CHAPTER - 3

THE RECOGNITION OF IGBO NOVELS
CHAPTER III

THE RECOGNITION OF IGBO NOVELS

The second chapter comprises of the early Igbo writings. In this chapter, a discussion is taken up to explore the writings in Igbo English that gained peak and popularity and were acclaimed with Recognition.

Igbo Writings that Gain Peak and Popularity with Recognition

For the present purpose few important novels of the Igbo writers that fall in the “Igbo writings that gain peak and popularity with Recognition” way are chosen. They are - Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe, The Potter's Wheel by Vincent Chukwuemeka Ike, The Concubine by Elechi Amadi and Flora Nwapa's Efuru.

It is needed to discuss in detail about the major aspects of these novels as per the authorship/s:
1. Chinua Achebe

   i.  *Things Fall Apart*

*Things Fall Apart* written by Chinua Achebe is a classic novel published in 1958. It is a seminal novel, a milestone in African literature. It is read all over the world including Europe, America, India and Australia. The importance of the work is evident from the fact that it has been translated into around forty five languages. It is a masterpiece and archetypal, modern African novel. It has achieved the distinction of being acclaimed as among the hundred best English language novels between 1923 and 2005, by the *Time Magazine*. The book has been prescribed for study in schools and colleges and has also been adapted for the stage, radio and television.

Through this novel, Achebe writes back to clear misconceptions and prejudices harboured by especially the Western world about Africa being uncultured, primitive, savage land. Africa has often been portrayed as the black continent full of mindless savages and even cannibals. This image of Africa as a backward and uncivilized place is perpetuated in literature especially in books like Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Achebe was fed up of this racist stereotyping and through his novel, he presents the real Africa. The novel presents the clash between Nigeria’s white colonial government and the traditional Igbo culture.

“...Things Fall apart is indeed a classic study of cross-cultural misunderstanding and the consequences to the rest of humanity, when a belligerent culture or civilization, out of
sheer arrogance and ethnocentrism, takes it upon itself to invade another culture, another civilization.” (Wittaker, and Mpalive 57)

Achebe deliberately wrote a novel which highlights Igbo culture and its progressive institutions. He lays emphasis on their rich culture. Their laws give great importance to justice and fairness. Something which is very progressive is the system of direct democracy without being ruled by Kings or any chief. People gather together to take decisions in a harmonious way.

Another progressive trend is the faith invested in individuals to grow and achieve greatness. An individual is not judged by his father’s wealth. High rank in society can be achieved by any person through his hard work.

One of the great strengths of the novel is realistic portrayal. He does not show an idealized Igbo culture, but his approach is realistic. He shows both the positive and the negative aspects of his culture. The main negative aspect is its highly patriarchal society. Another peculiar aspect is that they have great fear of twins. So, if twins are born they are abandoned and left to the elements.

The protagonist of Things Fall Apart is Okonkwo, who is the leader of an Igbo community. The novel follows his banishment from the community for accidentally killing a clansman, seven years of exile, his return and finally his suicide. The novel also records the problems that occur due to the presence and interference of colonial government and the white missionaries. The events take place in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s.
In the first three chapters, Achebe charmingly introduces the protagonist and some interesting Igbo traditions and customs. Three days after the novel's publication, a Times Literary Supplement review praised Achebe's ability to draw: "A fascinating picture of tribal life among his own people" (Mary Washington coll. dept. 92).

One social ritual which is striking is the way guests are received and treated. Thus, when Okonkwo's neighbour comes to their house to collect a debt, he and Unko (Okonkwo's father) first share palm wine and a kola nut and pray to their ancestral spirits before getting down to the business.

One day a neighbor called Okoye came in to see him...He immediately rose and shook hands with Okoye, who then unrolled the goatskin which he carried under his arm, and sat down. Unoka went into an inner room and soon returned with a small wooden disc containing a kola nut, some alligator pepper and a lump of white chalk.

"I have kola," he announced when he sat down, and passed the disc over to his guest.

"Thank you. He who brings kola brings life. But I think you ought to break it," replied Okoye, passing back the disc.

"No, it is for you, I think," and they argued like this for a few moments before Unoka accepted the honor of breaking the kola. Okoye, meanwhile, took the lump of chalk, drew some lines on the floor, and then painted his big toe.
As he broke the kola, Unoka prayed to their ancestors for life and health, and for protection against their enemies. When they had eaten they talked about many things: about the heavy rains which were drowning the yams, about the next ancestral feast and about the impending war with the village of Mbaino.

(Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 5)

Traditionally, a Kola nut is offered to welcome a guest and is a way of showing respect. Another important and interesting custom shown in the novel is the Igbo way of acquiring status. One of the chief indicators of a man’s prosperity is the number of yams he has been able to grow and store. Another is the number of titles earned by him. In Igbo society, there are four titles to aspire for. Hence an individual is not judged by his father’s wealth, but by personal achievement. This is shown in the novel in the initial chapters: “Okoye was also a musician. He played on the *ogene*. But he was not a failure like Unoka. He had a large barn full of yams and he had three wives. And now he was going to take the Idemili title, the third highest in the land” (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 5). This shows that one way of gaining honour is the cultivation and possession of yams and another “owning” multiple wives. Titles are conferred by the clan.

Okonkwo, the protagonist is introduced in the initial chapters. He is a dynamic, self-made man, who resents failure. He hates his father because he is lazy and listless and associates him with weakness and further weakness is associated with femininity just as power and strength is associated with masculinity. Okonkwo considers it a supreme insult if a person is called
*agbala* (which means woman in the Igbo language). This also shows the wide division between actions and duties which fall under masculine and feminine categories. Gaining respect and success are manly activities. Women are only supposed to take care of children and hens.

There is a superb illustration of unique Igbo proverbs. For example — “The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did” (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 16). This proverb means that since there is no one to speak for Okonkwo, he must speak for himself. Another is — “Eneke the bird says that since men have learnt to shoot without missing, he has learnt to fly without perching” (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 16). This is used to bring out the fact that though Okonkwo has become wise with the ways of the world he still has learnt to be stingy with his yams.

There are some interesting religious beliefs shown in chapters four to six. Igbo believe in an individual’s personal God. The Igbos believe that at the time of conception every person is given a *Chi* and his abilities and fate is determined by the Chi. A man is lucky if his *Chi* is good: “At the most one could say that his chi or personal god was good. But the Ibo people have a proverb that when a man says yes his chi says yes also. Okonkwo said yes very strongly; so his chi agreed” (Chigbo 95).

It is interesting to note that they believe in influencing the personal God through sheer will power, as shown in Okonkwo’s case. This gives a great message of hope – life is not completely dictated by fate. With hard work and a strong will power, man can change his destiny.
Gender roles are very significant as they are associated with power-play and power equation. Any kind of weakness is considered feminine and strength and success is lined with masculinity. Okonkwo believes that he can prove his masculinity by beating up his wives and also by ridiculing those men who are not as successful as him. He also considers showing emotions as a weakness. Since he hates his lazy father, he wants his son to stay away from his father and takes him to work with him in the fields, even though he is very young.

Okonkwo is shown as having a very violent nature. It can be because of his repressed emotions. He beats up his wife and also tries to shoot her. But he also has an affectionate side. He loves his daughter Ezinma but rarely expresses his feelings. There are wrestling matches described in this section of the novel. This is because Igbo culture gives great importance to physical strength and sports. The entire village collects together to see the wrestling match:

Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honor to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mban. (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 3)

These lines from the novel show that Okonkwo earns respect for himself and his village by proving his strength and bravery in the physical contest of wrestling. In Igbo culture, great importance is given to a man’s masculinity. As a provider for his family he has to cultivate the qualities of
resourcefulness, hardiness and toughness. A man has to dominate and control his wife and children. Values and traditions are passed on from generation to generation through stories. These are also gender specific. While a mother’s story has moral lessons contained within them, the stories of fathers are of bravery and conquests.

It is to prove masculinity, power and strength that Okonkwo goes to the extreme of killing Ikemefuna. “Okonkwo’s rigidity leads to his participation in the death of Ikemefuma. This incident is seen by many as a turning point in the novel, the beginning of the end. It initiates a series of catastrophes which end with his death” (wmi.ch.edu/dialogues/things fall apart) In doing this he disobeys the authority and advice of a clan elder. He does this because he does not want to appear weak. This becomes the turning point of the novel. This action alienates him from his family also. His son refuses to come near him because he is afraid of him. It also distances him from Igbo society and his friends. Even his closest friend Obierika refuses to support in this deed. Though Okonkow shows a tough exterior, he is a sensitive person from within. He is actually pained at Ikemefuna’s death.

This section of the novel also describes the Igbo courting rituals in great detail. Light is also thrown on the relationship between Ekwefi and Ezinma. It is not a typical parent-child relationship. Ekwefi receives companionship and great comfort from her daughter. Ekwefi is very fond of her daughter, also because before Ezinma is born, she has lost nine children in their infancy.

A woman’s status in Igbo society depends upon how many children she bears and how many of them are male. Even though women are considered inferior
to men, they too have great importance in Igbo society. They are responsible for preparing the very important celebratory activities that bring community together and bonds are strengthened. Women decorate the huts beautifully and create designs for body art.

The importance of women is also represented by Chielo. She speaks on behalf of God Agbala. She refers to Ezinma as her “daughter” which may indicate that she will replace Chielo’s position as a priestess.

CHIELO. And how is my daughter Ezinma?

EKWEFI. She has been well for some time now. Perhaps she has come to stay.

CHIELO. I think she has. How old is she now?

EKWEFI. She is about ten years old.

CHIELO. I think she will stay. They usually stay if they do not die before the age of six.

EKWEFI. I pray she stays. (shmoop.com/things-fall-apart/family-quotes)

The Igbo judicial system is also reflected thoroughly. It is very progressive and it focuses on a fair and public trial. Senior members of the society, who also have political and economic power, conduct the trials. Each party is given fair opportunity to present their case. Then just like a jury, the egwugwu leave to discuss and arrive at a verdict.

Chapter twelve introduces another important Igbo custom – the Uri ceremony. In this ceremony the bridegroom brings palm-wine for all the guests and
family of the bride. It is an occasion that is celebrated by the entire village. The women bring presents of palm-oil, smoked fish, plantation, cake of salt and yams for the bride. The slaughtering of the goat is also done according to traditional custom.

The writer also describes the custom of rescuing the cow by all the women of the village. There is also a song sung at the end which communicates that sexual activity is seen as a natural part of the courting rituals, enjoyed by both men and women.

Okonkwo is punished for his crime of killing Ezeudu's son and he is ostracized from his village for seven years, though the crime is an "accident". Obierika's role is that of an interrogator. He cannot comprehend why such a harsh treatment should be given for an offence that happened accidentally. He also questions the customs of abandoning twins, especially because his children were left in the forest to die. Chapters fourteen to sixteen of the novel show Okonkwo's reaction and then response to his exile. He is forced to go to the homeland of his mother. He has seemingly committed a so-called womanly crime—the accidental killing of a boy during a funeral ceremony. He feels weak, a failure, unmotivated and discouraged. His uncle Uckendo supports him and pulls him out of depression. He advises him to show his strength he needs to accept his fate with dignity, grace and fortitude. Okonkwo is reassured and takes his exile positively.

This section also details the *isa-ifiti* ceremony of the Igbo. It is a part of their complex marriage rituals. The presence of the whites is also presented. But it is not shown as a tragic event. It is also presented in a comic way. There is
also an examination of how the Christians were gaining sway over the villages and slowly eroding traditions of the Igbo people. They discover certain beliefs to be invalid.

The missionaries brought scientific way of thinking. Their religious views are changed. The outcasts from the society get converted to Christianity because Christianity does not believe in these divisions. Similar was the case of untouchables and low caste people of India who were promised a better life of equality and justice through Christianity. The whites stopped many evil practices in Africa like the superstitious abandoning of twins. Nwoye is a good case in point. He represents those natives who start doubting Igbo custom's and converts to Christianity. He is Okonkwo's eldest son. When he gets to know about his son's conversion, Okonkwo reacts violently and angrily. All his hopes and dreams for his oldest son and his family are shattered. His violent attitude towards the Christians separates him from the Mbanta clan. The clash between the village and the Church grows. Whenever they meet, there is conflict. Most of the time they try to avoid each other to prevent conflict.

When Okonkwo's exile is over, he celebrates and is grateful to his motherland's relatives. But the seven years have not changed him. When he returns to his clan, their perception of him has changed. His power and prestige cannot be regained. The readers realize that he won't be able to achieve the status he yearns for.

Okonkwo still yearns that Ezinma were a boy. But she always remains a comfort to him. By this time, we are told that the Christian missionaries have
taken full control of Umuofia. After this the British establish their own government and started suppressing Igbo language and traditions. They establish special courts to punish those who break the laws made by the whites. The African natives who are given some power become arrogant. For example, the natives who are appointed as court messengers become so arrogant that they misuse their power by beating up the prisoners they are guarding.

Though the British disrupt the lives of the people, they also brought education and economic development. The Europeans buy palm kernels and palm oil from the Igbo at high rates and thus they have an opportunity to earn profits. Health care is another benefit brought by them. But Okonkwo still refuses to give in. He wanted a big welcome from the people of his village, but nobody notices him.

An important technique employed by Achebe is that the names he gives his characters have hidden meanings. For example, Okonkwo's name has a clear implication of stubbornness and pride. The British, on the other hand, are given simple names which are very common like Brown and Smith. The British District Commissioner is known by his title.

There are many stereotypes. Thus Reverend Smith is a stereotype of the typical, rigid Christian missionary. He is very high-handed. His dealings are inflexible in most matters. He does not allow the natives to cling to their traditional beliefs, after conversion. He openly condemns the customs of the clan by suspending a woman for allowing her old beliefs to pervade her new Christian ways. Reverend Smith is responsible for a lot of clash between the clan and the church because he refuses to respect Igbo culture.
The British are also adept at the policy of divide and rule. They turn the Igbo people against each other through religion and politics. Okonkwo is determined to fight against the influence of the British. He also wants to take revenge for his humiliation by the whites. So he kills the court messenger. The villagers condemn his violent action. He realizes that the villagers do not trust and support him. He also realizes that single handedly he cannot save his village or its traditions.

The protagonist is frustrated and depressed. He realizes that though his actions are brave, he has not gained the confidence and support of his fellow clan members. He commits suicide because for him it is a better alternative than to submitting to the British. The book shows the slow fading away of Igbo culture due to colonization. Okonkwo clearly sees that his village and clan have changed tremendously after the coming of the Europeans.

The novel is set in a small village known as Umuofia, which is in the South-eastern part of Nigeria. It has well-defined traditions. The book is set at the turn of the nineteenth century and this time period is also significant – it includes the pre and post European imperial era. Okonkwo's experiences are seen within this period and it enables the readers to see the changes that came about in the Igbo society as a result of colonialism. “If things fall apart is first a story of the disintegration of a traditional African society, it is also the personal tragedy of a single individual, whose life falls apart in the midst of that same process.” (Booker 202)

Achebe also uses comparisons and contrasts to juxtapose Igbo culture and governance systems with the system brought in by the Imperialists. A case in
point is the Igbo traditional system of ensuring justice. Complaints are brought to a group of nine elders dressed as masked Gods. This is symbolic to show that proper justice will be done. Each party is given a fair chance to present their case, after which the jury of nine members discuss and debate and give the verdict, compensation etc. When the whites arrive, they set up an unfair system where disputes are settled in favour of the highest bidder.

Another important aspect is that the Igbo are very close to nature. They respect it and are also in awe of it. For example they respect as well as fear the forest as the chief God. The earth Goddess is seen as in control of the weather and the productivity of the land. Land is of great importance because the chief occupation of the people is farming. They rely on it completely and also have to face drought and floods. So nature is honoured and feared like a Goddess.

The title of the novel *Things Fall Apart* is significant and appropriate. It is taken from W. B Yeats's poem *The Second Coming*:

> Turning and turning in the widening gyre
>
> The falcon cannot hear the falcon;
>
> Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
>
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. (Campbell 40)

In this disturbing poem Yeats describes an apocalypse in which there is a vision of the world collapsing into anarchy because of internal flaw in humanity. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe draws a parallel in the falling apart of Igbo society due to the intrusion of the white colonizers. Due to the internal division and weakness within the native structure of the Igbo society, the
community of Umuofia is unable to stand up against the engulfing tidal wave of foreign government, religion, commerce and technology. The title is referred to in chapter twenty.

Okonkwo and his friend Obierika are discussing the invasion of the whites into their world, Obierika says:

The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart. (Whittaker and Mpalive 98)

The novel contains many major and minor themes. They are the driving force of the work. The themes binding the novel are man and the natural world, gender, family, respect and reputation, religion, fear, sin, atonement, culture and traditions, language, communication, fate and free will.

Specially, structured gender roles form the heart of traditional Igbo life and culture. Most of the Igbo life is gendered, from the growing of crops to the characterization of crimes. “His mother and sisters worked hard enough, but they grew women’s crops, like coco-yams, beans and cassava. Yam, the king of crops, was a man’s crop” (Achebe, Things Fall Apart 16). Yam is considered to be a man’s crop as it is the community’s staple diet. Through this also men maintain and strengthen their position as primary providers for their families. The following passage from the novel reveals how crimes are gendered.
The only course open to Okonkwo was to flee from the clan.
It was a crime against the earth goddess to kill a clansman,
and a man who committed it must flee from the land. The
crime was of two kinds, male and female. The crime was of
two kinds, male and female. Okonkwo had committed the
female, because it had been inadvertent. He could return to
the clan after seven years. (Ray 5)

Female crimes are considered less severe than male crimes

It is obvious that women are considered the weaker sex in Igbo culture.
Masculinity is associated with violence and aggression. Hence Okonkwo beats
up his wives and at times also threatens to kill them. He associates weakness
with feminity and can go to any extent to prove his powers, even stab his
surrogate son when the party want to execute him. When in exile in his
mother’s land, he finds that his maternal kinsmen are not courageous, brave
and fierce like the Umuofia community. They prefer negotiation and
compromise over bloodshed and anger. “Okonkwo ruled his household with a
heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his
fiery temper and so did his little children” (Achebe, Things Fall Apart
9).Women cannot question the men. Their aggression at home has been
legitimized by community:

“He belongs to the clan,” he told her [Okonkwo’s eldest
wife]. “So look after him.”

“Is he staying long with us?” she asked.
“Do what you are told, woman,” Okonkwo thundered, and stammered. “When did you become one of the ndichie of Umuofia?”

And so Nwoye’s mother took Ikemefuna to her hut and asked no more questions. (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 11)

Okonkwo has a very high-handed attitude towards his wife. He treats her like a servant. In Igbo society, women are silenced. They have to be obedient and submissive. Their unimportance is shown by the fact that often they are not even addressed by their given names, but their relationship with men.

All through the novel, the narrator does not use Okonkwo’s first wife’s name. Her identity takes its meaning from her relationship with her husband or son. This is quite similar to Indian traditional, orthodox society where a girl is first known as someone’s daughter, then as someone’s wife and then her son’s mother. The worst fear of a man is to be called a woman – an *agbala*:

Only a week ago a man had contradicted him at a kindred meeting which they held to discuss the next ancestral feast. Without looking at the man Okonkwo had said, “This meeting is for men.” The man who had contradicted him had no titles. That was why he had called him a woman. Okonkwo knew how to kill a man’s spirit (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 19)

Cowardice is also associated with feminity. Okonkwo calls the Mbanta tribe womanly because they refuse to resist the Christians violently. Action and violence are associated with masculinity “Okonkwo cleared his throat and
moved his feet to the beat of the drums. It filled him with fire as it had always done from his youth. He trembled with the desire to conquer and subdue. It was like the desire for woman” (Achebe, Things Fall Apart 30). His desire to wrestle is equated with the desire for sex. He views women as objects to ‘conquer’ and ‘subdue’.

In traditional Igbo society, there are clear-cut male-female roles. The three roles that a woman is required to play are – 1) to make a pure, chaste bride for her man 2) to be a submissive and obedient wife 3) to bear many children. The role of an ideal man is to keep his wife under his thumb, provide materially for his family and prove his bravery and courage on the battlefield. He can gain respect only through manly activities. Taking care of children is entirely the woman’s responsibility. Okonkwo’s strictly following of Igbo codes of gender roles prevents him from showing love for his favourite daughter: “And after a pause she said: ‘Can I bring your chair for you?’ ‘No, that is a boy’s job.’ Okonkwo was specially fond of Ezinma” (Achebe, Things Fall Apart 32).

The key values that form the basis of an ideal Igbo family are mutual respect for each other, a reverence for older and past family members and unity. The father not only supports the family financially but also teaches his sons to continue the values and traditions of Igbo culture.

The Feast of the New Yam was approaching and Umuofia was in a festival mood. It was an occasion for giving thanks to Ani, the earth goddess and the source of all fertility. Ani played a greater part in the life of the people than any other
deity. She was the ultimate judge of morality and conduct. And what was more, she was in close communion with the departed father of the clan whose bodies had been committed to the earth.

The Feast of the New Yam was held every year before the harvest began, to honour the earth goddess and the ancestral spirits of the clan...So much was cooked that, no matter how heavily the family ate or how many friends and relatives they invited from neighbouring villages, there was always a large quantity of food left over at the end of the day. (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 26)

This feast traditionally celebrates the family. Forefathers are honoured in the name of Ani, the earth Goddess, who, it is believed, keeps their bodies in her hold. The current family is also honoured by being invited to the feast.

The novel shows the traditional Igbo way of earning reputation. The success of a man is judged by the number of titles he is able to earn. This is indicated by the ankle bracelets the men wear. There are four titles that can be earned in an Igbo society. These titles make him powerful and reputed. The important thing is that these titles are earned through hard work, wrestling and bravery in war. Gaining reputation can earn a man position of power, influence in the community and innumerable wives. Okonkwo is always concerned with his reputation.

Okonkwo's prosperity was visible in his household. He had a large compound enclosed by a thick wall of red earth. His
own hut, or obi, stood immediately behind the only gate in the red walls. Each of his wives had her own hut, which together formed a half moon behind the obi. The barn was built against one end of the red walls, and long stacks of yam stood out prosperously in it. At the opposite end of the compound was a shed for the goats, and each wife built a small attachment to her hut for the hens. Near the barn was a small house, the “medicine house” or shrine where Okonkwo kept the wooden symbols of his personal god and of his ancestral spirits. He worshipped them with sacrifices of kola nut, food and palm-wine, and offered prayers to them on behalf of himself, his three wives and eight children.

(Achebe, Things Fall Apart 10)

Okonkwo is respected because he is a self-made man. According to Igbo standards he is wealthy and successful. His house is big and he is prosperous with several wives and children.

When Unoka died he had taken no title at all and he was heavily in debt. Any wonder then that his son Okonkwo was ashamed of him? Fortunately, among these people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father. Okonkwo was clearly cut out for great things. He was still young but he had won fame as the greatest wrestler in the nine villages. He was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams, and had just married his third
wife. To crown it all he had taken two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars. And so although Okonkwo was still young, he was already one of the greatest men of his time. Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered. (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 6)

Reputation is self-earned and not inherited. Okonkwo’s father is lazy and so Okonkwo wants to break away from the reputation his father stands for.

Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 8)

Nwakibe respects Okokwo for his dedication and hard work. It also wins his trust. “I think it is good that our clan holds the ozo title in high esteem,” said Okonkwo. “In those other clans you speak of, ozo is so low that every beggar takes it” (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 48). Okonkwo is extremely pleased with his reputation in society. He has achieved an elite status.

An interesting feature of the novel is the dominance of fear in many characters. Okonkwo is afraid of being lazy like his father. He is also afraid of being called an agbala or a woman. Ekwifi is afraid of losing her daughter. Nwoye fears her father. Fear leads them to behave negatively. This attitude is not liked by the community:
Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man. But his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness. It was deeper and more intimate than the fear of evil and capricious gods and of magic, the fear of the forest, and of nature, malevolent, red in tooth and claw. Okonkwo’s fear was greater than these. It was not external, but lay deep within himself. It was the fear of himself, lest he should be found to resemble his father. Even as a little boy he had resented his father’s failure and weakness, and even now he still remembered how he had suffered when a playmate had told him that his father was agbala. That was how Okonkwo first came to know that agbala was not only another name for a woman, it could also mean a man who had taken to title. And so Okonkwo was ruled by one passion — to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved. One of those things was gentleness and another was idleness. (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 9)

Ekwefi fears the unknown darkness around her and she is mortally afraid that Chielo will abduct her daughter — “When Okonkwo heard that he [Ikemefuna] would not eat any food he came into the hut with a big stick in his hand and stood over him while he swallowed his yams, trembling. A few moments later he went behind the hut and began to vomit painfully” (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 20). Okonkwo’s wives are afraid of being beaten up by him all the time. Another theme of the book is the complex and subtle traditions and customs, that constitute Igbo culture — its ritual speech and other rituals performed
during different occasions. Most of these actions acknowledge and show respect to some superior being. Respect and knowledge of one’s role in society determine such customs. The rituals also honour the family:

He [Okonkwo] took a pot of palm-wine and a cock to Nwakibie...He presented a kola nut and an alligator pepper, which were passed round for all to see and then returned to him. He broke the nut saying: “We shall all live. We pray for life, children, a good harvest and happiness. You will have what is good for you and I will have what is good for me. Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break

After the kola nut had been eaten Okonkwo brought his palm-wine from the corner of the hut where it had been placed and stood it in the center of the group. He addressed Nwakibie, calling him “Our father.”

“Nna ayi,” he said. “I have brought you this little kola. As our people say, a man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness. I have come to pay you my respects and also to ask a favor. But let us drink the wine first.” (Achebe, Things Fall Apart 14)

As a guest Okonkwo is obliged to give traditional gifts and respectful sayings to his host. He conducts himself appropriately to be called a respectable guest. He follows all customs before doing business talk. He offers the kola nut, prays for the health of the host’s family and calls him “Our Father”.
And so nature was not interfered with in the middle of the rainy season. Sometimes it poured down in such thick sheets of water that earth and sky seemed merged in one gray wetness. It was then uncertain whether the low rumbling of Anadiora’s thunder came from above or below. At such times, in each of the countless thatched huts of Umuofia, children sat around their mother’s cooking fire telling stories, or with their father in his obi warming themselves from a log fire, roasting and eating maize. It was a brief resting period between the exacting and arduous planting season and the equally exacting but light-hearted month of harvests. (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*)

A custom followed during the rainy season is that it is mandatory for children to sit inside the huts with their parents who tell them stories and they all eat snacks together. This tradition gives them time to rest and recover after the tiring planting season. Marriage rituals are also very interesting.

“I hope our in-laws will bring many pots of wine. Although they come from a village that is known for being closefisted, they ought to know that Akueke is the bride for a king.”

“They dare not bring fewer than thirty pots,” said Okonkwo. “I shall tell them my mind if they do.”

At that time Obierika’s son, Maduka, led out the giant goat, from the inner compound, for his father’s relatives to see.
They all admired it and said that that was the way things should be done. The goat was then led back to the inner compound.

Very soon after, the in-laws began to arrive. Young men and boys in single file, each carrying a pot of wine, came first. Obierika’s relatives counted the pots as they came. Twenty, twenty-five. There was a long break, and the hosts looked at each other as if to say, “I told you.” Then more pots came. Thirty, thirty-five, forty, forty-five. The hosts nodded in approval and seemed to say, “Now they are behaving like men.” (shmoop.com/things-fall-apart/traditions-customs-quotes)

This marriage ritual shows that the price of the bride is paid in palm wine which is put in pots. The more the pots, the greater respect and value is shown.

The Umuofia follow a traditional practice to determine bride-price. The bride’s family presents the groom’s family with a particular sum which is presented by broomsticks. The other party adds or subtracts sticks as they wish. They exchange the bundle of broomsticks many times until an agreement is reached. The numbers of broomsticks then represent the number of bags of cowries to be paid by the groom’s family for the girl’s hand in marriage:

Obierika then presented to him a small bundle of short broomsticks. Ukegbu counted them.
“They are thirty?” he asked.

Obierika nodded in agreement.

“We are at last getting somewhere,” Ukegbu said, and then turning to his brother and his song he said: ‘Let us go out and whisper together.’ The three rose and went outside. When they returned Ukegbu handed the bundle of sticks back to Obierika. He counted them; instead of thirty there were only fifteen. He passed them over to his eldest brother, Machi, who also counted them and said:

“We had not thought to go below thirty. But as the dog said, ‘If I fall down for you and you fall down for me, it is play’. Marriage should be a play and not a fight; so we are falling down again.” He then added ten sticks to the fifteen and gave the bundle to Ukegbu.

In this way Akueke’s bride-price was finally settled at twenty bags of cowries. (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 50)

This custom is considered civilized and respectful for women rather than verbal haggling (which is how men agree on prices of livestock). Strict adherence to these beliefs and customs forms the Igbo society into close, well-knit whole. They are inducted into these traditional rituals right from childhood
and they are made to believe that following customs, traditions and rituals is compulsory.

*Things Fall Apart* also showcases to the world rich Igbo culture and traditions which are complex and dynamic and existed before the advent of the European’s. These traditions are in danger with Western influence and the contrary pulls. This tension is also revealed in the book. Okonkwo constantly resists the colonial, political and religious order. He feels that it will not be manly to give in to them. He is also afraid of his traditionally acquired fame and respect, which might change due to the changes brought by the Europeans. The Igbo outcasts find refuge in Christianity because it offers respect and status and freedom from discrimination.

The Igbo people are caught between two pulls - resistance or acceptance of change. Some are impressed and very excited about the new opportunities of progress and development opened up by the Christian missionaries. On the other hand, this progress and new technology is a threat to traditional ways of cooking, farming, harvesting and building which are important components of their lives. Thus a clash of cultures is evident:

But I fear for you young people because you do not understand how strong is the bond of kinship. You do not know what it is to speak with one voice. And what is the result? An abominable religion has settled among you. A man can now leave his father and his brothers. He can curse gods of his fathers and his ancestors, like a hunter's dog that
suddenly goes mad and turns on his master. I fear for you; I fear for you the clan. (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 118)

One of the deepest and most important values of the people is the unit of the family and the community. Under Western influence, the younger generation has ignored these bonds. The older generation bitterly blame the missionaries for this change. They firmly believe that success and salvation can only be achieved through traditional ways.

Religion also plays a very important role in the lives of the Igbo people. They worship nature, because their society is agricultural and they depend on season. They cannot afford to anger mother Earth. They avoid doing anything to harm her because they believe that if she gets angry she will wreck vengeance by wiping out the entire community. Their ancestors also assume divine importance and the Igbo always consult the spirit of their forefathers before taking important decisions:

Near the barn was a small house, the “medicine house” or shrine where Okonkwo kept the wooden symbols of his personal god and of his ancestral spirits. He worshipped them with sacrifices of kola nut, food and palm-wine, and offered prayers to them on behalf of himself, his three wives and eight children. (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 10)

The Igbo people pray to wooden idols of their Gods. The shrines are devoted to them and to the spirit of their ancestors. If they are not remembered, it brings bad luck.
The Feast of the New Yam was approaching and Umuofia was in a festival mood. It was an occasion for giving thanks to Ani, the earth goddess and the source of all fertility. Ani played a greater part in the life of the people than any other deity. She was the ultimate judge of morality and conduct. And what was more, she was in close communion with the departed father of the clan whose bodies had been committed to the earth. (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 26)

This shows what the mother earth represents. She is gentle, nurturing, a judge of morality and also provides a link between the living and the dead. She is also a mediator between generations.

As soon as the day broke, a large crowd of men from Ezedu's quarter stormed Okonkwo's compound, dressed in garbs of war. They set fire to his houses, demolished his red walls, killed his animals and destroyed his barn. It was the justice of the earth goddess, and they were merely her messengers. They had no hatred in their hearts against Okonkwo. His greatest friend, Obierika, was among them. They were merely cleansing the land which Okonkwo had polluted with the blood of a clansman. (shmoop.com/things-fall-apart/traditions-customs-quotes)

Thus the Gods are respected, feared and appeased. In *Things Fall Apart*, sin is enunciated as a crime against the Gods. This happens when someone violates family bonds especially those of children and their ancestral spirits. These sins
have to be atoned for and punished. Punishments that are imposed are heavy fine, even exile, death or animal sacrifices or various symbolic tokens of atonement. If this is not done, the Igbo believe that the sinner as well as the community will be punished by the Gods. Any wrong action by an individual also affects the entire community. Thus in one instance:

[Ezeani]: “We live in peace with our fellows to honor our great goddess of the earth without whose blessing our crops would not grow. You have committed a great evil [...] Your wife was at fault, but even if you came into your obi and found her lover on top of her, you would still have committed a great evil to beat her...The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. The earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall all perish.” His tone now changed from anger to command. “You will bring to the shrine of Ani tomorrow one she-goat, one hen, a length of cloth and a hundred cowries.” (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 22)

Here, Ezeani declares that Okonkwo’s beating of his wife is a sin against the Goddess. He also warns that this sin would have drastic consequences which would affect him and the entire community. He pronounces his punishment in the form of animal sacrifice and payment. It is important to acknowledge one’s wrongs:

[Uchendu]: “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. Your mother is there to protect you. She is buried there. And that is why we say that mother is supreme. Is it right that you, Okonkwo, should bring to your mother a heavy face and refuse to be comforted? Be careful or you may displease the dead. Your duty is to comfort your wives and children and take them back to your fatherland after seven years. But if you allow sorrow to weigh you down and kill you, they will all die in exile.” (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 95)

Disrespect towards the family is a grave sin. Uchendu believes that Okonkwo is committing a sin by showing his frustration while in exile in his motherland. This is dishonour towards his mother who has nurtured him. Since he is not setting a positive example for his family, while he is in exile, it is also a disrespect shown towards his family. If he does not change it is an individual as well as a community crime.

Suicide is also considered as a crime against the earth because the Goddess provided people with life. So, spilling one’s blood on the earth is disrespectful because it is a rejection of her gift of life:

[Obierika on Okonkwo’s corpse]: “It is an abomination for a man to take his own life. It is an offense against the Earth, and a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen. His body is evil, and only strangers may touch it. That is why we ask your people to bring him down, because you are strangers.” (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 147)
Closely related to all this is another important theme of the novel - man's relationship with the natural world. Being an agricultural society, the Umuofians depend upon the earth and its cycle of seasons. So they worship the earth, especially during the harvest season and the New Year. The bounty provided by the earth is reaped in different ways like tapping trees for palm-wine, making medicines from herbs etc. Though the earth is looked upon as a nurturing mother, she can be ruthless and severe, if offended. The paradox is that the earth at times appears as both provider and victim of men. This is in the case if wine-tapping from the palm trees:

The men in the obi had already begun to drink the palm-wine which Akueke's suitor had brought. It was a very good wine and powerful, for in spite of the palm fruit hung across the mouth of the pot to restrain the lively liquor, white foam rose and spilled over.

"That wine is the work of a good tapper," said Okonkwo.

The young suitor, whose name was Ibe, smiled broadly and said to his father: "Do you heart that?" He then said to the others: "He will never admit that I am a good tapper."

"He tapped three of my best palm trees to death," said his father, Ukebgu. (Achebe, Things Fall Apart 50)
Rain is also very important for the Igbo society:

At last the ram came. It was sudden tremendous. For two or three moons the sun had been gathering strength till it seemed to breathe a breath of fire on the earth. All the grass had long been scorched brown, and the sands felt like live coals to the feet. Evergreen trees wore a dusty coat of brown. The birds were silenced in the forests, and the world lay panting under the live, vibrating heat. And then came the clap of thunder. It was an angry, metallic and thirsty clap, unlike the deep and liquid rumbling of the rainy season. A mighty wind arose and filled the air with dust. Palm trees swayed as the wind combed their leaves into flying crests like strange and fantastic coiffure.

When the rain finally came, it was in large, solid drops of frozen water which the people called "the nuts of the water of heaven." They were hard and painful on the body as they fell, yet young people ran about happily picking up the cold nuts and throwing them into their mouths to melt.

The earth quickly came to life and the birds in the forest fluttered around and chirped Merrily. A vague scent of life and green vegetation was diffused in the air. As the rain began to fall more soberly and in smaller liquid drops,
children sought for shelter, and all were happy, refreshed and thankful. (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 92)

This is a wonderfully poetic description of the rejuvenation power of rain. The earth Goddess too depends upon the rain to rejuvenate her. Another interesting natural phenomenon described in the novel is the locust plague:

“Locusts are descending,” was joyfully chanted everywhere, and men, women and children left their work or their play and ran into the open to see the unfamiliar sight. The locusts had not come for many, many years, and only the old people had seen them before.

[...]

Everyone was now about, talking excitedly and praying that the locusts should camp in Umuofia for the night. For although locusts had not visited Umuofia for many years, everybody knew by instinct that they were very good to eat. And at last the locusts did descend. They settled on every tree and on every blade of grass; they settled on the roofs and covered the bare ground. Mighty tree branches broke away under them, and the whole country became the brown-earth color of the vast, hungry swarm.

Many people went out with baskets trying to catch them, but the elders counseled patience till nightfall. And they were
right. The locusts settled in the bushes for the night and their wings became wet with dew. Then all Umuofia turned out in spite of the cold harmattan, and everyone filled his bags and pots with locusts. The next morning they were roasted in clay pots and then spread in the sun until they became dry and brittle. And for many days this rare food was eaten with solid palm-oil. (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 39)

This shows how the people capitalize on this natural phenomenon. They use all natural resources productively.

The dark side of the phenomenon is also shown:

The year that Okonkwo took eight hundred seed-yams from Nwakibie was the worst year in living memory. Nothing happened at its proper time; it was either too early or too late. It seemed as if the world had gone mad. The first rains were late, and, when they came, lasted only a brief moment. The blazing sun returned, more fierce than it had ever been known, and scorched all the green that had appeared with the rains. The earth burned like hot coals and roasted all the yams that had been sown. Like all good farmers, Okonkwo had began to sow with the first rains. He had sown four hundred seeds when the rains dried up and the heat returned. He watched the sky all day for signs of rain clouds and lay awake all night. In the morning he went back to his farm and saw the withering tendrils. He had tried to protect them from
the smoldering earth by making rings of thick sisal leaves around them. But by the end of the day the sisal rings were burned dry and gray. He changed them every day, and prayed that the rain might fall in the night. But the drought continued for eight market weeks and the yams were killed...

Okonkwo planted what was left of his seed-yams when the rains finally returned. He had one consolation. The yams he had sown before the drought were his own, the harvest of the previous. He still had the eight hundred from Nwakibie and the four hundred from his father’s friend. So he would make a fresh start.

But the year had gone mad. Rain fell as it had never fallen before. For days and nights together it poured down in violent torrents, and washed away the yam heaps. Trees were uprooted and deep gorges appeared everywhere. Then the rain became less violent. But it went from day to day without a pause. The spell of sunshine which always came in the middle of the wet season did not appear. The yams put on luxuriant green leaves, but every farmer knew that without sunshine the tubers would not grow.
That year the harvest was sad, like a funeral, and many farmers wept as they dug up the miserable and rotting yams. One man tied his cloth to a tree branch and hanged himself.

(Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 17)

The rains can prove a bounty as well as a force of destruction. Their crops depend on the rain and sun for their survival. The glaring fact is the drought and then flooding can kill their chief crop yam means a year of starvation for the Umuofians.

Destiny plays an important role in the lives of the people. But they also believe that a man can change his destiny through sheer will power and hard work. One of the significant conflicts of the novel is the clash between Okonkwo’s determination to succeed and his fate.

Language is a very important theme in *Things Fall Apart*. In Igbo culture forms of address and register are very specific. There are rules to address a neighbour, a superior and even ancestral spirits. Formal speech is respectful. Many proverbs, folktales, songs etc are used while speaking. The Gods are supposed to have their own language which human beings do not understand. The white people speak English and require an interpreter to communicate with the people of Umuofia.

Having spoken plainly so far, Okoye said the next half a dozen sentences in proverbs. Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten. Okoye was a great
Igbo language is also very flowery. Instead of simply saying “Unoka, give me my money back”, Okoye uses fancy and well-known proverbs and then generally comes to the point. Correct speech is a mark of respectability and a status symbol. Unoka finds it easier to express his happiness through music rather than words. He finds music more meaningful and fun than words. Through music he creates good will among the people.

The language used to ask favours and give gifts is very formal. It also includes respect by wishing luck and happiness for the host and linguistically making him part of the family. The repetition of certain sounds in formal occasions has ritual significance, especially during marriage:

[Obierika]: “We are giving you our daughter today. She will be a good wife to you. She will bear you nine sons like the mother of our town.”

[The crowd]: “Ee-e-e!”

The oldest man in the camp of the visitors replied: “It will be good for you and it will be good for us.”

“Ee-e-e!”

This is not the first time my people have come to marry your daughter. My mother was one of you.”

“Ee-e-e!”

“Prosperous men and great warriors.” He looked in the direction of Okonkwo.
"Your daughter will bear us sons like you."


The sound "E-e-e-e" is a collective approval. Some words in the native tongue are not translated thereby implying that certain words are beyond words and inhabit a space where no translation is possible. For example in the following song:

Eze elina, elma!
Sala
Eze ilikwa yalkwaba akwa oligholi
Ebe Danda bechi eze
Ebe Uzuzu nete egwu
Sala

He sang it in his mind, and walked to its beat. If the song ended on his right foot, his mother was alive. If it ended on his left, she was dead. No, not dead, but ill. (Achebe, Things Fall Apart 42)

Achebe has deliberately not translated this song. Probably it was sung to him by his mother when he was a child.

Small talk is also important in transactions. One does not get down to business immediately. They first talk about general topics. This is very modern because in the Western world too small talk is very important in business. It breaks the ice and creates a friendly atmosphere. Thus in the novel Things
Fall Apart, there is a description of small talk – “As the men drank, they talked about everything except the thing for which they had gathered. It was only after the pot had been emptied that the suitor’s father cleared his voice and announced the object of their visit” (Achebe, Things Fall Apart 50).

In Igbo society, it would be considered rude to immediately come to the point, when there is still food and drink to be enjoyed. So, the ancestors first discuss everything else other than the main topic at hand.

Symbols

Things Fall Apart uses several symbols. These symbols convey mood, meaning and even complex ideas. Symbols are in the form of objects, characters, colours, folktales etc.

a) Folktales

In the novel women-mothers and daughters share folktales. They not only provide entertainment but also convey values and morals. Many folktales feature animals as symbols. Most of the time folktales featuring animals are symbols of femininity. Okonkwo’s son is very fond of folktales and prefers to listen to them rather than to stories of war. Because of this, Okonkwo fears that his son is too effeminate. Okonkwo is referred to as “roaring flame”. He is associated with fire, flame and burning. He has inflamed passion and a fiery temper. It is also associated with potency, masculinity and life. Yet fire also destroys everything. Okonkwo is both physically and emotionally destructive. Okonkwo kills Ikemefuma and Ezinma’s son because he thinks that if he
displays his emotions, he will be considered feminine and thus a sign of weakness.

b) Ash

Ash is associated with lifelessness, dullness and impotency. Okonkow kinks it with emasculation. Nwoye and the court messenger are compared to ash by Okonkwo. The court messengers are called “Ashy-Buttocks”. This comment is a double-edged attack which not only refers to the colour of their shorts, but also for their masculinity and manliness.

c) Egwugwu

This is an important symbol of fairness and justice. The Egwugwu are actually elders of the community, who are masked. They perform the respected and responsible duty of meting out justice. They listen to complaints and award appropriate compensation or punishment. Thus they are a symbol of the culture and independence of Umuofia and also a symbol of justice. Their replacement with the courts of the British signifies the loss of Umuofian independence.

d) Locusts

The locusts are a subtle allegorical symbol of European intrusion. Just as the locusts descend upon the village, the Europeans intrude upon the natives and exploit their resources. The Igbo eat these locusts and enjoy it. Similarly, the Igbo people who convert to Christianity do not really understand the implications of the deep damage it does to their culture, while they are happy
converting to an alien religion. The outer glamour and promises of a better life and progress blinds them to the deeper consequences.

*Things Fall Apart* is an intense tragedy which shows the crumbling of Igbo society because of the coming of the British and Christian missionaries. The centre falls apart due to the internal weakness inherent in the native structure and the divided aims of the Igbo community. They are overwhelmed by the tidal wave of foreign technology, religion, commerce and government.

The novel also focuses on the tragedy of an individual Okonkwo who falls and fails due to a tragic flaw—fear of appearing weak. “If *Things Fall apart* is first and foremost a story of the disintegration of traditional African societies under the impact of European colonial intrusions, it is also the personal tragedy of a single individual, whose life falls apart in the midst of that same process” (Booker 202). In fact it becomes an obsession for him. He is afraid of failure and weakness. Anger and fear lead him to make many poor decisions in his life which lead to his exile and loss of his reputation. People do not have faith in him and so he is unable to fight against the inroads made by the British. He is unable to save his tribe from the white missionaries. The novel is not merely focussed on the protagonist. There are multiple voices which give insight into the thoughts of other characters like Ikemefuma, Nwoye, Obrelika and Ekwefi.

Achebe has written the novel in English, but catches the cadence of the culture of the Igbo culture. Igbo language is also incorporated into the text in the form of words, phrases and proverbs. Through this the Igbo world view is projected. The use of traditional Igbo proverbs and takes give *Things Fall*
Apart an authentic African flavour. He has also incorporated Pidgin English in the novel. Pidgin is a natural outcome of the coming together of two different cultures and language. Communication can take place through Pidgin English. 

*Things Fall Apart* is indeed a powerful novel.

Things Fall apart analyzes the destruction of African culture by the appearance of the white man (Christian Missionaries) in terms of the destruction of the bonds between individuals and their society. Christian Missionaries try to convert the people of the Ibo society to Christianity, and in their efforts of doing so, they bring about a downfall in the social and cultural structure of the people in this society. Like the title suggests ‘Things fall apart’ in the society largely due to the interference of the Christian Missionaries. (socialpc.com/African-Culture)

2. Vincent Chukwuemeka Ike

i. *The Potter’s Wheel*

*The Potter’s Wheel* is written by Vincent Chukwuemeka Ike who is a well-known Nigerian writer. He is one of the most well-known and prolific writers of post-independence Nigeria. He is a satirist and excels in lampoon, humour and satire. He satirizes and exposes the post-colonial burden and life in Africa after the colonists have withdrawn. Some of his well-known novels are - *Toads Of supper* (1965) which is about an undergraduate who is a philanderer. *The Naked Gods* (1970) exposes academic intrigues among American and
British expatriates. *Expo 77* deals with a contemporary theme—that of examination leaks. This novel was published in 1980. *Sunset at Dawn* strips the glamour off the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-70. The main targets of his satire are corruption, hypocrisy and quest for domineering power. An analysis of one of his great novels, *The Potter's Wheel* will give some idea of his power as a writer.

This novel was published in 1973. It is a very short novel set in a village in Nigeria. In the village people are very fond of communicating through chapter and verse citations. The boys participate in riddle and proverb contests. The contests are arranged to see who is the most knowledgeable. Sometimes the riddles and proverbs are complicated and puzzling. For example—"The rat who follows a lizard into the river should come out with skin as dry as the lizard’s" (books.google.co.in). The story is about a boy Obu. He is the only son among six sisters. So he is thoroughly spoilt by his doting mother. The boy's status and importance is shown by the fact that even though she has six other children, she is called "mama Obu". The boy's father Mazi Lazarus Maduabuchi is a sensible man and realizes the danger of spoiling his son's future by over pampering. Obu is a very brilliant boy. He is described as having large head, small nose and a thin body. The father decides to send his son to live with the school teacher, Zaccheus Kanu and his wife, to work for them, so that he could also get formal education in the nearly colonial school.

Teacher Zaccheus and his wife Deborah are proprietors of the school. The teacher is described in the following way—"Dare-devil who carried out his intentions without caring whose ox was gored" (books.google.co.in). He is also
described as one – “Who also carried a Koboko, a long leather whip, which he administered to any pedestrian who got in the way of his bicycle” (Jones, and M. Jones 21: 46). His wife Madam Deborah is described as a person who - “At the age of only six showed that even at that tender age her granite heart had become clearly evident” (books.google.co.in).

The teacher and his wife are hard and harsh and strictly control the girls and boys living with them. They overwork and underfeed the children working for them and give extreme punishments even for minor offences. Obi and other youngsters are abused, beaten and made to work like slaves. The decision of Mazi Lazarus to send his son symbolizes the necessity for supervising childhood. He realizes that the love and care of loving parents often hinders the effective training of a child.

In the novel, Ike shows Obu at various stages of his childhood. Experiences are shown through positive-negative contrast. Obu has to deal with Samuel, who is a bully. He constantly troubles Obu. At one point Obu remembers:

All the tricks Samuel played on them including making them bruise their knuckles by goading them into a silly contest to determine whose knuckles would produce the loudest noise when knocked against the stone hard tip of an old pair of shoes....Afraid to offend him, they would go on knocking at the shoe until one of them, unable to bear further bruises, burst into tears. (books.google.co.in)

Samuel represents all that is negative. His behaviour symbolizes children who are not brought up well under proper guidance of their parents. Mama Obu
chides Samuel’s mother. “People say you are responsible for his actions. You heap sand around his waist, you prop him up in his vicious action” (books.google.co.in). This is true but extremely ironic because she herself is guilty of spoiling her son thoroughly. This over-protection shows the devastating effect of parents who spoil their children who then turn wayward.

Mazi Lazarus’s main purpose of sending Obu to live with the teacher and his wife is to ensure that he learns the importance of hard work: “All he wanted was to establish the principle that every person who breathes must regard work as an essential ingredient of life, and everybody who eats food must work for it” (books.google.co.in). He wants his son to work hard and become responsible. At home he had noticed that he did not do any work and did not help in household chores. He would wake up whenever he wanted, waste his time and do nothing but play.

Living with the teacher and his wife, Obu learns discipline. He also learns adjustment. He realizes that he will have to develop strategies for survival in his new environment. He realizes this in his unpleasant encounter with another boy called Silence. After he meets him he, “felt that all he had to do was to recount his unpleasant experience and everyone would exonerate him and condemn Silence. To his utter consternation, both judge and jury found him guilty on both counts” (books.google.co.in).

Obu learns new strategies and how to cope with a constant battle of wits with his guardians. One day Obu spoils the yam porridge by putting too much salt. He is punished by Madam who beats him up. Obu, however, does not cry and wonders whether he has gained the strength of resistance. “Was already
developing a houseboy's crocodile skin" (books.google.co.in). Obi learns the 
hard way and is transformed. Both the teacher and the madam are experienced 
足够的 to catch the children's tricks. The children start believing that madam 
可以读他们的想法并且是一位女巫。教师足够聪明来发现Oub的伪造的信件。

The writer wants to show that this "cleverness" needs to be 
channelized in the right direction—not for wrong-doing but for good and the 
development of the child's personality.

The novel has a moral core. The teacher disgraces Oub in public because he 
steals meat from the soup pot. Though this is not too big an offence, it is 
dishonesty which has to be nipped at the bud. He does not want the children 
to become dishonest when they grow up. Madam supervises the moral conduct 
of the girls. For instance, she keeps an eye on Mary so that she is protected 
from the deceitful and philandering men of her locality.

After one year under the teacher, Oub returns home for Christmas. He has 
been transformed into a dutiful, hardworking youngster. He even chooses to 
return voluntarily despite the harsh treatment he receives there. So the moral 
of the story is rather ambiguous. One can understand that a child's discipline 
and moral growth is important. But does the end justify the means? Is there 
no other way to achieve it except through strictness and punishment? It is a 
debatable issue.

_The Potter's Wheel_ centres on child abuse and education as a means of 
interrogating how the "mental universe of the colonised" was transgressed by 
the new attitudes of the colonizer. Through Oub's experiences, the writer
criticizes the Africans slavishly following the education system established by
the colonizer. In fact, some of the natives themselves follow the footsteps of
the colonizer. The attempt of the African officer to show the same arrogance
as the British colonial education officer is ridiculous and comic. It is even
more hilarious when he attempts to ape the European accent. This shows the
extent to which the African psyche has been fractured by colonialism.

3. Elechi Amadi

i. The Concubine

Elechi Amadi is another well-known Nigerian novelist and playwright. He
writes about the African world before the coming of the Europeans. His main
novels are - The Concubine (1966), The Great Ponds (1969), The Slave
(1978), Isiburu (1973) and Estrangement. His novels describe African
indigenous culture - village life, customs, beliefs and the role of the
supernatural. He also deals with the theme of human destiny and how and to
what extent it can be changed by human effort. The relationship between
people and the Gods they believe in is also explored.

The Concubine is set in the village of Omokachi which comprises of eleven
family groups. The story centres around Ihuoma, her husband and her suitors.
It is a love story coloured by the supernatural.

Amadi’s first novel, The Concubine, is steeped in the mythical
aura of a traditional society in its pristine beginnings. The
mythical feel of life in Omokachi and the adjoining villages issues from the Sea King, an anthropomorphic force who contests a woman with the villagers and visits all her human suitors with a mysterious death. We are just a step away here from the Greek world of the Oresteia and Prometheus Bound where divine jealousy empties a fearsome anger on the human causes, real or suspected, of such anger. (njas.helsinki.fi/pdf-nyamndi.p df)

The novel starts with a dispute between Emenike and Madume over a piece of land. The fight that ensues almost costs Emenike his life. He has the support of the entire village and the elders of the village. Madume warns Emenike and swears revenge. Emenike's condition after the fight grows worse and the medicine man has to be called.

Madume hates Emenike because he has taken away Ihuoma from him. With the ministrations of the medicine man, Emenike recovers and his wife Ihuoma and family are very happy. This calls for thanking the Gods by offering sacrifices. Nwokekoro takes Emenike to worship at the sacred woods of Amadioha. Fate, however, stalks Emenike and later death stalks him and he has to succumb.

One month after Emenike's death the people of the village gather and sing a song which has been composed in Emenike's honour. Young men and women sing and it touches Ihuoma so much that she starts crying loudly and uncontrollably. But she also starts preparing for the last funeral rites, a year after her husband's death. The formalities are finally completed. After some
more time has passed Ihuoma's mother calls her and suggests that she should marry another man. But Ihuoma refuses.

After Ememke's death, Madume’s hopes for getting Ihuoma revive. One day he goes to her house to speak to her about this. There he sees Ememke’s grave and somehow, seeing it, he becomes very frightened. He stumbles and cuts his toe. When he returns home, he meets the medicine man Anyika and tells him his situation and what had happened at Ememike’s grave. Anyika tells him that it is a result of Ememike’s anger and the wrath of his ancestors. So, to be able to be free, he will have to make a sacrifice to the Gods. All this shows the prominence of superstition.

Madume, who is evil, suffers for his sins and ends up committing suicide. One day, he finds Ihuoma picking plantains from the land which he claims is his. He tries to stop her picking anything from that disputed land on which he had beaten up Ememke, who had later met his death. She refuses to comply and so Madume jumps on her to fight with her. People from the nearby village intervene and stop the fight. Ihuoma leaves. When Madume is left alone, he decides to pick plantains. But a cobra spits in his eyes, making him blind. He becomes stubborn and irritable and eventually his wife leaves him. Eventually he hangs himself.

Now Ekwuene goes to Ihuoma’s house to declare his love for her. But then, he accepts Ahurole for marriage. However, things change because of Ahurole’s peculiar behaviour. She cries for no reason over petty issues. Ekwueme’s parents ask Ahurole’s parents to postpone the wedding date. So Ahurole goes to Anyika for a love potion, which he refuses to give. Her mother finds
another medicine man. But it only makes Ekwueme lose his mind. Ekwueme's parents ask for Anyika's help, but he tells them that it is due to a love potion given by Ahurole. So Ahurole then flees.

One night, Ekwueme vanishes, and is found in the forest up on a tree. He agrees to come down only if Ihuoma comes to meet him. He even refuses to take medicines if Ihuoma is not beside him. A few days later his condition improves and the bond between him and Ihuoma become stronger. But superstition comes in the way. Anyika tells Ekwueme's parents that Ekwueme's and Ihuoma's marriage will not be successful because she is the wife of the Sea-King. Ekwueme does not believe this and insists on marrying her. His parents also do not believe Anyika and call another medicine man, who also tells them the same thing. But still they do not believe it and proceed with the marriage preparations. But before the marriage rituals could be performed, something peculiar happens. Nwonna Ihuoma's son shot an arrow to kill a lizard, which was one of the items needed for sacrifice. But accidentally the arrow misses the lizard and hits Ekwueme, who dies.

The love story of *The Concubine* is thus deeply influenced by the supernatural. There is a questioning of the boundaries between spirit and matter and an exploration of the spaces between realistic and supernatural explorations. This makes it an intriguing novel. There are two dimensional characterizations. In a classical sense, Ihuoma is too perfect to be a tragic figure. Her Sea-Goddess perfection universalizes her tragedy.

Dreams play an important role in the novel. For example, Ekwueme has a nightmare in which he is lured by the dead Emenike, who orders him to cross
a stream. When he wakes up, there are physical signs of struggle. Regarding the dream, Anyika, the medicine man prescribes ritual cuts on Ekwueme's skin. This is, according to him, a remedy to protect him from the evil spirits that worry him. Throughout the novel various sacrifices are performed to either appease the Gods or clam down spirits of the dead.

Like *Things Fall Apart* the theme of religion has been given great importance. The foundation of this religion is the fear of the Gods and ancestors (who also become God-like) who maintain the moral order of the society. The Gods are at times shown as hostile and need to be appeased. The Sea-King in *The Concubine* is indifferent, cold, unappeasable and manipulative. “It all went to confirm that a man could not wrestle with a God” (Amadi 9). Again, the story of Ogonda who had tried to make rain in rivalry with Nwokekoro, the priest of Amadioha, the God of thunder is an example of the people's tremendous belief in religion and superstition.

Divinations indicate the will of the Gods. It is believed that if the Gods are angry, they relentlessly strike human beings down. So, sacrifices have to be performed to appease them. In Elechi Amadi's words, the Gods are blamed for human suffering. This is shown in the prefix to *The Concubine*.

The thunder-god feasts in his grove

Then naps 'twixt rainbows above;

But justice suffers here below,

And we know not which way to go. (nigerdeltadirectory.com)
Futile sacrifice is also a theme which recurs. In the novel, the medicine man Anyika presides over the sick beds of Emenike and Ekwueme. He is also consulted by Madame, Ekwueme and his parents. Sea-Gods/ Kings are among the most feared divinities in the Igbo mythology. “Amadi recreates a typical African society that is ruled by the gods. In fact according to Sam Adewoye (1996), the people live their lives under the superintendence of the gods whose powers are based on traditional myths” (krepubhshers.com). Their remoteness makes them unknown, mysterious and unpardonable. They are believed to be very powerful. “The gods in Amadi’s The Concubine are neither good nor bad; they are only powerful. They use their power to manipulate man, and man’s proud attempt to counteract their influence is mere folly and the effort made will inevitably lead to ruin” (www.academicjournals.org). In the novel, religion and myth are a very important reality of life. The people want to harmonize their lives with the spiritual beings they believe in. It is a part of their spiritual heritage handed down from generations. However, there is some questioning too. Ihuoma at times wonders whether the Gods are at least partially blind most of the time. Ekwueme boldly challenges the Sea-King and the rest of the Gods to do their worst.

There is also an intertwining of the human and divine. Ihuoma is believed to have committed infidelity by seeking the divine as a human, to seek the companionship of men. Once this pact of fidelity is broken, between the Sea-King and his wife, he allows his wife to live but kills all the men responsible for her unfaithfulness. At the end of her earthy life-span, Ihuoma will return to her husband i.e. the Sea King.
There is also a predominance of animal imagery and association. The God Ojukwu Diobu appears as a vulture. Amadioha (another God) appears as a grey serpent and the Sea-God appears as a cobra. The hooting of an owl is a premonition which foreshadows Emenike’s premature demise. Owls appear as ominous and uneasy.

The Concubine starts with a love story at its centre and slowly the supernatural seeps in. By the time we reach the end, fantasy takes over as the narrator finally reveals the identity of Ihuoma that she is actually a Sea-Goddess incarnate. Ekwueme can safely marry Ihuoma after a midnight sacrifice to the Sea-King. But Ekwueme dies in an accident when Nwonna’s hits him. The end is rather ambiguous and the reader is left guessing whether it was the Sea-King’s revenge or merely a matter of chance. It is thus open-ended.

According to Eko:

Amadi provides rational motivations and consequences by showing religion as an essential tool for dibias to provide faces and names and therefore a measure of control of nebulous fears and of the unexplainable in life. His aim is to draw attention to the integrity, beauty and wisdom of traditional culture, without hiding from the rational modern mind its rigidity, restrictions, limitations and potentials for suppressing and even stagnating originality in some characters. Amadi the scientist makes room for scientific scepticism and objectivity. Yet despite his rationalism he offers no apology
for the unexplainable in traditional religion and mythology. His modernism does not negate or rationalize away traditional beliefs in gods and dibias, but he provides the reader with added rational information, beyond the grasp of the village man and woman. (http://docs.lib.purdue.edu)

According to Sam Adewoye, the novel is - “a strange but nonetheless desirable co-operation between the material and the super sensible word” (krepublishers com).

4. Flora Nwapa

   i. *Efuru*

Flora Nwapa has the distinction of being the first African women novelist to have published her work. She has been acclaimed as the mother of modern African literature. *Efuru* is written by Flora Nwapa and was published in 1966. It is a feminist novel declaring the strength of women to deal with any kind of situation. The novel also highlights a woman’s competence, intelligence and the power of independent thinking.

*Efuru* explores female experience from early colonial times to post-civil war period and contemporary Nigeria. The novelist leans on elements of cultural, domestic as well as economic history as they touch on women's lives from the past to contemporary times. Consequently, many scenes are set in the home, by the stream and at the marketplace, all of which are
In Igbo society, women are considered weak and have clear-cut roles to play - that of a dutiful wife and mother of many children. They are also silenced as they cannot protest or take any action independently even if they are abused and ill-treated by their husbands. Their main role is to look after the house, obey their husbands without asking any questions and produce innumerable children, especially male children. Nwapa interrogates these traditional roles.

The novel *Efuru* was published in 1966. She started writing it in 1962. The setting of the book is a rural community of Africa. It is based on a folktale about a woman chosen by the Gods. The novel is named after the female protagonist Efuru. It is written from her point of view. She is a beautiful young woman with a strong character. She belongs to a distinguished family of Eastern Nigeria. The novel is set in the twentieth century.

When the novel opens, we find Efuru being courted by a young man called Adizua. He is looked down upon because he is poor. He is definitely not a good match for Efuru according to her family status and he is not able to pay the bride-price. Efuru is a woman of independent thinking and takes her own decisions. She is not bogged down by family or society. She marries Adizua and also is successful in developing a strong relationship with her in-laws. Even though her father feels disgraced, she manages to nurture a special relationship with her father.

Efuru is not only strong in maintaining and developing relationships, but is also very skilful in business. She is a very competent trader and does well in
the market. Her husband is the opposite and he continues to do poorly at farming. Efuru gets pregnant and delivers a baby girl, whom she names, Ogonim. But tragedy strikes as the baby girl dies before the age of two due to some kind of a fit. The entire village likes her and all come for Ogonim’s funeral and to console and give morals support to Efuru. Later, her marriage with Adizua breaks down and she has the courage to leave him and build up her life afresh.

She meets a young man Enebeni, whose Christian name is Gilbert. He is all that Adizua was not. He is well-to-do, handsome and respectable and wants to marry Efuru. This time the marriage follows the traditional customs. Eneberi and his family visit Efuru’s father and pay the appropriate bride price according to custom. They are very happy in the first year of marriage. Her husband’s family is also proud if their daughter-in-law specially her deft trading skills. But trouble ensues when she is not able to conceive a child. Then, her in-laws want their son to marry another girl.

In the meantime, Eneberi has a habit of disappearing many times, so much so, that he even neglects family duties. He does not attend Efuru’s father’s funeral. Eventually, Efuru is left husbandless and childless.

In the novel, Flora Nwapa has emphasized the role of marriage and procreation in Igbo society. “Throughout Efuru, marriage is a cultural and traditional element which contributes to make women’s burden heavier. It is intrinsically linked to procreation. Even in marriages based on pure and true love which bring together husband and wife, childbearing remains the main objective” (http://greenstone.refer.bf) But he has also critiqued it. Each
marriage is expected to produce many children. Preference is given to the male child. She has shown how children are greatly valued. Having children is the prime reason for marriage and even a love marriage can fail if the couple is unable to have children, for whatever reason. This is a concern not merely of the family but the entire community, who gossip if a couple remains childless after a year.

The most important role of women in the Igbo society is the upbringing and nurturing of children. Though it is a noble talk in itself, it limits, confines and domesticates a woman. This prevents women in achieving higher roles in other fields, though they may be capable. The capability of a woman is only judged by her expertise in domestic work. Amede, Efuru’s mother-in-law and her friend Ommia express their disappointment with Ogea when Amede complains, “It is that silly girl, Ogea. She washed by wrappers and all of them will have to be washed again because there is still black soap on all of them. How is it that a grown up girl like that is not able to wash clothes properly? How can she live in a man’s house?” (Nwapa 162) A question that a reader asks at this point is that if motherhood is so important for the wellbeing of an African woman, her family and society, why does Nwapa punish her heroine with childlessness? She worships the Goddess Uhamiri, who gives beauty and wealth but no children. She also gives independent spirit. Omirima says:

How many women in this town who worship Uhamiri have children? Answer me Amede, how many? All right let’s count them: Ogmi Azogu, she counted off one finger, she had a son before she became a worshipper of Uhamiri. Since then she
has not got another child. Two, Nwanyafor Ojimba, she has no child at all. Three, Uzoechi Negenege, no child. They are all over the place. (Nwapa 181)

The crux of the matter, however, is this - though the Lake Goddess is barren and yet is said to be happy. Flora Nwapa is trying to convey a very important message through the novel-children alone do not bring self-fulfillment and happiness to women. What about those who are not able to bear children? Why should they suffer trauma?

Through the character of Uhamiri, Flora Nwapa consoles the Igbo women who do not have children. There are many other fields to work in and attain fulfillment. In Igbo society it is believed that the reason for the break up of a marriage is when a woman cannot bear children. But through the novel, Nwapa shows that there are other very important basic reasons for a failed marriage in Igbo society, like incompatibility, neglect, distrust, unfaithfulness, rigid attitudes etc Efuru’s marriages fail because of inherent weakness in the men. They are ungrateful, irresponsible and unfaithful. But Efuru has the strength to break away and find her vocation elsewhere. She has a positive attitude and finds other areas where she can contribute to society and feel satisfied with her work. She starts serving her own community and helps the sick. She is liked by all and remains self-reliant and independent through all her trials and tribulations of life. The message is of strength and hope-that Igbo women have the capability and strength to fight against all odds and emerge victorious.
The image of the Lake Goddess symbolizes the potential of Igbo women. They can achieve much greater things in life and are not here merely to bear children. The Lake Goddess also represents the glory and beauty of womanhood and gives Igbo women the power to aspire for economic independence to fulfill political or social aspirations.

Efuru sets a feminist example through her independence and strength of character and tries to prove that looking down on women as weak and helpless is a myth which needs to be shattered. Efuru is also a symbol of survival and independence from all that colonization stands for - suppression, oppression, injustice and tyranny. The novel is engrossing and a significant move towards women's empowerment.

Comparison and Contrast of the novels *Things Fall Apart*, *The Potter's Wheel*, *The Concubine* and *Efuru* and their place in English literature.

No one could have predicted that *Things Fall Apart* would one day sell nearly eight million copies, and become of the most widely read books in Africa. The novel is typically assigned in schools and universities, and most critics consider it to be Africa's most important novel to date. *Things Fall Apart* has been translated into more than fifty languages, and often used in literature, world history, and African studies courses across the world. *Things Fall Apart* is the first African novel to receive such powerful international critical acclaim, and is considered the archetypal modern African novel. Although *Things Fall*
Apart made a huge impact on African culture, it has also proven to be popular among international audiences.

For the Fourth world writers, Literature becomes a means to write back to the European world, showing both the progressive aspects of their culture and also critiquing it from within. What is important is to cut stereotyping and showing the world how Africa, its people and culture have been misrepresented by the Europeans. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is a seminal work and a milestone in African literature. Through this novel, it appears as if Africa writes back to clear the prejudices and misconceptions harboured by the Western world about Africa being a land of savages - uncultured and primitive.

A common policy of the British in the colonized nations - divide and rule - appears in Fourth world Literature. *Things Fall Apart* shows all the pressure and is a rich and multi-dimensional novel which shows many facets. Igbo culture comes forward with all its nuances and richness. The effect of Western culture is also shown with great insight. A clash of cultures – the Igbo culture and the British culture has been shown in the novel. Similarly, Vincent Chukwuemeka Ike’s *The Potter's Wheel* centres around child abuse and education (an English education) in order to interrogate how the mental universe of the colonized was transgressed by new attitudes of the colonizer. Through Obi’s (the protagonist of the novel) experiences, Ike deals with pre and post-colonial attitudes. Another general truth in the novel is highlighted, which is also true for other similar colonized countries - the adoption of the methods of oppression and suppression which were the weapons of colonizer.
In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe, shows some interesting religious beliefs – the belief in an individual’s personal God. There is the fascinating concept of *Chi* that a person is born with and which determines his abilities and fate. A man is lucky if his *Chi* is good. However, the Igbo also believe that with hard work and will power one can change his/ her destiny. Just like in *Things Fall Apart*, Elechi Amadi’s *The Concubine* focuses on indigenous African culture, village life, customs, beliefs and their tremendous belief in supernatural and destiny. Like *Things Fall Apart*, religion is given great importance. Religion and myth are interwoven as an important reality through which the people try to harmonize their lives with spiritual beings. Thus this book *The Concubine* starts with a love story at its centre and slowly, the supernatural takes over and a new dimension added is that of fantasy and an open-ended conclusion.

The publication of Elechi Amadi’s novel, *The Concubine*, brought him critical plaudits. The book solidified his reputation as a writer, both in his country and abroad. From his first appearance as a novelist, with *The Concubine* in 1966, Elechi Amadi established himself as a unique figure in African fiction. He was not alone in attempting to convey the day-to-day texture of traditional, pre-colonial life in an African village. Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* also depicted the Igbo life and culture. However, Amadi distinguished himself by not offering any explicit contrasts between that traditional Igbo culture and the Western culture. *Things Fall Apart* and many other African novels are concerned with the coming of the white man and the effect of that Western culture on the traditional Igbo society. Amadi’s novels have never emphasized the influence of the Western culture on the Igbo society. A riveting story, Amadi’s *The Concubine*, is considered to be one of the classic novels of
modern African literature. It has been made into a film by the accomplished Nollywood film director Andy Amenechi.

As in most Fourth World cultures, gender roles are well-demarcated and associated with power play. The female sex is considered weaker and the strength of the male is asserted by dominating, oppression and beating their women. A woman’s status in the Igbo society is determined by how many children she is able to bear, especially a male child. All this, has been clearly shown in the novel *Things Fall Apart*. In *Things Fall Apart*, there is less portrayal of the image of women. Achebe gives more recognition to the men folk, giving them the major roles while the minor roles were given to the women. Flora Nwapa wrote her novel *Efuru* to negate Achebe and portrayed the positive image of the women. In contrast to Achebe, Nwapa highlights the strengths of women to deal with different kinds of situations. It is a progress indeed and Igbo literature has come a long way from the typical belief of women being weak, passive and helpless. Flora Nwapa, in *Efuru* emphasizes a woman’s intelligence, competence and power of independent thinking.

Flora Nwapa has emphasized the role of marriage and procreation in Igbo society, but has also critiqued it. She shows that by laying over emphasis of marriage and having children, a woman’s role is narrowed down. It prevents them from achieving higher roles in other fields. The novelist is trying to convey through her book – getting married and having children does not only bring self-fulfilment to a woman. In *Efuru*, she shows the potential of Igbo women to achieve great heights in other areas of life.
Although *Efuru* came out to be a well written book with a profound message when it was first published in 1966, the novel did not receive the attention it deserves; unlike novels written at that time by African male writers like Chinua Achebe. However, in today’s world literature, the book is considered to be a significant move towards women empowerment. Today, *Efuru* is considered to be one of the most important feminist novels. Nwapa’s novel *Efuru* has earned her a lot praises in the field of feminism in literature. Due to her contribution to African literature and being the first female African author, she has been called ‘The mother of African female’s tradition’.
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