his society and commits suicide. There is a conversion that takes place in Nwoye. Nwoye’s is gradually convinced of the absurdity and the inhumanity of the communist party and the tribal ethos respectively. In the end Nwoye loses all faith and hope in his tribal society. He finds the logic and humanity of the Christian religion more meaningful and joins the Christian church. Issac Ezeunlu of *Arrow of God* who
is unable to relate his own selfish desires with those of society’s demands, becomes mad at the end.

What is highly remarkable in this first phase is that the seeds of individualism are deeply planted. All the protagonists scrutinized critically represent this early phase and are seen striving to assert their own individuality. Here, Ibo society is at its best but with the intervention of the white man, things fall apart and the centre can no more hold them together. Gradually as the seeds of individualism sprout here, the clan no longer can think or feel as one, and succumbs to the influence of an alien force.

The socio-cultural richness of the Igbo society is seen deteriorating gradually in the next two phases and the Igbo’s are no longer at ease as they were. The individuals are portrayed as heroic, chivalrous and courageous men of deep thought and action, but as they emerge as individuals they grow more corrupt and cowardly and also deteriorate. Okonkwo is cast in a better mould than Ezeulu. Obi and Okonkwo are still lesser men than Ekonkwo and Ezeulu. In Achebe’s society the individuals change for the worse though Achebe believes that change is a must.

Achebe, hailing from a chauvinistic male dominated society, casts all this protagonists as men except for Beatrice in *Anthills of the Savannah*. He depicts only male protagonists namely Okonkwo and Ezeulu. Women
characters as discussed in the earlier pages have so significant part to play except for Ezinma in *Things fall Apart* and are merely objects performing a function. The protagonists here, as the other protagonists of Achebe, are not portrayed as productive since they do not contribute materially as they do in the next phase. Okonkwo and Ezenlu in *Things fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* respectively are all ‘chief strivers’ and heroic individuals.

“Okonkwo was clearly cut out for great things. He was still young but he had won fame as the great wrestler in the nine villages…. To crown it all he had taken two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two inter tribal wars” (TFA 5-6). Ezeulu of ‘*Arrow of God*’ has the raw material for later achievement but none of them in this phase is allowed to develop the natural resources.

Achebe’s novels show how Christian missionaries and the British intervene by the end of the nineteenth century and the Ibo society experienced a transitional phase at the socio-cultural-religious and economic levels. His world, the Ibo society, is in direct contact with the supernatural through their various rituals, ceremonies, beliefs, myths and legends. Though the religion practiced in the Ibo world is primitive yet it is sincere and honest. There is hardly any life activity from birth to death; one truth is always corrected by another in what Achebe has typically described as Igbo dualistic mode of thought: “Whenever something stands, something else will stand beside it”9.
There are numerous examples of authorial commentary heard through oral illustration and proverbs in Achebe’s fictions. The most revealing of these comments is often presented through a second character, reflecting upon another. In such a manner Ezenlu’s son Edogo thinks about his father. The trouble with Ezenlu was that he could never see something and take his eyes away from it. That was what their father could never learn. He must go on treating this grownup children like little boys.

The researcher traces Achebe’s individuals in No Longer at Ease who are seen emerging from a secure solidarity to a new form of identity crisis resulting to accommodate the two. Achebe’s attitude to nature is typical of the occidentalist and Orientlist. Achebe demonstrates a more mystical closeness to nature. It is the concern of the whole tribe and not just of the couple or their families.

The love theme is not given much room in Achebe’s fiction except Oni-Clara relationship in No Longer at Ease. Obi, a young men of the 1930s and 1940s, falls in love with Clara on the boat when coming home; Clara has been to England too and she is a nurse. She is innocent in her actions and thoughts. But she belongs to an ‘Osu’ family. By obscure, stupid and surely unjust village reckoning she is an outcast and hence Obi is not permitted to marry her.
The coming of the whitemen with his government disrupts the age-long tradition and there is a great conflict between the new and the old order. The whiteman has established his own court which is presided over by the District Commissioner. They are foreigners and they do not know the customs of the people especially in land disputes.

The court messengers who are the agents of the District Commissioners are disliked because they are strangers too. They come from 'Umuru' which is regarded as a foreign land. Obierika describes them as "arrogant and high-handed". The whiteman has no regard for Umuofia titled men and they, in turn, do not recognize the whiteman's brutal government. The whiteman has two major types of punishment. For minor offences the people are flogged and in murder cases which are major cases, the offenders are hanged. Hanging is seen as an abomination and is abhorred by the people, but the whiteman regards it as a legal act.

In Achebe's work the first note of estrangement from tribal ethos is heard from Nwoye in Things Fall Apart, where due to his disillusionment with Igbo life as he found it, he sets out in quest of more human concerns. The traditional Ibo religion is based on the forces and elements of nature. This type of religion reflects an "agrarian cult". Achebe tells his readers later that he finds refuge in the new religion Christianity and the knowledge it offers. In a more advanced stage of this pursuit of knowledge as an accepted way of life, Obi embodies
within himself extreme idealism and an intense sense of alienation from his roots. Both attitudes, estrangement and alienation reflect a deep form of intellectual pursuits and economic advancements.

The traits of individualism traced through Nwoye and Obi Okonkwo arise from the smoldering ashes of the dying Igbo clan. This new individual is caught in the collapse of values. Born in an age which is slowly sacrificing its traditional values, to meet the demands of a new way of life, Obi feels helpless, for though he is aware of the old dignified order, he is thrust into the new.

Obi’s problem is that he is not able to accommodate the contradictory ethical values of two cultures. His is a case of double alienation for his missionary upbringing and education adopted religion; neither is he able to relate wholly to the complex living of the mid-twenties in Nigeria in spite of the modern education. The child of two worlds, Obi has a nostalgic memory of his noble ancestors which makes him impatient with the corruption and indignity of Modern Nigeria.

In Obierika’s questioning of the meaning of some of the traditional Igbo values in Things Fall Apart Achebe shows that even traditional values have to be revalued and up-dated according to the needs of the time. What Achebe advocates is not super imposition but a successful adaptation of the old to the
new, if the old is to survive. Nwoye’s conversion perhaps illustrates the author’s conviction that the only way for the future is cultural cohesion. This view of Achebe’s is best summed up by Jonathan Peters in the following manner:

“Ideally Achebe would have wished for a gratifying of the best elements of African tradition with desirable elements from other cultures as a guarantee against the eruption of hate and violence which proved ultimately to be his country’s colonial legacy”.

In Achebe’s novels a thematic order or pattern can be traced through the three novels. The theme of the song of traders in *No Longer at Ease*, about the world turned upside down has its first relevance in *Things Fall Apart*. It reaches its climax in *Arrow of God* when the free poetic and collective spirit is sapped and replaced by a selfish and corrupt system which finds its full expression in Obi’s acceptance of bribes of *No longer at Ease*, which may be considered as the decline of the old way of life.

The freezing death of the older order is seen in the shameless corruption and cynicism expressed where Achebe depicts the anarchy that rules the Ibo society. It has lost all the contact with the old ceremonies and ritualistic social order. The process of deterioration which begins with the breaking of communal life in *Things Fall Apart* reaches its final stage in *A Man of the People* when a new government takes over. The people see it as the alien institution to
which they can cling as parasites - a far cry from the healthy communal life which created men like Okonkwo and Ezeulu.

There is an absence of centre, which will hold things together. Speaking of the degeneration of moral and spiritual values of Igbo life, Achebe explains that in the ancient days titles were not given but taken and each title had its own value. He comments on how in the modern times, spirituality which would have controlled excess is rejected and materialism is retained.

“The Igbo society has always been materialistic. This may sound strange because lbo life had at the same time a strong spiritual dimension controlled by Gods, ancestors personal spirits or Chi magic. The success of the culture depends on the balance between the material and the spiritual… Today we have kept the materialism and thrown away the spiritually which should deep it in check12.

If No longer at Ease exposes the corrupting power of privilege and position and personal pleasure at the expenses of the majority, Anthills of the Savannah reveals massive corruption subservience to foreign manipulation the problems of capitalism and the failure of the rulers to re establish vital inner links with the poor and dispossessed of this country, with the bruised heart that throbs painfully at the core of the nation’s being (AOS, p141).
The novel was hailed as a “prophetic work”. “Achebe predicts with uncanny accuracy, the end of his country’s first Republic”13. The military coup was observed as follows also:

Indeed *A Man of the People* published on January 24, 1966, only nine days after the first military coup in Nigeria also ends with a military coup. “Achebe intended the coup as a parable not a prophecy” 14.

Nevertheless this correspondence between fiction and reality should not blind the reader to the fact that Achebe has not changed his underlying theme; he is once again dramatizing against the background of a particular era in Nigeria’s history the consequences of a collision of cultures. The only major difference between these novels is that the entire narrative bristles with sharp satire which at times explodes into hilarious burlesque.

These novels of Achebe examine in an incisive way the fundamental issues relating to political leadership and also the position of women in modern significant African society. Using Obi as his mouthpiece, Achebe gives him views on the theory of class and class struggle, and calls to question some of the basic tenets of Marxism including the idea of a millennium in which there is no oppression of one social group by another after the establishment of communism.
Achebe notices the orthodox Marxist position as a simplistic remedy to the problem of oppression. A socialist and communist revolution cannot solve all social problems of a society. He strongly believes that the only way to reform the corrupt society is by changing the corrupt leadership. In his novels, Achebe offers a kind of solution for determining the course of Nigerian history. Abala’s role as a priestess in TFA, makes a significant contribution to the novel’s examination of political leadership and sheds light on the ideology of leadership in the novel.

Achebe feels that “Nigeria’s problem is the result of its leader’s unwillingness and inability to rise to the responsibilities and challenges of leadership. The lack of hallmark of the true leadership namely the challenge of personal example has brought Nigeria to the brisk of disaster. Nigerians are what they are only because their leaders are not what they should be”15.

To Achebe leadership implies responsible performance on the part of the individual. A leader should be able to create the circumstances in which the people begin to act with awareness. Leadership may be a privilege of the elite but the latter who have been specially trained and educated should use their education to encourage the upward movement of the people.

Thus Achebe through his trilogy clinically dissects the past of his society and traces a kind of psychic journey through the characters of Okonkwo,
Ezeulu, Obi Okonkwo a downward path from stability to anarchy. It is a journey from the inspired and fulfilling rituals of the past to empty parodies of the present. Jonathan Peters observes “Yeats sphere its two gyres or vortices are symbol of universal conflict”.

Achebe is a social anthropologist because of his interest in the socio-cultural patterns, beliefs, rituals and ceremonies of his class. His interest stems from his study of the impact of one civilization through his fictional characters. Achebe succeeds in convincing the reader that which had happened to the Ibo Clan in the past is how the historical force works. Civilization is not static; it can collapse from within and be over-powered from without; the new order usually offers all that the old has over-looked, but even this new order must yield to another in course of time for power and shift of power is an inevitable historical determinism.

The design and execution of Achebe’s novels give a historical over-view of the Ibo society from colonization to post-colonial Africa. Avoiding both the method of indulgence and flagellation Achebe asserts the objective truth about the past of this tribe.

Achebe in his article “African Literature as Restoration of Celebration” shows “how literary artist can be nostalgic without sacrificing objectivity or realism”. As a writer committed to social realism he illustrates that
disintegration of his society stems from the loss of allegiance to the religion and more of clan and ethnic group. He also dwells on the lessons to be learnt from the ironies of human relation and the responsibilities of an individual to ensure a valuable legacy for the progeny.

Achebe reveals a pronounced similarity of purpose in his writings. They provide rich contrasts in their point of view, ideas, characters and representation of reality. Like most of the creative writers he too has used the fictional form with explicit social commitments. Yet one perceives a striking dissimilarity in their respective efforts to endow a changing ethical mood with new values. Achebe makes use of his creative genius with great insistence on the obligation of the African writer to his people achieving a skillful balance and synthesis of aesthetics and didacticism. He moves further away from the typically traditional to explore worlds and view outside its limited confines.

Achebe, perhaps the more innovative and open in his concepts, undertakes bold experimentation in his fiction with an uncommon earnestness and unique vision. ‘Simplicity’ has been a quality commonly attributed by western critics to African fiction. The term has been used in a variety of ways. About Achebe’s first novel TFA, it is said, “His literary method is simple, but a vivid imagination illuminates every page, and his style is a model of clarity.” His intention is not just to tell one more tale but to create through ideas an
experience that can be shared against a reawakening tradition and its total effect evolves out of an aesthetic merging of characters, situation and episodes.

The writer Achebe combines an insight into human predicament with a mature vision. His style in ‘NLAE’ is usual and almost traditional; “some very fortunate writers indeed will be able to fill the framework in, motivation, depth, psychology and all the rest of it”\(^\text{19}\). The majors shifts in the thinking patterns of the protagonists is viewed within the structural confines of a few selected creative works. These works also mark a steady eventual progression in the image of the emerging history.

It has been fascinating to watch how from a closed self-contained complacent world emerges a totally transformed being, reshaped and reformed through consistent conflicts and crises. Apart from exploring deep into the intricacies of the human psyche, the effective aesthetic apprehension of the transitional phase in history compels the readers to subscribe totally to and reinforce a basic sociological notion that man does not simply react to his environment but responds.

The researcher realizes that the need of the day is socio-cultural cohesion, that is a successful grafting of the two best elements of the past and the present. In other words Achebe’s concept of the ideal of the self should be grafted with his concept of a truly meaningful communal living. In every society
there are individual creators and the society needs men of such integrity and
caliber to redeem it. If Prometheus had not stolen fire from the gods, man
might have been starving today.

Chinua Achebe observes that,

\[\text{“a Westerner would be most reluctant to destroy in a page or two her angel and paragon of perfection, the individual hero. And if he has to be destroyed then it has got to be justified by final impressive speeches. Achebe, does not have these obligations because in his scheme and hierarchy the human hero is not even near the top. He is subordinate to his community to begin with, even when he is their leader and priest”}^{20} .\]

Thus after making a thorough survey of Achebe’s novels and short stories the researcher can make it sure that in all his novels, Achebe is very conscious of his race, his style of living, the society’s moral obligation and the customs. The customs and the rituals of the people of his clan or Africans in general are vividly explained and Achebe’s desire is to highlight his people’s feelings and desires.

Achebe gives us an exciting view of an age of his country passing through a change. As he traces the political realities of his society, he interprets them not only for himself or his fellow African but for the world. Readers in India
can imaginatively feel through some of the characters particularly with Obi in *NLAE* the intellectual and emotional impact of these situations. The readers can recognize the features the contemporary modern Indian shares with his African counterparts.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


3. Ibid., p.85.


18. Times Literary Supplement, Friday, June 20, 1958, p.34.
