

Chapter III

Issues of Identity and Culture in '*No Longer at Ease*'

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3.0. Introduction

No Longer at Ease (1958) by Chinua Achebe won the Nigerian National Trophy for Literature, which relates the story of a Nigerian man named Obi Okonkwo who struggles with cultural identity and loyalty. It deals with the issues like nationalism, colonialism, conflict and self-identity. The novel focuses on a young man's life and his lost connection with African roots. Throughout the novel, the author shares many themes of conflict and struggle. The struggle extends from Obi's personal perceptions of what is right and wrong, but also addresses the conflict that exists within the country of Nigeria. The novel is set in modern Nigeria, in the days immediately before Independence. It has its hero Obi Okonkwo, the grandson of Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* (1958). If we say the novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is a structure of ironies, then *No Longer at Ease* (1960) is a structure of 'ambiguities'.

The title of the novel is taken from the selection of verses by T.S. Eliot's poem *The Journey of the Magi* (1927) which is narrated in the perspective of the Magi, the narrator who goes away to find the peace but comes to the conclusion that the home is the worse place and loses his faith about old religion, his people and the things make him alien and he wishes for the death. The epigraph is as follows;

“We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods,
I should be glad of another death,” (Eliot, 1927: Verses 40-43).

The protagonist Obi spends time both in his native country and in Europe. He grows up in native Nigeria, a country that has witnessed the spread of colonialism and mingled those traditions with the traditions of native people's living in Nigeria. T. S. Eliot's idea to explain 'But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation' is similar to the protagonist Obi Okonkwo in the novel. When he is caught between the two cultures and finds no security and solace in his own community and ethical values. In the journey from his village Umuofia to England, where he experiences an intellectual and cultural birth that is more like death. When he returns to his country, Nigeria, he feels culturally dislocated. He is 'no longer at ease' among his countrymen, with their religion and their way of life. It records Obi's professional, social and moral decline after returning from England to Nigeria.

No Longer at Ease (1960) portrays the third world in a unique perspective. The author writing the novel dealt with much conflict in his life, and this conflict of identity, country and nationalism is shared through the eyes of the main character, Obi Okonkwo. The main action begins with Obi's return from England where he completes his B.A. degree. He is determined to rid his country of corruption and to create a new and better nation. On the other hand, Obi's affair with Clara, a nurse whom he meets on the boat returning them to Nigeria and with whom he falls in love. Clara is an *osu*, a descendent of slaves within the Igbo community and she, according to the tradition, must live apart from the free-born.

It is likely true that Obi did sense that he gained advantages over his peers by having a European education. He desires that his native people recognize their own culture as something to be proud of and enthusiastic about. G. D. Killam points out about the novel as,

“No Longer at Ease shows the nature and extent of the changes wrought by colonial intervention in Nigeria as they are revealed in the career of Obi, a character intensely individualized yet nevertheless representative of the young and educated Nigerian at this point in time. Obi is a modern man and his story comprises a modern tragedy” (Killam, 1969:37).

Yet, he is in conflict because he is benefited from European ways, including his career and education, which were obtained in a British influenced environment. One sees the potential for the flourishing of a unique and diverse native culture, but unfortunately, it seems that culture is somewhat overshadowed by European influences. His themes and personal idealisms are very well pronounced throughout the story. The differences of social class are interwoven and visible throughout the novel. The issues of identity and culture are brought to light in the novel, through the struggle of Obi to identify with two cultures i.e. European and Native.

G.D. Killam argues that the core of *No Longer at Ease* (1960) is;

“the moral dilemma in which Obi finds himself and the conflict in the novel is produced by the clash between the strength and his moral awareness on the one hand and his almost total lack of moral courage in sustaining it” (Killam,1969:37).

With the intervention of the white man in Nigeria caused a loss of native values of Nigerian people such as communal harmony, placing society at high expectations, respect for the elders and reverence for achievers, which resulted in the absence of self-analysis and the firm values of ethics in the society of Pre-Independent Nigeria. The protagonist Obi struggles with his ethnicity throughout the novel and it results in the inner conflict or turmoil for many of the people of Nigerian society.

3.1. Issues of Identity in ‘*No Longer at Ease*’

No Longer at Ease (1960) penetrates the issues of identity among Nigerian Igbo people in the forms of social identity, masculine identity, feminine identity, religious identity and cultural identity. The cultural patterns of any society play the pivotal role in identity formation. The pre-colonial Igbo people in Nigeria got disrupted by the colonial influence during the 1950s and 1960s. The missionaries imposed their administration upon the Igbos by the division of southern-eastern Nigeria into areas ruled by District Commissioners, and appointed the Igbos as the chiefs, clerks and messengers to help them. The imperial power of missionaries made them disintegrated from the clan-system; as a result, they lost their cultural values.

The western influence created the opportunities for them in education, trade and law and order. On the other hand, the new faith like Christianity and colonial influence among them made a drastic change in their cultural patterns. The traditional cultural beliefs are replaced by the materialistic approaches in modern Lagos. But the traditional obligations made them trap into the chaos of ethical beliefs versus new ideology. The Western influence among Igbo people in Nigeria fostered the following issues of identity reflected in the novel.

3.1.1 Identity of Igbo People in Nigeria

Chinua Achebe explores the identity of Igbo people in *No Longer at Ease* (1960) different than the Igbo clan of Umuofia, after arrival of the missionaries the Igbo people travelled a long way to the city Lagos, a capital of Nigeria since the death of the protagonist Ogbuefi Okonkwo at the end of the first novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958). The identity of the Igbo clan is no longer as the identity with the kind of ‘titles’ and the ‘eminent warriors’ or ‘wrestlers’ in the first novel. The central

character of the novel *Obi Okonkwo* is the grandson of the Okonkwo of *Things Fall Apart* (1958) who faces a very different world than that of his grandfather. The Igbo people were under colonial rule for quite some period and adopted the new modes of culture therefore; the Igbo society in Nigeria was formed by the different ethical values and naturally the new dimensions to their identity as a society.

The identity of Umuofian Igbo society represents the values of the past, while the Nigerian capital, Lagos represents the difference where everyone competes, no holds barred and the education which has made them to dislocate from their own villages. The Igbo people of Umuofia are rurally conservative, the hybrid amalgam of pagan and established Christian respectabilities. The protagonist Obi is treated as the 'invaluable possession' by the elders of Igbo society, but he is an instance of the dislocated identity of the Igbo people in Nigeria. The change due to western education among Igbo people in Nigeria is one of the responsible factors to make them to think as an individual rather than as a unique Igbo society. David Cook points out;

“...the process of education is....complex. Not only has it raised his status, it has done something to his personality, something which he cannot reverse even if he would: it has made him to see himself as an individual” (Cook, 1977:84).

The role of the colonial education and its impact on Obi is one of the responsible factors to foster his dreams and the ideals about Nigerian Igbo identity. He realises that the identity of Igbo people is considered by the family, which is known as the central institution among Igbo people and the place of the individual is necessarily subordinate to it. The individual isolation of Obi Okonkwo is the outcome of his own indecisive nature, and to a certain extent, his disadvantageous position. He neither belongs to the Umuofian Igbo traditions, values and the culture nor to the western culture. As a result, his alienation accounts for his identity crisis and it remains as one of the examples of the identity of the Igbo people in Nigeria. Matthew Arnold says that 'perfection as culture perceives it is not possible while the individual remains isolated' (Arnold,1932:48).The Umuofian (Igbo) People established their social identity in Lagos by the formation of union known as the Umuofia Progressive Union is the collective identity to help each other to resist the burdensome injustice through western education.

3.1.2 Social Identity

The social identity of the Nigerian people in *No Longer at Ease* (1960) is reflected by a sense of belongingness and ethnicity of Igbo people in the colonial period. The social identity becomes the hallmark of the self-image when there is a division between ‘them’ and ‘us’. The colonial power pacified the Igbo people in Nigeria and the issues of Nigerian social identity raised to protect the social customs and values. The Igbo people formed the Umuofia Progressive Union in Lagos to educate the bright and scholar youngsters abroad. They simply believed that the social identity of their clan could be protected by education. Obi was sent to England as “They (Umuofia People) wanted him to read law so that when he returned he would handle all their land cases against their neighbours”(NLE: 6). It means that the youth is motivated and mobilized by the ethnic society as the instruments for conflict and protecting the self-image of the society. The social identity in the novel *No Longer at Ease* (1960) seems disrupted by prejudice, racism and the confusion between old traditions and the new faith i.e. Christianity.

Social identity indicates the activation of an individual identity in a situation to increase the influence and self image of a group or society. The Igbo social identity in *No Longer at Ease* (1960) reflects the dual issues as they believe in the traditional way to follow the rules of the society and to promote the social codes in a modern approach to protecting the ethnicity. The Igbo social identity in Lagos is described by Achebe. He says;

“Those Umuofians (that is the name they call themselves) who leave their home town to find work intowns all over Nigeria regard themselves as sojourners. They return to Umuofia every two years or so to spend their leave. When they have saved up enough money they ask their relations at home to find them a wife, or they build a 'zinc' house on their family land. No matter where they are in Nigeria, they start a local branch of the Umuofia Progressive Union” (NLE: 4).

The Igbo social identity is represented through the main character of the novel Obi Okonkwo. The identity of Obi constitutes the crisis of alienation and dislocation from the traditional culture through the European education and the changes he comes

across after returning from England to Lagos. As a son of Catechist, Obi's identity is shaped by the Christian influence. But his beliefs comprise far more than his religion. J.P. Clark rightly says that Obi is a 'citizen of two worlds', as a first person in his village to receive a university education and a post in senior service' (Clark, 1965: 24). The confusion of Obi to identify himself wholly with either the traditional or the modern way of life and his lack of sense of identity is most clearly reflected as the issues of social identity.

The Igbo social identity in a traditional way is visible through the ceremonial, ordered and governed traditional wisdom rooted in the soil. The influence of the colonial power had not swept away all the rituals and traditions of the Igbo people. Obi's social identity is undecided at the trial in the beginning of the novel when the judge sums up the verdict by saying that 'I cannot comprehend how a young man of your education and brilliant promise could have done this' (NLE: 2). The reaction of Obi's father (Isaac Okonkwo), the catechist, to his son's proposed marriage to an *Osu* or outcast, is an example of his feelings for Igbo traditions'.

According to Dr. Abiola Irele;

“In *No Longer at Ease* the main emphasis is shifted on to what might be termed 'brotherliness', as a sense that one's primary obligations are to one's kinsmen, both within the family circle and beyond it in the clan”(Irele,1965:32).

The proverb, 'anger against a brother was felt in the flesh, not in the bone' (NLE: 4) denotes the idea of the unified social identity of Igbo people. The Umuofia Progressive Union is itself a product of the kinship; it was a result of the communal effort that Obi was sent to England in the first place and when he gained the post in the senior service it is assumed that his prestige will reflect on his kinsmen. The sense of 'brotherhood' takes an external form in the Igbo society in the sharing of the common language, as Obi realises at an early stage in his relationship with Clara: "We belong together: we speak the same language"(NLE: 20).

The Igbo social identity is explored by sharing the Igbo language. Mr. Mark convinces Obi in Igbo language to depute his daughter for education in England on scholarship. The another incident about social identity is reflected with an incident like a hostile policeman's manners changes abruptly when he realises that Obi and

Clara are like himself, Igbo. It reveals the kinship of Igbo with each other. Achebe writes that “Clara told me in Ibo to call the driver and go away. The policeman immediately changed. He was Ibo, you see. He said he didn't know we were Ibos” (NLE: 59). Obi’s relationship with his people and following his father’s Christianity develops certain issues of his identity in Nigeria. The modernity in Nigeria distorted the integrity of the Igbo people which is ‘no longer at ease’ and Obi, of course, is at the centre of the social unease and the conflicts. It represents the social identity of the Igbo people in Nigeria.

3.1.3 Masculine Identity

The formation of masculine identity is based on the ‘culture controls’ and social image of the particular society with certain customs and beliefs. It is an analysis of the social power and the meaning through the masculine constitutions. In Africa, men have generally been associated with “culture control,” which seems to confer hegemony on them (Connell 2005). But a deeper evolution of gender in Africa reveals a hierarchy of masculinities which exposes complex identity formation of men. The social order is based on patriarchy and the division of gender roles. The masculine identity heralds the cultural proportion and social determination; men are unconsciously assessed by the society along the lines of their input into the general pool of social growth or development.

The masculine identity of Igbo people in Nigeria with the conventional and modern customs is described with the certain amount of patriarchy and the dominance of the cultural aspects. The masculine identity in Umuofia is exposed through the more importance to them rather than the women. The mothers are too affectionate towards their son. Achebe puts in;

“There was a special bond between Obi and his mother. Of all her eight children Obi was nearest her heart. Her neighbours used to call her 'Janet's mother' until Obi was born, and then she immediately became 'Obi's mother'. Neighbours have an unfailing instinct in such matters” (NLE: 60).

Obi Okonkwo is depicted as a grandson of the protagonist, Ogbuefi Okonkwo of *Things Fall Apart* who proves as a distinct masculine character in the novel. He is a relatively modern man and the most of his activities in the novel take place in an

urban area, Lagos. In the real sense of masculine analysis, Obi is best considered as an urban man, educated in far away England and lives and works in Lagos. Obi's masculinity is not directly displayed from the traditional yam and its genetic link with Igbo ethnicity. Obi Okonkwo is sent to England for further education. "Obi's going to England caused a big stir in Umuofia" (NLE: 6). He got the scholarship because he holds the top rank among all the students in the village Umuofia. He is depicted as extremely brilliant and hardworking at school. He thus controls that section and is accorded recognition by the society and that is why he is consequently encouraged to further consolidate his prime position through education at the top hierarchy of his section of the society.

The Nigerian masculine identity is reflected through the character of Obi who is one of the few Africans and a middle class of the colonial society in Lagos. His experiences while working as a senior staff in the Ministry of Education and sanctioning the scholarships to the Igbo people for western education mark his status as a special one and it makes his identity as a part of the masculine hierarchy. Despite his status, he wants to be distinguished as a clan member of Igbo and the citizen of Umuofia. His masculine identity is linked with his grandfather as Ogbuefi Okonkwo rested his fame on his solid personal achievements as a wrestler and Obi by adapting the western education. He didn't like to accept the western ideology and the traditional way of thinking by his clan without revolt against the rotten thoughts.

The Umuofia Progressive Union charts the customs of the legacy and social codes in the form of the masculine identity. The president says;

"When this boy's father---you all know him, Isaac Okonkwo---when Isaac Okonkwo heard of the death of his father he said that those who kill with the matchet must die by the matchet"(NLE: 127).

In the same way, Obi didn't attend the funeral of his mother because he was contaminated by her not to marry Clara. The 'hubris' (pride) in the masculine power ultimately directs the adversity and the doom as Obi followed the guilt after guilt. His father sows the seed of such guilt in his mind when he was restricted from his marriage with Clara. Being catechist, he followed the traditional beliefs of the Igbo society.

The masculine identity plays minor roles in the action, like Mr Green, Obi's expatriate boss in the office and the leader of Umuofia Progressive Union in Lagos. Obi, the protagonist, is rather psychologically dispossessed. What baffles him particularly is that every single person he meets attempts to control him; for identity has a control factor. He resents the colonial expatriates but has to fight off one individual claiming master identity after another on the other flank of him and finds himself hemmed in and 'constrained by structural expectations' (Stets and Burke, 2000: 229).

The twist at the end of the novel reminds one of the Obierika's final comments about the doom of Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) "That man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself, and now he will be buried like a dog..." (TFA: 151). It is similar that the social pressure influences Obi to succumb to a despicable level of social impropriety (bribery) capable of pronouncing his doom like his grandfather Ogbuefi Okonkwo to commit suicide rather than to live in the society like a man of inaction. It is noted that the history repeats itself; it exists unconsciously within the liberal discourses when there are a failure and the consequences of the cultural bond which make the world a difficult place.

3.1.4 Feminine Identity

The feminine identity in *No Longer at Ease* (1960) manifests the gradual progression in the role allocated to them in compare to the feminine identity of the women in *Things Fall Apart* (1958). In spite of the failure to delineate the dominant role for the women in the public domain in an early novel and the short stories, Achebe prominently tries to give some visibility in *No Longer at Ease* (1960). It portrays the increasing preoccupation with women. Clara's identity is an instance of the emancipation of the Igbo women by educating herself abroad. She is an *osu* or ostracised from the Igbo society but modifies herself from the measures of the self-esteem, which is one of the hallmarks of her identity when she refuses to be pitiable towards her. Christopher Lasch points that "identity refers both to persons and to things. 'Both have lost their solidity in modern society, their definiteness and continuity'" (Lasch 1979: 32). Though, Clara is the victim of the rigid social customs. She identifies herself sincere and professional without self-pity and the possession of self-pride and integrity. Achebe puts in;

“I can’t marry you’, she (Clara) said suddenly as Obi tried to kiss her.....she had no coyness in her. Not much, anyway. That was one of the things Obi liked best about her. She had seemed so sure of herself that, unlike other women, she did not consider how quickly or cheaply she was captured” (NLE: 56).

Clara doesn’t want to see Obi in trouble due to her low caste status in the Igbo society. Even after Obi acceptance of marriage proposal, she carefully evaluates the complexities and puts herself back rather than taking advantage of Obi’s love and patronage. The feminine aspects of Igbo society are depicted by the contrast between the modern and traditional values of Nigerian Igbo women. Obi’s mother doesn’t permit him to accept Clara as a bride because she is an *osu*. On the question of marrying Clara, she instructs Obi:

“If you want to marry this girl, you must wait until I am no more. If God hears my prayer, you will not wait long....But if you do the thing while I am alive, you will have my blood on your head, because I shall kill myself” (NLE: 108).

It is noted that the distinctions between the women of the two different generations, who stand contrast to each other and pertain the attitudes about the Igbo culture. Obi’s father thinks that “*Osu* is like leprosy in the minds of our people.....not to bring the mark of shame and of leprosy into your family” (NLE: 107). We find the distinction between the initial limited social space by Clara’s attitude and the traditional conviction through the instruction by Obi’s mother. The strong outgoing women identity in the pre-colonial Igbo society is missing by creating the chaos in the mind of Obi. It results into the confusion and dilemma. Achebe offers a modification of his female characters, which culminates in Clara, who is seen as being self-assertive and outgoing. Unlike the identity of women explored in *Thing Fall Apart* - who are docile and submissive and unthinking, Clara gets an abortion following Obi Okonkwo’s refusal to marry her. Although, she fades away in the novel, but Achebe presents to us the image of a changing group, who had been at the lower rung of the societal ladder.

The Irish girl-friends of Joseph and Christopher are portrayed peripheral. Obi’s classmate and friend Joseph comments on the virginity of the girls in Lagos as

it makes a point that the morality and ethics are not followed by the Nigerian women and it stamps the feminine identity in the novel. Joseph comments:

“She (Joy) was a nice girl but sometimes very foolish. Sometimes, though, I wish we hadn't broken up. She was simply mad about me; and she was a virgin when I met her, which is very rare here” (NLE: 13).

The moral identity of women is questioned by the new finding of Joseph in Lagos and the influence of modernity is reflected in the following manner. The dancing, drinking beer, kissing and making a fun are the common aspects revealed in the manners of girls is an instance of the newness of feminine identity in Nigeria.

“The girl was one of Joseph's new finds, as he told him later. She was dark and tall with an enormous pneumatic bosom under a tight-fitting red and yellow dress. Her lips and long finger-nails were a brilliant red, and her eyebrows were fine black lines. She looked not unlike those wooden masks made in Ikot Ekpene. Altogether she left a nasty taste in Obi's mouth, like the multi-coloured word OSCULATE on the pillow-case” (NLE: 13).

The girls of Igbo society in Lagos seek the scholarship at all cost, they are exploited and degraded. But their exploitation can also be read as an aspect of social malaise, which has its parallel in the bribes received from male candidates. Miss Mark wanted to go to England for further education and she is ready to pay the price for it by sacrificing her chastity is the another instance of helplessness and the moral degradation of Igbo feminine identity. She says:

“Please, Mr Okonkwo, you must help me. I'll do whatever you ask.' She avoided his eyes. Her voice was a little unsteady, and Obi thought he saw a hint of tears in her eyes” (NLE: 73).

The Igbo girls at Lagos draw the attention in the novel towards the change in their attitude; they act as the helpless women on the part of the corrupt system. It fosters an idea that the social status through education by getting the scholarship is the most important aspect for them rather than their purity and chastity. It is noted that the

social system and corruption in Nigeria after colonialism makes the difference in the feminine identity. Robin Goodman states;

“It is possible still to identify survival itself with the future of the public sphere and, as women are the hardest hit by such structural adjustment policies, to identify the future of the public sphere itself as dependent upon the direction of feminism”(Goodman, 2004:5).

In the context, Goodman’s view states the expansion or transformation of feminine identity in the public sphere that foregrounds the structural modification and the dominant patriarchy within the Igbo Society in Nigeria.

3.1.5 Religious Identity

The title *No Longer at Ease* (1960) from T.S. Eliot's '*Journey of the Magi*' signifies that an abandonment of the old gods does not necessarily lead to an unqualified embracing of a new religion. The protagonist Obi as a son of Isaac (Nwoye in *Things Fall Apart*) in *No Longer at Ease* is in the search of religious identity throughout the novel. He is caught into the two religions namely the traditional religion of Igbo and the Christianity that was adopted by his father long back when he was a child. Obi’s education in England is another aspect of the Christian influence on him. Before he left Nigeria, he had been a true Nigerian and had known only his village. But his father, Nwoye – the son of Okonkwo who converted to Christianity and rejected his father – strictly condemned the old religion and brought up his children as Christians. Obi has his own opinion of religion but is afraid of telling his parents. The confusion of Obi about the two religions is stated by Achebe;

"Father, I no longer believe in your God"?' He knew it was impossible for him to do it, but he just wondered what would happen if he did. He often wondered like that. A few weeks ago in London he had wondered what would have happened if he had stood up and shouted to the smooth M.P. lecturing to African students on the Central African Federation: 'Go away, you are all bloody hypocrites!' It was not quite the same thing, though. His father

believed fervently in God; the smooth M.P. was just a bloody hypocrite” (NLE: 45).

Obi’s feelings of revolt against Christianity and traditional ethics of Igbo people is an outcome of the generation gap between his father and himself. The M.P. calls him the ‘bloody hypocrite’. It makes an impact on him to challenge the unnerving wrongs of the Nigerian society. The influence of missionaries and their religion changed the villages and the people there so much during the years when Obi was in England. He comes to know that the Nigeria he came back to after four years of being in England is not the same country of his dreams. The drastic change in Nigeria and his country makes the difference in the outlook of Obi, he thinks that the Igbo society in his country was no longer created by the old African traditions and culture, but a huge impact of colonial society was seen there:

“It was in England that Nigeria first became more than just a name to him. That was the first great thing that England did for him. But the Nigeria he returned to was in many ways different from the picture he had carried in his mind during those four years. There were many things he could no longer recognize, and others---like the slums of Lagos--- which he was seeing for the first time” (NLE: 12)

The clash between the two religious and cultural aspects results into the issues of religious identity. Obi’s father is converted to Christianity and rejected the Igbo culture, religion and traditions when he was young. There was no such a point to resist Obi to marry Clara who was *Osu*. Obi’s mother strictly instructed him not to marry her. The point is to argue about the fact that if they do not accept the traditional Igbo rules, there is no such reason to prevent him from the decision to marry Clara. Even though, Obi’s father was a Christian and according to the Bible, he should not have been judgmental in this case, he could have cut off his ties to Igbo traditions and accepted an ‘*osu*’ in his family.

Obi’s father thinks that there are the old traditions among Igbo people and he also wants to follow the similar traditions even though some people accepted the new religion, their tradition and old roots were still part of them. Obi’s father is afraid of the consequences of such marriage. He is worried about the children of Obi and Clara

in the future who would have to bear the curse of being the children of 'osu' mother. It makes a point that not only he but also the whole village will follow the old Igbo traditions in the future as well no matter how much influence of the missionaries and Christianity will have on the Igbo people. Achebe asserts the views of Obi and Obi's father about the two religions.

"We are Christians,' he said. 'But that is no reason to marry an osu .'

'The Bible says that in Christ there are no bond or free.'

'My son,' said Okonkwo, 'I understand what you say. But this thing is deeper than you think.'

'What is this thing? Our fathers in their darkness and ignorance called an innocent man osu, a thing given to idols, and thereafter he became an outcast, and his children, and his children's children forever.'"(NLE: 106)

When Obi's father, Isaac opposes him for marriage with Clara on the ground of her 'osu' background, Obi questions his Christian wisdom, which is supposed to draw no line of discrimination among the people of the world. His father remarks that "but have we not seen the light of the Gospel?" (NLE: 106). Obi thinks about Christianity that it is a kind of remedy "to bring light to the heart of darkness, to tribal head-hunters performing weird ceremonies and unspeakable rites" (NLE: 84). The Christian influence on Obi didn't prevent him from the adverse things in his life though he was brought up in such an environment. His glorious prospects abroad quickly become sullied by sexual affairs "- a Nigerian, a West Indian, English girls, and so on" (NLE: 55). The Bible ethics also didn't prevent him from accepting the bribe. The Canadian novelist, Margaret Laurence observes that perceptive African writers like Achebe interpreted their own world as;

"...neither idyllic, as the views of some nationalists would have it, nor barbaric, as the missionaries and European administrators wished and needed to believe" (Laurence, 1968:9).

The Igbo people lost their religious identity as a consequence of the colonial impact and Christianity. The culture and religion clashes negatively influenced the Igbo people, who suddenly had to find their way of accepting the system and religion

and live according to the new rules and they also had to redefine their identity. The religion clashes caused Obi's loss of identity in a sense of social status and the chance for a good future life.

3.1.6 Cultural Identity

The world is made up of thousands of different cultures. The culture of any society is formed with its own unique history, traditions, beliefs, religions and languages. All the aspects of the culture help us to know our identity; hence the cultural identity defines the individual and the social status. *No Longer at Ease* (1960) epitomizes issues of cultural identity caused by colonial power in Nigeria. The native Igbo people in Lagos are captivated by Englishness in daily routine making them aware of their social status and the challenge to preserve the culture. Stuart Hall points out the cultural identity;

“Essentialist conceptualizations of identity claim there is an authentic cultural identity, a “true self”, which “people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common” (Hall, 1996:111).

The unequal relationship with colonial power stamps the questions on the cultural identity of the Igbo people. Achebe remarks the problematic situation;

“Titles are no longer great, neither are barns or large numbers of wives and children. Greatness is now in the things of the white man. And so we too have changed our tune” (NLE: 42).

The remark of an Igbo is the awareness of the influence of colonial power. There are the two worlds: the native world of the Igbo people and ‘the white man’. The native Igbo people were caught into the two spheres in order to survive and preserve their cultural heritage.

The colonial encounter from the African perspectives in colonial Nigeria on the verge of Independence reflects the chaos in the cultural identity of the Nigerian people. Obi, the protagonist as an Igbo villager is the only hope of advancement in the colony by European education. The narrator says;

“Obi's theory that the public service of Nigeria would remain corrupt until the old Africans at the top were replaced by young men from the universities was first formulated in a paper read to the Nigerian Students' Union in London” (NLE: 31).

It helps to locate Obi in the young educated elites of historical colonial Nigeria. He asserts that old African is the reason behind Nigeria's corruption. The attitude of Elise Mark, who is a young woman so desperate that she offers up her body in exchange for a federal scholarship by saying that “Please, Mr. Okonkwo, you must help me. I'll do whatever you ask’ (NLE: 73) is a disgraceful act on the part of the cultural identity. Obi scornfully attributes the corruption of the situation to the devastating lack of education in Nigeria; he is disgusted by bribery because that is something only the uneducated savage deals in. Obi comments that “To (the uneducated) the bribe is natural” (NLE: 18). Obi misguidedly but successfully argues with his Christopher that bribery is inherent in the culture of the old uneducated Igbos.

The Umuofia Progressive Union resists mechanisms, but the uncertainty of colonialism portends the way in which colonialism forces itself on indigenous groups of the Igbo people. There is the ignorance of Nigerian Igbo people emphasizing the native ambivalence and invading the colonial administration. The identity of the Igbo is always at the grim fear about the colonial power. Achebe mentions it that “It was said that if you touched a soldier, Government would deal with you” (NLE: 10). The colonial power operates the Nigerian community with the practice of the colonial administration. . Lloyd W. Brown analyses the impact of colonial power in post-colonial fiction including Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* points out;

“Their indifference to Government and the regulation of the state is due to the fact that—since it was created by the foreign colonizer—they have ‘been accustomed to think of a central authority in terms of powerful, alien exploiters’ (Brown,1972:33).

The representation of the conflict between traditional customs and modernity is one of the aspects of the issues of the cultural identity. The Christianity adapted by Isaac Okonkwo and the traditional Igbo culture fosters the division among Igbo

people destroying the communal lifestyle that has traditionally banded Igbos in kinship. In this context, Hall defines cultural identity, According to him; it points out that what we call “identity” is an ongoing process “of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’ (Hall 1996:112). The difference in the Igbo culture is reflected in the novel. “One day a neighbour offered a piece of yam to Obi who was then four years old. He shook his head like his older and wiser sisters, and then said: 'We don't eat heathen food” (NLE: 46-47). Christianity makes an impact in Igbo society to disrupt from the collective identity. Although, imported from the colonizing culture Christianity was not simply an intruding evil that turned people against each other.

The younger generation is treated with the two worlds of culture such as the Christianity and the traditional culture. Pratten says;

“Colonialism and Christianity had created a rift between youth and elders and between varied bases of political authority” (Pratten, 2007:93).

Achebe mirrors the divert applications of the religions and culture among Igbo people in Nigeria.

“For young men mission Christianity became more appealing under Colonialism. Economic development in general, and trade, urbanization and schooling in particular, introduced new categories of social status—the literate teacher and clerks—and dissatisfied with the old traditions and customs, increased their physical and political mobility” (Pratten, 2007:94).

The Nigerian Igbo society is forced to follow such modes of living as maintaining a chauffeur-driven car, upkeep of a modern home, luxury of frequenting nightclubs, paying taxes besides expenses involving the education of his brothers and sisters and contributing to the family finances. The cultural identity of the Igbo young generation unredeemed like Obi when they were deprived of the links with their own people with whom they no longer tried to continue their separate cultural identity by the resistance to the colonial power.

3.1.7 Disruption of Nigerian Identity

The disruption of Nigerian identity in *No Longer at Ease* (1960) distinguishes the absence of self-analysis and the purposeful existence. The clash between western education and traditional beliefs is one of the aspects that dislocated the Igbo people from their ethnic identity. It is noted that the most of the Igbo youngsters like Obi of the third generation in compare to the generation of the Igbo in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) lost their roots towards preserving the cultural values. Though, they found certain capabilities by the western education. The dilemma and the chaos made them on the 'cross-roads of culture'.

The intervention of the missionaries among Igbo people caused the loss of indigenous values such as communal harmony of the Nigerian identity. During the colonial period, the colonized world undergoes a drastic change. The chief characteristics of these periods are industrialization and urbanization. The protagonist Obi Okonkwo is a "representative of the young and educated Nigerians at this point of time" (Killam1969: 37). The trial of Obi in the beginning of the novel itself is an instance of the disruption of the Nigerian identity in the colonial period. The helplessness and pacification of Igbo society by the colonial power at the end of the *Things Fall Apart* ((1958) is continued in the beginning of *No Longer at Ease* (1960). The only difference between them is the dislocation of the identity of the Igbo by the man of action and the man of pride.

The urban Igbo people didn't follow the patterns of self-analysis and they simply were decolonised by the western influences. The complexity of the Nigerian identity is revealed through the representation of the protagonist in offering the three types of the crisis of identity. First of all, he is trapped in the dialectic of the difference of identity; he finds that he cannot completely dislocate himself from the colonial culture, which had been adapted by his father Isaac Okonkwo, nor can he totally differ from the traditional Igbo culture of his ancestors. Secondly, his ideology is based on the western sense through the books so he tried to impose the moral codes on reality. Thirdly, he tries to reconstruct reality by imagery existence and the unrealised ideals. The questions of the reality and the moral codes of Obi trapped him into the dilemma. Obi was only able to construct his moral identity by refusing to see those realities that might have questioned his desire for transcendence.

The Umuofia Progressive Union was proud about the western education of Obi as it remarked; "Greatness is now in the things of the white man. And so we too

have changed our tune” (NLE: 42). But they didn’t understand that “the knowledge which brings power also brings detachment and alienation...” (Carroll 1980: 65). The disruption of Nigerian identity of the Igbo society is revealed through the western influence and the native youth is dislocated from their folk culture, and exposed to the alien value. In the words of Abiola Irele:

“Obi’s dilemma is contained in the conflict between his developed intellectual insight and his lack of moral strength to sustain it... His weakness of character is reflected in his inept handling of his human relationships and of his material problems; he is an individual with no sense of order. Obi is never really prepared to engage in any sort of sustained effort, with the result that he flounders through his life” (Cook, 1977: 85).

The Umuofia Progressive Union is not interested in protecting the people of the Igbo society. Even, they do not hold the meeting in generalisation about the eradication of the corruption. They are more concerned with the details of the downfall of their favoured son, whom they had sent to England for education. They too are baffled by Obi’s conduct, but in their case it is his naivety that troubles them. It reveals the disruption of the Nigerian society during the colonial period on the verge of Independence.

3.2. Issues of Culture in the Novel ‘*No Longer at Ease*’

Achebe explores the Igbo people in Nigeria with old values of Umuofia as well as the modern Nigeria in Lagos at the threshold of Independence. Obi Okonkwo the grandson of Ogbuefi Okonkwo is a typical product of the modern era that mixes motives and values, a miserable amalgam, the offshoot of a weak, hybrid culture. *No Longer at Ease* (1960) proves that the individual and the society are equally responsible for shaping the patterns of their culture. The culture of the Igbo people is explored with the tribal gathering and the impressive ritual of the clan that had been replaced by a Christian prayer meeting, conducted on the occasion of Nwoye (renamed Isaac) a retired Church of England catechist. It doesn’t represent the complete victory of the missionaries. The people of Umuofia promote Obi for the European power through education to bring them a status and refuse. The attention of the clan is shifted from religion to the new open-sesame, education, which is an

invaluable asset in the inter-village and inter-tribal rivalries. It projects the struggle of Igbo people to cope with a new Nigerian cultural and identity.

The influence of colonial power projects the nuances of tribal life and its homogenous culture. Obi, the protagonist is depicted as an exemplary character that is prepared to play a vital role in eradicating social and economic evils that seem to stand in the way of Nigeria of his dreams. But he fails to execute the idea of the modern Nigerian culture. The society-ridden culture with a set of degenerate values is exposed by Achebe that the individual and society are equally responsible for shaping the patterns of existence. Erickson states;

“culture is a tool, and a product of human activity that is...learned and transmitted from our elders and also invented (or incrementally transformed) through recurrent improvisation within current situations of practice” (Erickson,2006:41).

Erickson’s definition acknowledges the generative nature of culture through time, but also points to the changes possible in the culture based on the context. As such, the culture is a social construction that is passed through generations and is dynamic, changing because of alterations in the context of meaning-making. It is created through the dialectical interactions of individuals and groups.

The alienated Obi is a prey of his indecisive nature, and to the certain extent, his disadvantageous position. Although, he doesn’t belong to the traditional Umuofian culture or to the western culture, he questions the outcome of the western education; therefore, his sentimental relationship with his motherland keeps him alienated. The attitude of the Nigerian people regarding the change in the cultural patterns is reflected through the Fisherman’s comment “the world turned upside down” (NLE: 37). It relates the event of in-laws beating in-laws, which is unheard in the Nigerian culture. It shows the dominance gained by the newly ushered in values of the West such as their language, lifestyle and rational thoughts.

3.2.1 Social Patterns and Cultural Hybridity

The social patterns and cultural hybridity in the post-colonial literature have been termed from different perspectives by literary scholars. Bill Ashcroft points out, “The concept of universalism is one of particular interests to post-colonial writers

because it is this notion of unitary and homogeneous human nature which marginalizes and excludes the distinctive characteristics, the difference, of post-colonial societies” (Ashcroft et.al., 1995: 55). Hybridity in any society fosters the roots of the social codes and patterns. It is not the biological stream of the society. It relates the cultural issues of colonial social patterns. The people influenced by their own traditional culture and modernity design the hybridity in the social patterns.

Obi’s failure to face the challenge to groom the ideals of Nigerian social identity is a part of the cultural crisis. The Igbo people by taking over the administrative positions adopted the lifestyle of them. The Igbo people ignored the fact that they were from different traditional cultural than the west. Obi’s life-style is one of the examples of it. Mr. Green’s comment about the insurance premium of his car is a sarcastic one about the hybridity of the culture among Igbo people. Mr. Green says, “It is, of course, none of my business really. But in a country where even the educated have not reached the level of thinking about tomorrow, one has a clear duty” (NLE: 76). The educated people like Obi were captivated by the modernity and it created the certain amount of cultural crisis, which seems the hybridity among Igbo people. Kinship and its obligations are destroyed by the European mode of life. His salary is adequate to fulfil the obligations, but the comfort and luxury trapped him into the moral error of putting the European code ahead of kinship obligations. It makes a point to note that the complex interaction of African past and the emerging new hybrid culture.

The clash between Christianity and the Igbo religion presents the hybrid culture in Nigeria. Obi’s father opposes to celebrate Obi’s arrival by offering Kolanuts to the wooden idols calling them ‘heathen’ food and Obi’s confusion to narrate the story in the classroom evokes the conflicts between two cultures. Obi’s Mother shows interest in traditional Igbo cultural events, but she was prevented by Christian principles. ‘She liked music even when it was heathen music’ (NLE: 102). The ‘heathen’ music according to Isaac Okonkwo is the part of the past things. He scorns at the event and shows no interest in it. The description of the Igbo people in the western clothing reminds the impact of the Western culture. Obi returns from England and to welcome him in Lagos, “Everybody was properly dressed in *agbada* or European suit except the guest of honour, who appeared in his shirtsleeves because of the heat” (NLE: 25). It’s about the hybrid kind of social pattern of the Igbo people. The reception given to Obi is too different than the reception given to his grandfather

Ogbuefi Okonkwo by his people. (*Things Fall Apart* (1958) “Cold beer, minerals, palm-wine and biscuits were then served” (NLE: 26). The ethical values of Igbo were replaced by the hybridity in culture when the kola-nuts were replaced by the cold beer, minerals and biscuits.

The reflection of the hybrid culture is seen among Igbo people through their pidgin language. The speech of the truck driver regarding importance of sleep as “Weting I been de eat all afternoon?” asked the driver. ‘I no fit understand this kind sleep. Na true say I no sleep last night, but that no be first time I been do um.’ Everyone agreed that sleep was a most unreasonable phenomenon” (NLE: 36). It is called the ‘broken’ English by the influence of the missionaries among Nigerian people. Foucault comments;

“If an original kinship is to be already in existence between a root and its signification, if there is to be an articulated patterning of representations, there must be a murmur of analogies rising from things...” (Foucault, 2002:132-133).

The hybrid culture through the language among Nigerian people reflects the analogies from the things.

Obi’s attempt to break the boundaries of culture and traditions to change the realities is a sign of the influence of Western culture. Obi supports the idea of Hitler, who opposed the system and the act of Obi to challenge the ‘*chi*’ is similar as he says; “What was Hitler to me or I to Hitler? I suppose I felt sorry for him. And I didn't like going into the bush every day to pick palm-kernels as our "Win the War Effort" (NLE: 29). Obi’s behaviour exemplifies his attempts to empower himself by acting contradictory to the established beliefs and conventions. It is evident from the personal concerns to change the attitudes of the Igbo people, and getting influenced by the western culture. The common dilemma of the educated Africans is represented through the acts of Obi, who is puzzled between acceptance and rejection of a life of a hybrid culture in Lagos. He is captivated in such a mode like his grandfather Ogbuefi Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* (1958). The distinction between Obi and Okonkwo is that they faced the different phases of culture and race. But the elder Okonkwo realised the potentials of his deeds and Obi fails to decide a definite course of action till he is caught red-handed accepting the bribe.

The Obi's engagement with Clara by giving a golden ring is a western ritual and it is not considered in the Igbo culture. Unless the bride price is paid the engagement doesn't take place. The Igbo customs of paying bride-price transfer the bride's reproductive abilities from her father lineage to the bridegroom's lineage. The clash between these two customs ruins Obi's career and results into the chain of the guilt. African hybridity in culture advocates the diversified elements of the two systems which tend to foster the cultural crisis in the deeply rooted traditional values regulated by their society at the threshold of the Independence.

3.2.2 Tradition versus Modernity

The colonial power had the greatest impact on the traditional culture of the Igbo people in Nigeria. It is identified that the western influence disrupted African traditional society. Ekechi points out that "as the ranks of Christians swelled, so also did violations of societal codes of conduct rise" (Ekechi, 1989:65). The western influence in Lagos, the Nigerian capital abandons the traditional customs of the Igbo people. The Igbo Africans were influenced by the Western cultural habits, no longer respect or obey traditional ethical norms and values. Igbo people had a clear sense of morals and ethics before the arrival of missionaries and new faith i.e. Christianity. The unity and order in traditional African societies anchored on the respect for customs and tradition of the society. It is noted that Colonialism, Christianity, Western education and value system dealt a severe blow on the traditional ethical principles, which ensured peace, harmony and social stability.

No Longer at Ease (1960) begins with the trial of Obi, the outcome of his guilt and the decline of his career, who has been caught in the trap of modernity and tradition of Nigeria. Nigerian society was evolving into modernity and this new climate confronted Obi Okonkwo. He is tattered apart in his desire to follow his ancestors and at the same time to blaze his own trail and finally he seeks his own path and risks his whole prospect and place as a civil servant. He wanted to overcome the society-ridden customs of paying bride-price and decided to marry an *osu* girl, Clara. As a result, he accepts the evil practices and opposes the communal rites such as avoiding the funeral of his mother. He challenges the ideology, tradition and even the social patterns of his society.

Achebe gives us two opposite views on Obi's action, one of European's and other of members of Umuofia Progressive Union. Mr. Green, Obi's boss explains his

disgrace and announces in the club, “Africa is corrupt through and through” (NLE: 2). It is observed that for centuries Africa has been the victim of the worst climate in the world and of every imaginable disease. “Hardly his fault, But he has been sapped mentally and physically.”(NLE: 3) Anuradha Ghosh comments on the character of Obi;

“His abortive effort at education and culture, though leaving him totally unredeemed and unregenerated, had nonetheless done something to him-it had deprived him of his links with his own people whom he no longer understood and who certainly wanted none of his dissatisfaction or pretension” (Ghosh,2006: 45).

The image of the masked ancestral spirit indicates the confusion of values put across by Obi’s father. The blind ugly superstitious tradition is still over shadowing the man, who is supposed to have seen the light of the gospel. Obi tells his father;

“What is this thing? Our fathers in their darkness and ignorance called an innocent man *osu*, a thing given to idols, and thereafter he became an outcast, and his children, and his children's children forever. But have we not seen the light of the Gospel?” (NLE: 106).

It reminds the clash between the traditional ethics and the modernity. The views about traditional beliefs of marriage are drastically changed by the western influences anchoring on the part of modernity.

The Igbo people had the tradition to be a good wrestler to attract the attention of the people and to seek a ‘title’ in the society. Achebe writes in the novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) about Okonkwo’s “fame rested on his solid personal achievements” (TFA: 1). and Ekwefi falls in love with him being married. The ‘wrestling’ of the tradition has been replaced in the modernity as Joseph, the friend of Obi tells him, “Dancing is very important nowadays. No girl will look at you if you can't dance” (NLE: 11). The virginity of the traditional Igbo girls used to count the most important aspect of the ethical values. Modernity changed the term of the morality as the ‘virginity’ is not the important issue among the people in Lagos. Joseph says about the virginity that it’s ‘very rare’ in Lagos. Miss Mark’s attitude is the part of moral

degradation. She says, “I’ll do whatever you ask” (NLE: 73) to sacrifice her chastity for the sake of getting the scholarship for the western education is another instance of the conflicts between the traditional moral values and the modernity. Clara’s pregnancy before her marriage adds the disruption of moral values in the modernity by opposing the traditional ethics.

The colonial power in Nigeria made a distinction of the power struggle between elders and the young educated youth. The elders advocated the traditional way of life and youths were disillusioned with the lack social mobility of tradition and attracted to the individualism glorified by the missionary schools and then abroad education. They were dissatisfied with the authority of their less educated elders. Nigerian youths thus initiated and formed unions in which they usurped the power of their chiefs and exercised political authority over their domain. It made the drastic changes in the traditional ethical values of Igbo people and the modern approach of the youths about the traditions. Obi’s act to take a bribe is insensible one according to the tribal ethics hence the Umuofia Progressive Union ignored it and they were aware of the evil side of it. Frantz Fanon says that “The native is declared impervious to ethics representing not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values” (Fanon: 1963:6). Obi’s downfall is a result of the adverse effect of the colonial power in Africa. It can then be argued that Achebe attempts to correct Obi’s Christian missionary and Western education induced misconceptions about traditional Africa.

3.2.3 Conflicts in Ideology (Ethical Values)

The conflicts in ideology distinguish between the Igbo and Christian ethical values. According to Carroll;

“The Umuofians with characteristics flexibility appreciate the need for modern knowledge in order to defend and extend the gains already secured by the Christian compromise”(Carroll, 1980:65).

Obi Okonkwo is influenced by Lagos elite society, which forced him to follow the modern ethical values even against Christian principles. When Obi returns from England, He doesn’t go to his village, but he prefers to stay in Afro- European city of Lagos. David Carroll rightly says;

“...the defined conflict between Africa and Europe is a thing of the past. The city stands midway between Europe and Umuofia and creates its own highly spiced amalgamation of their different cultural ingredients” (Carroll, 1980:65).

The traditional ethics of Igbo society are shattered by Christian ethics. The foreign modernity keeps the traditional African values on the toe and the conflicts in cultural patterns. The early missionaries disrupted the pre-tribal African Igbo community, but the modernity created the change in traditional cultural patterns.

Obi, the protagonist was trapped between two different systems of value. While returning from England, he falls in love with an Igbo girl, Clara. He believes that the romantic love is more important than the other “grossly overrated European inventions” (NLE: 55). His confusion to determine the two ethical values leads him to the divert attitudes about modernity and tradition of Igbo Society. The narrator says;

“The result was that one half of Obi might kiss a girl and murmur: 'I love you,' but the other half would say: 'Don't be silly.' And it was always this second half that triumphed in the end when the glamour had evaporated with the heat, leaving a ridiculous anti-climax” (NLE: 56).

When Clara tells him that she can't marry him because she is an *osu*. Obi doesn't believe in the traditional ethics that would prevent them from marriage and he believes that the traditional taboos are burdensome.

The traditional values of Igbo society make Obi to think about an outdated. He says;

“It was scandalous that in the middle of the twentieth century a man could be barred from marrying a girl simply because her great-great-great- great-grandfather had been dedicated to serve a god, thereby setting himself apart and turning his descendants into a forbidden caste to the end of Time”(NLE: 57).

Joseph comments on the behavior of Obi that the western education has made him a stranger in the traditional Igbo society while convincing him the adverse effects of marrying an *osu* girl. The influence of the western writers like Joseph Conrad,

Graham Greene, T.S. Eliot, and A.E. Houseman shapes the Obi's thoughts about modernity. It makes him difficult to follow the native idealism to transform the society by resisting corruption.

Obi's father abandons the Christian beliefs and reverts to the tribal law of his childhood by restricting Obi to marry Clara, On the other hand, he had restricted his children from eating the Yam food from the Igbo people by saying that the Christianity doesn't allow to eat yam food from the tribal people. Achebe writes;

“One day a neighbour offered a piece of yam to Obi who was then four years old. He shook his head like his older and wiser sisters, and then said: “We don't eat heathen food” (NLE: 46-47).

The attitude of Isaac Okonkwo regarding the Christianity and Igbo tribal ethical values is the regression to earlier beliefs denied by him. It makes a point to think about the dismantling of the dialectic values on the grounds of moral and religious principles. The implication of the reversion from Christianity to tribal ethics leads the conflicts in the mind of Obi and he neither believes in the traditional tribal ethical values nor Christianity. “His father, although uncompromising in conflicts between church and clan, was not really a man of action but of thought” (NLE: 132). It revolves around the ethics of traditional and modern age of Igbo people.

Obi's conflicts centred first on his professional ethics and then became more acute with his engagement with Clara which turned into despair. Achebe puts in the confusion of Obi;

“His mind was troubled not only by what had happened but also by the discovery that there was nothing in him with which to challenge it honestly. All day he had striven to rouse his anger and his conviction, but he was honest enough with himself to realise that the response he got, no matter how violent it sometimes appeared, was not genuine. It came from the periphery, and not the centre, like the jerk in the leg of a dead frog when a current is applied to it” (NLE: 109).

He neither accepts his parents' values nor rejects them. He is influenced not only by Umuofia but also of Lagos and Europe.

Obi's refusal to attend the funeral of his mother is called a 'thing of shame' and his conduct is compared with his father's refusal to go to attend the funeral of Ogbuefi Okonkwo. The President of Umuofia Progressive Union remarks that "A man may go to England, become a lawyer or a doctor, but it does not change his blood" (NLE: 128). The conflicts and permutations of Obi are caused by his disloyalty to the tribe. Achebe's portrayal of the inevitable struggle between modernity and traditional values poses the question of conflict between traditional culture and the culture of the metropolitan European authority. Achebe captures revolutionary experiences and depicts them with explicitness in the context of conflicts in ideology.

3.2.4 Customs

Customs are found in all the communities of the world. The customs of any society play a pivotal role to shape the social patterns for the existence of culture. Custom and culture are the inevitable aspects to regulate the social life. Customs act as an effective means of social control. They bring people together and develop the social relation with them. Both, customs and culture change from society to society, and also within a society over a time. The customs of the Pre-colonial Igbo society have been changed as per the situations of modernity. The colonial power makes them to come out of the superstitious acts and they believe that the knowledge is the power and it brings prosperity to the individual as well as for the clan. Mr. Ikedi informs Obi about the importance of knowledge.

"In times past,' he told him, Umuofia would have required of you to fight in her wars and bring home human heads. But those were days of darkness from which we have been delivered by the blood of the Lamb of God. Today we send you to bring knowledge" (NLE: 8).

The custom of the Igbo people to share their thoughts regarding the change in social patterns indicates the cultural identity of them during the colonial period.

The Igbo culture is depicted with the customary actions against Isaac Okonkwo (Obi's father) to treat him with the tribal rules. The person goes against the

customs of the tribe is treated with the customs to follow the culture. Achebe writes about the Igbo customs;

“One of the great gods of Aninta was Udo, who had a he-goat that was dedicated to him. This goat became a menace at the mission. Apart from resting and leaving droppings in the church, it destroyed the catechist's yam and maize crops. Mr Okonkwo complained a number of times to the priest of Udo, but the priest (no doubt a humorous old man) said that Udo's he-goat was free to go where it pleased and do what it pleased”(NLE: 132).

The Igbo people of Nigeria are reflected as vindictive about the decision of Isaac to convert himself to Christianity. The customs of Igbo people are visionary during the empirical power, when obi returns to Lagos from England. The tribal customs are apparent from the first meeting of Umuofia Progressive union, Obi gets out of his car, he is greeted with traditional customs;

“Umuofia kwenu!” shouted one old man.

'Ya!' replied everyone in unison.

'Umuofia kwenu!'

'Ya!'

'Kwenu!'

'Ya!'

'Ife awolu Ogoli azua n'afia,' he said”(NLE: 62).

It is an instance of the grand welcome given to Obi by Igbo clan in Lagos and based on the continuity of the customs of Igbo people in modernity. In the pre-colonial Igbo community, the grand welcome by breaking the ‘palm-wine’ is replaced in the Igbo society as they celebrate the reception with the bottles of beer. One of the youngsters says that “Lagos palm-wine was really no palm-wine at all but water---an infinite dilution” (NLE: 64). They exchanged the bottles of beer among each other to make the reception of Obi a grand one.

The change in customs of the Igbo people is explored through the song of traders. Obi comes to know the changes that had been taken place in Nigeria during the four

years, which he spent in England. While travelling from Lagos to Umuofia, he comes across with the changes by colonial power through the song sung by the traders;

“An in-law went to see his in-law
Oyiemu---
o His in-law seized him and killed him
Oyiemu---
o Bring a canoe, bring a paddle
Oyiemu---
o The paddle speaks English
Oyiemu---o” (NLE: 37).

The set rules of the Igbo tribe are disrupted and the new customs. The in-laws kill the person, who has gone abroad intimates that the person is dislocated from the Igbo culture. The man’s in-laws are referred with the personal gods of the Igbo people known as the ‘*chi*’. According to Igbo customs, it was the height of the treachery and betrayal against the set rules of Igbo people. The elders of Umuofia asked for a kola nut to scarify on the personal gods called ‘*chi*’. Obi’s father doesn’t allow them to do so as follows;

“bring us a kola nut to break for this child's return.'
'This is a Christian house,' replied Obi's father.
'A Christian house where kola nut is not eaten?' sneered the man.
'Kola nut is eaten here,' replied Mr Okonkwo, 'but not sacrificed to idols.'
'Who talked about sacrifice? Here is a little child returned from wrestling in the spirit world and you sit there blabbing about Christian house and idols, talking like a man whose palm-wine has gone into his nose.' He hissed in disgust, took up his goat-skin and went to sit outside” (NLE: 41).

The twist among Igbo people about the customs is seen between the traditional Igbo people and Christianity regarding the sacrifice of kola-nut to the idols. At last, they settled their dispute by adopting the Christian way to break the kola nut. “And we shall break it in the Christian way” (NLE: 41). It is a point to notice that the change in the customs and the cultural patterns of the Igbo people proclaims the

influence of Christianity and subsequently the colonial power. Custom and tradition find their way into modernized society. One of the elders, as he dwells on the subject of the greatness of the society, observes that, with the changing times, greatness too changes its tune. In the ancient times the ‘title’ taking was an important aspect of the Igbo people, it has replaced in the modernity by the western educational skills.

The issues of culture have different applications among Igbo people like marriage. Obi, being an educated doesn’t believe in the traditional way of considering an *osu* in the society. His friend, Joseph convinces him the impacts of marrying an *osu* girl, “You know book, but this is no matter for book. Do you know what an *osu* is?”(NLE: 57). His father being Christian follows the traditional Igbo customs and prevented him, who said that “*Osu* is like leprosy in the minds of our people.....not to bring the mark of shame and of leprosy into your family”(NLE: 107).His mother instructed him on the same issue that he should wait till her death. She says; “If you want to marry this girl, you must wait until I am no more. If God hears my prayers, you will not wait long” (NLE: 108). The inflexibility in the custom of marriage leads the confusion in Obi’s decision and he finds himself in a trap to follow either the modern way or the traditional way of life.

3.2.5 Beliefs and Proverbs

The beliefs and proverbs in any story add the interest, not for the purpose of amusement, but they also signify the fabulous historical and traditional importance with the specific contents. It has been observed that “We learn our culture through proverbs” (Samovar, et. al.1998:39). The proverbs explicate moral and spiritual wisdom of the society. Achebe says that “proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten” (TFA: 6). The Igbo art of conversation is regarded very influential in connection with the cultural identity and the beliefs through the proverbs. In the opening slot of the novel *No Longer at Ease* (1960), the use of the Igbo proverbs identifies the guilt of a man along with the consequences. When the trial of Obi goes on and the verdict is passed on his guilt, the foolishness of Obi in his life is commented by the proverb that “the fox must be chased away first; after that the hen might be warned against wandering into bush” (NLE: 5). It throws the light on his love with an *Osu* girl Clara and the guilt of accepting the bribe. The President of Umuofia Progressive Union says that it was the shame for a man in the senior service to go to prison for twenty pounds. He also asserts that “I am against people reaping

where they have not sown. But we have a saying that if you want to eat a toad you should look for a fat and juicy one” (NLE: 5). It denotes an idea of the corrupt Nigerian society. There is a belief about kola nut among Igbo people that “He that brings kola nuts brings life,' he said, 'we do not seek to hurt any man, but if any man seeks to hurt us may he break his neck” (NLE: 5).

On the verge of Obi’s departure to England for higher Education in the farewell occasion Mary, the most zealous Christians in Umuofia and a good friend of Obi’s mother remarks about the opportunity for Obi to go to England and the subsequent benefits for Igbo people by the proverb “You have the yam and you have the knife; we cannot eat unless you cut us a piece” (NLE: 7). The Igbo sayings in Nigeria elicits the when Obi returns from England, the Igbo people feel very proud of him and appreciated his unprecedented academic brilliance, and the honour brought by Obi to the ancient town like Umuofia as it would help them for social equality and economic emancipation. In the welcome speech, Michael remarks;

“The importance of having one of our sons in the vanguard of this march of progress is nothing short of axiomatic. Our people have a saying "Ours is ours, but mine is mine." Every town and village struggles at this momentous epoch in our political evolution to possess that of which it can say: "This is mine." We are happy that today we have such an invaluable possession in the person of our illustrious son and guest of honour” (NLE: 25).

The Igbo people compared the power of Obi’s education by saying that ‘the power of the leopard resided in its claws’ (NLE: 26). The power of any society is evaluated by its prospectus of the new generation.

The social identity needs to be unique according to the Igbo proverb as there is a need to be united during the colonial period and the missionaries would harm them if the Igbo society falls apart. Obi was honoured in Umuofia after returning from England and he states the proverb “Our fathers also have a saying about the danger of living apart. They say that it is the curse of the snake.’ ‘If all snakes lived together in one place, who would approach them?’ ‘But they live every one unto himself and so fall easy prey to man” (NLE: 64). Some proverbs in the novel have become the common property in the Igbo community that enhances the communal rapport with each other. The failure of Obi after Clara refusal to meet him in the hospital is advised

in the encouraging Igbo proverb that “not to lose heart because whatever was hot must in the end turn cold” (NLE: 126). Christopher convinces Obi about the importance of patience in serious situations. The tragic blows in the life of Obi followed one after another and he is caught in the dilemma and his guilt is explained as;

“Wherever something stands, another thing stands beside it.” You see this thing called blood. There is nothing like it. That is why when you plant a yam it produces another yam, and if you plant an orange it bears oranges” (NLE: 127).

Obi holds his mother in high regard and remembers her love and strength in mind. Whenever he meets her, he respects her sacrifice. But he is struck dumb when realizes her intension about marrying an *osu* girl. It reflects the erosion of traditional values from his mind by western influences. Obi didn't go to attend the funeral of his mother. It was very strange and surprising, but his father Isaac (Nwoye in *Things fall Apart*) also did the same when Ogbuefi Okonkwo committed the suicide by saying about the death that ‘who killed with matchet must die by a matchet’ (NLE: 127). In a similar way, Obi didn't go for a funeral of his mother who didn't permit him to marry Clara. The President of Umuofia Progression Union Says that “A man may go to England, become a lawyer or a doctor, but it does not change his blood. It is like a bird that flies off the earth and lands on an ant-hill. It is still on the ground” (NLE: 128). Achebe's exposes Christian religious institutions as the vehicles for the exploration of Isaac's (Obi's father) psychology. According to Judith Gleason;

“Achebe has already hinted at the inner anatomy of the sort of youth who out of a rebellious sense of insufficiency flees to Christianity as a refuge from a sterner, more exacting way of life, a youth who as a man tries to crush out the new ways of feeling among a pious, if promiscuous, generation of the future which equates Western Christianity with colonialism and seeks a sophisticated dialectical return to African forms of belief” (Gleason, 1965:93).

The decision of Obi seems the parallel one as the decision had taken by his father. Achebe as a gifted ventriloquist is able to individualize his characters by differentiating their expressions through the proverbs and beliefs. The social patterns

are depicted through the culture and cultural change among Igbo people in the modern and traditional beliefs.

3.2.6 Dislocation of Nigerian Culture

The cultural dislocation of Igbo people in Nigeria is reflected in the opening slot of the novel from the comment of the Judge in the High Court of Lagos and with the question to the protagonist Obi; “I cannot comprehend how a young man of your education and brilliant promise could have done this’(NLE: 2). Obi, by taking a bribe is alienated from the social values of the Igbo people in Nigeria. The members of the Umuofia Progressive Union of Lagos branch are alarmed by the Obi’s action that they had sent him for the higher studies to England. According to David Carroll;

“To the Africans of Umuofia it is disturbing that their most learned offspring, who has been educated for the glory of the clan and to look after their interests, should be so incompetent in the elementary conventions of bribe taking”(Carroll,1965:63).

Achebe writes about cultural disruption in Nigeria through the sexual behaviour of the people. Obi’s friend Joseph is exemplified about immorality and sexual lust. The narrator explains;

“Joseph had brought a woman home.....The girl was one of Joseph's new finds... She was dark and tall with an enormous pneumatic bosom under a tight-fitting red and yellow dress. Her lips and long finger-nails were a brilliant red, and her eyebrows were fine black lines..... Altogether she left a nasty taste in Obi's mouth” (NLE: 12).

The immoral acts of the people in Lagos are revealed as a part of the dislocation of the Nigerian culture in the modernity.

Achebe draws the social patterns of Igbo people in Nigeria as they are caught up in the dynamic world of change. The erosion of the old cultural values made a way for the new and transitional society. The transitional stage of society made the invasion and disrupted social order during the colonial period. When Obi returns from England after four years, the narrator says;

“Nigeria he returned to was in many ways different from the picture he had carried in his mind during those four years. There were many things he could no longer recognise, and others---like the slums of Lagos--- which he was seeing for the first time” (NLE: 10).

Obi frames his thoughts regarding the perseverance of the Igbo culture. When he was in the school and the teacher asked him to narrate the story in the oral examination. He failed to narrate the native tale of the tribe then the entire class ridiculed at him. He adds certain spicy details in the ‘story of the wicked leopardess’ and relates it by his own conception of the significance of the preserving culture’ (NLE: 47), According to Matthew Arnold, “What distinguishes culture is that it is possessed by the scientific passion as well as the passion of doing well” (Arnold: 1932:45). Obi’s attitude is reflected about the morality, when he gives the details to Christopher about Miss Mark’s visit. Achebe writes about the distinction in the attitudes of Christopher and Obi;

“If a girl offers to sleep with you, that is not bribery,’ said Christopher.

‘Don’t be silly,’ replied Obi. ‘You mean you honestly cannot see anything wrong in taking advantage of a young girl straight from school who wants to go to a university?’” (NLA: 96).

Obi’s attitude regarding Miss Mark about morality is an example of his honesty towards the moral values. He further adds; “but perhaps she will remember that there was one man at least who did not take advantage of his position” (NLE: 97). In certain situations regarding morality and corruption, Obi resisted the Nigerian people and tried to overcome the situation, but his dilemma of the modernity and traditionalism dislocated him from the culture. He goes to the bed with girls, accepts the bribe and challenges the Igbo customs, which are the issues of dislocation of the culture. He neither follows the instructions of his people nor goes against them. The expressionless Obi loses Clara and his mother at the end.

Killam’s study explains Achebe’s strategy is “one of implication rather than explication” leaving “much unsaid”. And in the process, Achebe “achieves a suggestiveness which communicates far more than he might achieve in long passages of explicit description” (Killam, 1977:11). Obi’s reaction after the death of his mother

is reflected from his indecision as it is applicable with the issue of his love with Clara. Achebe explains his crisis;

“He was amazed at the irrelevant thoughts that passed through his mind at this the greatest crisis in his life. He waited for his father to speak that he might put up another fight to justify himself. His mind was troubled not only by what had happened but also by the discovery that there was nothing in him with which to challenge it honestly” (NLE: 109).

It makes a point about the gradual disruption of the cultural life that continues by the foreign elements. In a sense, the Nigerian culture made a way to dislocate the persons like Obi from the unified society.

The dislocation of culture in Nigeria reflects the division and alienation among the Igbo people. David Carroll observes that Achebe mirrors the character;

“Obi is an alien created out of a miscellany of cultural elements, and the scaffolding of his character is meant to be ramshackle...” (Carroll, 1980:83)

The colonial power through western education made the people to think about the social change. The issues of cultural are posed in the novel due to the influence of colonial power the native youth are disinherited from their own folk culture and exposed the alien values in the form of the dislocation of the culture. Obi’s downfall symbolizes the change in the cultural patterns in Lagos. The duel of the fulfillment of Igbo traditional obligations and aristocratic circles in Lagos are considered the responsible factors for dislocation of Nigerian culture.

3.3. Summary

No Longer at Ease (1960) is a blend of the African culture and the influence of western ideology. The main concern of the novel is to explore the decline of the social values in Nigeria at the threshold of the Independence. The issues of identity of the Nigerian Igbo people are visible throughout the novel. People of Umuofia tried to keep themselves united with the changing scenario by the formation of Umuofia Progressive Union in Lagos. It monitored the values of the Igbo tradition, but to some extent the failure of them due to the crisis in ideology and the issues of culture sacked

their goals with some unwanted creed in the social malaise. The clash between traditional culture and Christianity made the people alienated from their society. The traditional caste system made the fertile ground for getting people separated from each other in the modern Lagos.

Obi's materialistic approach to fulfil the needs traps him into bribery. He loses his kinship, relations with society, and dislocated from culture. He becomes no longer at ease after his disconnection with the Nigerian village. The complexity in the religious codes, ethical values and hybridity in culture is focused on the issues of identity and culture. Finally, it can be argued that the society with a blend of two diversified cultures, ethical values, social patterns, customs and religious order faces the issues of identity and culture. It is evident from the novel that the issues of identity and culture are visionary among the Nigerian people.

Major Findings:

- *No Longer at Ease* (1958) mirrors the issues of identity and culture with the clash between two diversified cultures in Nigeria on the cusp of Independence.
- Achebe elucidates individual dilemma versus social patterns of the Igbo people in the form of issues of identity and culture.
- The culture of any society shapes the identity, but the traditional obligations do not permit the cultural change.

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