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## 7.0. Introduction

This research study delineates *Issues of Identity and Culture in the Novels of Chinua Achebe*. His novels are deeply rooted in reflecting the various facets of culture and identity by the use of local colours, proverbs, riddles, myths, religion, patriarchy, women issues, political concerns, folktales, songs, rites and rituals. The issues of identity related to political power, dilemma, quest, individual versus society, social issues versus colonialism, and internal tribal issues foreground the cultural veracity in relation to the need of harmonious coexistence. From this point of view, Achebe's novels have been analyzed to find out the different layers of the African society.

African Literature forms a significant segment of twentieth-century world literature. It projects a huge range of languages, cultures and colonial contexts to focus the connection with the issues of identity during the colonial and post-colonial period. The argument mainly involves the issue whether it means the bulk of writing produced by those living on the continent irrespective of race, creed and nationality or whether it relates to the work of the writers of black origin only. It has, however, been conclusively agreed upon that African literature, in the final analysis represents the writing of African nationals living on African soil reflecting the African native sensibility in the form of culture and their issues regarding identity.

In relation to the colonial impact, it is important to take into account that African literature extended solely during the postcolonial period as a response to the 'brutal force' of colonialism. The constant struggle to create new images and metaphors in English charting the African experience is a kind of cultural transformation that finds reflection in the writings of Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Thilag O' Wa Ngugi, Buchi Emecheta, Alex La Guma, Dennis Brutus, Amos Tutuola, Christopher Okigbo and T. M. Aluko. They attempted to acquaint the people about to set free from the clutches of the colonial domination by articulating the collective desire of the people, re-writing history through the medium of literature, expressing the felt pressures and anxieties, fears and hopes of the people with intense emotions. Achebe's writing extends over a tumultuous and critical period in the history of the Igbo and West Africa in general. If we focus on analyzing Achebe's novels, we find a construct of the microcosm of the conceptual universe that is both specific and immanent in its ambience to go through the issues of identity and culture.

Achebe's novels penetrate not only the older form of existence but also locate the issues of identity and culture in the contemporary Nigeria. The novels are incorporated three essential phases of African or rather Nigerian history. The first phase draws attention towards the loss of pristine glory of a civilization that had flourished on the strength of its own merits and demerits. The second phase elucidates the painful experience of colonialism and the process of disintegration, pacification and invasion. Finally, the struggle against the foreign domination, the establishment of indigenous rule foregrounds the sense of the issues of identity and culture.

Achebe's mirrors the British policies of education of the natives, focus on oriental studies and anti-colonial resistance movements in the sphere of politics at the material level of cultural re-organisation in the society leading to the process of modernization in the novels *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). Anuradha Ghosh comments on the contribution of Achebe to deal with the imperialism in Nigeria. She says:

“The task of nation-building is also implied the creation of secular, social vision that fostered the translation of collective identity of the people who had unique ways of living, quite opposed to the practices of the white Christian world that had tear asunder not only the physical and material riches of the land but supplant the very essence of everything that was African” (Ghosh, 2006:34).

The novels that came into being reflected the process of identity formation by the resistance of colonial paradigms exposing the struggle of the people that is attributed to their transformation of cultural patterns. However, the question can be posed as what needs to be asked here is how the colonial tendency of homogenization gets subverted into a category of cultural resistance through the politics of Negritude. The basis of this continuity is Achebe's sense of the world which he derives from his Igbo heritage. He conveys the issues of identity and culture both explicitly in his novels and implicitly in his humour, style and arguments. In relation to the views regarding the issues, the reality is an idea that nothing in religion, politics society or the life of the individual is absolute to prove the doom or failure. He says the human beings are dependent on gods, but gods need their worshippers. “If a man says yes his *chi* also says yes” (AOG: 27). The ‘chi’ i.e. personal god controls a man's fate, each

person is unique but “No one can win the judgment against the clan” (AOG: 131). The evidence in the novels exposes the relationship between the man and god or the individual and community. Both of them remind the issues of culture and identity.

### **7.1. Concept of Identity and Culture**

African culture and its adaption of European parameters foster an idea of the identity issues during the post-colonial period. The critic Stuart Hall points out that identity can be invented. It is constructed within the ‘play of power and exclusion’ (Hall 1996:5). The invention of self is an important index in the formation of identity. Identity is a dynamic and a continuing changing process: it is not static and it continues to be modified and finally becomes generally accepted with the times. The issues of identity are related within the framework of culture. There are certain traditional African concepts of identity in the colonial and post-colonial African Literature which are by no means simplistic in their explorations.

The affirmation of one’s identity, individual, group or national expectedly, includes an establishment of value for, recognition and acceptance of it. The affirmation or rejection of the cultural values effects on the sense of self both at personal and social levels in relation with the identity. Connolly says;

“Identity is established the relation to a series of differences that converts differences to otherness in order to be; in order to secure its own self-certainty”(Connolly,2002:64).

The germ of culture consists in the harmonious development of human nature which is possible only for a limited period. The wheel of the time is never steady and every epoch of development is followed by an era of decline. 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, 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. However, in all societies there are certain basic values which constitute its culture and these needs to be perpetuated, because the the loss of culture would mean the loss of identity for the society and, culture is reflected in the quest for perfection in any society.

African Literature in the post-colonial period is often hinted by bloody civil wars, military rule, dictatorship, ethnic conflict and genocide. Such issues are related to the culture of African life. African culture and people of Africa dislocated during the colonial period. The post-colonial African literature reveals the friction within the individual and the friction between the individual the way both account for the transformation that the culture undergoes. As war is said to be a bigger evil that wipes away all minor evils, it is with the impact of the colonial encounter, which eradicated the evils, rooted in the African culture. It is undeniable that the “encounter” has been traumatic.

African cultures are remarkable for their mixing of cultural influences, traditions and indigenous European languages. The category ‘African literature’ includes oral and written literatures in indigenous languages such as *Kikuyu*, *Hausa*, *Sotho*, *Xhosa*, *Somali* and *Swahili*, alongside those African literatures in Arabic, French, Portuguese, Afrikaans and English, but they cannot be understood without deeper recognition of the larger cultural hierarchies and social pressures that pervade African locations.

## **7.2. Present Status of Identity and Culture in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, the issues of culture and identity are still persistent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The group identities have assumed not only the prime means of social expressions but also of the rights and privileges in the spheres of politics. The identity of the people is fostered with the bifurcated national citizenship of equal rights, benefits and duties for all citizens by internal social group struggles and conflicts.

The issues of identity and culture are prominently advocated by marginalisation, domination and social justice by the several ethnic groups like Odua (Yoruba), Idi-ngbo (Igbo), Arewa (Hausa-Fulani), which represent the three main ethnic groups and others like Ogoni (Niger delta) often derive from this reality. It is

therefore, evident that the inter-group or identity-based conflicts are visible to get the harmonious co-existence in the social identity.

Nigeria is comprised of around 250 different ethnic groups. The three major largest ethnic groups have been divided by the religious lines. The Hausa- Fulani in the north comprises by Muslims, The Christian Ibo are in the south-east, and the animistic Yoruba in south-west Nigeria. By scattering into the different groups, the people in Nigeria struggle to foster the sense of nationalism, consequently the identity of them as a united nation seems weakened. The conflicts on the ground of economic and religious differences between the north and the south are the sources of violence and unrest among the people.

It has been observed that the British didn't consider the ethnic groups in the region during Independence. On the parts of the Nigeria, Efforts were not made to unify the people of Nigeria with certain National identity. It created the political turmoil after Independence. To some extent, the nationalism among the people of Nigeria was built up in the Independence movement early in the 1960s but it was discarded quickly due to the distinct ethnic groups.

The civil conflict between the religious and tribal groups is the major issue of the Nigerian Identity. The north part of Nigeria advocates the religious laws according to the local demands of the Muslims, subsequently the federal government left the local governments and the *Sharia* riots took place between Hausa Muslims and Ibo Christians in 2000. It is about the issues of their culture and the judicial systems. In the parts of Sharia, There are the restrictions for women to the traditional roles in the public spheres. The feminine identity issues are still posed to the religious domain. The inequality in economical share between the southern and northern part creates the disparity between the southern rich people and northern weaker sections causes the conflicts among them.

On the other hand, The Niger Delta region of Nigeria is the major oil-producing part of the country. Due to the environmental issues, the crisis has occurred between the government and the *Ogoni* people. Security forces are unable to control the area and typically exacerbate the social issues. The violence and International boycotts have resulted to control the environment and to protect the human rights in the region. Nigeria is also a capitalist society, which proclaimed the social division resulting from the huge amount of petroleum related wealth, which poured into the country during the late 1960s. It has resulted in two stratified classes within Nigeria; a

wealthy, politically influential elite class funded by oil wealth and the poor tribal class without access to representation or social mobility. The levels of bribery and corruption have made in impact on the part of their social issues.

The religious components of Nigeria are responsible for making the conservative society due to a large Muslim population, who are the fundamentalist in the north part. Religious leaders in the north suggest it is the liberal western influence that is responsible for the economic poverty throughout most of Nigeria. They wish to expel all Western ideas and ideology. The Christian south is also fairly conservative due to the lasting effects of missionaries and authoritarian governments. In areas plagued by poverty and civil unrest, there are strict rules and expectations for all members of society, especially women.

Nigeria is a society with abundant rich cultural heritage that are scattered within the diverse ethnic nationalities. These cultural heritages include language, marriage rites, burial rites, birth rites, dressing, greeting, music, folklore, religion, and other tangible cultural monuments, natural sites and cultural landscapes. Some of these cultures have died due to western cultural influence.

On the whole, the people of Nigeria are still dislocated from their social identity due to anti-colonial political struggle and about the rights of the natives to become the citizens. The interaction of the twin- factors of the colonial antecedent and the direction of state policy coalesced to shape the nature of the post-colonial identity of Nigeria.

### **7.3. Issues of Identity and Culture by Chinua Achebe**

In Achebe's first four novels, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964) and *A Man of the People* (1966) the social system is exposed with the identity issues which evaluate the characters on the basis of their dilemma, actions, adjustments and interactions with the natives. It can be argued that the protagonists of these novels like Ogbuefi Okonkwo, Obi Okonkwo, Ezeulu, Chief Nanga lead certain types of 'pride' to regulate the cultural norms in order to keep the cultural and social values vibrant. *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) differs from the identity issues due to the similar sort of intensions are found among major characters like Sam, Ikem, Chris and Beatrice. Excluding Sam, others perceive the similar moral and ethical standards to aware the people of Kangan regarding the good governance. Each of the novels of Achebe is considered as a delectable cameo containing the

subtle enfoldment of a particular stage or aspect of the process of change from prosperity to adversity that has taken place in the Igbo society.

It is evident that the identity theory is not only helpful to assess the individuals according to their depths, but also finds the sense of virtuousness accordingly to mould with the different situations. Identity issues chart the social movements from the fringe of individual to individual and individual to social. Moral power plays a pivotal role in such cases. We find Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Ezeulu in *Arrow of God* (1964) struggle for social power and the moral codes make them to realise about their individual crisis, even the issues of their identity have the social influence. In *No Langer at Ease* (1960), the predicament of Obi Okonkwo represents the state of the educated Africans. He is torn between two cultures and fails to achieve the goals. He learns that the ideals must be supported with practical wisdom. In *A Man of the People* (1966) Chief Nanga's struggle for political power makes a sense of the identity issues regarding the pursuit of a 'national cake'. Odili Samalu gets into the traps of identity issues that suggest the conflict between individual and salience. *Anthills of Savannah* (1987) represents the political powers by exposing its failure to connect with the masses in the fictional state Kangan. It reflects the need of a range of possibilities to open up the new horizons as the remedies to its social malaise

*Things Fall Apart* (1958) reflects the issues of identity and culture of the Igbo people of Nigeria. Ogbuefi Okonkwo, the protagonist of the novel wants to hold the reputation in the clan by taking the reputed 'titles' one of the pre-eminent men in the village of Umuofia. His ambitions to keep the clan vibrant during the invasion initiated by the British people got failure, As a man of action, he didn't tolerate the insults caused by the 'womanish' reaction of his clan towards the colonial power, subsequently, he decides to avenge by killing one of the 'kotmas' court messengers. At the end, he commits suicide by hanging himself to the tree. It can be argued that he was himself responsible for his fall, but the things fall apart in Umuofia at the advent of colonialism results in the issues of identity of the people in Nigeria.

Ogbuefi Okonkwo's attempt to identify himself as a man of 'titles' in the clan is the part of his 'pride' that never allowed him to adjust with the inevitable changes in the society. The beginning of the novel makes a sense about his 'personal achievements' that made him to consider him with certain respect in the clan. The novel begins as;

“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” (TFA: 3).

Okonkwo’ strength earns a reputation as a wrestler, besides he is a warrior and had taken the heads of five victims at the age of twenty-one. His prosperity is visible including two barns full of yams, three wives, nine children and two titles, all symbolizes his success. It is evident that the social constructs play the significant role to form the self-identity and vice-versa. Okonkwo's instance in the Igbo clan is a perfect illustration of it. He brings honour to the clan and the clan honours him for his achievements.

The novel brings out the duality of Umuofian clan. It has not only manly men like Okonkwo but also weak-willed people like Unoka. They represent the cultural issues of their society. But their patterns of behaviour disclose the hidden facets of their character. Okonkwo, though the man of action, aggressive is not cruel at heart. Similarly, Unoka is a failure as an individual. But the fact that he is a mystic surface when he plays on musical instruments. On such occasions, one could see “his face beaming with blessedness and peace” (TFA: 4). The Igbo clan too follows the same patterns of culture. Both its culture and identity are projected with aesthetic sense and practical wisdom is evaluated by the practice of different customs and the rigid judicial system.

On the other hand, it depicts the flexibility in their customs that creates the harmonious co-existence in the clan. In Uzuolu’s case, The *Egwugwu* (nine ancestral spirits) gives the judgment on the dispute between Uzowulu and his wife’s family. The briefs were taken, testimonies of witnesses were received and the judges evaluated the matters before pronouncing judgments. “The *egwugwu* retreated in consultation for a moment, and when they emerged, the Evil Forest delivered their judgment, asking Uzowulu to go beg his wife with a pot of wine” (TFA: 67).

The culture of the Umuofia is identified by the significance of the family in the village. From looking at this novel, one sees that the family group or clan is made of many members where the husband is the patriarch of the family and he has several wives who bear many children. Each family has their own farm and compound where

they live and work. Okonkwo's family is described in great detail. He is described as being one who "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" (TFA: 10). He and his family work very hard from sunup to sundown and each person has their own responsibilities (TFA: 11). He has three wives and eight children and they all live in huts surrounding his (TFA: 11).

It is evident that the man works hard and so do the women, they have different roles, and there are several examples of the difference between the feminine and masculine aspects. If anyone is cowardly, is described as 'womanly'. Achebe describes the strengths of Umuofia by comparing it with other villages. He says; "Umuofia was feared by all its neighbors. It was powerful in war and magic, and its priests and medicine men were feared in all the surrounding country" (TFA: 9-10). It makes to know that the 'place' factor among Igbo is not so significant in relation to the concept of culture. David Carroll comments on the concept of culture by comparison of the villages. He rightly puts in;

"Such scrutiny of law and custom is one of the perennial activities of Umuofia. The villagers probe into the logic of their traditional rites to test their usefulness; they compare them with the customs of neighbouring villages; and the elders recall the evaluation of the present traditions for the past"(Carroll,1980:38).

The death of Ikemefuna makes Okonkwo to feel retrospective about abilities who had killed the five men in the battle, who is known as the 'valour in war'(TFA:47) feels 'womanish' after killing Ikemefuna, the lad of Mbaino village, who used to call him 'father'. "Okonkwo, you have become a woman indeed" (TFA: 47). It is evident that the weaknesses of Okonkwo are seen in some of the elements when he comes across with the certain familial issues. Nwoye, his son joins the missionaries and Okonkwo is thrown into the frustrations, which lead the downfall of him to identify himself in the clan as a survivor of cultural identity.

Briefly, the novel takes place in a late-1800s Nigerian Ibo village of Umuofia, prior to the arrival of the first Christian missionaries and British officials. The main character, Okonkwo, represents the tragic hero who has status, prestige, bravery, wealth and a strong desire to succeed to make up for his father's failings. However, as

a tragic figure, Okonkwo's human flaws contribute to his downfall. More broadly, however, Okonkwo represents every man who must have a strong enough self-image and personal integrity to battle new ways and customs from a competitive culture. It doesn't describe the actual geographical location or region in Nigeria, but it gives an ornate description of the cultural ethos of the Igbo community.

According to David Carroll, *No Longer at Ease* is "a tragicomic postscript to the moving events of his first novel" (Carroll, 1980:62). *No Longer at Ease* is "a tragicomic postscript to the moving events of his first novel" (Carroll, 1980:62). The issues of Obi Okonkwo's identity are at the centre of it. Achebe describes the adversity of the protagonist, Obi who is a grandson of Ogbuefi Okonkwo of *Things Fall Apart* (1958). In the novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) we come across with the disintegration and pacification of the Igbo people after the arrival of the missionaries in Nigeria. The colonial forces and the domination of Christianity are projected to persist the issues of the identity of Nigerian people along with the cultural patterns. Achebe takes us to the 1950s, the Nigerian pre-independence period, in which Nigerians were aspirants to get the political Independence. The story reveals the problems of the Igbo people at the cusp of Independence.

Obi Okonkwo, the pride of the Igbo people of Umuofia having the brilliant academic record of eight distinctions at the senior Cambridge level, finds himself no longer at Ease, due to his confusion of the hybrid culture in Lagos. His downfall due to alienation from the society and his scholarly sense makes him to go through the traumatic phase of 'culture cringe'. Ogbuefi Okonkwo struggles to keep the communal ethics of his society integrated in *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Obi, on the other hand, exposes the weaknesses of the old values and doesn't adjust with the modern sense.

In *No Longer at Ease* (1960), The Umuofian society represents values of the past, While Nigerian Capital Lagos, is cosmopolitan urban presents, where everyone take a refuse to seek the fortune, no holds barred, for the meagre parks of the effulgence. Umuofia is rurally conservative, the hybrid amalgam of pagan and established Christian respectabilities. Obi finds the bonds of kinship and conservative values suffocating during the disruptive period of rapid change. The Umuofia Progressive Union was established in Lagos for the welfare of the Igbo people of Umuofia. Obi was sent to London on scholarship for further education to acquaint the English – based knowledge. "They (Umuofia Progressive union) wanted him to read the law so

that when he returned he would handle all their land cases against their neighbours” (NLE: 6). It means that the youth are motivated and mobilized by the ethnic society as the instruments for conflict and protecting the self-image of the society. But when he got to England; He did graduation in English instead of studying law. The Umuofian Progressive Union got angry and left him alone. He got the ‘European post’ as a civil servant in Lagos.

After returning from England, he failed to live up to the image and function Umuofia had created for him; consequently he became alienated from the community while the Nigerian identity he desires still remains unrealized. The questions posed in front of Obi about to focus on identity as Umuofian, a Nationalist or to revolt against the colonial ideology. He lost the ethnic and regional ties. He didn’t value Igbo culture even he didn’t follow its prescriptions. The crisis in his mind about not to follow his catechist father Isaac (Nwoye in *Things Fall Apart*) who “believed utterly and completely in the things of the white man. And the symbol of the white man’s power was the written word, or better still the printed word” (NLE: 100). It results the issues of identity of Obi and the issues of the Nigerian Umuofian culture that had been neither rejected nor respected by the educated people like Obi.

Achebe’s concern to focus on Obi Okonkwo is to describe that he is not only the product of Umuofia but also of Lagos and Europe. He is dismantled to return to his origin; moreover he is no longer at ease in the old dispensation. His engagement with Clara breaks off and financial problems became so critical when he learns that Clara is pregnant. He manages to get the money for a bungled abortion of Clara, but, unfortunately, Clara leaves him as she doesn’t want that there should be the problems for Obi in his clan after marriage. On the other hand, Obi’s mother dies and Obi doesn’t attend the funeral of her. His absence from the funeral is called ‘a thing of shame’ (NLE: 126). His conduct was equated with the act of his father Isaac (Nwoye) who didn’t attend his father’s means Ogbuefi Okonkwo funeral. The President of Umuofia Progressive Union comments;

“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: 127-128).

Obi's frustrations after the departure of Clara from his life, death of his mother and financial burden made him to accept the bribe of twenty pounds that the disgraceful thing occurs in the life of Obi, who suffers throughout the novel to know his real identity in Nigeria. Obi Okonkwo's moral decay cannot be blamed on the ecological syndrome or even on his contact with Western cultures. It is also inappropriate to assume that Western education and Western culture is a panacea for our moral ills.

It is evident from the confusion of Obi that the educated African like Obi couldn't outgrow even the most backward member of his village where traditional wisdom along with its own setbacks rides high. On the other hand, it can be argued that individual relies not only on his own strength but also on the help of the community, whereas in the new dispensation of the developed economy he could be himself, remaining disinterested in others.

Achebe projects the Igbo village life in the 1920s before it had experienced any sustained contact with Europeans. The arrival of the missionaries has been continued with the significant change from *Things Fall Apart* (1958). The villagers realise that the missionaries would arrive at any time with their powerful and permanent rule. The central character in the novel Ezeulu is focused as the Chief priest of the God Ulu. The God Ulu is the most powerful of all the deities of the six villages of Umuaro. Ezeulu is considered as an arrow of the God Ulu, who interprets the will of the god and perform the important rituals of the villages. The *Festival of Pumpkin Leaves* and *New Yam Festival* are the core parts of the villagers to offer the praying to their God Ulu.

The cultural patterns of the Igbo villagers are visible through the celebration of these rituals as the parts of their ethics. The Festival of Pumpkin Leaves is celebrated to cleanse the six villages of their sins before the planting season. The announcement of it is being made by the Chief Priest of the God Ulu. The culture of the Umuaro gets the people associated in the *ilo* (market place) with the huge gathering of the people with *Ikolo* drum to salute Ulu. Achebe captures the nerves of the communal Igbo rituals with their strange mingling of fear and delight. The second festival of New Yam proclaims the harvest and marks the end of the old year and the beginning of the New. On the occasion, every elder man takes yam-seeds to the shrine of Ulu. Ezeulu selects the twelve only from each of the villages to calculate the New Year. After the

ritual the harvesting begins. Such cultural and religious activities make the people to find revered to their god, Ulu.

The harmony and peace of the villagers are at the toe when the Umuaro people decide to go for a war with Okperi on the land issue. Ezeulu is a man of thought whereas Okonkwo is a man of action in *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Ezeulu tries to prevent the war with Okperi, but he was blamed by Nwaka being the most titled man in the six villages. He convinced people that Ezeulu's decision would harm them and sinks his reputation among villagers by challenging his power.

The dispute between Nwaka, the priest of Idemili and Ezeulu, the Chief Priest of Ulu is not limited to these two men, but it spreads to their respective villages, Umuachala and Umunneora. The issues of their identity are on the grounds of politics and religion foreground the fertile situation for missionaries to lead their Christianity among the villages by execution of their power. David Carroll rightly says;

“Achebe has opposed the two very different worlds of the novel and then skilfully developed this parallelism between his main characters, The problems and complexities of authority and power reveals surprisingly similar pattern in the colonial and in the tribal world” (Carroll, 1980:95).

The world of the Europeans also has its rituals. Although there are only five men on Government Hill in Okperi, Witerbottom insists on the rigid hierarchy of power. There are the administrators and officials. The religious aspects of Igbo tradition and secular views of missionaries employ different frames of references in relations to the culture and identity. Missionaries had to compete with their priests and their deities to convince the people about new faith i.e. Christianity. The missionaries too have their own internal conflicts like Umuaro and the British administration about to exercise and extend their power. The catechist John Goodcountry from Niger Delta despises the traditional beliefs of Umuaro like the act of colonial administration, “who fought the bad customs of their people, destroyed shrines and killed the sacred iguana” (AOG: 47). In certain aspects, the culture of the tribal people is humiliated by the missionaries, which differ from the traditional religious faith.

Ezeulu realises the strength of colonial power, so he decides to send one of his sons Oduche to learn the new ritual. “He (Ezeulu) also wanted him(Oduche) to learn the white man's wisdom, for Ezeulu knew from what he saw of Wintabota and the

stories he heard about his people that the white man was very wise”(AOG:42). The missionaries offer the post of warrant chief in Umuaro. Being loyal to his clan, Ezeulu rejects Winterbottom’s order and believed in himself that his own religious power is much more powerful than the prestige to work with the colonial administration. He sends the message with court messenger by saying; “tell your white man that Ezeulu does not leave his hut. If he wants to see me he must come here” (AOG: 139). The religious power of Ezeulu, The social power of Nwaka and the colonial power of missionaries poses the issues of their identity as far as concerned to the rituals of the Igbo people. Each of them wants to foster the influence among people about their powers. It is an evident from the perspectives of the issues of identity and culture in Umuaro that the Christianity and traditional Igbo religion got the prominence to execute their hold on the social system.

Ezeulu’s imprisonment by missionaries in Okperi to reach the final destination by sinking his religious power in the eyes of villagers is certainly the downfall of the Igbo society to accept the new culture including the white man’s religion. It can be argued that tradition vibrates with new life by being enriched from time to time, tradition, thus, is not merely reenacting the past. The identity of the individual or the society forms with the changing patterns of culture. The culture is fluid and it changes time to time, to accept the changes in the cultural patterns means to be flexible with the changing scenario. Ezeulu, unlike Okonkwo, didn’t accept the change, subsequently faces the problems due to the steps taken by his own clan without resistance to the missionaries.

*A Man of the People* (1966) mirrors the political struggles between Africans along with continuing influence of colonial power and other western countries on African culture and ends with a government being overthrown by the military coup. The novel is set during the newly Independent West African country in the 1960s to expose the conflicts between the emergent middle class and the masses of Nigeria. The novels *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and *Arrow of God* (1964) delineate the issues of African identity and culture by illustrating the internal and external influences upon the traditional Igbo life, while the novels *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of Savannah* (1987) project the encroachment of the western domination after Independence in Nigeria with conflicts between the elitism and the masses.

The central characters Chief Nanga and Odili Samalu occupy the opposite ends of the political spectrum. The conflicts between them elucidate a strange blend of fascination and repulsion by losing the importance of cultural values. It also makes an impact of the continuing process of disintegration, which started in the colonial regime that focuses the forth confusion and chaos about the breakdown of the values. Chief Nanga is focused as 'a man of the people' satirically. The Self-centred opportunist like Chief M.A. Nanga shows no interest in the problems of the villagers. He seems the inheritor of the western ideology and almost influenced by the White man's approach towards the natives even after the Independence. His love for 'national cake' amounts a genuine sympathy and rapport with the people whom he represents. According to David Carroll;

"He doesn't discount the people's primitive loyalties; even as he exploits them he remains sensitive to their demands, so that there is an ironical half – truth in his assertion that he represents the government 'of the people, by the people, for the people'"(Carroll,1980:120).

Odili rejects the influence of Mr. Nanga but is turned to political benefits through the parties, vacations and other incentives. Hugh Webb evaluates the process of refinement which is visible in Odili's decision for the moral upliftment of the society. He says that "the contradiction of his individual position with what is projected as a naive searching for the "right" way, himself and the nation" (Webb, 1980:141).

The politicians take over tribal and village trappings to prove their identity as the representatives of the society. However, there are the conflicts between the morality of the village and the political affairs of the nation. Instead of educating the people and making them to understand the political system, the corrupt government feeds on the ignorance of the masses. The contrast in the ancient Igbo culture is seen in the new ideology. In the novel *Arrow of God* (1964), Ezeulu's decision to send his son Oduche to the white man's school is an act of making the new generation able to resist the colonial impact. The duality in the post-colonial Nigeria poses the issues of their identity. The Independence in Nigeria made the beliefs of the people alienated when the people were struggling on the part of the corruption and disintegration or one can say that the dislocation of them from their unified culture. The urge for getting

the favour of girls like Elsie or Edna enforces the patriarchal identity of the society to displace the women from the traditional cultural bondage of the society. It highlights the insecure women in the post-colonial period when the political power comes in force as the dominant masculine ideology.

Chief Nanga's plan to marry Edna according to the native custom and law throws the light on the masculine identity of the people after Independence. It suggests that the patriarchal identity of the Nigerian people is embedded in the traditional culture to consider the women as the 'tools' of reputation. "He wants a bright new "parlour-wife" to play hostess at his parties" (MOP: 23). Odili's decision to deprive Chief Nanga of his plan about marriage with Edna leads an act of revenge against him who had spoiled Elsie. The rivalry between Odili and Mr. Nanga poses the contrast between them.

Chief Nanga's sex with Elsie is a shameless act according to Odili. She cried out for the help, but Odili couldn't make it possible to resist Chief Nanga. He becomes repentant about his decision that he should not have called Elsie to introduce Chief Nanga. He didn't pay the attention to the inconsequential things and got trapped into the dilemma to console Elsie. The power of Chief Nanga made the difference and Odili got helpless to protect Elsie from him.

Mrs. Jeans is described as the bold and dominant figure and represents the attentiveness of the women when she teases Mr. Nanga about the equal rights of the women. She says; "I done talk say na only for election time woman de get equality for dis our country" (MOP: 19). Her argument is about the inequality of the women and they have been treated equally with rights in the society during the elections to win their votes. In contrast to the identity of Mrs. Jean, the 'bush' wife of Chief Nanga is presented in the novel as the women with no ambitions. The helpless women like Mrs. Akio Agnes scarify their purity in order to become successful in their professions. When she wants to succeed in her business as a lawyer jointly owning her private firm with her husband sacrifices her chastity and falls prey of Chief Nanga.

The decade of the First Independence was one of the distressing periods in the history of Nigeria that wherein the culture got dominated by the political influences. The ancestors of the Igbo society and other several indigenous groups kept the cultural patterns vibrant with an amazing tenacity in spite of the disastrous colonial rule. Achebe presents the cultural issues in the novel *A Man of the People* (1966) which were swept away the traditional patterns of their culture by the new change. In

his fictional attempt to assess the patterns of change, it predominantly reveals the various forces hastened the old values of the people.

The tribal cultural values kept the people integrated before colonial and post-colonial influences. The changes in the old values disrupted the people from each other. Odili, the narrator gives an insight about the western influences in Nigeria, when he comes to know that Chief Nanga plans to marry the girl Edna calling her as 'parlour wife' though she deserves to be someone's first wife. He says, "Just think of such a cultureless man going abroad and calling himself Minister of Culture. Ridiculous. This is why the outside world laughs at us" (MOP: 23). Chief Nanga's sexual act with Elsie is an instance of the change in the ethical values.

The cultural aspects of the Nigerian people are portrayed to describe 'highland tribes'. The yam as the principal crop of the tribe is replaced by the cash crop coffee. It suggests the part of East Africa. The people eat bitterleaf soup and egusi, and jollof rice; they speak African Pidgin English which is the parallel between the novel's history and events in Nigeria. The new generation is alienated from the roots of their culture. Mr. Nanga's origin is not identified in the story that makes a point about an alienation of him from the lineage. Odili abandons the old gods.

The materialistic Nigerian society keeps away the highly tribal relations. The 'bush' people were captivated by the changing cultural patterns. The nation becomes the open prey of the bribery. They worship the political gods instead of their gods of the shrine. Although the novel concludes on the 'coup' and army taken over, it doesn't find the solution for the cultural issues which brought out the social change. The hybridity in Nigerian culture poses the issues of their cultural identity. With colonialism, the distinction between the society namely the elite and the villagers draws the line about the hybridity in their cultural patterns. Most of the African Leaders like M.A. Chief Nanga belonging to the elite class didn't value their own traditional culture and the importance of their indigenous groups.

The celebration of the *New Yam Festival* in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is the reflection of the traditional culture of the Igbo people. The festive mood among the women and children gives an idea about it. The social gathering of the Igbo people during the New Yam Festival is replaced after Independence by the celebration of the Christmas Day. The narrator explains the glamour of the Christmas festival among the people. The education and job opportunities made available by the White men along with the influence of their culture. The celebrations before arrival of the colonies in

Nigeria and the cultural patterns of them after colonialism make the point that the drawing beautiful black patterns of *Uli* on their stomachs and backs is substituted by the lipstick. The Italian-type of shoes and tight trousers reminds the traditional anklets and the '*jigida*'. It is about the hybridity in the cultural patterns of the Nigerian people.

The 'titles' for the Igbo people in the traditional clan were bestowed for their greatest achievements. Achebe remarks, "Okonkwo rested his fame on his solid personal achievements by throwing Amalinze, the Cat in the wrestling match" (TFA: 1) Ekwefi falls in love with him for his dandy performance in the wrestling matches. But he didn't have enough money to pay the bride price for her. He was unable to convince her father at the end. But Odili Samalu succeeds to impress Edna Odo's father with the branded-new Volkswagen. The fame of Odili is considered by his wealth instead of achievements.

Odili's love for Elsie is not a pure and he just makes the fun of his relations with her. The deep sense of love is not portrayed in the modern life like situations. Odili shifts his focus on Edna Odo is an instance to take a revenge of Chief Nanga, who molested his girlfriend Elsie. It is not a genuine love of him with Edna that makes a point of the love in a practical sense.

*A Man of the People* (1966) projects the issues of culture in Nigeria by multifarious socio-political evils. The corrupt political leaders, bigots, political opportunists made the people alienated from their culture. The internal tribal sharing got weakened to come with the cultural practices such as the traditional social activities. The polygamy of the politicians resulted into the rifts of social and economical injustice, inter-tribal rivalry and the issues of their integration.

*Anthills of Savannah* (1987) represents the political powers by exposing its failure to connect with the people of Abazon in the fictional state of Kangan. It reflects the need of a range of possibilities to open up the new horizons as the remedies to its social malaise and revolves around the identity of the two prominent intellectuals like Chris and Ikem, who are victimized in a military crackdown initiated by the nation's president, Sam. The focus of the novel shifts between these two characters and their female friends, Beatrice and Elewa. It also explores the post-colonial identities of the Nigerian people that experienced the military rule for a long time. The anthills of the elite people are visible in the barren landscape through consuming the public funds by imitating the former colonial master. The historical

forces related to colonization seem to have disrupted the spiritual foundation of the Nigerians by deterioration of their traditional values. It led the people to chaos, corruption and instability in all the sections of life.

The political concerns reflect the power game, political upheavals and agitation of women for their political rights and the unequal share of the masses. The basic questions of class struggle are executed by the materialistic approach of the imperialists. The duel between Sam, His Excellency and Chris Oriko projects absolute power corrupts absolutely by generating the problems of the country like Kangan. The trouble with Nigeria simply refers the failure of leadership.

It is evident that the native rulers exploit the masses to justify their power in the form of the domestication. "They have the animal capacity to endure the pain of, shall we say, domestication. The very words the white master had said in his time about the black race as a whole. Now we say them about the poor" (AOS: 37). The native ruler like Sam is the failure to get rid on the colonial legacy. The political leaders caused the problems to the masses. The social malaise becomes the core part of the political powers. The middle class and the lower class people restore the dignity of the nation as the new hope for the new nation. The role of the masses is poignant to eradicate the nepotism and corruption. In the context, reconciliation connects the people to reject the European culture as well as political domination. It gives a message that the Africans can seek the glorious future not by the civil wars but in the terms of social developments through the harmonious co-existence of the culture.

The three alternatives have been projected in the novel to get the society free from the clutches of the colonial-based administration. The leadership of enlightened intellectual person unlike Ikem Osodi, The equality and space for the elevated status of the women like Beatrice and the group of the people, who insists on the dynamic policies. After Independence, the modest public officers serve as the objects of laughter, On the other hand, the nepotism made them distorted in their ideas to keep the masses vibrant with the changing pace.

The dominance of masculine identity is reflected in the African Trilogy (1988) by Chinua Achebe. *The Anthills of Savannah* (1987) extends the same issues at certain level, whereas the power relations impact the class struggle. Much heat has been generated on the issues of patriarchal ethos in English literature by Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) about the oppressive, gender-oriented mechanism

in the society throughout the world. However, it reflects in the African literature during the post-colonial period in Achebe's novels. Being Independent in 1960, Nigeria faced certain social bias up to 1990. The two-facet issues of masculine identity are seen in the novel with power-struggle and ideology. Achebe refers the dominance of masculine power to promote corruption, selfishness, and greed, which results into bad governance as well as the military coups. It is evident that the male dominance and their urge for the opportunities in the pursuits of the power relations is depicted in relation to the ideological, social and economic suppression of women. It can be argued that the root of the cultural change reflects the realities of postcolonial Nigeria subsequently the issues of their identity.

#### **7.4. Pedagogical Implications of the Study**

Chinua Achebe as a prominent writer of Modern African Literature fosters his reputation as the father of Modern African Literature. He had been the part of teaching profession. He was appointed to a three-year visiting professorship at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 1972 and for one-year visiting professorship at the University of Connecticut in 1975. He returned as professor of English at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1976 with which he had been affiliated since 1966. He became professor of literature at Bard College, Annandale, New York in 1990. Some of his novels, poems and short stories are the parts of the syllabi of different universities. *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is a part of the prescribed syllabi at undergraduate level in some of the renowned Indian Universities, such as the University of North Bengal, University of Delhi, University of Calicut, S.R.T.M. University, Nanded, Govt. V.Y.T.P.G. Autonomous College, Durg (C.G.) University Of Delhi, Delhi, Kanpur University, Ravenshaw University, Cuttack, University of Calcutta, Presidency University and at post-graduate level in the universities such as Goa University, Aliah University Kolkata, Chaudhary Charan Singh University Meerut, Osmania University, University of North Bengal, Kurukshetra University Kurukshetra Hariyana, Shivaji University Kolhapur Maharashtra, Veer Narmad South Gujarat University Surat Gujarat, Alagappa University, Karaikudi Tamilnadu, Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University Maharashtra, K.S.K.V. Kachchh University, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar University Agra Gujrat University, University of Kota, University of Rajsthan Jaipur, Vidyasagar University and Singhanian University.

*No Longer At Ease* (1960) is a part of prescribed syllabi at postgraduate level in the University of Burdwan and *Refugee, Mother and Child* (1971) is prescribed in Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune and St. Joseph's College (Autonomous) Tiruchirappalli at post graduate level and in University of Calicut, S. R. T. M. University, Nanded, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Nagarjuna Nagar at undergraduate level. *Chinua Achebe: The Novelist as Teacher* is prescribed in the Bhartiya University, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu at post graduate level and in Thiruvalluvar University at undergraduate level. *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) is prescribed at undergraduate level in Christ University, Bangalore and Pt. Ravishankar Shukla University, Raipur, Chhattisgarh.

*Chinua Achebe: "Colonialist Criticism"* is prescribed in Dibrugarh University, Assam, and North Lakhimpur College (Autonomous), New Delhi. The short story *Marriage Is A Private Affair* (1952) is prescribed in Maulana Azad National Urdu University at post graduate level and in the Kristu Jayanti College (Autonomous) at undergraduate level. In such a way, the present study will give the readers a firm distinct impression of the quality of this great novelist Chinua Achebe. The readers will also understand the theme of pacification, disintegration and disruption among Igbo tribe.

The research will be helpful to literature-lovers as well as common readers to know identity and culture through various aspects such as race, religion, rites, rituals, gender, customs traditions and ethics influenced by the colonies along with the issues of identity and culture in the novels of Chinua Achebe. The study of social, cultural and political aspects of Nigerian people in African Literature in the light of the issues of identity and culture in the novels of Chinua Achebe is helpful and useful to know the African Literature. This research study may play a great role in their investigations of various themes and ideas in his writings. This research tries to be a reliable and authentic resource pedagogically.

### 7.5 Major Findings

- The novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is a fine manifestation of reflecting issues of identity and culture in every sense of the word. Achebe mirrors the friction within the individual and the friction between the individual and Igbo society in the form of issues of identity and culture.

- Identity formation of any society or a person is not static it is fluid. Culture changes as per the changing social patterns and help to identify the people or society with differences.
- The novel *No Longer at Ease* (1960) mirrors the issues of identity and culture with 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 novel *Arrow of God* (1958) subsist the issues of identity and culture through internal tribal conflicts and the intervention of the missionaries to dislocate the Igbo people from their religious concerns.
- *A Man of the People* (1966) focuses individual pride in fostering status in the form of identity issues versus social patterns of the Igbo people which fall them apart during the colonial phase.
- *Anthills of Savannah* (1987) regulates the social order by keeping people vibrant about their social and individual identity, but the cultural changes disrupt the social patterns and individual identity if the vacuums remain in mutual understanding of the people in the society.
- Culture of any society shapes individual's identity, but the traditional obligations do not permit the cultural change hence, the issues of identity exist.

#### **7.6. Further Avenues for Research:**

The novels of Chinua Achebe open up the several issues of critical interest to readers especially those situated in contexts that share a similar experience of colonization. The issues of identity and culture those the Igbo world of Achebe's novels can be analyzed from different perspectives. By the study of the novels of Achebe, the reader is led through a few decades of Nigerian history where colonization led to the arrival of an alien culture that, as has been discussed, led to the destruction and death of the native culture and paved the way for the regeneration of a new one. The fact that the themes of the novels of Achebe may have universal application that set out to study his people, yet the Igbo experience has parallels in native cultures around the world. The numerous researches, in relation to the writings

of Chinua Achebe, are done and will be undertaken by researchers in future. This study will help the research students as an authentic source.

The study of the works of Chinua Achebe provides a wide variety of scope for further research. His plots and technique of writing pave a wide way for a separate study.

- It is clear from the study of his novels that Achebe projects dilemma of characters in the novels. Therefore, one can undertake analysis of the psyche of characters in his novels.
- Achebe has focused on the theme of masculine and feminine discrimination in that sense the Masculine and Feminine identity in the novels of Chinua Achebe can be an area for further research.
- Presentation of religion, culture and pacification of the Igbo people in the novels of Achebe also will be a subject for research.
- He uses the myths, folklores, and the art of story-telling with sense of belongingness in his novels. All these concerns of Chinua Achebe can be taken for research study.
- He also presents the disruption, disintegration and invasion of the Igbo people in the novels. So, this will be the subject of study.

Chinua Achebe projects African Literature through his novels as a great source of getting acquainted different facets of the Nigerian society, there is a variety of scopes for the researchers to evaluate the different perspectives.

### **7.7 Summay**

The chapter delineates the concepts of ‘identity’ and ‘culture’ along with the implications of them in the literary works. It has also focused its academic relevance by elucidating the pedagogical implications. The chapter takes a cursory look on issues of identity and culture at present in Nigeria in relation to the issues depicted by Chinua Achebe in his novels. Identity is a dynamic and a continuing changing process: it is not static and it continues to be modified and finally becomes generally accepted with the times. The issues of identity are related within the framework of culture which has different facets on the parts of the individual and social identity.

The affirmation of one’s identity, individual, group or national expectedly, includes an establishment of value for, recognition and acceptance of it. The

affirmation or rejection of the cultural values effects on the sense of self both at personal and social levels in relation with the identity. On this ground, the issues of identity and culture need to be supported with a great deal of harmonious co-existence in the rapid age of globalization to keep the social norms vibrant with the changing pace. Achebe gives this message through his novels to explore continuities with the past that can coexist with modern society. That is highlighted in the present research study. In the final part of the chapter major findings of the undertaken research have been focused along with the further avenues for the research from Chinua Achebe's literary work.

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