

Oral Techniques and Language in Chinua Achebe's Novels

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Abstract

African Literature has come to stay and has made outstanding contribution to world literature through its use of traditional African Oral techniques. In this direction one of the earliest innovators in African fiction is Achebe whose writing has had a profound effect on the African writing canon through the decades. Achebe has chosen the Idea of subversion rather than rejection. He uses the language of the colonizer to convey the Igbo experience of that colonization and defends his practice as an African writing in a European tongue. He writes in English not because he wants to write to the world in a world language or to write to white in white language. He wants to write to Nigerians, can only do that in English. If he wrote in his native Igbo he would only be writing to part of Nigeria. This paper attempts to study Achebe, his innovations in the use of language and oral techniques. He makes readers familiar of the English language and traditional folk tales and then showing them his own culture by writing with an advance African vocabulary and knowledge of Igbo proverbs. On the whole for Achebe, the skillful adaptation and use of indigenous African Oral techniques with western language has helped to improve his craft and effectiveness.

Introduction

Achebe has been the first Nigerian writer who very successfully transmutes the conventions of the novel a European art form into African Literature. Achebe has mastered the Western literary techniques and has expressed his thoughts in the European language.

Achebe has produced a fiction of the highest order in English language. He has made English language not only a medium of expressing native values, ideas and stories but also to reach a number of readers in all parts of the world. Achebe's experiments with the language of colonizer enables him to recapture the Igbo world in its fullness and at the same time for a non-African reader his novels become an introduction into it. Achebe accepts the fact that English language gives us a way of communicating among ourselves but he also admits that one has to modify English to convey our own sensibility rather than let one self be bought over by the language and thought process of one's education. Achebe in his essay "The African Writer and the English Language" writes of English, "If it failed to give them a song, it at least gave them [Africans] a tongue, for sighing". (Morning Yet on Creation Day, 57) He also adds,

...can he [the African writer] ever learn to use it like a native speaker? I should say, I hope not. It is neither necessary nor desirable for him to be able to do so. The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use. The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience. I have in mind here the writer who has something new, something different to say. (Morning Yet on Creation Day, 61)

Achebe in Morning Yet on Creation Day makes a connection between the African and the black American experience with English by quoting from James Ballwin,

My quarrel with the English language has been that the language reflected none of my experience. But now I began to see the matter

another way... perhaps the language was not my own because I had never attempted to use it, had only learned to imitate it. (84)

Non-English writers using English have, of course, bent and molded the language to their purpose. The best example would be that of James Joyce perhaps the single most efficient experimenter in the language ever. At the conclusion of *A Portrait of the Artist as a young man*, Stephen Daedalus voices what could be the inaugural moment of decolonizing English:

The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different the words home, Christ, ale, master, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language so familiar and so foreign will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language (Nayar, 246)

Raja Rao, one of the first generation of Indian novelist in English has expressed the linguistic and narrative anxiety of the post-colonial writer in these words,

One had to convey in a language that is not one's own spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word 'alien' yet English is not really an alien language to us... our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will someday prove to be distinctive and colourful as Irish or the American. (Nayar, 247)

Achebe, while conceding that it is an act of betrayal to abandon one's mother tongue, sees opportunities rather than impediments in using a worldwide language to communicate an African experience. The goal, as many writers have stressed, is to indigenize English.

Shashi Deshpande in a well-argued essay, titled 'Where Do We Belong: Regional National or International' states, "I have never had any doubts that my writing was as much part of the Indian literature as my father's was... writing in English is as much as a part of the literatures of this country as the writing in any other language." (Nayar, 250)

Writing in English, the language of the oppressor, would appear to contradict the very project of African literature set by Achebe; that of reconnecting with the roots in order to educate and liberate the people from colonially induced self-denigration. Achebe defends his choice of English in these words, "My reasons for choosing English [in *Things fall Apart*] were pragmatic to communicate, to tell a story to your ethnic group alone. There is a larger Africa beyond this world." (Nayar, 250)

Helen Tiffin in his book *Common Wealth Literature and Comparative Methodology* writes,

The literature of post-colonial world is inherently political in their use of language, as is the historiography of their patterns and their development. The very act of writing in the English language on alien ground restructures the worlds around the writer in terms of the imperial power, attempts to break out of their particular imperial power. Attempts to break out of their particular prison house of language have been, in many cases, both conscious and deliberate... It is not just the experience of other worlds that makes post-colonial literature fundamentally different from that of the European, but the double vision inherent in the use of an alien language to express these worlds, and the concomitant perception of the political implication of the act. (Roy, 50)

English language is used in the writing of post-colonial writers to create a texture and tone which in itself defines certain themes and meanings. Though much of colonial experience in post-colonial writing is written in English but what marks the work of these writers, is their conscientious use of English language in depiction of the society to which they belong. Their fiction is governed by the customs, manners, habits, ideas and norms of their own group or community. English language is not only a means of communication for them but also it is a carrier of culture transition. In most cultures of Asia, Africa, and South America, there exists rich and varied oral tradition. It was speech which came first, with the written form following it. As in Africa the oral culture was predominant and written was introduced only with the advent of colonialism. It is agreed that phase-shift from speech to writing, from spoken world to written, was a technical change, for it bring a major transition in modes of perception. But even after it when we see the samples of African writing in English, it appears clearly that despite the adaptation of written medium in African literature, the oral modes still survive. In the absence of the written tradition the African writers had to depend only on oral tradition. But the newly emerging creative writers of Africa have a clear vision of the ideal society so they have stressed on the need to combine the best in the old cultural tradition with the enlighten ideas of the new modern English world. They made English language a medium of expressing their native ideas and culture. But their African literature has maintained its typical African flavor for it remains rooted in the African culture, tradition, myths, rituals, landscape and social, economic and political realities. Thus while writing the African writers uses language as technique for cultural inferences which were orally transmitted through generations. Commenting on the use of the language as a technique Mark Schorer in his essay "Technique as Discovery", remarks:

For technique is the means by which the writers experience, which is his subject matter, compels him to attend to it; technique is the only means he had of discovering exploring, developing his subjects, to conveying its meaning and, finally of evaluating it. And surely it follows that certain techniques are sharper tools than others, and will discover more, than the writer capable of the most exacting scrutiny of his subject matter will produce works with the most satisfying content, works with thickness and resonance, works which reverberate works with maximum meaning. (Agarwal, 169)

Numerous post-colonial writers like Chinua Achebe, Amos Tutuola, Raja Rao, and Leslie Morgan Silko combine a traditional oral story telling format with new techniques of writing. Orality is the central indigenous mode in post-colonial writing. It seems natural that the first generation of post-colonial writers in English, adopted their aesthetics from this indigenous mode of storytelling. Post-colonial writing even written in English language replete with proverbs, riddles, song and local legends from the native community, tribe, clan and ethnic groups of these writers. Most post-colonial writers turn to local legends, myths and folk tales even as they write in a form that is western (the novel). In most of the cases, however, this western form is adopted and subverted through a process of indigenization, through the incorporation of local themes strategies and images etc. The result is often a form that is recognizably, a novel, but modified to suit the post-colonial requirement of a nativized genre. The African novel is an outgrowth of a society in which oral traditions still form a living reality. African oral traditions of storytelling mean that the pioneering works of African fiction have been largely unavailable in print. Vast numbers of various peoples across sub-Saharan Africa mainly relied on the oral relaying of stories

and styles of storytelling from one generation of a family to the next. This preserved a repertoire of tales peculiar to their culture which was also a record of African history. Oral traditions are an integral part of the everyday life of Nigerian people. Emmanuel Obiechina confirms that "Oral traditions has survived in West Africa in spite of the introduction of western writing and the foreign traditions which it bears" (Gera, 25)

Storytelling, a fundamental aspect of novel is a favorite form of oral tradition. Achebe tries to proclaim his native identity and African fiction by using the skills of narration which are rooted in his native oral traditions. Achebe uses native techniques of narration in his novels. These native techniques give an African colour and flavor and authenticity to his novels. By native techniques Achebe became able to attract not only to native audience but also to overseas readers, who find a way to look into African culture. Of course the content of the novels of Achebe is fully Africanized by drawing African oral traditions. He uses English language and linguistic medium not merely as a means of articulation but to express African cultural experience to established African authenticity.

The glory of Achebe's fiction is his use of effective language and adages of oral culture what sets him apart from other writers is the fact that he is, by far more successful than others in flawlessly translating his working of African term from one medium to another, from an oral tradition to an alien form of European (the novel) origin without changing the freshness of the former. He has not borrowed a style from any writer or standard style but from his own culture. While describing his African culture in the most realistic term, Achebe has used materials from his culture as the most effective fictional techniques. Achebe's characteristic mode of writing fulfills his own idea that the English of Africa will have to be a new English,

still in communication with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings. His language is a major component of his artistic strategy, which not only enriches English language but also gives the reader the experience of a whole culture. Lloyd W. Brown says,

Achebe's fiction demonstrates his preoccupation with language not only as a communicative device, but as a total cultural experience. At this level language is not merely technique; it is the embodiment of its civilization and therefore represents or dramatizes modes of perception within its cultural grouping. (Gupta, 87)

Achebe evokes the ceremonial traditional Igbo life through a richly condensed proved laden rhetoric English. The way he makes use of the native proverbs in English, shows how he exploits native elements of speech to give authenticity to the language he employs. The language used by Achebe provides an appropriate cultural matrix to the fictional narrative and lend an authenticity to his novels with a regional flavors. As Brenth Lindforce comments, "What gives each of Achebe's novels an air of historical authenticity is his use of English language". (Ravichandra, 236) But Achebe perfectly knows that oral forms like folk tales, stories, songs, proverbs dance etc. forms a significant role in shaping beliefs and values, behavior and actions of the people's life. Eustace Palmer in "The Growth of the African Novel" writes,

Achebe deliberately introduces the rhythms, speech patterns, idioms and other verbal nuances of Ibo... the effect of this is that while everyone who knows English will be to understand the work and find few sighs of awkwardness, the reader also has a sense, not just of black men using English, but of black

Africans speaking and living in a genuinely black African living situation. (Gupta, 29)

Achebe is a first rate story teller. He follows the art of a folk tale teller. He has consciously experimented with traditional oral forms. This use of folk tales and stories in his novels clearly shows his familiarity with the art of storytelling tradition of his native people. He has a great ability to narrate and control the materials from his own culture and traditions in all its fullness. As a storyteller he owes a great deal to his elder sister. She told him many stories when he was young and it was she who introduced him the pleasure of art of storytelling. As a storyteller he not only narrates the history of the community, but also critiques it through social commentary. He prophesies cautions and guides his community.

His novels are read like folk tales amusing stories, folk songs, proverbs, customs, spirit, religion, gods, goddesses, beliefs, rites, birth, death, family marriage etc. are parts of his novels which add to the total effect of his tale based novels to entertain, instruct and introduce native ideas, values, customs that constitute their moral and ethical view of the world. His novels show how folk tales rise naturally and originally from real living situation in traditional society. These folk tales not only embody the values and belief of group but also serve as guides to future action and behavior. As a storyteller he uses the folk tales to answer the practical needs of the Igbo society. Tales in his novels combines an encyclopedic function with ethical advice. These tales also serve the purpose of educating young ones. Mothers provide knowledge through different stories to their children, which play a significant role in the spiritual and moral development of their offspring's. Through these folk tales Achebe shows how values, beliefs and knowledge were orally transmitted in Igbo society from one generation to another.

In *Things Falls Apart* there are stories of tortoise and his wily ways, of the bird eneken-tioba and of quarrel between Earth and Sky that have pointed a moral value. The tale of the tortoise-an etiological one suggests the basic theme of the novel- the racial conflict, the tortoise that exploits the innocence of the birds is the white colonizer. This has reference to the wiping off the Abame tribe by the white. When Obierika tells Okonkwo about the destruction of the village of Abame and its habitants for killing an innocent white man, Uchehdu recollects a tale of a young kite- how the duckling was returned to its mother who said nothing and how the chick whose mother raved was eaten by mother kite and young kite to clear his point that never kill a man who says nothing.

The didactic animal tale appears in almost all Achebe's novels. In *Things Fall Apart*, the tales of the wily tortoise (38, 67) expose the wicked nature of human beings, and the story of the mother kite shows the folly of the people of Abame (98). Such tales also point out indifference and inconsiderateness of human beings in *No Longer at Ease* (149), and in the same novel the story of the leopardess illustrates the ill effects of greed.(53)

One of the stories which always hunt young Nwoye's memory is about the quarrel between earth and sky. There cannot be a more explicit poetic evocation of the complementarily of masculine and feminize as visualized by the Igbo than this brief tale which shows how earth and sky the male and female are interdependent. In this Igbo society men's and women's stories illustrate male and female values Okonkwo's stories exemplify warfare and violence in order to indicate courage in children. Ekwefi's stories of the mosquito, Obiageli's unending chain tale are meant for entertainment.

The Igbo have another story about the chicken who having abdicated its responsibility had become a sacrificial victim. The story gives a

moral that in a democratic system everyone should play his role and be concerned about the crucial issues affecting his welfare and communal harmony. In *No longer at Ease* and in *Things Fall Apart* Achebe tells a story about leopardess which illustrates the ill effects of greed. The Igbo folk tale of Ojadili, the master wrestler who ventured to challenge his 'Chi' and brought down ruin on himself has relevance to the unfortunate end of Okonkwo.

Maxwell in *A Man of the People*, at the inauguration of the election campaign of Odili in Urua, narrates a story about the emergence of Common People's Convention Party. The story is about a hunter who kills big game at night but loses it to two vultures to that in his anger he had shot dead. The action of the hunter is justified by saying that the hunter had "wiped out the dirty thieves fighting over other man's inheritance." (124) Here the hunter is the people and the vultures are people's Organization Party and Progressive Alliance Party.

In *Anthills of the Savannah*, the old man narrates the story of the tortoise and leopard to explain the struggle of the people of Abazon against the military regime. It is a fight against a powerful regime, "perhaps to no purpose except with the hope that those who come after us will be able to say, 'True, our fathers were defeated but they tried'." (128)

All these tales are fine examples of Achebe's art of storytelling and prove that he is a great folk tale teller. The novels of Achebe get life and soul from oral tradition of Africa. *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* are oral records of Igbo life. Even the later novels like *No longer at Ease*, *A Man of the People* do not function in the Igbo narrative tradition as explicitly but they too conceal striking oral patterns and habits in their linguistic structures. Of other forms of oral tradition the role played by proverbs is of vital importance

because proverbs occupy a significant place in African societies. More than folk tales, myths the central part of oral literature in most African societies is embodied in proverbs which are drawn from experience and from observing the behavior of human beings their emotions, feelings, thoughts, habits, beliefs, values and the surrounding world of natural happenings.

Achebe uses proverbs and saying in his novels in an exemplary manner. In *Things Fall Apart* Achebe says "Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly and proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten". (5) Achebe, who uses proverbs to pass on great cultural richness, thinks such proverbs can provide solutions to a people's questions and problems. Hence, proverb which is an important feature of the Ibo culture, finds ample and appropriate place in the novels of Achebe. African proverbs mirror the wisdom and insight of the African people. To convey the flavors of traditional Nigeria, Achebe translates Igbo proverbs in to English and weaves them into his stories. Proverbs are woven into speech and dialogues of characters. Each proverb has a story behind it and this is the triumph of Achebe's art. By the use of proverbs a speaker of his novels is looked upon as the owner of traditional values and wisdom locked in them. In his novels proverbs constitute one of the most potent factors for individual conformity and cultural continuity.

An Ibo proverb as Achebe use it, besides giving a local colour lightens up a situation and gives it a significance which otherwise could be missed. Proverbs are used to express the motive, ideas of characters and to give information about them as an old man says about Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, "Looking at a King's mouth one would think he never sucked at his mother's breast." (19) The Umuofian society hold success and achievement in high regard, this attitude is well expressed in many proverbs like "You can tell a

ripe corn by its look." (16) As we see in the novel, the proverb, "If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings"(6) indicate the character of Okonkwo whose fame rises to be a man of title. Then Achebe goes on, "Okonkwo had clearly washed his hands and so he ate with kings and elders." (6) These proverbs gives an insight in to the native traditions that age was respected but achievement was revered among Igbo people. By merit of one's personal quality respect could be earned. The proverb "A toad does not run in the day time for nothing." (21) and "whenever you see a toad jumping in broad daylight than know that something is after his life.", (22) basically express the idea that whenever there is something unusual in the decision of people it is enough to suggest that it is due to some obvious reason. A number of proverbs reveal Ibo beliefs about spirituality as they say, "when a man say yes his chi says yes also" (19) As in the case of Okonkwo when he strived for prosperity his chi agreed, but when he started to become aggressive his chi disagreed and brings his downfall. Other proverb, such as "mother is supreme" (96) communicate Igbo views of society. In this traditional society mothers are regarded very high.

In No longer at Ease to justify the importance of kinship the president point out, "A kinsman in trouble had to be saved, not blamed, anger against a brother was felt in the flesh, not in the bone."(14) Many proverbs in his novels are also concern with matter of politics and power particularly where related to the effects of colonization. The proverb that, "If one finger brought oil, it soiled the others", (89) shows the effort less spreading of anarchy among the natives after the advent of the white man. Ezeulu's positive attitude in Arrow of God towards the whites finds expression in some proverbs as, "If a man kills the sacred python in the secrecy of his hut the matter lies between him and his God."(113). In this novel we also learn that, "when a

handshake goes beyond the elbow, we know it has turned to another thing."(13) When Ezeulu fails as keeper of the clan's safety people show their anger by quoting appropriate sayings.

"The man who carries a deity is not a king"(29)

"No matter how strong or great a man was, he should never challenge his chi." (26)

"Only a foolish man can go after a leopard with his bare hand."(85)

By the time we come to Ibo society in Nigeria in *No Longer at Ease*, most traditional values have disappeared but some of the proverbs that explicate moral and spiritual wisdom remain with the people. Here are some examples: "Wherever something stands, another thing stands beside it" (145); "He who has people is richer than he who has money" (72). The impatience and the foolhardiness of the Obi Okonkwo's are compared to that of "the young antelope who danced herself lame when the main dance was yet to come" (10). *A Man of the People*, Achebe's fourth novel, has a number of proverbs that clearly trace the decay of cultural values in Nigerian society. Selfishness, greed, and desire for power characterize of political leaders like chief Nanga. The general motto of the people's leaders is, "Ours is ours but mine is mine." And "if you want to eat a toad you should look for a fat and juicy one."(*No Longer at Ease*, 5)

Achebe's characters make use of proverbs to make their arguments forcefully and effectively illustrate moral values.

Brenth Lindforce in his work "Folk lore in Nigerian literature" remarks about Achebe's use of proverbs, "The function of proverbs in Achebe's novels is to reiterate themes, sharpen characterization clarify conflict and define values."(Agarwal, 171) Each of Achebe's proverbs carry on the theme of the novels and strengthen the

structure of his novels. Through proverbs, Achebe is able to impart native wisdom to non-Igbo readers. The significance of Igbo proverbs as vehicles of native sagacity and embodiments of traditional value is well known. In Achebe's novels the examples of the Igbo proverbs beautifully woven into the speech patterns of characters are numerous. As the elders say, "the sun will not shine on those who stand before; it shines on those who kneel under them."(Anthills, 115) The Igbo people say, "A man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness."(Things Fall Apart, 27) and "Wisdom is like a goat skin bag; every man carries his own."(Arrow of God, 16) In Igbo society,

Negro proverbs constitute one of the most potent factors for individual conformity and cultural continuity. In West Africa proverbs are cited in court trails in much the same way the European lawyers city cases which serve as legal precedent. (Meitei, 50-51)

Achebe quite successfully translated Igbo proverbs, thoughts and words in to English which give an extra dimension to his novels. As Ben Obumsele in his review said,

The African writer is not merely to use but to expand the resources of English and also the verbal peculiarities of Things fall Apart suggest that Chinua Achebe has reflected much on his problem. His solution is to attempt literal fidelity to translate where ever possible the actual words which might have been used in his own language and thereby preserve the native flavors of his situations. (Agarwal, 170)

These proverbs give insight of Igbo people as these proverbs have a value system which engendered them continues to exist. In Arrow of God Ezeulu's desire that everyone should act according to his

thinking, a failing that his friend recognized in him is censured in the following Proverb " If a man sought for a companion who acted entirely like himself he would live in solitude."(132) The proverbs and saying are an important part of the daily life of Igbo people. The continuing popularity of proverbs in Achebe's novels may be partly attributed to their symbolic import, economy of expression and linguistic sophistication. George Awoonor William, a critic, who was very enthusiastic about the use of such phrases and proverb in Achebe's novel, comments:

I think Achebe's Things Fall Apart achieves this overall effect of freshness by the translation of Ibo thoughts and words into English. Proverbs are woven in to speech and dialogue. Far from being a desecration of the English language, which seems to have come to stay, this transliteration of thoughts, concepts and images give the language freshness and a new scope for which I am sure the native speakers of English will thank us. (Agarwal, 174)

It seems that by using Igbo proverbs in English language Achebe protests Igbo people against oppression and domination. These proverbs are used to voice the native resistance. In the absence of a written system of laws in traditional societies, proverbs, on account of their association with ancestral wisdom enjoy irrefutable authority as informal guides to action and behavior.

Commenting on the technique and usage of proverbs in Achebe's novels Donates Nwoga says:

The Ibo proverbs can be relevant in two ways, depending on the context- the illuminative and the corrective. In Achebe's novels both types of uses are found. Corrective use refers to that which is not direct, is oblique in its usage, designed to produce an understanding or reaction in the person concerned, without directly

involving the speaker. The illuminative use on the other hand directly reinforces ideas by recalling traditional wisdom to support a given statement and is mainly to be found in formal address, oratory, discussion etc. (Agarwal, 173)

Thus in Igbo society, "Proverbs rather than folk tales and songs, form the core of the oral literatures of many African society." (Gera, 30) The other oral form that Achebe borrows into his novels is that of the folk song. Folk songs are also a glorious expression of Igbo culture songs are integral part of the life of Africans. In common celebrations song reaffirms the unity of the community and the importance of the Individual in the collectivity. In the song of Ikemefuna Achebe has shown how playfully sentimental and superstitious Africans are. Ikemefuna sings in Things fall Apart,

Eze Elian, elian!
 sala
 Eze ilikwa ya
 Ikwaba akwa Oligholi
 Ebe Danda nechi eze
 Ebe uzuzu nete egwu
 sala. (54)

As Ikemefuna sings in his mind and walks to its beat as he plays a childish game. If the song ends on his right foot he would consider his mother alive and if it ends on the left, she is dead, not dead but ill. The song ends on the right so he thinks his mother is well and alive. But he does not consider when his song ends on the left. So Ikemefuna felt like child once again. In No longer at Ease the female singers accosted Obi when he visits his village during his mother's illness with the following "Song of the Heart",

*A letter came to me the other day.
I said to Mosisi: Read me letter for me.
Mosisi said to me: 'I do not know how to read'
I went to Innocent and asked him to read my letter.
Innocent said to me 'I do not know how to read.'
I asked Simonu to read for me.
Simonu said: 'this is what the letter has asked me to tell you:
He that has a brother bought with money.
Is everyone here?
(Hele ee he ee he)
Are you all here?
(Hele ee he ee he)
The letter said
That money cannot buy a kinsman,
(Hele ee he ee he)
That he who has brothers.
Has more than riches can buy. (117)*

This folksong underscores the corrective function of songs in Igbo community. The singers are indirectly reminding Obi his responsibility towards his kinsmen than his girlfriend Clara. In Things Fall Apart in a song people sang the praise of a wrestler and clapped their hand:

*Who will wrestle for our village?
Okafo will wrestle for our village.
Has he thrown a hundred men?*

He has thrown four hundred men.

Has he thrown a hundred cats?

He has thrown four hundred cats.

Then send him word to fight for us. (36)

In Things Fall Apart while cutting the grass the villagers sang the most noteworthy song:

Kotma of the ash buttocks,

He is fit to be a slave

The white man has no slave

He is fit to be a slave (126)

This song shows Achebe's patriotism and may be regarded as a political song that shows the public opinion against the white who are fit to be thrown out of the land. The jubilant songs sang at the traditional feast reflects humor. As in the same novel people sing at the feast of the Uri of the daughter of Obierika.

If I hold her hand

She says, 'Don't touch.

If I hold her foot

She says, 'Don't touch'

But when I hold her waist beads

She pretends not to know. (85)

The rain song expresses man's relation to nature in complete harmony. It also reflects the importance of rain in the African farming and happiness of tribal people is also symbolized by rain. In rain children no longer stayed indoor, but ran about singing.

'the rain is falling,

the sun is shining

Alone Nnadi is cooking and eating. (25)

Ezeulu's Children in Arrow of God sing a song which is a part of their game,

Ukwa killed Nwaka Dimkpolo

E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo

Who will punish this ukwa for me?

E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo

Matched will cut up this ukwa for me

E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo

Who will punish this Matched for me?

E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo

Blacksmith will hammer it for me

E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo

Who will punish this Blacksmith for me?

E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo

And who will punish this fire for me?

E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo

And who will quench this water for me?

E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo

Earth will dry up this water for me

E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo

Who will punish this Earth for me? (125)

Igbo people also sing song when the child weeps. Obiageli sing a song to draw the crying and to sleep the child,

"Tell the mother her child is crying

Tell the mother her child is crying

And then prepare a stew of Uziza

And also a stew of Uziza

Make a watery pepper-soup

So the little birds who drink if

Will all perish from the hiccup?

Mother's goat is in the barn

And the yams will not be safe

Father's goat is in the barn...

Achebe neither translates some songs nor does he explain them. He appears to be doing strange things to the novel, leaving his readers mystified as to the status of tribal songs in his novels.

Achebe also uses the native myths which reveal both his learning and cultural heritage. He shows contemporary events, problems, public follies, mysteries of life and death through his own interpretation of Igbo myth. Achebe and other post-colonial writers use the seasons, agriculture life, local topographies to locate the myth and legend of their culture. This makes the myth highly specific.

George Santayana opines:

A developed mythology shows that man has taken a deep and active interest both in the world and in himself and has tried to link the two and interpret the one by the other. Myth is therefore a natural prologue to philosophy since the love of

ideas is the root of both. Both are made up of things admirable to consider. (Khayyoom, 89)

Achebe's use of cultural myth in his novels is to depict the collective cultural psychology that is the pre-historical knowledge but is still preserved by the modern men. Achebe uses the myths as fictional techniques. It is also articulated that myths are a protoplasmic pattern of a race, how this collective flow of racial history keeps the superstitions, norms, ritual beliefs and religion of a culture.

Achebe in *Anthills of the Savannah* uses the myth of sun (symbolized in Sam) whose power of scorching

heat destroys everything around. The destructive nature of the sun creates a terrible drought in Abazon forcing its leadership to visit H.E for the readdressal of their problem caused by the drought. He also uses the myth of Idemilli and Almighty sends his daughter to moderate monstrous masculine power and corruption prone. This most powerful myth is related to the pillar of water (Beatrice in the context of the novel) which seeks to put out the fire of the sun and also quench the thirst of the parched land of Abazon. Achebe succinctly portrays legend of male-power which is sought to be neutralized through female resistance:

In the beginning power rampaged through our world, naked. So the Almighty, looking at his creation through the round undying eye of the Sun, saw and pondered and finally decided to send his daughter, idemili to bear witness to the moral nature of authority by wrapping around power's rude waist a lain cloth of peace and modesty. (102)

Thus these two myths of creation and destruction, the pillar of water and the burning sun take on a variety of forms to compose two separate worlds.

The importance of myths, legends folk tales proverbs rites folk songs etc. in African society need not to be over emphasized. Achebe's novels are an exhaustible source of these elements. These elements are used both explicitly and implicitly in the form and structure of the novel to show how they shape the life and consciousness of the people. Helen Tiffin in significance of Things Fall Apart writes,

In Things fall Apart western historicizing is kept at bay while the complexity and communal destiny of culture through proverbs, seasonality, festivals rituals, multiple and power-balancing and power-sharing are established. Simultaneously this serves in each of its facts, to comment on a British system of theological exclusivity, ethnocentrism and hierarchical situation. (Amin, 166)

The oral forms like saying stories, myths and songs constitutes the religious social and ethical framework of Igbo society which forms the background of Achebe's novels. But in his fiction he also succeeds in creating English which has an ability to bring a whole range of human experience before our mind's eyes by his consummate uses of imagery drawn from both native and alien sources. Achebe has employed the new English and a new diction which suits his people.

He has successfully formed a new kind of diction and provides his characters with an impressive range of speech styles-formal, appropriate to the highly educated, dislocated broken English to the less educated and the illiterates. (Khayyoom,115-116)

In No Longer at Ease Achebe says of Christopher. "Whether Christopher spoke good or 'broken' English depended on what he was saying it, to whom and how he wanted to say it." (109-10) He writes in A Man of the People, "Mr. Nanga always spoke English or Pidgin; his children... spoke impeccable English, but Mrs. Nanga struck to our language--with the old English words thrown in now

and again." (32) He uses Pidgin English in his novels, a language spoken by non-native speakers. In *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* pidgin is used to show the Europeans trying to corrupt the traditional values. Winterbottom speaks Pidgin English to impress the local officers. Nanga also uses Pidgin English when he talks with the villagers. In *Anthills of the Savannah* Pidgin has become the legitimate language of the common people while Standard English represents the language of the common people.

Achebe never imitates the trends in English literature. He rejects the European notion that art should be accountable to no one, and needs to justify itself to nobody. As he puts it in his book of essays *Morning Yet on Creation Day*. Instead of it Achebe has embraced the idea which is at the heart of the African oral traditional that an art is and always was at the service of man; our ancestors created their myths and told their story for a human purpose. For this reason Achebe believes that any good novel should have a message should have a purpose. To quote Achebe, "every literature must in other words speak of a particular place evolve out of the necessities of its history, past and current and the aspirations and destinies of its people" (*Morning*, 77). He is a committed writer, committed to specific goals. For him every writer has a responsibility as he says,

A writer has the same kind of responsibility in all cultures, but the various elements of that responsibility come in different proportions according to the health of the community he's trying to serve... In Nigeria there's a sense of the loss of initiative in your own history, the loss of responsibility... And, of course, the view of the government as alien: in our traditional culture everybody was supposed to participate in the government... Now, all that has gone. Within one generation people loss even the memory of what

used to be. The writer has a responsibility to remember what it was like before, and to keep talking about it. (Needham, 11)

Thus after the above discussion it is clear that Achebe is a great writer whose style is easy to read and very convincing. Margaret Laurence in her book *Long Drums and Cannons: Nigerian Dramatist and Novelist*, praise Achebe in these words;

Thirty years ago Chinua Achebe was one of the founders of this new literature and over the years many critics have come to consider him the finest of the Nigerian novelists. His achievement however has not been limited to his continent. He is considered by many to be one of the best novelists now writing in English language. (Gupta, 29)

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