Joseph Conrad; 1857-1924

Joseph Conrad grew up in the Polish Ukraine, a large, fertile plain between Poland and Russia. It was a divided nation, with four languages, four religions, and a number of different social classes. A fraction of the Polish-speaking inhabitants, including Conrad's family, belonged to the szlachta, a hereditary class in the aristocracy on the social hierarchy, combining qualities of gentry and nobility. They had political power, despite their impoverished state. Conrad's father, Apollo Korzeniowski, studied for six years at St. Petersburg University, which he left before earning a degree. Conrad's mother, Eva Bobrowska, was thirteen years younger than Apollo and the only surviving daughter in a family of six sons. After she met him in 1847, Eva was drawn to Apollo's poetic temperament and passionate patriotism, while he admired her lively imagination. Although Eva's family disapproved of the courtship, the two were married in 1856.

Instead of devoting himself to the management of his wife's agricultural estates, Apollo pursued literary and political activities, which brought in little money. He wrote a variety of plays and social satires. Although his works were little known, they would have tremendous influence on his son.

A year into the marriage, Eva became pregnant with Joseph, who was born in 1857. The Crimean War had just ended, and hopes were high for Polish independence. Joseph's family moved quite a bit, and he never formed close friendships in Poland.

After Apollo was arrested on suspicion of involvement in revolutionary activities, the family was thrown into exile. Eva developed tuberculosis, and she gradually declined until she died in 1865. The seven-year-old Conrad, who witnessed her decline, was absolutely devastated. He also developed health problems, migraines and lung inflammation, which persisted throughout his life. Apollo too fell into decline, and he died of tuberculosis in 1869. At age eleven, Joseph became an orphan.

The young boy became the ward of his uncle, who loved him dearly. Thus began Joseph's Krakow years, which ended when he left Poland as a teenager in 1874. This move was a complex decision, resulting from what he saw as the intolerably oppressive atmosphere of the Russian garrison.

He spent the next few years in France, mastering his second language and the fundamentals of seamanship. The author made acquaintances in many circles, but his "bohemian" friends were the ones who introduced him to drama, opera, and theatre. In the meantime, he was strengthening his maritime contacts, and he soon became an observer on pilot boats. The workers he met on the ship, together with all the experiences they recounted to him, laid the groundwork for much of the vivid detail in his novels.
By 1878, Joseph had made his way to England with the intention of becoming an officer on a British ship. He ended up spending twenty years at sea. Conrad interspersed long voyages with time spent resting on land.

When he was not at sea, writing letters or writing in journals, Joseph was exploring other means of making money. Unlike his father, who abhorred money, Conrad was obsessed by it; he was always on the lookout for business opportunities.

Once the author had worked his way up to shipmaster, he made a series of eastern voyages over three years. Conrad remained in the English port of Mauritius for two months, during which time he unsuccessfully courted two women. Frustrated, he left and journeyed to England.

In England in the summer of 1889, Conrad began the crucial transition from sailor to writer by starting his first novel, Almayer's Folly. Interestingly, he chose to write in English, his third language.

A journey to the Congo in 1890 was Joseph's inspiration to write Heart of Darkness. His condemnation of colonialism is well documented in the journal he kept during his visit. He returned to England and soon faced the death of his beloved guardian and uncle. In the meantime, Conrad became closer to Marguerite, an older family friend who was his closest confidant. For six years he tried to establish intimacy with her, but he was eventually discouraged by the age difference and the disparity between their social positions.

Then, 1894 was a landmark year for Conrad: his first novel was published; he met Edward Garnett, who would become a lifelong friend; and he met Jessie George, his future wife. The two-year courtship between the 37-year-old Conrad and the 21-year-old Jessie was somewhat discontinuous in that Conrad pursued other women during the first year of their relationship, but his attention became strongly focused on Jessie by the autumn of 1895. Garnett disapproved of the match, especially since Jessie was miles behind Joseph in education. Nonetheless, they married in March 1896.

The children who followed the union were not warmly welcomed by their father; an absent-minded sort, he expressed surprise each time Jessie delivered a baby. His days were consumed with writing, a struggle no doubt exacerbated by the gaps in his knowledge of the English language.

The major productive phase of Conrad's career spanned from 1897 to 1911, during which time he composed The Nigger of the Narcissus, Youth, Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim, Nostromo, The Secret Agent, and Under Western Eyes, among other works. During this period, he also experienced serious financial difficulties, often living off of advances and state grants, there being little in the way of royalties. It was not until the publication of Chance in 1914 that he experienced some level of commercial success.
As the quality of his work declined, he grew increasingly comfortable in his wealth and status. Conrad had a true genius for companionship, and his circle of friends included talented authors such as Stephen Crane and Henry James.

Still always writing, he eventually returned to Poland, and he then travelled to America, where he died of a heart attack in 1924 at the age of 67. Conrad’s literary work would have a profound impact on the Modernist movement, influencing a long list of writers including T.S. Eliot, Graham Greene, Virginia Woolf, Thomas Mann, Andre Gide, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and William Faulkner.

Heart of Darkness : Plot Summary

Heart of Darkness opens on the deck of the yawl, Nellie, which is anchored along the Thames awaiting the return of the tide. Five individuals are on her deck, each exchanging a few lazy words. There is the owner of the boat, a lawyer, an accountant, the narrator -- who remains ambiguous in profession, and Marlow, the only one of the group who still works at sea. Looking to the river, Marlow describes what it must have been like for ancient travelers to Britain and how the area must have seemed like the end of the earth. He ponders how they tackled the "darkness" and overcame the "mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, [and] in the hearts of wild men" (Conrad 69). He then tells the group about his time spent as a fresh-water sailor -- his time in the "darkness."

He explains how he had just returned to London after life on the sea in the Far East, and how he became tired of his long vacation and tried to find another ship. His aunt knew of an ivory trade company in Africa and suggested he inquire. His aunt's influence paid off and he became employed as a steamboat captain on the Congo River.

He departed from Europe on a French steamer down the coast of Africa. The ship he was on seemed to make an infinite amount of stops. On these stops, Marlow became entranced by the endless coastline and the isolation created by the unfamiliar people. When the boat would stop and the black men would come out to trade with the ship, Marlow was fascinated by their presence and the reality they seemed to convey in contrast to the dreamlike features of his journey so far. Marlow realized his journey would be anything but normal. "For a time I would feel I belonged still to a world of straightforward facts; but the feeling would not last long" (p. 78).

Marlow's journey on the French steamer came to an end at the river's mouth, where he transferred to a river boat commanded by a Swede. The captain told Marlow of the corrupted government and country he was entering, and he added that an earlier passenger of his hanged himself up river for no apparent reason. Nearly one hundred miles upriver, the boat landed at the company's Outer Station. The station was littered with abandoned equipment rusting away in the grass. Accompanying the valuable equipment were groups of black workers chained to each other and the dead bodies of others. Marlow was troubled at the sight before him.
Marlow moved up to the company buildings where he met the company's chief accountant. His dress was immaculate as were his quarters -- a complete contrast to the confusion that defined the rest of the station. Here, Marlow learned of a man named Kurtz for the first time. The man told Marlow that Kurtz was an amazing man who was in charge of the inner, and most important, station. He said that it wouldn't be long before Kurtz made it into administration, as he had sent more ivory down river than any other agent.

After spending ten long days at the Outer Station, Marlow headed toward the Central Station over land with a caravan of sixty blacks and a white man. Fifteen days and two-hundred miles later, Marlow made it to the station exhausted from his journey. Adding insult to injury, he discovered his awaiting steamboat at the bottom of the river. The manager of the station made no acknowledgment of Marlow's long journey and went on and on about the wreck and how it would take three months to get it running again. The manager began talking about Kurtz and how no one knew if he was dead or alive. Marlow quickly determined that the manager "was a chattering idiot" (p. 89) and not worth his time, so he isolated himself from those who resided at the station. He decided to focus all of his time toward raising the steamboat. While he was there, however, he noticed the "pilgrims," white men who carried staffs and constantly spoke of the ivory trade, and he couldn't help overhear the constant talk of Kurtz.

One evening, the brick maker of the station invited Marlow to his room. The agent's quarters were a marvel compared to the rest of the station, just as the accountant's had been at the Outer Station. It did not take long for Marlow to realize the agent's motive. He was trying to extract information about Marlow's influential friends and sources back in Belgium. The agent was convinced Marlow knew of the company's plans for Kurtz, as Marlow and Kurtz shared recommending sources. Marlow revealed nothing and instead questioned the agent about Kurtz after discovering a painting by him. The agent expected a promotion for Kurtz soon, but said nothing more. Marlow soon realized the agent resented Kurtz, as he continued to pry information out of him.

Later, Marlow told the agent that he needed rivets to repair the steamboat. Weeks passed, but there were no rivets. Marlow knew that supply convoys came in from the Outer Station, and he knew there were rivets there as he had almost tripped on bags of them earlier. The only supplies that came, however, were cheap trade goods. Marlow, demanded rivets, but the agent acted indifferently towards his "forgetfulness."

As Marlow continued to wait, a group known as the Eldorado Exploring Expedition came into the station. The group was headed by the manager's uncle. One evening, as Marlow was lying in the shadows on the deck of the steamer, he overheard a conversation between the manager and his uncle. He discovered the manager had purposefully neglected to send supplies to Kurtz's Inner Station. A clerk of Kurtz's, while delivering a shipment of ivory, informed the manager that Kurtz was ill, and from then on, no news was heard from him again.
Finally, after months of waiting, rivets arrived. Marlow repaired the steamboat and began his journey upriver with a crew of about twenty natives, a few of the "pilgrims," and the manager. They progressed slowly over two months and encountered many native villages along the way. Marlow was determined to get to Kurtz and discover for himself the true nature of the man. The journey was difficult for "the snags were thick, the water was treacherous and shallow, [and] the boiler seemed indeed to have a sulky devil in it" (p. 107).

A few miles from the Inner Station, after clearing through a snag, the steamer was showered with arrows. Chaos ensued as men from the boat "squirted lead into the bush" (p. 117). Marlow's helmsman was killed in the attack, and a few of the crew were wounded. Speculation of whether Kurtz was still alive at this point was abundant. The manager, who became frightened by the attack, insisted they turn around. Just as he said this, however, the Inner Station came into view.

When they pulled to the bank, they were greeted by a rather peculiar looking Russian. He told Marlow that Kurtz's health was failing, so the manager and the "pilgrims" headed out to find him and return him to the steamer. Marlow discovered from the Russian that Kurtz, without goods to trade with, had rounded up his recent supplies of ivory at gunpoint. He had become a god to the surrounding natives, and the Russian later informed Marlow that Kurtz was the one who ordered the attack on the steamer. When Marlow asked why, the Russian responded, "They don't want him to go" (p. 126). The Russian, who was obviously devoted to Kurtz, was nearly shot by Kurtz as he was aiding him to recovery.

When the group found Kurtz, he was in horrible physical condition, but his speech was amazingly strong. They carried him to the steamer under the watchful eyes of the natives, who seemed to silently protest the move. An ominous looking woman in the tribe stood out from the woods and made her presence known to the group.

Later that night, Marlow discovered Kurtz had escaped from the steamer. After locating him, Marlow carefully approached him. Kurtz was watching the natives perform one of their ceremonies, and Marlow saw the apparent torment Kurtz experienced. Marlow carried him back to the steamer, and they set out downriver the next day.

As they traveled down river, Marlow watched Kurtz's decline, and he developed a kind of partnership with him. Kurtz entrusted his private papers and a photograph of a woman to Marlow, because he knew anyone else would exploit his findings. Not long after, Kurtz died speaking his final words, "The horror! The horror!" (p. 147), and was buried in the jungle.

After the event, Marlow returned to Europe to recover from an illness. A few men inquired information on Kurtz's papers, but he denounced their value and told them they were for his mourning love. Marlow took the papers to the woman, who was in obvious pain and distress over her loss of Kurtz. She questioned Marlow intently, but he evaded her questions as he did not have truthful answers about the man he hardly knew. He could not get Kurtz out of his mind, though, and thought constantly of Kurtz's situation.
and how he had separated himself from the world into an entirely different existence. Marlow ended the woman's sorrow by assuring her that her name was Kurtz's last word. Marlow was incensed that he lied to the woman, but did nothing and left her.

Finally, the scene returns to the present deck of the Nellie where silence ensues with the end of Marlow's story. The men share no feelings of the emotional story they have just heard and are more or less indifferent. They just sit afloat on the Thames, which seems to flow into the endless "darkness" of the horizon.

"Heart of Darkness" : A Critical Appreciation

Conrad’s agonizing Congo experiences of 1890 were re-worked nine years later into Heart of Darkness which is generally regarded as one of the greatest short novels in the English language.

It is a crucial work in the development of modern literature, in that it establishes the dominant theme of twentieth-century writing: fear and disillusion about the western man’s place in the world and the values by which he lives. The narrator and central character, Marlow, travels up the Congo to meet the demonic trader, Kurtz. He witnesses the violence and hypocrisy of his colonizing culture and his faith in the western world, and even his own sanity is threatened.

Heart of Darkness is based upon Conrad's own experiences of the Belgian Congo when he visited that country in the year 1890. It is a largely personal and autobiographical book. Being based upon what Conrad actually witnessed during his travels through what he calls the "heart of darkness", the book has the stamp of authenticity. Knowing Conrad's integrity as a writer, we have to accept Heart of Darkness as a truthful account of the conditions in which the savages of the Congo, a country of the dark continent of Africa, lived under the imperialist rule of the white man, and also a truthful account of the behaviour and the attitudes of the white men who went to that country as traders or as the agents of a trading company, or as explorers. The fictitious character called Marlow, who narrates the story, is Conrad himself in disguise. Most of the experiences of Marlow, and most of Marlow's reactions to what he beheld in the Belgian Congo, were Conrad's own experiences, observations, and reactions.

The theme of Heart of Darkness is the conditions prevailing in the Congo under the imperialist rule of the Belgian King Leopald II. These conditions include the impact of the white traders and explorers on the life of the African savages, and the influence of the native way of life on the white men, with special reference to one man who is given the name of Kurtz. (Kurtz is a German word meaning "short"). There is another theme also which is equally important for the thoughtful reader i.e. reality versus dream. As Marlow voyages to the Belgian Congo by a French steamer, he observes closely the sights on the coast and falls into a meditative mood. The sights which he witnesses now, and those which he beholds subsequently, appear to him to be half real and half unreal. The unreality of these sights becomes the basic condition of Marlow's experiences.
Heart of Darkness is replete with symbolism. The very title of the novel has a symbolic meaning, in addition to its literal meaning. Literally, “Heart of Darkness” means the interior of a dark country, namely the Congo. Symbolically, the title means the depths of the human mind or the human consciousness. The book describes not only Marlow’s exploration of the Congo but also his exploration of his own mind and of the deeper layers of his mind. Then there are other symbols in the novel also. The women, knitting wool, symbolize the Fates of ancient classical mythology. Mr. Kurtz, who is the dominating character in the novel, is a symbol of the modern western man’s lust for power and pelf. The chief accountant of the Belgian trading company is as telling an image of modern man as the demonic Mr. Kurtz and there are other symbolic suggestions in the novel also.

Heart of Darkness is a remarkable book by virtue of its imagery also. Conrad here gives us ample evidence of his descriptive powers. The imagery in this book is remote and wild; but it is described in such a graphic manner that we begin actually to visualize it. There are, first of all, the sights which Marlow witnesses along the coast as he sails by a French steamer. Then there are the sights which Marlow witnesses on landing from the Swedish captain’s sea-going steamer. These are memorable sights indeed. We can never forget the boiler lying uselessly in the grass, the steep path, and the several pieces of decaying machinery and the rusty rails, the blasting of the rock, the clanking of the chain-gang criminals, and so on. Soon afterwards, Marlow feels as if he had stepped into the gloomy circle of some Inferno and thus the description and the imagery continue throughout the novel.

Heart of Darkness is a profound book. Part of its profundity is due to its philosophical character and to the writer’s psychological insight. There are a large number of philosophical passages in the book. Marlow is not only a man of action and an adventurer, but also a thinker and a kind of philosopher. He tends to reflect and meditate upon whatever he observes and beholds. At the very time of setting out on his voyage, he makes the remark that he felt for a second or two as though, instead of going to the, centre of a continent, he was about to set off for the centre of the earth. Now, this is a philosophical remark, though not a deeply philosophical one. Soon afterwards, he makes the remark that, as he entered into a grove near the Company’s first station, he felt as if he had stepped into the gloomy circle of some Inferno. But a more philosophical remark comes when he says that, at one point, in the course of his experience, he found it difficult to distinguish between reality and dream. When the brick-maker is talking to Marlow about Kurtz, Marlow feels that he does not at this moment see Kurtz. In fact, it seems to him at this time that he is seeing a dream and experiencing a dream-sensation. Then Marlow goes on to make the following philosophical observation: “It is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one’s existence that which makes its truth, its meaning, its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream alone”.

There is also plenty of psychological analysis in Heart of Darkness. In the course of his narration, Marlow gives us a peep into the minds of the various characters, at the same time making it possible for us to look into his own mind as well. Much of the interest of this book lies in its psychological studies of the various characters.
instance, Marlow gives us a penetrating portrayal of the chief accountant of the Company. That man is able to maintain a neat and tidy appearance even in the midst of the chaotic conditions around him. Everything at the station is in a muddle (disorder), but the accountant’s clothes and his account-books are being excellently maintained. Similarly, Marlow gives us a penetrating portrayal of the manager of the Central Station. He makes a significant remark when he says that perhaps there was nothing ‘within’ the manager, and that, after commenting upon the effect of the climate on the white visitors to this region, the manager smiled in a manner which showed as if his smile had been a door opening into a darkness which the manager had in his keeping. Again, Marlow enables us to look into the working of the brick-maker’s mind. Marlow quickly perceives that the brick-maker wants to know exactly where Marlow stands in relation to the higher officials of the Company which has sent him to the Congo. But it is in his descriptions of Kurtz that Marlow shows his real psychological insight. He skilfully, subtly, and effectively brings to our notice Kurtz’s passion for ivory, Kurtz’s passion for power, Kurtz’s influence over the savages, Kurtz’s secret ambitions, Kurtz’s surrender to the rites and customs of the savages, Kurtz’s love for his “intended”, and so on. Indeed, we are able to form a comprehensive picture of Kurtz’s moral character and his mental make-up’ though Kurtz still remains a mysterious figure to us.

Heart of Darkness is an interesting mixture of the traditional and the modern in several ways. The Company’s doctor, who examines Marlow before Marlow leaves for the Congo is, for instance, very much a modern figure. This doctor is something of a psychiatrist, having an interest in analysing the mental changes of individuals. The sciences of psychology and psychiatry are modern sciences which were being developed in Conrad’s own time. And Marlow, in the course of his narration, himself shows a keen interest in tracing the mental processes of the various persons with whom he comes into contact. At one point in the story; Marlow speaks of the mental change going on within himself. Here he remarks that he was becoming a fit subject for scientific study by a psychologist. Furthermore, Marlow experiences a feeling central to the literature of modernism. He experiences the anarchy and the futility of modern life. He keenly experiences the truths of the modern western world whose products include its colonialism and a sense of racial superiority. The “powers of darkness” to which Marlow refers at one point are the powers of European culture to which Kurtz belongs, and which Kurtz had imbibed. In this context Marlow says that Kurtz would be claimed by the powers of darkness to whom he really belonged. These powers of darkness, according to one interpretation, are the influences of European culture on Kurtz: “All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz.” The trader Kurtz is a demonic person who writes and speaks with inspiring eloquence but who yet performs rites of unspeakable savagery. Kurtz is also the embodiment of the colonial appetite for possessions and power. At the same time this story has to be read as a myth. The mythical elements in it belong to tradition. There are the two ominous women knitting black wool who suggest the Fates of classical mythology. There is Marlow’s journey through a certain region of the Congo which resembles Dante’s Inferno. Such elements in the novel suggest that it should be read as we read a myth. Thus looked at, the novel would seem to be a statement on the timeless problems of mankind in its existence on the planet known as the earth.
Heart of Darkness has an unusual kind of structure. Conrad was an innovator so far as the structure of most of his novels was concerned. The structure of Heart of Darkness is very complex. In the first place, there are two narrators in this novel. The first narrator appears before us at the very beginning of the book. It is this first narrator who tells us about the boat “Nellie” lying anchored in the river Thames and about the men on the deck of this boat. It is this first narrator who introduces to us the second narrator. While the name of the first narrator is not given to us, the second narrator’s name is given as Marlow or Charles Marlow. Now, the real story comes from the lips of this second narrator; and yet the first narrator also, intervenes occasionally in the course of the novel. This mixing up of the two narrators confuses the average reader. It is not really necessary for a novelist to adopt a device of this kind except as a point of departure from the traditional way of telling a story.

Heart of Darkness is a masterpiece of an unusual kind. It is a profound book, and it is at the same time a starkly realistic book. It excels both in respect of external description and imagery, and in respect of its analysis of the mental processes of its characters and its probing of the conscious and the sub-conscious mind.

**Heart of Darkness : Main Ideas Explained**

**Alienation and Loneliness:** - Throughout Heart of Darkness, which tells of a journey into the heart of the Belgian Congo and out again, the themes of alienation, loneliness, silence and solitude predominate. The book begins and ends in silence, with men first waiting for a tale to begin and then left to their own thoughts after it has concluded. The question of what the alienation and loneliness of extended periods of time in a remote and hostile environment can do to men's minds is a central theme of the book. The doctor who measures Marlow's head prior to his departure for Africa warns him of changes to his personality that may be produced by a long stay in-country. Prolonged silence and solitude are seen to have damaging effects on many characters in the book. Among these are the late Captain Fresleven, Marlow's predecessor, who was transformed from a gentle soul into a man of violence, and the Russian, who has been alone on the River for two years and dresses bizarrely and chatters constantly. But loneliness and alienation have taken their greatest toll on Kurtz, who, cut off from all humanizing influence, has forfeited the restraints of reason and conscience and given free rein to his most base and brutal instincts.

**Deception:** - Deception, or hypocrisy, is a central theme of the novel and is explored on many levels. In the disguise of a “noble cause,” the Belgians have exploited the Congo. Actions taken in the name of philanthropy are merely covers for greed. Claiming to educate the natives, to bring them religion and a better way of life, European colonizers remained to starve, mutilate, and murder the indigenous population for profit. Marlow has even obtained his captaincy through deception, for his aunt misrepresented him as “an exceptional and gifted creature.” She also presented him as “one of the Workers, with a capital [W] … something like an emissary of...
light, something like a lower sort of apostle,” and Conrad notes the deception in elevating working people to some mystical status they cannot realistically obtain. At the end of the book, Marlow engages in his own deception when he tells Kurtz's fiancée the lie that Kurtz died with her name on his lips.

**Order and Disorder:** Conrad sounds the themes of order and disorder in showing, primarily through the example of the Company's chief clerk, how people can carry on with the most mundane details of their lives while all around them chaos reigns. In the larger context, the Company attends to the details of sending agents into the interior to trade with the natives and collect ivory while remaining oblivious to the devastation such acts have caused. Yet on a closer look, the Company's Manager has no talent for order or organization. His station is in a deplorable state, and Marlow can see no reason for the Manager to have his position other than the fact that he is never ill. On the other hand, the chief clerk is so impeccably dressed that when Marlow first meets him he thinks he is a vision. This man, who has been in-country three years and witnessed all its attendant horrors, manages to keep his clothes and books in excellent order. He even speaks with confidence of a Council of Europe which intended Kurtz to go far in “the administration,” as if there is some overall rational principle guiding their lives.

**Sanity and Insanity:** Closely linked to the themes of order and disorder are those of sanity and insanity. Madness, given prolonged exposure to the isolation of the wilderness, seems an inevitable extension of chaos. The atmospheric influences at the heart of the African continent—the stifling heat, the incessant drums, the whispering bush, the mysterious light—play havoc with the unadapted European mind and reduce it either to the insanity of thinking anything is allowable in such an atmosphere or, as in Kurtz's case, to literal madness. Kurtz, after many years in the jungle, is presented as a man who has gone mad with power and greed. No restraints were placed on him—either from above, from a rule of law, or from within, from his own conscience. In the wilderness, he came to believe he was free to do whatever he liked, and the freedom drove him mad. Small acts of madness line Marlow's path to Kurtz: the Man-of-War that fires into the bush for no apparent reason, the urgently needed rivets that never arrive, the bricks that will never be built, the jig that is suddenly danced, the immense hole dug for no discernible purpose. All these events ultimately lead to a row of impaled severed human heads and Kurtz, a man who, in his insanity, has conferred a godlike status on himself and has ritual human sacrifices performed for him. The previously mentioned themes of solitude and silence have here achieved their most powerful effect: they have driven Kurtz mad. He is presented as a voice, a disembodied head, a mouth that opens as if to devour everything before him. Kurtz speaks of “my ivory … my intended … my river … my station,” as if everything in the Congo belonged to him. This is the final arrogant insanity of the white man who comes supposedly to improve a land, but stays to exploit, ravage, and destroy it.

**Duty and Responsibility:** As is true of all other themes in the book, those of duty and responsibility are glimpsed on many levels. On a national level, we are told of the British devotion to duty and efficiency that led to systematic colonization of large parts of the globe and has its counterpart in Belgian colonization of the Congo, the book's focus. On an individual level, Conrad weaves the themes of duty and
responsibility through Marlow's job as captain, a position that makes him responsible for his crew and bound to his duties as the boat's commander. There are also the jobs of those with whom Marlow comes into contact on his journey. In Heart of Darkness, duty and responsibility revolve most often about how one does one's work. A job well done is respected; simply doing the work one is responsible for is an honourable act. Yet Conrad does not believe in romanticizing the worker. Workers can often be engaged in meaningless tasks, as illustrated in the scene where the Africans blast away at the rock face in order to build a railway, but the rock is not altered by the blasts and the cliff is not at all in the way. The Company's Manager would seem to have a duty to run his business efficiently, but he cannot keep order, and although he is obeyed, he is not respected. The Foreman, however, earns Marlow's respect for being a good worker. Marlow admires the way the Foreman ties up his waist-length beard when he has to crawl in the mud beneath the steamboat to do his job. (Having a waist-length beard in a jungle environment can be seen as another act of madness, even from an efficient worker.) Section I of the novel ends with Marlow speculating on how Kurtz would do his work. But there is a larger sense in which the themes of work and responsibility figure. Marlow says, "I don't like work—no man does—but I like what is in the work—the chance to find yourself." It is through the work (or what passes for it) that Kurtz does in Africa that his moral bankruptcy is revealed. For himself, Marlow emerges with a self-imposed duty to remain loyal to Kurtz, and it is this responsibility that finally forces him to lie to Kurtz's fiancée.

Doubt and Ambiguity: - As reason loses hold, doubt and ambiguity take over. As Marlow travels deeper inland, the reality of everything he encounters becomes suspect. The perceptions, motivations, and reliability of those he meets, as well as his own, are all open to doubt. Conrad repeatedly tells us that the heat and light of the wilderness cast a spell and put those who would dare venture further into a kind of trancelike state. Nothing is to be taken at face value. After the Russian leaves, Marlow wonders if he ever actually saw him.

The central ambiguity of Heart of Darkness is Kurtz himself. Who is he? What does he do? What does he actually say? Those who know him speak again and again of his superb powers of rhetoric, but the reader hears little of it. The Russian says he is devoted to Kurtz, and yet we are left to wonder why. Kurtz has written a report that supposedly shows his interest in educating the African natives, but it ends with his advice, "Exterminate all the brutes!" Marlow has heard that Kurtz is a great man, yet he suspects he is "hollow to the core." In Marlow's estimation, if Kurtz was remarkable it was because he had something to say at the end of his life. But what he found to say was "the horror!" After Kurtz's death, when various people come to Marlow representing themselves as having known Kurtz, it seems none of them really knew him. Was he a painter, a writer, a great musician, a politician, as he is variously described? Marlow settles for the ambiguous term "universal genius," which would imply Kurtz was whatever one wanted to make of him.

Race and Racism: - The subject of racism is not really treated by Conrad as a theme in Heart of Darkness as much as it is simply shown to be the prevailing attitude of the day. The African natives are referred to as "niggers," "cannibals," "criminals,"
and “savages.” European colonizers see them as a subordinate species and chain, starve, rob, mutilate, and murder them without fear of punishment. The book presents a damning account of imperialism as it illustrates the white man's belief in his innate right to come into a country inhabited by people of a different race and pillage to his heart's content.

Kurtz is writing a treatise for something called the “International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs.” This implies the existence of a worldwide movement to subjugate all non-white races. Kurtz bestows a kind of childlike quality upon the Africans by saying that white people appear to them as supernatural beings. The natives do, indeed, seem to have worshipped Kurtz as a god and to have offered up human sacrifices to him. This innocence proceeds, in Kurtz's view, from an inferior intelligence and does not prevent him from concluding that the way to deal with the natives is to exterminate them all.

Early in his journey, Marlow sees a group of black men paddling boats. He admires their naturalness, strength, and vitality, and senses that they want nothing from the land but to coexist with it. This notion prompts him to believe that he still belongs to a world of reason. The feeling is short-lived, however, for it is not long before Marlow, too, comes to see the Africans as some subhuman form of life and to use the language of his day in referring to them as “creatures,” “niggers,” “cannibals,” and “savages.” He does not protest or try to interfere when he sees six Africans forced to work with chains about their necks. He calls what he sees in their eyes the “deathlike indifference of unhappy savages.” Marlow exhibits some humanity in offering a dying young African one of the ship's biscuits, and although he regrets the death of his helmsman, he says he was “a savage who was no more account than a grain of sand in a black Sahara.” It is not the man he misses so much as his function as steersman. Marlow refers to the “savage who was fireman” as “an improved specimen.” He compares him, standing before his vertical boiler, to “a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind legs.”

Violence and Cruelty: - The violence and cruelty depicted in Heart of Darkness escalate from acts of inhumanity committed against the natives of the Belgian Congo to “unspeakable” and undescribed horrors. Kurtz (representing European imperialists) has systematically engaged in human plunder. The natives are seen chained by iron collars about their necks, starved, and beaten, subsisting on rotten hippo meat, forced into soul-crushing and meaningless labour, and finally ruthlessly murdered. Beyond this, it is implied that Kurtz has had human sacrifices performed for him, and the reader is presented with the sight of a row of severed human heads impaled on posts leading to Kurtz’s cabin. Conrad suggests that violence and cruelty result when law is absent and man allows himself to be ruled by whatever brutal passions lie within him. Consumed by greed, conferring upon himself the status of a god, Kurtz runs amok in a land without law. Under such circumstances, anything is possible, and what Conrad sees emerging from the situation is the profound cruelty and limitless violence that lies at the heart of the human soul.
Moral Corruption: - The book's theme of moral corruption is the one to which, like streams to a river, all others lead. Racism, madness, loneliness, deception and disorder, doubt and ambiguity, violence and cruelty—culminate in the moral corruption revealed by Kurtz's acts in the Congo. Kurtz has cast off reason and allowed his most base and brutal instincts to rule unrestrained. He has permitted the evil within him to gain the upper hand. Kurtz's appalling moral corruption is the result not only of external forces, such as the isolation and loneliness imposed by the jungle, but also, Conrad suggests, of forces that lie within all men and await the chance to emerge. Kurtz perhaps realizes the depth of his own moral corruption when, as he lays dying, he utters, "The horror! The horror!" Marlow feels this realization transferred to himself and understands that he too, living in a lawless state, is capable of sinking into the depths of moral corruption. The savage nature of man is thus reached at the end of the journey, not upriver, but into his own soul.

Heart of Darkness : Significance of Title

"Heart of Darkness" is a short novel by Polish novelist Joseph Conrad, written as a frame narrative, about Charles Marlow's experience as an ivory transporter down the Congo River in Central Africa. The river is "a mighty big river, that we can see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depths of the land". In the course of his travel in central Africa, Marlow becomes obsessed with Mr. Kurtz. The phrase "Heart of Darkness" has two meanings. Literally, the title refers to the dark continent of Africa known as the Congo. "Heart of Darkness" is an appropriate title for the novel because Marlow describes his experiences of the interior region of the continent which was known as Congo. The events at the beginning and at the close of the novel occur outside Congo but the major and the most significant events of the story take place in the Congo and on the river Congo. The savages really belong to the heart of darkness.

There are other features of the novel too, justifying the title "Heart of Darkness". One such feature is the description of the wild scenery of the thick, impenetrable jungle, and the suggestive picture of the natives not fully visible to the white men sailing over the river Congo. At one point in the novel Marlow says that sailing up the river Congo was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world. He then refers to the great silence of the impenetrable forests where the air was warm, thick, heavy and sluggish. Marlow perceived no joy in the brilliance of the sunshine in that region. The long stretches of the water-way ran on into a mob of wooded islands. One could lose one’s way on that river as one might lose one’s way in a desert. The stillness prevailing there was not the stillness of peace but of a relentless force brooding over some mysterious purpose. Now, a description of this kind occurs later when Marlow tells us that the night came suddenly and seemed to strike him blind. Then, about three in the morning, Marlow heard a loud splash as though a gun had been fired. When the sun rose, there was a white fog, very warm and damp, and more blinding than the night. The fog remained there like something solid. A little later in the morning the fog lifted as a shutter lifts. Marlow then had a glimpse of the towering multitude of trees, of the
immense jungle, and of the blazing little ball of the sun hanging over it, all perfectly still. And then the white fog came down again. There are other descriptive passages of the same kind in the book, too.

The barbarism of the natives reinforces the effect of these descriptive passages and intensifies the atmosphere of mystery and fear. Reading about the natives, we get an even stronger impression that we are in the midst of darkness. On one occasion, the natives, seeing Marlow’s steamer sailing up the river, draw near the river-bank in order to launch an attack upon the intruders. Marlow on this occasion hears a muffled rattle, then a very loud cry. This cry gives rise to a feeling of terror in the hearts of all the white men. Then the attack by the natives actually begins. The white men then hit back by firing their rifles. In the fighting, the helmsman of the steamer is killed with a spear hurled at him by a native. It is the barbarism and the ignorance of the natives which creates the effect of darkness. The natives have merely attacked the steamer because they have received instructions to do so from their supremo, Mr. Kurtz. The personality of Mr. Kurtz is very important because it is he who sums up the whole essence of the barbarism and the savagery of the natives. Marlow has conveyed to us the demonic character of Mr. Kurtz by the use of highly suggestive phrases. Instead of civilizing the natives, Mr. Kurtz has himself become barbarian. Mr. Kurtz has begun to identify himself with the savages. He has been presiding over their midnight dances which always end with “unspeakable rites”. In Marlow’s opinion, Mr. Kurtz has taken a high place among the devils of the land. He has been experiencing “abominable satisfaction”, and he has been gratifying without restraint his “various lust”. In short, Mr. Kurtz has become part of the darkness of the Congo.

The phrase “Heart of Darkness” has yet another meaning. It also stands for an exploration of the depths of Marlow’s own mind or soul. The human mind may also be regarded as a kind of Dark Continent whose exploration is even more difficult than the exploration of Congo. The book called “Heart of Darkness” may be treated as a journey by Marlow into his own sub-conscious mind or into the sub-conscious mind of all mankind. The novel called “Heart of Darkness” is symbolically the story of an essentially solitary journey involving a profound spiritual change in the voyager. Marlow prepares us for such a journey at the very outset. But it is, at the same time, a psychological and mystical journey. Marlow also tells us indirectly that, by paying close attention to the surface reality of the story and its external details, we would be able to arrive at an inner meaning. Thus Conrad is here able to blend morality and adventure in a unique manner, as he has done in some of his other novels as well.

There are many passages in the course of Marlow’s narration in which he gives us glimpses of his own mind. At one point he tells us in explicit terms that he has always hated and detested lies because he has always found a taint of death and a flavour of mortality in lies. In the same context, Marlow also says that it is not possible for any man to convey to others the life-sensation of any period of all existence. He says: “We live, as we dream—alone.”

At another point Marlow says that the mind of man is capable of anything because everything is in it. In order to endure the stark realities of human life, a man should
possess an inner strength. What a man needs is a deliberate belief, at yet another point in the novel, Marlow tells us of the effect on his own mind of the savage sight of human skulls hanging from the tops of the posts fixed to the ground outside Mr. Kurtz's residence. Later, Marlow tells us of the effect on his mind of Mr. Kurtz's arguments defending his action in slipping away from the ship's cabin into the jungle. Towards the end of the novel, Marlow tells us the working of his own mind when several persons come to him, one after the other, claiming the packet or papers and the photograph which, Mr. Kurtz had given him for safe custody; and he also reveals to us the working of his mind when he goes the meet Mr. Kurtz's Intended. In all these cases, Marlow tells us not about his conscious thoughts but also tries to probe his sub-conscious mind. This subconscious mind is also the heart of darkness which Marlow or Conrad tries to explore.

Finally the "darkness" is many things: it is the unknown; it is the subconscious; it is also a moral darkness; it is evil which swallows up Mr. Kurtz and it is the spiritual emptiness which he sees at the centre of existence; but above all it is mystery itself, the mysteriousness of man’s spiritual life.

**Heart of Darkness : Theme of Evil**

Evil has a tangible reality in “Heart of Darkness” and it dominates the novel manifesting itself in several ways. At the very outset Marlow refers to the ancient Roman conquest of Britain who used only brute force. They grabbed what they could get. It was just “robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale”. Marlow then says that the conquest of any territory by any nation means the taking that territory away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than the conquerors. This talk by Marlow pertains to the evil of conquest, and to the brutality and the slaughter which any military conquest necessitates.

There is a hint of evil in Marlow’s reference to the city of Brussels as a “whited sepulcher”. The phrase “whited sepulcher” means a place which is outwardly pleasant and righteous but which is inwardly corrupt and evil. The evil character of this city is emphasized when Marlow points out that the Belgian conquerors were running an over-sea empire in the Congo and making no end of coin by trade. Then there is a hint of evil in Marlow’s description of the two women knitting black wool. “In the outer room the two women knitted black wool, feverishly.”

These knitting-women remind us of the mythological Fates constantly busy in spinning the yarn of human destiny. They seemed to him to be guarding the door of darkness and knitting black wool as of to make a shroud. When Marlow is about to set out on his voyage, he feels that, instead of going to the centre of a continent, he is going to the centre of the earth. Such a remark also hints at the evil which exists in this universe.

Marlow’s descriptions of the natural scenery which he witnesses in the course of his voyage have a strong suggestion of evil in them. Indeed, the wilderness and the thick forest seem to be the abode of evil. Marlow sees a huge jungle, so dark-green as to be almost black. The sun is fierce and the land seems to glisten and drop with steam. He
speaks of the empty stream, the great silence, and the impenetrable forest in which the air is warm, thick, heavy and sluggish. There is no joy in the brilliance of the sunshine here. “And the river was there – fascinating – deadly – like a snake.”

Marlow’s steamer penetrates deeper and deeper into the “heart of darkness” and the very earth seems unearthly. Marlow’s narration heightens our sense of evil which is lurking in the forest behind the millions and millions of trees.

The other sights also suggest the existence of evil. At one point, Marlow sees a warship anchored off the coast and firing its guns without having any target in view. The firing seems to be absolutely aimless and futile. He sees several trading posts where “the merry dance of death and trade” goes on “in a still and earthy atmosphere” resembling that of an over-heated tomb. He sees a lot of people, mostly black and naked. “A lot of people, mostly black and naked, moved about like ants.”

At one place, a rock is being blasted with gunpowder even though this it does not stand in the way of the railway line which is to be laid. Then he sees the horrible sight of a chain-gang. Men in this chain-gang are criminals who have been sentenced to hard labour.

“I could see every rib, the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope; each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain whose bights swung between them, rhythmically clinking.”

Marlow remarks that he had previously seen the devil of violence, the devil of greed, and the devil of hot desire. He was seeing the “devil of rapacious and pitiless folly”.

The white men, whom Marlow encounters in Congo, by no means provide any relief to Marlow. These men, cowardly civilized, are actually degenerate fellows. There is no goodness in them at all. The manager of the Central Station is a wicked fellow who can inspire neither fear, nor love, nor respect but only uneasiness. Marlow says that there was “nothing within” this man. The white agents are seen loitering about idly, talking maliciously and scheming against one another. The brick-maker is the manager’s spy who keeps a watch upon the other white men at the Central Station. Marlow describes this man as a “papier-mâché Mephistopheles” meaning that his man is a veritable devil, but a fall kind of devil. The white men, who have come to civilize the natives, are only exploiters having no regard for the welfare of the savages.

Evil is the keynote of the latter portion of the novel in which Marlow records his impressions of Mr. Kurtz. He has been told that Mr. Kurtz is a “remarkable man” who is expected to rise at a very high position because he has been collecting more ivory than all the other agents taken together. Ivory had become a passion and an obsession with Mr. Kurtz which showsthe man’s extreme greed. He has begun to identify himself with the native savages. He presides over their midnight dances which always end with “unspeakable rites”. This means that he has begun to take pleasure in the shedding of the blood of human beings, in sexual orgies, in sexual perversions and in similar other practices. In short, Mr. Kurtz has become evil incarnate. Even when Mr. Kurtz is being
taken to Europe for medical treatment, he slips away from the ship into the jungle. When Mr. Kurtz is dying, he utters the words: “The horror! The horror!”

The portrayal of Mr. Kurtz is perhaps even more important in this novel for this portrayal of a civilized man is meant to convey Conrad’s own ideas about evil. Conrad believes that there is much evil in the savages. He does not believe in the existence of the “noble savage”. The barbarian customs of the savages are certainly horrifying to him. Because of his prolonged stay with the savages Mr. Kurtz become a devil. Conrad says that the western man should beware of falling a prey to the barbarism of the savages whom he conquers. Conrad depicts the savages in a favourable light too, but it is fully alive to the obnoxious customs of the savages and warns the western white men against the menace of those customs. Conrad’s other message is that the white man should civilize the savages instead of exploiting them to fulfill his own greed.

**Heart of Darkness: Theme of Self Restraint**

Self-restraint (self-control) is certainly one of the themes of the novel “Heart of Darkness”. Self-restraint is only a subsidiary or secondary theme. This theme has been handled by Conrad very skillfully, and almost subtly, so that it does not project itself on our attention or undermine the other themes.

The white men who have gone to the Congo for trade show no self-restraint but unlimited greed. They are all there to collect ivory; and ivory has begun to dominate their thoughts. Ivory has become their obsession. The manager has begun to feel jealous of Mr. Kurtz because Mr. Kurtz collects more ivory than all the other agents put together. The desire of these men for ivory knows no bounds.

Then, all these men seek power and authority; and they show no self-restraint in this aim. The most striking example of greed is to be found in Mr. Kurtz who knows no self-restraint at all. Mr. Kurtz becomes the embodiment of the passion for ivory and for power. Many times he was heard saying:

“My ivory, my station, my intended, my career, my …”

Indeed, Mr. Kurtz has become a devil seeking wealth in the form of ivory and seeking power in the form of control over the natives. He has collected all the ivory in the Congo. On one occasion he got ready even to kill his friend, the Russian, because he was having a small quantity of ivory which he did not wish to part with and which Mr. Kurtz had demanded from him. Mr. Kurtz’s passion for power also knows no bounds. He has been acquiring more and more power over the savages till he has become in their eyes a god. If any native rebels against his authority, Mr. Kurtz has him executed. The time comes when nothing on earth can prevent him from killing whomsoever he wants to kill. And he still has more plans for his self-aggrandizement.

Nor does Mr. Kurtz show any self-restraint in the satisfaction of his primitive instincts which have begun to dominate him. Mr. Kurtz has become an active sharer in
the demonic practices of the savages. He presides over their midnight dances which always end with “unspeakable rites” including sex-orgies, sadistic and masochistic practices, human sacrifice and other obnoxious acts. He indulgence in all such proceedings has assumed vast scope and has begun enjoying “abominable satisfactions”. He now gives a free outlet to his “monstrous passions” in the company of the savages.

Mr. Kurtz shows no self-restraint even in his desire for possessingthings and for owningthings. Indeed, his sense of ownership and proprietorship has assumed abnormal proportions. He has developed a feeling that everything belongs to him. And yet there is emptiness in his soul. His mind is by no means insane, but his soul has certainly gone mad. He is “hollow at the core”, as Marlow puts it. And yet this man is able to stir feelings of friendship and respect in Marlow. Here we are faced with a paradox.

There is also a lack of self-restraint in the Russian who has developed an attitude of worship towards Mr. Kurtz. The Russian, a highly intelligent and well-educated man, begins to adore Mr. Kurtz. According to the Russian, Kurt's has taught him many things and has enabled him to look into the essence of things. The Russian regards Mr. Kurtz as one of the immortals. Surprisingly Marlow himself develops an attitude of respect towards Mr. Kurtz. He has discovered that Kurtz is hollow at the core and has taken a high place among the devils of the land. And yet Marlow himself falls under Mr. Kurtz's influence. When Mr. Kurtz has slipped away from the ship’s cabin into the forest, Marlow follows him to bring him back. Marlow writes:

“I did not betray Mr. Kurtz – it was ordained. I should never betray him – it was written I should be loyal to the nightmare of my choice.”

Marlow also says that Mr. Kurtz had conquered his soul which is totally untainted by selfishness. Marlow interpret Mr. Kurtz's last words as indicative of Mr. Kurtz's victory over the evil within him. Thus we can safely affirm that even Marlow shows a lack of self-restraint in his feelings of admiration and regard for Mr. Kurtz.

This theme of self-restraint finds expression also in the manner in which Marlow has depicted the cannibalcrew on his steamer. These cannibals were very hungry, and they could easily have killed some of the white men on board the steamer and consumed their flesh but they showed self-restraint. This self-restraint on the part of the cannibals is quite puzzling and highly commendable, though surprising. In respect of self-restraint the cannibals score a point over the civilized white men. Even the white manager of the Central Station shows restraint in his mental make-up. He refrains from giving orders to Marlow and says that Marlow has the right to decide whether he should continue the voyage to the Inner Station or stop for a few hours to find out whether the savages would attack the steamer.

According to an eminent critic, restraint or self-restraint is a major theme in “Heart of Darkness”. Mr. Kurtz has no restraint because he has no urgent work to do and has no belief. Mr. Kurtz's extremism and faith are the opposite of true belief which is needed to tackle darkness. On account of this lack of moral equipment and his greed
of money and power, Mr. Kurtz is unable to cope with the forces of savagery and evil within him. Mr. Kurtz's only defence is his eloquence but this is not enough. These heads, stuck to the poles show that Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts. The native helmsman, steering Marlow's steamer, also showed a lack of restraint which results in his murder.

"In fact nobody in the story has any real restraint except the most savage of all men, the half-starved cannibals on board the steamer who amaze Marlow by the fact that they restrained themselves from tucking into the pilgrims."

This true restraint on the part of the cannibals is incomprehensible to Marlow. Marlow's failure to solve this mystery and many other mysteries in the story is linked to a lack of restraint in the language which Marlow uses. Marlow occasionally employs excessive rhetoric, thus showing his lack of restraint in the use of language also.

**Heart of Darkness : Theme of Isolation**

"Heart of Darkness" has a multiplicity of themes interwoven closely and produces a unified pattern. The theme of isolation and its consequences constitute a theme in this book, though a minor one. **Marlow and Mr. Kurtz illustrate this theme**, dominate the novel and have symbolic roles. Both **thesemenstand for muchmorethantheindividuals** which they certainly are.

**Marlow** strikes us from the very start as a **lonely** figure. Although he is a member of a small group of people sitting on the deck of the streamer called the "Nellie". He is, at the very outset, differentiated from the others. He sits cross-legged in the pose of a Buddha preaching in European clothes without a lotus-flower. Then he begins his story, and nowhere in his narration does he appear to be feeling perfectly at home among other people. He seems to have the temperament of a man who would like to stay away from others, though he would certainly like to observe others and to meditate upon his observations.

When Marlow goes to Brussels for an interview, he depicts himself as an alien who has stepped into an unpleasant environment. The city of Brussels makes him think of a "whited sepulcher". This feeling clearly shows that he has nothing in common with the people of this European city, though he is himself a European. Then he finds something ominous in the atmosphere of the office of the Company. The two knitting-women strike him as mysterious and sinister beings. "**In the outer room the two women knitted black wool, feverishly.**"

Even the doctor tells him that he is the first Englishman to have come under his observation. Marlow says: **'The old doctor felt my pulse, evidently thinking of something else the while. "Good, good for there," he mumbled, and then with a certain eagerness asked me whether I would let him measure my head.**
There seems to be a distance even between Marlow and his aunt who has got him the job. She is enthusiastic and cordial enough, but Marlow has his reservations. He thinks that she is a most unrealistic woman. She is under the impression that the white men go into the backward regions to confer benefits upon the savages. But, in Marlow’s opinion, this view of the white men is entirely wrong.

When **voyaging** upon the sea in order to get to the Congo Marlow found himself to be perfectly **idle** and **isolated** from all the others on board the steamer because he had no point of contact with them. The sound of the sea-waves was the only source of comfort to him because these sounds seemed to be like “the speech of a brother”. He finds a kinship with the sea-waves but no kinship with the human beings on board the steamer.

**Marlow’s sense of loneliness** increase when he sees certain **sights in the Congo**. These sights convey to him the futility of the white man’s exertions and activities in the Congo, and miseries of the black natives. His realization by him of white man’s cruelty creates a kind of barrier between him and the white men living in Congo. When he has to deal with the individual white men, his isolation is further emphasized. He finds absolutely no point of contact with the manager of the Central Station, with the manager’s uncle, and with the brick-maker. The manager is a man who inspires no fear, no love, no respect and there is “nothing within this man”. The manager’s uncle is an intriguer and plotter as the manager himself. The brick-maker is described by Marlow as a “papier-mâché Mephistopheles” and a devil who is hollow within. The only man, whom Marlow can respect, is the chief accountant who keeps his account-books in apple-pie order and is always seen dressed neatly and nicely; but perhaps Marlow is speaking here ironically. Actually none of the white men seems to have any merit in him. Marlow does discover some good points in the natives but none in the white men. The cannibal crew of his steamer shows an admirable self-restraint and are hard-working but the white agents seem to be useless fellows and to them he gives the nickname of the “faithless pilgrims”. It is only when Marlow meets Mr. Kurtz that some sort of contact is established between him and the chief of the Inner Station of the Company.

The **effect of isolation** upon Marlow is **profound**. He is by nature somewhat unsociable. He is a kind of philosopher who meditates upon whatever he sees. Isolation further heightens his meditative faculty. Finding no point of contact with others, Marlow becomes more of a **thinker** and more of a **philosopher-cum-psychologist** and studies the character and habits of Mr. Kurtz; and it is because of his isolation that he falls a victim to the influence of Mr. Kurtz whom he has himself described as a devil. This isolation can have grave consequences.

**Mr. Kurtz** is another isolated figure. He has become an **absolutely solitary man** after his **prolonged stay** in the Congo. He is not solitary in the sense that he does not mix with other. In fact, he **has begun to identify himself with the savages and has become a sharer in their activities and in their interests**. He participates in their “unspeakable rites” and he gratifies, without any restraint, his various lusts and his monstrous passions. “The wilderness has caressed him, loved him, embraced him, entered his blood, consumed his flesh and has taken complete possession of his soul.”

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In the case of Mr. Kurtz, it is isolation which proves the man’s undoing. Being cut off from all civilized society at the Inner Station of the Company, Mr. Kurtz begins slowly to fall under the influence of the savage till he becomes one of them. Gradually he acquires great power and begins to be regarded as a god by them. Thus now he has to keep himself at a distance even from them. He “presides” over their midnight dances which end with “unspeakablerites”.

But he is a solitary figure in the context of his western education and European upbringing. Even among the savages, he stands far above them. The savages regard him as a man-god. Mr. Kurtz is indeed a deity for the savages, and therefore he is a solitary figure even among them. Perhaps the savage closest to him under these conditions is the native woman who is his housekeeper and also perhaps his mistress. But the evil within him has already acquired huge proportions. Thus the effects of isolation in Mr. Kurtz’s case are disastrous.

**Heart of Darkness**: White Imperialism

Heart of Darkness is a short novel, and yet it has several themes. It is indeed strange that such a short book should deal with so many themes.

There is in this book the theme of self-restraint. Then there is the theme of the working of the sub-conscious mind of man. There is the theme of the exploration of a little-known continent. There is the theme of the influence of barbarism and primitivism on a civilized man when he is cut off from civilized society. And there is, of course, the obvious theme of the imperialist exploitation of a backward country. Thus Heart of Darkness is a masterpiece which, in its brief compass, deals with a number of important ideas. Conrad’s treatment of the theme of white imperialism was influenced by his own visit to the Congo and his exploration of that dark country; and his rendering of Marlow’s conscious and sub-conscious thoughts was also based upon his own reactions to what he had himself witnessed in the course of his travels through the Congo.

**Marlow’s Reference to the Ancient Roman Conquest of Britain**: -The keynote of the theme of imperialism is struck at the very outset of Marlow’s narration. Marlow speaks at the very beginning of the ancient Roman conquest of Britain, and says that the ancient Romans were conquerors using brute force. The ancient Romans, says Marlow, grabbed what they could get. Their conquest of Britain was “robbery with violence”; and the violence in this case meant murder on a large scale. The conquest of another country, says Marlow, mostly means the taking away all things from those who have a different complexion or who have flatter noses than the conquerors have. Such a conquest is unpardonable. What can, however, excuse such a conquest is the idea at the back of it: not a sentimental pretence but an idea, and an unselfish belief in the idea. What Marlow here wishes to say is that conquest can be excused only if the conquerors perform some constructive work in the backward country which they have conquered. Marlow here does not use the phrase “the white man’s burden;” but he has evidently that concept in his mind. The white man certainly has a duty to the savages whom he dues, and whom he begins to govern. The test of the white man’s intentions lies only in
his performance of this duty. If he fails in this duty, his government of the backward countries cannot be justified.

**Ivory a Symbol of Imperialist Greed and Commercial Mentality:**  
Marlow’s (or Conrad’s) experiences in the Congo clearly show that the white man there had failed to perform his functions. Instead of civilizing the savages, the white men who went there became exploiters, pure and simple. The Congo was at that time being governed by the Belgian King, Leopold II; and the Belgian trading companies were sending their agents into the Congo for trading purposes. The chief commodity which these Belgians found worth their pains was ivory. Ivory was of no use to the natives, themselves, while the white men collected ivory and sent it to Europe where it could profitably be used for the making of numerous ornamental articles. Now, as we go through this book, we find that ivory is being constantly mentioned. Ivory dominates the thoughts of the manager of the Central Station, the thoughts of the brick-maker, the thoughts of the several white agents who loiter around the Central Station and to whom Marlow gives the name of “faithless pilgrims.” Subsequently we find that ivory not only dominates the thoughts of Mr. Kurtz but has become an obsession with him. The manager of the Central Station tells Marlow that Mr. Kurtz collects more ivory than all the other agents taken together; and the Russian tells Marlow that, on one occasion, Mr. Kurtz had threatened to kill him if he did not surrender to Mr. Kurtz a small quantity of ivory which the Russian had received as a gift from a native tribal chief. Thus ivory becomes a symbol in the book. Ivory symbolizes the white man’s greed and the white man’s commercial mentality. The white man’s chief concern in the Congo is to collect ivory and send it to Europe. The greater the ivory collected by an agent, the greater is his achievement in the eyes of his employers, and the higher is the promotion which he can expect. Ivory becomes a source of revenue to the trading company which can, therefore, afford to invest a lot of money in sending its agents into the Congo. Nowhere do we find any mention of any service being rendered by these white men to the natives of the Congo.

**The White Man’s Callousness towards the Natives:**  
The sights seen by Marlow, when he has got down from the Swedish captain’s steamer, are of a very depressing kind. These sights depict the wretchedness and the misery of the natives of the Congo, and the sheer futility of the white man’s seemingly useful work. Marlow sees a lot of black people, mostly naked, moving about like ants. Later he sees half a dozen men chained to one another, and each wearing an iron collar on his neck. These men are criminals, who have violated the laws and are being punished with hard labour under the orders of the white rulers of the country. Marlow feels deeply upset to see this sight. Going further, he sees black figures crouching under the trees, leaning against the trunks, and clinging to the earth. These men, says Marlow, were dying slowly. These men were not enemies; they were not criminals; they were only black figures representing disease and starvation, and lying in a state of confusion in the gloom of the trees. Here Marlow feels as if he has entered into the gloomy circle of some inferno. Now, it is made obvious to us that the white man’s indifference and his unconcern are responsible for this state of affairs. These sights have been described by Marlow in order to convey to us the callousness of the white man towards the natives.
**A Waste of Time and Effort by the White Man: No Rivets:**

Accompanying all these sights are a few others which clearly indicate the hypocrisy of the white men who are simply wasting time and effort to show that some kind of constructive work is going on. There is a project to build a railway line in this region. But Marlow sees that a rock is being blasted with gunpowder even though this rock does not stand as an obstruction in the way of the railway line. Likewise, he sees a boiler lying unused in the grass. Then he comes upon some pieces of decaying machinery, and a large heap of rusty rails. Similarly, before landing here, Marlow had seen a warship anchored close to the land, and firing its guns into the forest aimlessly. Marlow had found a touch of madness in this firing of guns to no purpose at all. Outwardly, of course, the warship was frightening away the savages; but actually it was merely a waste of ammunition. This waste of effort and the unused machinery lying in the grass offer a sharp contrast to the starving natives. The whole effort of the white man is completely misdirected. It is a sad commentary on the efficiency of the white man that Marlow should not be able to get any rivets to repair the wrecked ship for weeks when these are needed badly.

**The Meanness and Pettiness of the White Colonizers:**

The futility of the white man’s endeavours in the dark country called the Congo becomes even more evident when we meet certain employees of the trading Company which has sent Marlow here. The manager of the Central Station has been described by Marlow in scathing terms. Marlow makes us despise this man who could inspire neither respect nor love nor fear, and who could inspire only uneasiness. Marlow found nothing within this man. Marlow's description of the brick-maker is equally satirical and critical. He describes the brick-maker as a “papier-mache Mephistopheles” because of this man's cunning. The brick-maker is here, but he makes no bricks. His function is to act as a spy for the manager. The men, who are loitering around the Central Station, are idlers having no work to do but only to gossip, to speak ill of one another, and to hatch intrigues. When the manager’s uncle turns up as the leader of an exploring expedition, he turns out to be a seasoned schemer and plotter. The manager’s mind is full of fear lest he should be superseded by Mr. Kurtz. If such are the colonizers in the dark continent of Africa, what possible benefit can they confer upon the savages there? Conrad conveys his strong disapproval and disapprobation of these white men to us most effectively, so that we begin to look upon these white men with the greatest possible contempt.

**The Shabby Treatment, Meted Out to the Black Crew:**

It is equally disgusting for us to watch the manner in which the cannibal crew of Marlow’s steamer are being treated by the white owners of the steamer. The cannibal crew are most efficient, hard-working, and sturdy fellows who deserve every possible encouragement. But the pity of it is that they are not fed properly. It goes to the credit of the cannibal crew themselves that they are exercising self-restraint and are not attacking the white men on board the steamer in order to kill them and eat their flesh. Thus the white men, led by the manager, are absolutely unconcerned about the welfare of the very men on whose labour and toil they depend. Without this cannibal crew the steamer could not have gone ahead at all; and yet the white bosses do not bother whether or not these men are properly fed.
The Lamentable Failure of Mr. Kurtz to Uplift the Savages: - Even Mr. Kurtz, who has begun to identify himself with the savages, and who had at one time held that the white man should confer huge benefits upon the backward people, has done nothing for the uplift of the natives. Instead of improving their mode of life, he has himself become a savage in their company. He has miserably failed to exercise any self-restraint, and has begun to satisfy his various lusts without any limit. Even in his prime of life, when he had supported the view about the white man’s civilizing role, he had written down the following words conveying an opposite message: “Exterminate all the brutes.” In fact, Mr. Kurtz has now become brutalized, and even dehumanized. Such is the irony of the achievement of Mr. Kurtz who had once upon a time believed that the white man could prove himself to be the Messiah of the natives.

Conrad’s Exposure of the Belgian Imperialist Rule: - Heart of Darkness conveys to us in a ‘nutshell the deceit, fraud, robberies, arson, murder, slave-trading, and general policy of cruelty of the Belgian rule in the Congo. There is an incident of fire in the story, and there is the long trek during which the natives have to carry a heavy load on their heads in the service of their white masters. The portrayal of the Company’s chief accountant is in itself a grim commentary upon the white man who can afford to dress flawlessly when the natives around are disease-stricken and starving. (Marlow of course admires this man but to us this admiration seems to be ironical). Indeed, in this novel the brutal futility of the Belgian imperialist rule is memorably captured in image after image: a natural ravine is clogged with a wanton smash-up of imported drainage-pipes; and the grass grows through the ribs of a trader’s corpse in a village abandoned in panic upon his accidental killing, colonialist and local community destroyed equally by their encounter.

The Wider Implications of This Novel: - We can go so far as to say that Conrad is here not only exposing the hollowness and the weaknesses of the Belgian imperialist rule over the Congo but also indirectly reminding us of British imperialism in various countries of the world of his time. Today the picture-of the world is widely different from what it was in Conrad’s time. Today white imperialism has crumbled; and most of the countries of Asia and Africa have become independent. But in Conrad’s time all the African countries were still a part of the dark continent, and most of the Asian Countries were being governed by their white rulers, chiefly the British. Therefore his picture of imperialist misrule and callousness in, the backward countries had in those days an undeniable relevance. Conrad’s denunciation of imperialist rule in the Congo had a valuable message for both the exploiters and the exploited. Today, of course, this message has only a historical interest. Now all the subject-countries have become independent, though independence has brought new problems for them. The evil of imperialist rule has ended, but other evils have come into existence.

Heart of Darkness : Pessimism in the Novel

A pessimist generally ignores the bright side of life, and concentrates on the dark and depressing side. Conrad very rarely speaks about the joys of life and about man’s victories and triumphs in this world. He is aware of the grandeur of human nature. But
he chiefly dwells upon the short-sightedness, corruption, egotism, and fanaticism which govern human life. The general trend of his thinking is pessimistic, and he feels especially troubled by the mystery of fate. Almost all his novels and stories lay stress on the numberless varieties of human suffering. The weaknesses of human nature everywhere dominate his novels. Conrad is of the opinion that the fundamental selfishness of man turns him into a wolf. He is certainly aware of the virtues of loyalty, fidelity, and integrity which are found in human beings; but the emphasis in his novels is upon the misery and the misfortunes which afflict human life.

Heart of Darkness is a sombre and grim novel. The title of this book is Heart of Darkness, and the book deals with the dark continent. But the story itself is also essentially dark and bleak. There is very little in this book to relieve the darkness which prevails. After reading this novel, we rise from our seats with very heavy hearts; and for days together we find ourselves unable to recover from the sadness which had begun to oppress us.

**Marlow’s Opening Remarks:** – Marlow’s very opening remarks about the Roman conquest of Britain centuries ago have a touch of sadness about them. He tells his listeners that all conquest is “robbery with violence,” and that violence in this context means “aggravated murder on a great scale.” Powerful nations and communities strive to grab whatever they can get by attacking the weaker nations. Marlow is here undoubtedly hinting at the imperialist rule of the modern western nations also. In this context, we must remember that Marlow’s voice is essentially the voice of Conrad himself. When Marlow criticizes and censures the ancient Roman conquest of the backward countries like Britain, it is Conrad who is censuring the Belgian, the Spanish, and the British conquerors who had established their own empires in modern times. These opening remarks by Marlow bring before us scenes of the reckless slaughter of the backward people and the establishment by the invaders of their own governments in the conquered territories.

**The Sight of the Knitting-Women and the Talk of the Doctor:** – Marlow’s comments upon the two women who sit knitting black wool in the Company’s office also have a tinge of sadness in them. These knitting-women appear to Marlow to represent the Fates who keep busy spinning the yarn of the destiny of human beings on this earth. After seeing these women, Marlow speaks in terms of shrouds and dead bodies. They bring to his mind the spectacle of gladiators getting killed in the arena where bloody contests used to take place for the amusement of emperors and commoners. Thus the sight of these women is ominous and suggests dark thoughts. Even the Company’s doctor, who examines Marlow and who is by nature a jovial man, says something which has a hint of tragedy in it. The doctor says that he, as a scientist, would very much like to study the changes that take place in the mind of a white man who goes into a dark and unexplored country like the Congo. Evidently, the doctor is aware of the fact that a white man would almost go crazy in a country where he meets only savages and has to deal with them. Subsequently we learn that no white man has been able to spend more than three years in the Congo. Everyone, who went there, fell ill and had to be sent back to Europe. The manager of the Central Station is, of course, a man with an exceptional
stamina; and he can withstand the rigours of the climate of the Congo; but most of the white men have been unable to do that.

The Sights of the Suffering and Misery of the Natives of the Congo: - Marlow’s feeling of isolation is conveyed to us very effectively when he is sailing towards the Congo by a French steamer. In this context, Marlow tells us that he was a lonely man on that steamer because he had no point of contact with any member of the crew, and also because he had no duties to perform. The sights which Marlow witnesses on reaching the Company’s very first trading post are of a kind which would depress and sadden any visitor. Marlow sees a number of black men held together by means of a chain, and each wearing an iron collar around his neck. This chain-gang of criminals gives rise to awful thoughts in Marlow’s mind. The other sights, which Marlow sees here, make him feel that he has entered the gloomy circle of some inferno. He finds large numbers of black men sitting in groups, close to the tree-trunks, and dying slowly of starvation and disease. These sights are intended by Conrad to convey to us the white man’s total indifference to the needs of the black natives of the Congo, and the white man’s self-centeredness. The white man was supposed to ameliorate the conditions of life for the savages; but the white man is absolutely unconcerned with the indescribable sufferings and misery of these black men. The white man evidently makes full use of the labour and toil of the backward and ignorant natives but pays no attention to their uplift.

Depressing Portrayals of the White Men Working in the Congo:- Conrad also shows his pessimism in the manner in which Marlow portrays the white men whom he meets at the Central Station. The manager is described by Marlow as a man who could inspire neither love nor fear nor respect but who could certainly inspire “uneasiness.” There was “nothing within him.” In other words, the manager was a man with a barren soul. Conrad’s purpose here is to convey to us the spiritual emptiness of the white men who went to the backward countries for purely trading purposes. The manager’s chief anxiety is to collect as much ivory as possible, though at the same time he feels jealous of Mr. Kurtz who is achieving an enormous success in collecting ivory. The white agents, who are seen by Marlow loitering about the Central Station, seem to be idlers who have no work to do and who merely spend their time in talking ill of one another and in hatching intrigues. These men are described by Marlow satirically or ironically as “pilgrims”. Then there is the brick-maker who earns Marlow’s strong disapproval by his cunning. This man talks a lot, but there is little meaning in his talk. Marlow describes him as a “papier-mâché Mephistopheles.” Naturally we feel greatly depressed by Marlow’s sketches of these men who have come to the Congo as the ambassadors of progress and enlightenment but each of whom is cutting a sorry figure.

The Most Pessimistic Part of the Novel:- The most pessimistic part of the novel, however, is that which deals with the character and deeds of Mr. Kurtz. This man had at one time given evidence of possessing a highly progressive and liberal outlook. In the prime of his life, he had believed in the great benefits which the white men could confer upon the backward peoples of the earth. But, after having stayed among the savages, this man has himself become a savage. Instead of civilizing the beasts, he has himself become a beast. He certainly retains his identity as a civilized man, but he gives evidence of that identity only when he is spending some time at his headquarters at the
Inner Station. When he goes into the interior to collect ivory, he begins to participate in the life of the savages and to share all their activities. He has now become a powerful man and is worshipped by the savages as a kind of deity. He now presides over their midnight dances which always end with “unspeakable rites.” He has now begun to gratify his various lusts without restraint, and he is now giving a free outlet to his monstrous passions. Marlow frankly says that Mr. Kurtz has now taken a high place among the devils of the land. Such is the effect of a savage environment on a civilized man when he is cut off from civilized society. Mr. Kurtz has now become a barbarian, giving a free vent to his primitive instincts which have risen to the surface under the influence of the savages. A large number of posts are fixed to the ground outside his residence and on the top of each post there is a human head or skull. These heads and skulls are of those natives who had incurred Mr. Kurtz’s displeasure and who had been executed under his orders. In short, the spectacle of an enlightened man falling a prey to the evil influence of barbarism has an intensely depressing effect on us. We begin to feel that civilization is only a thin veneer which wears off soon under adverse conditions of life. Beneath his refinement and culture, a human being continues to be essentially a primitive. In fact, a change has begun to occur even in Marlow; and, if Marlow had stayed among the savages in the Congo for any length of time, he too would have morally degenerated and become a savage.

**Heart of Darkness : Symbolism**

Symbolism means a deeper meaning in what has been written than meets the eye. The complexity with profundity of most of the modern writers leads them to fill their wirings with greater significance than we find on the surface. “Heart of Darkness” is replete with symbols. Every person and everything means more than what we find on a superficial view. The novel is based on the facts of history as well as on the facts of Conrad’s own life; but Conrad has tried to convey the evasive and elusive truth underlying both the historical facts and his personal experiences.

Almost every character in “Heart of Darkness” has some symbolic significance. The central figure Mr. Kurtz, firstly, symbolizes the greed and the commercial and corrupt mentality of the western countries. Secondly, he symbolizes the white man’s love for power. Power corrupts man and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Thirdly, the change, which comes over him during his stay among the savages, symbolizes the influence of barbarism upon a civilized man. It also symbolizes the irresistible influences of barbarism upon a civilized man cut off from civilized society. Where there is no check on a man, the worst of him may come out.

Finally, Mr. Kurtz symbolizes the repentant sinner. Mr. Kurtz’s desire to collect the maximum quantity of ivory conveys the exploitation of the backward people of Congo by the white colonizers.

Marlow too has a symbolic role in the novel. Firstly, he symbolizes the spirit of adventure and a love of knowledge. Secondly, he symbolizes the thoughtful
observer of human life and the thoughtful student of human nature. He also symbolizes a philosophical approach to human life by constantly meditating upon what he observes. To some extent, he too symbolizes the influence of savagery because his own primitive instincts have been awakened when he heard a lot about Mr. Kurtz’s way of life and then by his close personal contact with that man.

The subsidiary characters too possess symbolic significance. There is the manager of the Central Station. It is wrong to say that he symbolizes inefficiency. If he had been inefficient, he would not have been able to continue at his post. He symbolizes spiritual emptiness. If he is unable to inspire respect or love or fear, it is because he is spiritually barren and has no originality and no solid ideas in his head, though he can do his manager’s work like a machine.

The brick-maker acts as a “papier-mâché Mephistopheles” and symbolizes cunning and trickery. There are numerous white agents or traders loitering around the Central Station because they are idle. These men are described by Marlow as "faithful pilgrims".

The cannibal crew on Marlow’s steamer really symbolizes efficiency because they do not shirk work. More than efficiency, they symbolize self-restraint because they do not try to satisfy their hunger by killing and eating white men’s flesh.

The knitting women in the beginning of the story symbolize the Fates who determine the future of every human being on the earth. These knitting women symbolize the danger which lies in store for Marlow. In the outer room the two women knitted black wool, feverishly.

The majestic-looking native woman, who appears on the riverbank when Mr. Kurtz is being taken away, symbolizes a woman’s strong devotion and steadfast loyalty to her lord and lover.

Mr. Kurtz’s fiancée also symbolizes loyalty but her loyalty is that of an innocent, inexperienced woman who is deluded by false appearances and does not know the ways of the world. The fiancée symbolizes the hold of an illusion upon a woman’s mind.

The Russian symbolizes inquisitiveness or the desire to learn. But he also symbolizes loyalty and fidelity, the two virtue which Marlow also symbolizes.

Many sights seen by Marlow also possess symbolic significance. The French warship firing aimlessly into the forest, and the rock being blasted with gun powder but without any purpose symbolize the sense of futility and an aimless endeavour. Ivory symbolizes the white men’s greed.

Then there is the sight of one over-worked and starved native labourers dying slowly of disease and starvation. The condition of these men symbolizes the sufferings of the natives who do not receive any sympathy from the white colonizers. They were dying...
slowly ... They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now, - nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation.

The chain-gang with half a dozen native men chained to one another, and each wearing an iron collar round his neck, symbolize the white man’s sway over the ignorant backward people without any concern for their welfare.”... the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope; each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain whose bights swung between them, rhythmically clinking.

The description of the natural scenery also serves a symbolic purpose. The scenery is wild and awe-inspiring. The silence of the woods and the abundance of trees symbolizes mystery and horror. Marlow has given us many pictures of the thick, dense, matted forests. And the river was there – fascinating – deadly – like a snake.

The city of Brussels symbolizes the inner corruption and degeneracy of whiteman's civilization. Brussels seems to Marlow to be the white sepulchre – something outwardly pleasant and holy but inwardly rotten.

Finally, Marlow’s whole journey into the Congo has symbolic significance besides its literal meaning. It may be regarded as a journey into subconscious mind of Marlow in particular and of mankind in general. “Heart of Darkness” is the story of a journey involving spiritual change in the voyager. Symbolically, Marlow’s journey into the Congo is an arduous physical activity or adventure. The literal meaning of ‘heart of darkness’ is the inmost region of Congo; but symbolically this phrase means the inmost region of man’s mind or soul. As Marlow stands for Conrad, the novel becomes a kind of Conrad’s exploration of his own mind during his visit to the Congo in 1890. In the business of exploration, both exploiter and exploited are corrupted.

In short, the imperial exploitation of the Congo has effectively been conveyed through a symbolic description of numerous scenes and situations.

The papier-mâché Mephistopheles is the name Marlow gives the brick-maker of the Central Station. He, at first glance, appears to be a kind soul, but it doesn't take long for Marlow to discover that he isn’t: he is a “devil”, more than an enabler or the grim-reaper, but less than Lucifer (who, I anticipate, is Mr. Kurtz himself). This is therefore the second level of the “Inferno”. He is in papier-mâché because he is not real, though he could very well be: he is not really Mephistopheles, merely because he wants to be wants to be this type of character.

Heart of Darkness: Autobiographical Elements

Many of Conrad’s works are based upon Conrad’s own experiences in life. Heart of Darkness definitely, belongs to the category of autobiographical works. This novel is actually a record of Conrad’s own experiences in the course of his visit to the Congo in 1890. Conrad was only nine years old when, looking at a map of Africa of the time, he said to himself. “When I grow up, I shall go there.”
In Heart of Darkness the fictitious character, Charles Marlow, also tells his friends on the deck of a steamboat that, in his boyhood, he had been greatly attracted by the African country known as the Congo, and that the river Congo flowing through’ that country had exercised a particular fascination upon him.

In 1890, Conrad actually travelled to the Congo. As a grown-up man, Conrad felt even more interested in going to the Congo because of the exploits of the explorer named Henry Morton Stanley. His exploration of the dark continent had led to the Belgian King Leopold II taking control of the region to which was given the name of the Congo Free State. As a result of Stanley’s exploration, certain trading stations and administration centres were also established by Belgian Companies. Conrad’s interest in Africa was greatly increased by Stanley’s exciting experiences and discoveries. By the time Conrad reached the Congo, it had almost become the private property of King Leopold II and it had begun to be exploited by the Belgian trading companies in the name of Christianity and civilization.

Conrad’s Unpleasant Experiences: - In order to go to the Congo, Conrad had to take the help of an aunt who was by vocation a writer of novels. Through her influence, Conrad obtained a job with a trading company as the captain of a steamboat which was to take an exploring expedition led by Alexandre Delcommune to a place called Katanga in the Congo. Conrad felt very pleased with the prospect of being able to visit the region of his boyhood dreams. However, Conrad’s pleasure was greatly marred by a quarrel which he had with Alexandre Delcommune’s brother who was functioning as a manager under the same trading company at a trading station on the way. Conrad formed a very adverse opinion about this manager whom he blamed for the many things which went wrong with his voyage on the river Congo, especially the delay in his arriving at his destination. Conrad had many other unpleasant experiences as well. Most of Conrad’s experiences in the course of this visit were recorded by him in a diary to which he gave the name of the Congo Diary. One entry in this diary informs us that hardly sixty per cent of the Company’s European employees stayed in the Congo for more than six months because of the diseases which overtook them. Hardly seven per cent of the Europeans could withstand the climate of the Congo for more than three years. Thus Conrad began to feel disillusioned with this region in the very early part of his visit. He felt also disappointed to find that most of the Europeans spoke ill of one another, and had very little else to do. In the course of his visit, Conrad had to walk over rocky territory in the scorching sun, camping at night in the damp and cold, and facing threats of mutiny from the porters. Finally, Conrad arrived at a station where the company’s ships were assembled or repaired.

An Agent Called Klein, the Original of Mr. Kurtz: - Conrad’s main duty now was to bring one of the Company’s agents whose health was failing. The name of this agent was Klein. This man had arrived in the Congo late in 1883 and had been placed in command of the Company’s station at Stanley Falls in 1890. He subsequently died aboard Conrad’s steamship by which he was being brought. It was this agent, by the name of Klein, who is transformed into Mr. Kurtz in Heart of Darkness. During this time Conrad’s own health began to be damaged by the unwholesome climate and environment. Hence he decided to give up his job and return to Europe. However, he
stayed on as long as he could; and, by the time he returned, he was a broken man. In fact, he never afterwards regained his normal health. And it was as a consequence of this permanent impairment of his health that he gave up voyaging altogether, and turned to writing as a profession.

“Heart of Darkness,” Largely a Record of Conrad’s Own Experiences: - In Heart of Darkness the character named Marlow is largely Conrad himself. Alexandre Delcommune’s brother becomes the manager of the Central Station in Heart of Darkness. In the novel, Marlow makes very unfavourable comments on the manager of the Central Station because Conrad had formed an adverse view of Alexandre Delcommune’s brother with whom Conrad had quarrelled. Similarly, in Heart of Darkness, Marlow says that the white men at the Central Station had very little work to do and spent much of their time plotting and intriguing against one another. Marlow, like Conrad, experiences a strong sense of disillusionment and disappointment after observing the behaviour of the white traders and also the conditions of life of the natives. The colonial exploitation of the dark continent by the white traders in ivory, as witnessed by Conrad himself, is described by Marlow in scathing terms. Marlow also records the disastrous effects of the climate of the Congo upon the white traders and agents who were sent by the Belgian Companies to this region. Only the manager of the Central Station has the stamina to withstand the rigours of climate here, while most other agents had to go back to Europe after spending a short period of time here (in the Congo). Furthermore, Marlow experiences the same sense of enlightenment and the same process of maturing through disillusion and defeat which Conrad himself underwent during his travels in the Congo. It has therefore to be recognized that Heart of Darkness is, to a large extent, an autobiographical book because, in most of the essentials, Marlow’s experiences and feelings are very much the same as Conrad’s own had been. There is a lot of resemblance between Conrad’s Congo Diary and the contents of the novel Heart of Darkness to justify such an assumption. Conrad’s experiences in the Congo have been described by a critic as exasperating, frustrating, and humiliating; and Marlow’s experiences in his contact with most of the white men in the Congo are of the same kind. Marlow undergoes an extreme personal crisis; and this crisis is very much the same through which Conrad himself underwent in the Congo. Thus, both in externals and in terms of the inward mental life, Marlow meets the same fate which Conrad had met.

The Difference between Marlow and Conrad: - However, the autobiographical character of the novel should not be over-emphasized. There are certain substantial differences between Conrad’s personal experiences and Marlow’s experiences as described in the novel. Conrad’s own experiences have served only as the raw material for the story of the novel. Marlow’s development from idealism to disillusion and his greater understanding of life is very much the same as that of Conrad himself had been during his exploration of the Congo. But the differences are also noteworthy. Marlow is presented in the novel as being sceptical from the very beginning, as we see in his hesitation and his suspicion of the enterprise in Brussels, while for Conrad the opportunity to go to the Congo was the idealized reality of a boy’s ambition. In other words, Marlow is doubtfully and apprehensive in the very beginning, while Conrad had been full of idealistic and romantic notions at the time of his departure for the Congo.
Marlow at the very outset feels that he is not going to the centre of a continent but to the centre of the earth itself. Conrad, on the other hand, had gone to the Congo with bright expectations.

**The Difference between Mr. Klein and Mr. Kurtz:** But more important than this fact is Marlow’s portrayal of the character of Mr. Kurtz, which does not correspond to anything that Conrad had actually witnessed and experienced. The character of the agent called Mr. Klein does not much resemble the character of Mr. Kurtz as portrayed in the novel. Conrad had not, in the course of his travels, met anybody who can be compared to Mr. Kurtz. Mr. Klein can be regarded only as a starting-point for the subsequent portrayal of Mr. Kurtz in the novel. During his personal travels through the Congo, Conrad had certainly gone to rescue the ailing Mr. Klein, but Conrad had not found in Mr. Klein that embodiment of evil which Marlow fords in Mr. Kurtz. Conrad in his diary does not dwell upon the character of Mr. Klein at such great length as Marlow does in the novel while speaking about Mr. Kurtz.

**Marlow, the Mouthpiece of Conrad:** In conclusion, we may add that Marlow’s outlook upon life or his philosophy of life is very much the same as Conrad’s own was. Marlow appears as a pessimist in the novel; and Conrad himself was a pessimist too. Marlow recognizes the existence of certain virtues in human beings just as Conrad himself did. But, on the whole, Conrad had formed certain depressing ideas about life in general, and Marlow too expresses similar ideas about life. Marlow’s reactions to most people, whom he meets in the course of his travels, are unfavourable and disappointing; and so were Conrad’s own reactions to the people whom he met in the course of his voyage. Besides, we can read Conrad’s own mind in Marlow’s in such utterances as Marlow’s declaring that he hates and detests a lie not because he is straighter than other people but simply because a lie appals him. Similarly we can read Conrad’s own mind in such remarks as the following: “We live, as we dream alone.” Marlow is more or less a lonely, isolated figure despite the presence before him of four of his associates to whom he tells his story; and Conrad himself was a lonely figure too.

**Conrad’s use of irony “Heart of Darkness”**

Irrony always arises from a contrast of some kind. The contrast may be between things, as they appear to be, and as they actually are. A man may say something and mean just the opposite. When that happens, we say that he has made an ironical remark. Then we may expect something to happen, but find that just the opposite has happened. In such a case there would be irony in what we had expected. Similarly, we may expect a man to behave in a particular way, and we may then find that he has behaved in just the opposite way. In such a case, there would be irony in our expectation of that man’s behaviour. Irony is one of the most common, and one of the most effective, weapons in the hands of a writer. Conrad was an adept in the use of irony. Indeed, irony is as pervasive in his novels as it is in the novels of Jane Austen. His novels deal largely with life on the distant seas and with the unusual experiences of human beings. Much of Conrad’s irony has a sombre or grim quality.
The greatest irony in Heart of Darkness is the transformation which takes place in Mr. Kurtz during his stay at the interior station of the Company. Mr. Kurtz had been a kind of intellectual during the years of his prime. He had once written a pamphlet stating his views about the role of the white man in the backward countries explored by him. In that pamphlet he had written that the whites necessarily appeared to the savages as supernatural beings and as deities. The whites could therefore exercise a great power over the savages and bring about a great betterment in their way of life. The whites, according to Mr. Kurtz, could confer great benefits upon the backward people of the countries which they visited, which they conquered, and which they governed. The whites could suppress the savage customs of those backward people, and could civilize those people. Thus Mr. Kurtz held highly progressive views about the role of the white men in the dark and unexplored countries of Africa. And yet Mr. Kurtz had written at the end of that pamphlet the following words: “Exterminate all the brutes.” This bit of writing at the end seemed to contradict what he had written about the constructive role of the white people.

Mr. Kurtz was expected to strive to bring about all possible improvements in the way of life and in the way of thinking of the savages of the Congo where Mr. Kurtz had settled down to carry out his duties as an agent of a Belgian trading company. However, just the reverse happens. Mr. Kurtz, instead of civilizing the savages, himself becomes a savage. This is one of the most surprising developments in this novel. Thus the opposite of what was expected from Mr. Kurtz has happened. This is the chief irony in the story of this novel.

Another great irony in this novel is the attitude which Marlow ultimately adopts towards Mr. Kurtz. Marlow’s impressions about Mr. Kurtz are of a very adverse kind in the beginning. From the various reports that he has heard about Mr. Kurtz, he forms a most unfavourable opinion about Mr. Kurtz’s character. And yet, afterwards, Marlow becomes an admirer of Mr. Kurtz, and begins to harbour strong feelings of friendship and respect towards that man. We had expected that a rational and intelligent man like Marlow would continue to react to Mr. Kurtz in the same adverse manner. But what happens is just the opposite of what we had expected. Knowing fully the evil which has begun to dwell, in Mr. Kurtz, Marlow yet begins to cherish feelings of regard and esteem for that man. Evidently, Marlow’s own primitive instincts, have also been aroused, and been brought to the surface. That is why Marlow has begun to perceive a kind of kinship between himself and Mr. Kurtz. Thus, another civilized man, one who is an embodiment of reason and sanity, has also fallen a near-prey to the influences of savagery and primitivism.

There is irony also in the attitude of Mr. Kurtz’s fiancée towards Mr. Kurtz. She has been entertaining feelings of the highest admiration and esteem for him. She has been feeling proud of the man who had proposed marriage to her, and whom she had agreed to marry in opposition to the wishes of her own family. After hearing about the death of her lover, this woman is plunged into grief and, when Marlow goes to meet her a year after Mr. Kurtz’s death, he finds her still in mourning. She talks about her deceased lover in glowing terms and pays to him the highest tribute which a woman can pay to her lover. The irony in this case lies in the fact that the man, whom this
woman still worships and adores, had become a devil as a result of his stay among the savages. The irony becomes all the greater when Marlow tells her that the last word uttered by her lover before his death was her own name. She feels overjoyed to hear that Mr. Kurtz had spoken her name while dying though the actual fact is that the last words spoken by him had been: “The horror!” The irony in this case arises from the contrast between what Mr. Kurtz had actually become and what his fiancée still continues to think about him.

There is a similar irony in the Russian’s attitude of worship towards Mr. Kurtz. Mr. Kurtz has become a devil, as Marlow tells us. But, to the Russian, Mr. Kurtz has been a kind of hero worthy of adoration. The Russian tells Marlow, that Mr. Kurtz had enlarged his mind and that Mr. Kurtz had taught him to perceive the very essence of things. In other words, Mr. Kurtz had appeared to be a great sage and moralist to the Russian. The Russian had found in Mr. Kurtz a hidden wisdom which was a source of great enlightenment and illumination to the Russian. It is very strange that a man, who has become a savage and a beast, should be able to inspire such a deep respect in the Russian who is by no means a fool or a simpleton.

There is irony also in Marlow’s descriptions of things at certain points in his narration. For instance, his description of the blasting of a rock with gunpowder, when the rock does not stand in the way of the building of the railway line, is surely ironical. Ironical also is his description of the warship firing its guns without any purpose. The supposed purpose of the firing of these guns is to destroy the enemy, but no enemy is visible anywhere in the forest; and the warship is merely wasting its ammunition. There is irony also in the fact that, although the white man has brought a lot of machinery into the dark country of the Congo, the machinery is lying unused. Equally ironical is the fact that, although there are heaps and heaps of rivets lying at one of the Company’s stations, no rivet are made available to Marlow for the repairing of the wrecked steamer which he has been able to pull out of the river-bed.

Irony in Some of Marlow’s Portrayals of the White Persons

There is irony also in the way in which Marlow describes some of the whitepersons. His description of the two knitting-women, in the Company’s office in Brussels is ironical. There is a tinge of irony in his description of the Company’s doctor and the manner in which he examines the prospective employees of the Company. There is a lot of irony in Marlow’s description of the whiteagents who are seen loitering about at the Central Station in the Congo, and in Marlow’s describing these men as faithless pilgrims. The irony here becomes most pungent. For instance, referring to the sticks which these men carried, Marlow says: “I verily believe they took these sticks to bed with them”. Besides, the irony here is not sombre or tragic but most comic and most amusing. Then there is irony in his portrayal of the manager’s uncle, and the brick-maker who tries to extricate some information from Marlow because in his view, Marlow is a highly connected man wielding a lot of influence among the higher officials of the Company.
To conclude, irony deepens a particular effect. In this novel, the use of irony deepens the effect of melancholy and sadness which constitute the prevailing atmosphere of the story. Irony sharpens the sorrow which we, experience when we read about the unexpected transformation which comes, over Mr. Kurtz. The ignorance of Mr. Kurtz’s fiancée about this transformation in him saddens us because, being innocent and idealistic, she still visualizes him as her noble knight and her adorable hero. Similarly we feel a deep regret at the moral deterioration which unexpectedly takes place in Marlow and which he admire Mr. Kurtz.

**Heart of Darkness : Marlow’s Symbolic Character**

Marlow is one of the two narrators in “Heart of Darkness” and he is the more important of the two. Conrad has created a complex narrator in Marlow, a man who is not all good or all bad. Marlow narrates the story constituting the real substance of the novel. A mere narrator would objectively tell a story, keeping himself out of it. But in “Heart of Darkness”, Marlow himself is one of the central characters. As a narrator, Marlow is unreliable that he is not an objective teller of the story, but is instead emotionally conflicted about the events and people within his tale. He is also a figure who is alienated from the mainstream. He is also an observer, a thinker, and a commentator. Half of the interest and appeal of this novel would be lost if we were to ignore the role of Marlow in “Heart of Darkness”. Marlow also has a symbolic role. He stands for something bigger and larger than himself.

Marlow symbolizes the spirit of adventure and the love of exploration. The spirit of adventure is ineradicable and inborn but only some people possess it. The man seeks adventure to acquire knowledge. Marlow showed his spirit of adventure in his very boyhood when world-maps aroused his curiosity. He felt attracted by the African country, Congo, and fascinated by a river Congo. On growing up, he became a sailor, sailed upon many seas, and got an opportunity to explore the Congo and sail upon the river Congo. He does not go to there for trading purposes. It is to satisfy his spirit of adventure, and his boyhood longing, that he goes into the heart of darkness.

Marlow serves also as a symbol of the thoughtful observer of human life and the thoughtful student of human nature. Marlow symbolizes the class of curious people. He tries to probe the mind of everybody whom he encounters in the course of his travels. Firstly, Marlow observes the white men who have come to the Congo for trading purposes. He observes the chief accountant of the trading Company and feels much impressed by him who has kept up appearances even in a sordid environment and whose account-books are in apple-pie order. Marlow then observes the manager who is obeyed by his subordinates, but who can inspire neither respect, nor love, nor fear. To Marlow, he seems to be hollow. Next, Marlow observes the brick-maker and concludes that he is a papier-mâché Mephistopheles. The group of white traders, idling about, creates upon Marlow the impression that they are “faithless pilgrims”. Marlow clearly brings out the failings and the meanness of the white men. There is nothing admirable about what Marlow sees of their life in Congo.
Marlow observes the natives with same keenness and minuteness. He depicts the misery and the suffering of the poor, wretched and over-worked natives. He finds many of these starving to death slowly.

'They were dying slowly ... They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now, - nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom.

He also sees a group of muscular natives paddling their boat in a carefree manner, enjoying their work. Then Marlow observes the self-restraint of his cannibal crew who are feeling very hungry but do not kill the white men to eat their flesh. Marlow also admits the hard-working helmsman on his steamship, but greatly laments the lack of caution on the part of that helmsman, leading to his death.

Marlow also gives us vivid pictures of the wild scenery on both banks of the river Congo, and he conveys to us fully the darkness of the jungle and its impenetrable thickness of trees, in addition to the dangers which lurk there.

Marlow as a keen observer, thinker and a commentator, appears even more in his study of the character of Mr. Kurtz. Marlow here appears as a philosopher-cum-psychologist by giving us a detailed portrayal of Mr. Kurtz. He conveys to us the evil which had taken control of Mr. Kurtz's mind and his actions. He tells us about the influence of barbarism of the natives that had begun to exercise upon Mr. Kurtz. He had begun to participate fully in the "unspeakable rites" and ceremonies of the savages and their mode of life. He had begun to gratify all his lusts, monstrous passions and had begun to experience all kinds of abominable satisfaction. Marlow also conveys Mr. Kurtz's inextinguishable gift of eloquence in speech and his irresistible influence upon those who encounter him. Here we must note that Marlow himself also falls to some extent, a prey to the evil in Mr. Kurtz. He also begins to experience the surge of primitive instincts in his own mind. Of course, much remains mysterious about Mr. Kurtz despite Marlow's insight and Marlow's vast knowledge of human nature; but the salient features of Mr. Kurtz have effectively and vividly been brought to our notice by Marlow who therefore becomes a symbol of the writer having a penetrating mind and a masterly way of writing.

Marlow also symbolizes self-exploration. Marlow's journey into the Congo symbolizes a journey by Marlow into his own sun-conscious mind, and even into the sub-conscious mind of mankind in general. "Heart of Darkness" is not only a physical journey into an unexplored dark continent, but also a psychological and mystical journey. The Inner Station, where Mr. Kurtz lives, symbolizes the sub-conscious mind of man, and particularly of Marlow himself. On several occasions, Marlow reveals the working of his own mind to us in clear terms. Marlow shows a lot of bluntness when talking about himself and about the thoughts which cross his mind. He tells us freely about his hatred of lies, his assent in the brick-maker's mistaken idea about him, his motive in telling a lie to Mr. Kurtz's fiancée at the end of the story. At least the lies have a pure motive, for they save the distraught fiancé. Just as he tells us frankly about the nightmare being the evil embodied by Mr. Kurtz, similarly he tells us of the inner strength which enabled him
to withstand the dangers of his travel in the Congo, and he speaks of the dream-like quality of some of his experiences.

Unlike most Europeans who bought into the justifications for imperialism and saw it as a righteous cause, Marlow saw that it was nothing but greed. However, Marlow's ability to distance himself from the dominant thinking of the time does not fully free him from that kind of thinking. In the end, he accepts the injustice of imperialism by supporting the lies, which justify it.

**Significance of lie in Heart of Darkness**

The closing scene of *The Heart of Darkness*, Marlow's interview with the dead man's white Intended (a pale figure of delusion juxtaposed against the black Athena who had usurped her place for Kurtz at the Inner Station), leaves the reader with ambivalent feelings about Conrad's chief narrator. The paradoxical ending of *Heart of Darkness* has caused considerable critical consternation, if not outrage. That the novel should end with a lie should be told to a beloved amazing, that the lie should be told in a novel ostensibly directed towards a bewaring of the nefarious nature of the human heart almost astounding; that such a lie should be practiced by modern Buddha absolutely preposterous. The ending has therefore been criticized as being ‘a botched scene’, ‘a fatal blunder’ and even as ‘the final flaw in a flawed novel’. Yet a contextual reading of the novel would almost lead a discerning reader to a radically different conclusion. The conclusion would be that even though the ending does not satisfy the human desire for the whole truth or for a satisfying rounded final, the ending is not only appropriate, but also something devoutly to be wished for.

Every aspect of the ending is stepped in grandeur, pervaded with touch of the ethereal. The setting suggests magnificence and splendid idealism: the drawing room is ‘lofty’, the windows are long and luminous, the tall marble fireplace has monumental whiteness, the piano is grand and stands massively looking like a sombre and polished sarcophagus and the door is high. The lady is described in an almost equally idealized and hollowed manner:

“She has a mature capacity for fidelity, for belief, for suffering... this hair, this pale visage this pure brow, seemed surrounded by an ashy halo from which the dark eyes looked out at me. Their glance was guileless, profound, confident and trustful."

She was dressed in black although it was almost a year since Kurtz's death, and this unceasing mourning is revelatory of the fact that she was 'girlish', that ‘she was one of those creature who were not the play thing of time’. Her attitude towards Kurtz, her reverence for him is flawless. Illumined by the inextinguishable light of love and belief, she declares, ‘it was impossible to know him and not to admire him.’

The grandeur of the scene is shattered when Marlow lies to her. Marlow's lie gives a lie to the carefully crafted and meticulously woven façade of glory. The answers to Marlow's motivation are to be discovered in the nature of the lie itself and in the nature of the liar.
Lies, of course, have proven indispensable to fabulists ever since Cain lied to God in Genesis and Odysseus slipped out of one disguise into another in The Odyssey. But Marlow's lie is neither as wicked as Cain's (especially since it acknowledges his need to be the keeper of his spiritual brother's memory) nor as self-serving but justifiable as Odysseus's. When the beloved declares that she would have treasured every sigh, every word, every sign, every glance of the dying Kurtz, and laments that there may not have been anyone to hear his last words, Marlow unwittingly states that he had heart ‘ his very last words’. When pressed to reveal the final words of Kurtz, the self reviling and desperate Marlow can only utter a lie: ‘the last word he pronounced was your name” the final victorious truth expressed in articulo mortis by Kurtz---‘ The horror! The horror!’ is thereby suppressed.

The questions remain as to why Marlow tells an untruth. Such a lie may be explicable in the case of an inveterate liar, but not in the case of Marlow since it made it abundantly clear that lies are abhorrent to him. When he speaks about lying early in the novel, he says ,’lying appals me,’ it is exactly what I hate and detest in the world,’ it makes me miserable’ and sick like biting into something rotten wound’. As Garrett Stewart points out in lying as dying in Heart of Darkness , ‘his strict ethical theorem, the equation of death with lying ,is even in the early context no stray remark, for it threads untruth to death in the casual nexus of the European experience in Africa.’ All through the novel his one endeavour has been to know the truth about himself, and it is inconceivable that a man so meticulous about knowing the truth should lie to others.

The answer might be one of the various proffered—that he was being merciful to the Intended whom he admired , that he was generally mild and protective towards women as they were cocooned from reality, and that he wanted the truth only for himself. That Marlow may be tempted to hide the hideous truth fro the lady whom he found to be a veritable paragon of virtue, one who was about to dedicate her entire life to Kurtz, is quite likely. That he does so because he desires to shield all women from the unbearable truth of the darkness of the human heart too is plausible in view of his earlier remark about woman, ‘it is queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own...’ Marlow would be the last to shatter the fragile edifice of their make-believe world. If Marlow's assertion seems to deny women the right or need for the quest for the truth, one might go further and suggest that Marlow's was a journey of self-discovery and that therefore he was never interested in telling her truth.

Even though the reasons preferred may contain some truths, perhaps the greatest truth behind the lie is something different. It is not merely designed to provide relief to a particular woman or even to all women and certainly his purpose could never have been the selfish one of attaining the truth only for himself. Much more likely is his realization that not only cans mankind ‘not bear too much reality’, but also the mankind must be saved from the reality. Society can exist only if there is some idealistic basis, even if it is an allusion. It is only save mankind from devastating truth about itself, that Marlow makes the supreme sacrifice of telling a lie, something foreign to his nature, alien to his spirit.
Conrad’s Use of Journey Motif in Heart of Darkness

The novella Heart of Darkness was written in 1899 by Joseph Conrad explores the idea of self-discovery and can be described as a story of initiation. Marlow, the protagonist of the novella, undertakes a boat ride up the Congo River in search of Kurtz, the chief of the Inner Station, however this journey, which can be seen as a journey into the self, one’s ‘inner spirit’. Conrad uses the journey both in its literal and figurative meanings. Most obvious is Marlow’s journey to discover Africa, and the effects of imperialism. On a deeper level, it seems as if Conrad uses the journey to cloak Marlow’s true journey into himself. Through the use of the physical journey in Heart of Darkness, the reader can see the inner journey that the characters in the novella undertake and the effects that their unconscious has on their thoughts and actions. Marlow's journey from Europe, to the Outer Station and then to the Central Station also tests his ability to distinguish between good and evil since he witnesses such proceedings that draw out a moral judgment from him.

The journey in Heart of Darkness passes not only through the capricious waters that spanning the physical world, but also the paradoxical ocean which exists in the heart of man and all of mankind. Through Marlow's somewhat fanatical eyes we view the enigma that is humanity, and the blurred line between light and dark. It is a voyage into the deepest recesses of the human heart and mind (a voyage of self-discovery or, like Albert Guerard it can also be viewed as a ‘night journey’), leading to epiphany, enlightenment, and finally spiralling downwards into the crevices of a hell existing within each and every one of us, which is represented by the character of Kurtz. Although through Marlow Conrad depicts a journey into the Congo, his use of symbolism and wordplay divulge that it is something much more profound.

Almost every action, object, and character in Conrad's Heart of Darkness has a deeper, more relevant meaning behind it, serving to bring us ever closer to the conclusion that the voyage is indeed an inward one. The first major indication of this is the posture of Marlow as he recounts his journey into the Congo. According to the narrator, "he had the pose of a Buddha preaching in European clothes and without a lotus-flower." This lotus position is one typically used for meditation, which is in fact defined as a spiritual journey promoted by a lucidity of thought. Successful meditation leads to a more discerning understanding of human nature and allows one to contemplate the innermost workings of the mind. Therefore Marlow's stance capitalizes on his true destination, insinuating from the very first pages that his journey is actually within himself.

From the start of Marlow's tale there are countless of symbols relating to the unchartered places of the subconscious, and the journey intended to discover them. For instance, Marlow is lead to a room by two silent women spinning black wool (The women represent the Fates of Greek mythology, who spin a skein of wool which symbolizes a person's life. The fact that these women's thread is black creates an ominous sense of foreboding.). There his attention is drawn to a map and he finds himself enthralled by a large river coursing through the heart of Africa.He notices that the river resembled a snake, and that it was "fascinating." For some odd reason, this long, sinuous river
tempted him, despite its reptilian connotations, which already alerts the reader to danger ahead. The river is akin to the serpent in the biblical story of Adam and Eve, offering the unwitting pair a forbidden fruit - wisdom, and a dark knowledge of oneself. Also, throughout the journey, there are repeated references to both life and death.

Uncannily, these two are always intertwined. For example, there is a theme of bones which is constantly recurring in Marlow's story. The Swede mentions a man who died, and whose skeleton was left sprawled on the ground until the grasses began to grow up through his ribcage. The grass represents life, and of course, the skeleton represents death. These two are woven together. Also, there is Kurtz's obsession with ivory (dental bone), and according to Marlow he has the appearance of the object of his fixation. From Marlow's description, Kurtz bears a skeletal resemblance even when he is alive. Conrad's frequent symbolic combination of life and death is probably one of his numerous parallels to light and dark, echoing the fact that the two must exist simultaneously - there cannot be without the other. Conrad's book is based on the presence of light and dark within everyone, and in Marlow's journey the question is often posed of which is predominant. There are times when darkness usurps the light, others when it is the opposite. However, the darkness (evil) usually tends to prevail.

Conrad is implying that a sense of evil resides in the core of every human, and therefore reigns at the centre of humanity, however veiled by morals, civilization and refinement. This is one of the main facts Marlow ascertains on his journey, for he sees darkness everywhere, even when there is light. Just as the line between light and dark is indistinct, the barrier segregating civilization from savagery is equally obscure. In Africa, Marlow repeatedly encounters natives, and his crew is comprised of twenty cannibals. As they progress deeper into the heart of the forest, we can take note that black people are dehumanized. They are perpetually referred to in animalistic terms, and are treated as such. However, it is these "savages" who survive and thrive in the heart of darkness, and whose ways eventually engulf Kurtz. There is also the indication here that technology, civilization, and refinement have been rendered useless.

Every character thought to be at the pinnacle of cultivation and etiquette either dies or becomes corrupted by his surroundings (Kurtz, Fresleven). It is apparent that civilization is utterly futile in such surroundings. Kurtz serves as a prime example of a civilized gentleman who capitulates to his barbaric side due to his environment. Regardless of the respect and admiration showered upon him by his peers, not to mention the jealousy, he was at heart a hollow man, consumed by his greed for ivory. This is probably why he gave in so readily to his primitive instincts, partaking in the horrendous rituals of the natives, and letting his dark essence become the hub of his actions.

Kurtz is also symbolic of the evil within our society, for people saw him as the "emissary of science and progress." He represents the person found deep within the recesses of our subconscious, the core of darkness ever-present beneath the gauzy layers of refinement and civility. 'One evening coming in with a candle I was startled to hear him say a little tremulously, 'I am lying here in the dark waiting for death.' In this quote we can see that, symbolically, Kurtz is so overcome by darkness that he is blind to light. This is also embodied in an oil painting done by Kurtz, depicting a blind folded woman surrounded by...
darkness but carrying a torch which casts a sinister light over her face. The blindfolded woman can be taken as a common Western symbol of justice and liberty, things that man has created to differentiate himself from the beasts and savages. The fact that the woman is enshrouded in darkness with only insufficient torchlight to guide her says a lot about the nature of our society.

The culmination of Marlow's journey leads into the heart of darkness, or in a more worldly sense, Hell. Heart of Darkness fosters the allusion that hell is within us that it is the evil existing deep inside our souls. Marlow visits this place when he finally encounters Kurtz, and his innocent morals are challenged. He views first-hand the inhumanity man is capable of, and the journey begins to take on all the properties of a nightmare. When Kurtz himself is lying on his deathbed, he sees into his own heart, looks his personal hell in full view, and utters things which give Marlow a grim revelation as to what lies within that black abyss. Kurtz's final words, as he ends his voyage into his bitter core, are "The horror, the horror!" referring to what he sees inside himself.

The journey Marlow undertakes is seemingly in our own world, something which we reside in yet know so little about. We delude ourselves into believing that we can tame and subdue it, and that it will readily succumb and be molded to our good intentions. However, just as trying to harness the dark and primal nature within ourselves is impossible, this is an equally unattainable fantasy. Conrad's world is an embodiment of humanity, its ocean is its heart, and its impenetrable forest is its mind. Through Marlow's epiphany it is revealed that at the mouth of every river, at the core of every grove, subsists a perpetual darkness encased in light.

Thus what makes Heart of Darkness more than an interesting travelogue and shocking account of horrors is the way that it details — in subtle ways — Marlow's gradual understanding of what is happening in this far-off region of the world. Like many Europeans — including his creator — Marlow longed for adventure and devoured accounts such as those offered by Stanley. But once he arrives in the Congo and sees the terrible "work" (as he ironically calls it) taking place, he can no longer hide under the cover of his comfortable civilization. Instead, all the horrors perpetrated by European traders and agents — typified by Kurtz — force him to look into his own soul and find what darkness lies there. In the first half of the novel, Marlow states, "The essentials of this affair lay deep under the surface, beyond my reach" — but by the end of his journey, he will have peeked beneath "the surface" and discovered the inhumanity of which even men such as the once-upstanding Kurtz are capable.

Marlow’s descent into his mind in “Heart of Darkness”

Heart of Darkness is a novel which clearly shows the influence of psychology and psychiatry (psychoanalysis) which were emerging as full-fledged sciences at the time when this novel was written. Heart of Darkness is a record of the inner life of Marlow during the period of his travels in that country.

Prepared by Atta Ur Rahman Jadoon 03335499069
Heart of Darkness certainly gives us a vivid description of the thoughts and ideas which crossed his mind during his stay in that country. Marlow appears in this novel as a thinker who broods and meditates upon everything that he sees. Marlow appears as a keen observer, and he also appears as a thinker who reflects upon everything that he observes. Marlow is an introspective man who keeps constantly examining his own thoughts as they arise in his mind. Thus the book is to be treated as a kind of an exploration by Marlow of his own mind, of both his conscious mind and his sub-conscious mind. The phrase “heart of darkness” also means the inmost depths of the human mind which requires a great subtlety to plumb and probe.

From the very beginning, this novel gives us the **internals as well as the externals**. The externals are the outward scenes, happenings, incidents, and the persons with whom Marlow comes into contact, while the internals are the workings of Marlow’s own mind or the thoughts which take their rise in his sub-conscious. Thus the novel is a record of a two-fold journey—a journey into the Congo which had at that time not yet been fully explored, and a journey into the dark realm of Marlow’s mind and, in a sense, into the dark realm of the human mind in general. He narrates his experiences to a small group of his friends, he not only gives them his experiences of outward happenings but also his inward reactions to his experiences. For instance, he tells his friends that the city of Brussels made him think of a “whited sepulchre” (that is, a place which outwardly seems to be pleasant and righteous but is actually corrupt and disgusting). When he speaks about his encounter with the two knitting-women, he also describes his mental reaction to them: “Hail, old knitter of black wool. Those who are about to die salute you!” After seeing the knitting-women and after meeting his aunt, Marlow feels as if, instead of going to the centre of a continent, he were about to start for the centre of the earth. Similarly, he describes his reactions to the doctor who examines him and who measures the dimensions of his skull because it is in the interests of science for him to do so. The doctor at this time tells Marlow that it would be interesting for science to watch the mental changes of individuals during their stay in the dark continent.

When Marlow is sailing towards the Congo on a French steamer, he again records his thoughts. He tells us that during this journey the voice of the surf was now and then a positive pleasure to him like the speech of a brother. This voice, he says, was something natural which had its reason and which had a meaning. Marlow sees half a dozen black men linked together with a chain, and each wearing an iron collar around his neck. These men were criminals who had violated the law. This sight produces a deep effect on Marlow, giving rise to a chain of awful thoughts in his mind. He here says that he had previously seen the devil of violence, the devil of greed, and the devil of hot desire, but that these half a dozen black men were strong, muscular, red-eyed devils.

Marlow’s encounter with the manager of the Central Station and the brick-maker there also gives rise to many thoughts in his mind. The manager seems to be a man with nothing inside him, while the brick-maker appears to be a cunning and inquisitive man who tries to find out, by questioning Marlow, whether Marlow has any influence among the higher officials of the trading company which has sent him here. In this context, Marlow tells us that he has always hated and detested lies, not because he is straighter than the other people, but because a lie simply appals him. Marlow finds a
taint of death and a flavour of mortality in lies. However, on this occasion, Marlow allows the brick-maker falsely to assume that he did have a lot of influence among the high officials of the company. In the same context, Marlow says that the figure of Mr. Kurtz at this time was like a dream to him. He further says that no man can convey to others a dream-sensation, and that it is impossible for a man to convey to others the life-sensation of any given period of his existence. Marlow then adds: “We live, as we dream alone.” Thus here we find Marlow probing his own mind and delving into depths of his mind.

Later, **Marlow speaks about his work-ethic.** He has to work hard on the ship which he has to command. In pulling the wrecked steamer out of the river and repairing it, Marlow has to work very hard. His hard work made him fall in love with the steamer. Marlow says that work gives a man the chance to find himself and his own reality.

When Marlow has actually become the skipper of the Company’s steamer and begins his voyage on the river Congo, he **continues to meditate upon whatever he sees and overhears.** For instance, at the very outset he says that, in performing the daily duties of a routine kind, a man comes to know only the surface reality of life because the inner truth is hidden from him. In command of a steamer on a strange and unknown river, Marlow feels like a blind-folded man driving a motor-van over a bad road. Then Marlow describes his reactions to the scenery which he witnesses. “We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness,” he says; and the earth at that time seemed unearthly to him. A little later, he says that the mind of man is capable of anything because everything is in its all the past as well as all the future. Furthermore, a real man is he who can meet the naked truth with his own true stuff.

Marlow discovers a book on the subject of seamanship in the deserted hut. Such a book being found in that hut was something wonderful, says Marlow; but still more surprising were the notes written in pencil in the margin. The notes seemed to be in cipher and looked like an extravagant mystery. Later, however, the mystery is solved because Marlow learns that the notes were written not in cipher but in the Russian language. Here Marlow also observes that no man in this world is safe from trouble at any stage in his life.

Marlow’s reflections upon his cannibal crew are also noteworthy. Here again he records his mental reactions to an outward situation. The crew consists of cannibals who would like to eat human flesh to satisfy their hunger. They could easily kill the white men on board the steamer and eat their flesh; but they did not do so. Marlow feels amazed to find that, in spite of their gnawing hunger, they did not kill the white men on board. It is really easier to face the death of a close relative than to face prolonged hunger. It is easier to endure dishonour and even the damnation of one’s soul than to bear the pangs of hunger. Marlow is therefore filled with admiration for the self-restraint of those cannibals in not killing the white men and eating their flesh to appease their hunger.

Then there are **Marlow’s reflections upon the helmsman,** who gets killed by one of the natives through his own folly. The look in the dead helmsman’s eyes haunts Marlow.
In this context Marlow says that the helmsman had been lacking in self-restraint. There are also Marlow’s reflections upon Mr. Kurtz about whom he has been hearing a lot. Mr. Kurtz was a gifted creature, with eloquence as his greatest gift. When Marlow is told by someone that Mr. Kurtz might be dead by this time, Marlow feels deeply disappointed. He does not, of course, shed tears, but he is certainly grieved at the idea of having lost the privilege of meeting Mr. Kurtz and listening to his eloquent talk.

From this point onwards the narration centres round the deeds and the personality of Mr. Kurtz; and, in telling us the facts about Mr. Kurtz, Marlow also gives us his own reactions to those facts. The facts about Mr. Kurtz are certainly very intriguing, but so are Marlow’s reactions to those facts. Mr. Kurtz has now become an embodiment of evil, so that it seems to Marlow that Mr. Kurtz has taken a high seat among the devils of the land. And here Marlow once again talks about the need of inner strength in a man if a man has to face such grim facts as the devilry of Mr. Kurtz. Furthermore, Marlow now speaks about the spell which Mr. Kurtz’s reputation has begun to cast upon his own mind. Marlow here says that subsequently he became a devoted friend of Mr. Kurtz, and that Mr. Kurtz was able to conquer his soul. After meeting that man, Marlow begins really to admire him despite the man’s demonic character.

In fact, Marlow now becomes deeply devoted to Mr. Kurtz and goes to the extent of saying that he would never betray him and that it had already been ordained that he would always remain loyal to him. Marlow admits that Mr. Kurtz was a nightmare but he still maintains that he would never betray him because; Mr. Kurtz was “the nightmare of his choice”. Thus Marlow has developed a keen personal interest in that man, whose evil he also recognizes fully. Even after returning to Europe, Marlow remains loyal to Mr. Kurtz’s memory because, when Mr. Kurtz’s fiancée asks him what Mr. Kurtzs’ last word before death had been, Marlow tells her a lie and says that Mr. Kurtz’s last word had been her own name. Now this loyalty to Mr. Kurtz again means only one thing. Marlow has been able to convey to us indirectly and subtly the influence of Mr. Kurtz’s primitivism upon himself, without being able to define that influence in specific and explicit terms. It is in the last one-third of the novel that Marlow tries to lay bare his sub-conscious mind. The writing in this part of the novel anticipates the technique which came afterwards to be known as “stream of consciousness” technique. This technique was subsequently practised by writers like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. Conrad was a forerunner of that technique whereby the inner consciousness of a character is revealed. The inspiration and the incentive to explore the sub-conscious mind had come, of course, from the findings of Sigmund Freud.

Colonization and Greed in Heart of Darkness

The book Heart of Darkness written by Joseph Conrad is a masterpiece in literature. Conrad obtained many of his perspectives for his work from ‘hands on experience’ and also from his harsh background and childhood. When Conrad was still a child his father was exiled to Siberia because of suspicions on plotting against the Russian government. After his mother died, Conrad’s father sent him to his mother’s brother in Krakow for education purposes. This was the last time Conrad ever saw his father.
In 1890 Conrad took command of a steamship in the Belgian Congo. Conrad’s experiences in the Congo paved the way and the outline for his brilliant novel Heart of Darkness. During his time in the Congo, Conrad's health took a devastating blow so he returned to England to recover. Returning to sea twice before finishing Almayer's Folly in 1894 Conrad wrote several other books including one about Marlow which was called Youth (a narrative before beginning Heart of Darkness in 1898). Conrad wrote most of his other major works Lord Jim (which features Marlow), Nostromo and The Secret Agent as well as several collaborations with Ford Madox during the following two decades. Conrad died in 1924 but will always have and hold a place in the hearts of many readers. In his book Heart of Darkness Conrad gives us an understanding of how the Africans were mistreated during colonization. The book also pinpoints many cases that show the greed and selfishness of imperialism.

The evilness of how the Africans were treated is critiqued well in a quote "the men who work for the company describe what they do as `trade' and their treatment of native Africans is part of a benevolent project of civilization". This is a very true statement which shows that the way the colonizers treated the African was more like slaves rather than people. The book Heart of Darkness describes this inhuman behaviour in the quote "Each chief was authorized to collect taxes; he did so by demanding that individuals should work for a specific period of time for a minimum payment. This, of course, was another name for slavery. The so-called taxpayers were treated like prisoners; their work was carried out under the supervision of armed sentries, and, as can be easily imagined, the system lent itself to all kinds of tyranny, brutality and subsequent reprisals by the natives. In one concession alone one hundred and forty-two Africans were killed. The spirit of bitterness and hatred generated in the people was quite terrifying, but little could be done about it as thee was not enough control in the area to prevent the various agents from misusing their power". This quote sums up the immorality and the misuse of power against the Africans. It also gives insight into the horror of the colonization that was taking place at the time. One critic (Wilson Harris) helps describe Conrad's view and vision of the way that the Africans were treated. Harris writes "He sees the distortions of imagery and, therefore, of character in the novel as witnessing to the horrendous prejudice on Conrad's part in his vision of Africa and the Africans". This quote helps explain why Conrad describes the Africans the way he did (which some people may consider racist), but in actual fact it was just the reality of the situation.

The evilness of imperialism is shown very well in this quote "As Marlow travels from the outer station to the central station and finally up the river to the inner station, he encounters scenes of torture, cruelty and near slavery". This shows that the colonizers would do whatever it took including taking over the people and using them as `near slaves' for their own personal benefits. The results of this madness and greed can be best shown through Conrad’s use of life and imagery. The land of Africa is described throughout the book as a living thing, and the Congo is brought to life as a snake. Also the hills are described as being 'scarred' from the recourses being taken out of them. During the course of the book, the trees and land in Africa are constantly...
moving and swallowing up the travellers. It is sort of forcing them towards Kurtz and barring their retreat. This in my mind is the land and the spirit of what `used to be' rebelling against the colonizers that include the travellers searching for Kurtz. The evilness and greed of what was taking place is unimaginable and so this spirit being still very much alive is defiantly very realistic.

Colonization, greed and the mistreatment of human people happens all the time in our current day life. It is very sad, but true that we are living in one of the (if not the) biggest powers of imperialism ever. In Iraq for instance, America left Sadam in Iraq during the first gulf war for a reason. America had the power and the resources to do exactly what we are doing now back then. It was all about the oil, and sadly but truly oil was not even a necessity anymore. Technology has grown so much that we now obtain the power to generate enough electricity and power through wind alone. America has the ability to run cars off of water rather than gas, but if we look at where American president and his family had their money we clearly can see the problem. It was all invested in the oil business. Why was it so great that the vice president of American Mr Cheany was heading up a campaign to salvage the oil fields? Was it such a big surprise that he also had money invested in the whole oil business as well? This is one example of a current day situation that is reflected to the greatest extent in the wonderful novel Heart of Darkness. This book was an excellent portrayal of the evilness and suffering caused by imperialistic powers exercising their power in the wrong ways. It also helps us understand the suffering that took place in Africa.

The Significance of Idealism in Heart of Darkness

One of the prevalent themes in Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness is idealism, a seemingly inescapable component of human nature. Conrad addresses the desirability of such a quality, and his stance on this can be discerned through his use of symbolism, underlying myths, and language. He uses the background presence of the Company and the characters of Kurtz and Marlow to criticise the surface prettiness of idealism, which serves to disguise uglier intentions and leads ultimately to darkness.

One who falls to such darkness, the tragic hero Kurtz, harbours high ideals that veil a possible hypocrisy and may precipitate his mental and spiritual degradation. By most accounts a “remarkable” man, he is the epitome of the culture and civilisation of Europe – a “universal genius” and an “emissary of pity and science and progress”. Yet he is a man of contrasts. For example, his idea of justice is given form in his painting of “a woman, draped and blindfolded, carrying a lighted torch”. The light, however, cannot hope to penetrate the sombre darkness, just as Kurtz cannot see the lighted candle hovering before his eyes as he pronounces, “I am lying here in the dark waiting for death”.

Additionally, in the report he has written for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs, the contrast comes sharply into play through words. He writes of “a power for good practically unbounded” among other altruistic notions. Impossible to overlook, however, is the prophetic postscriptum: “Exterminate all the
brutes!”. Kurtz, whose “immense plans” are lost, or perhaps twisted, by abandonment and solitude, is a metaphor for a humanity which is capable of anything, even the most immense of darkness. Restraint, like the rotten fence in the story, falls away all too easily (though restraint is ironically exhibited by the cannibals on the boat), and Kurtz (like the manager and the brick maker) is hollow inside, and try as he might to “swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him”, nothing could fill that void but an echoing wilderness.

On the other hand, the Company, a collaboration of imperialistic notions, hides its core of darkness behind noble ideas of civilisation and commerce. At the beginning of the story, Marlow defines the Company as being “run for profit”, an ironic retort to his aunt’s “emissary of light”. The trading Company, as a model for colonialism, has as its visible aim a “heavenly mission to civilise” the “darker” regions of the world. However, elements of foreshadowing indicate a more sinister aspect to the Company. It is located in a “white sepulchre” of a city, and the description of its physical structure is reminiscent of Fresleven’s remains – the “grass sprouting between the stones”.

The two knitting women whom Marlow encounters guard the “door of Darkness” – a door that leads to the schemes and bureaucracy of an empire that holds the fate of millions in its hand. The women are symbolic of two of the three Fates who control the destiny of humankind, knit black wool, representing the dark-skinned natives of Africa. The true face behind the mask of the Company’s idealism, as Marlow finds out, is in the grove of death he stumbles upon. In stark contrast, immediately after the horrific discovery, Marlow meets an impeccably-dressed accountant who is possessed of a mentality that enables him to say, with indifference, “When one has got to make correct entries, one comes to hate those savages – hate them to the death”. These encounters are perhaps some of the very first chisels to chip away at Marlow’s ideals.

It is through this divesting of long-held and cherished idealism – reminiscent to him of childhood – that Marlow truly begins to gain insight into the human condition. In his journey into the heart of the Congo (a journey that has a symbolic counterpart and bears similarities to mythic rites of initiation), he is confronted with savagery and an unforgiving humanity that bring him closer to despair. Yet, it is through despair and a leaving behind of acceptable society that Marlow can be made privileged to a vast knowledge. He grows cynical with the Company’s ideals, and sees the imperialists as trying to conquer something much more immense than could be conceived.

Furthermore, he starts to discard his own convictions, such as his revulsion of lies, by letting the “papier-maché Mephistopheles” believe in his non-existent influence in Europe. However, this near-lie may actually represent spiritual progress, as rivets (the motive behind the lie) have become to him “a symbol of the redeeming ideas of civilisation, the ideas of humanity and solidarity which enable man to constrain hostile nature”. Marlow confesses with true clarity, “… what I wanted was a certain quantity of rivets – and rivets were what really Mr. Kurtz wanted, if he had only known it” (46). Marlow’s most significant lie is perhaps to the Intended, when he chooses not to reveal Kurtz’s expiating last words – “The horror! The horror!” (118).
It is a sign of his new-found knowledge that he does not unthinkingly respond to the Intended as he did his aunt. He lies to the Intended because the “truth” was “too dark altogether” and he perceives that “a part of Kurtz, the noblest part, the part he “Intended” has in fact survived the powers of darkness” (Boyle 115).

The story, in fact, ends on a hopeful note of idealism – within the “heart of an immense darkness” lies an imperfect and fleeting light, and though transient like a flash of lightning, it is our attempt to “live in the flicker” that ultimately redeems us.

Is Joseph Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' Racist?

Joseph Conrad’s novel Heart of Darkness follows one white man’s nightmarish journey into the interior of Africa. Aboard a British ship called the Nellie, three men listen to a man named Marlow recount his journey into Africa up the Congo River in a steam boat as an agent for a Belgian ivory trading company.

Marlow says that he witnesses brutality and hate between the white ivory hunters and the native African people. Marlow becomes entangled in a power struggle within the Company, and finally learns the truth about the mysterious Kurtz, a mad agent who has become both a god and a prisoner of the "native Africans." After "rescuing" Kurtz from the native African people, Marlow watches in horror as Kurtz succumbs to madness, disease, and finally death.

The description of African people in Heart of Darkness is disgusting. They are seen as and referred to as savages. This is what the narrator says about the Africans and Africa: "It (Africa) was unearthly and the men (Africans) were — no, they were not inhuman. Well, you know that was the worst of it — this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They (Africans) howled and leaped and spun and made horrid faces but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity — like yours — the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar."

That is not enough because there is some more of this kind of description: "... as we struggled round a bend, there would be a glimpse of rich walls, of peaked grass roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling ... The prehistoric man (the African) was cursing us (white men), praying to us, welcoming us — who could tell"

The structure and style of Heart of Darkness is the first challenge. We have a narrator reporting Marlow's narration of Marlow's experiences in Africa. This is a story inside another story, inside a story! We may say that technically, Heart of Darkness ceases to be Conrad's story and therefore if the story is racist, then Conrad is not necessarily racist!

The story is partially Marlow's because only what is remembered or deemed important by him gets to be narrated. It is also partially the narrator's story because his record of what he heard Marlow say is his sole experience. We are, therefore, faced by a situation
where we should not fully ascribe to either Conrad or Marlow. Again: technically the story operates from several "subsequent" points of view. We keep on saying: who is racist here?

Chinua Achebe, Africa's most prominent novelist, who happens to find the novel racist, thinks that Marlow speaks for Conrad because Conrad does "not hint, clearly and adequately at an alternative frame of reference by which we may judge the actions and opinions of his characters."

Achebe's assertion that Marlow speaks for Conrad is further strengthened by the fact that Conrad himself makes a journey similar to Marlow's down the Congo River in 1890. It is the nature of literature to be wholly or very partially autobiographical.

Those who agree with Achebe insist on the point that: in the nineteenth century where adventure novels are heavily loaded with the author's experiences the authors tended to agree to be associated with their major characters. Conrad, who tended, throughout his life, to see the multiple conflicting dimensions of one thing, would definitely not want to disassociate himself from Marlow, who undertakes the same journey as his creator.

For Achebe, Heart of Darkness is racist because it projects the image of Africa as "the other world, the antithesis of Europe... the question is whether a novel which celebrates this dehumanization, which depersonalizes a portion of the human race, can be called a great work of art. My answer is: No, it cannot. I do not doubt Conrad's great talents. Even Heart of Darkness has its memorably good passages and moments.

The "Achebe school" is also angered by the portrayal of the Thames River as representation of modernity against the savage muddiness and hazardous Congo River of Africa. There is also the "wild and gorgeous apparition of an (African) woman" pitied against the serene civilised mood of the intended (white woman). The "worst insult" is the pitying of the thoughtful life-like white men against the grunting men of Africa.

Those who disagree with Achebe and company put across a series of arguments that revert back to the ideological environment under which the novel was conceived and written. Their argument is that the writing of Heart of Darkness was done at a time when considering Africans as savages as and lesser beings than non-Africans was the norm.

They point out that Conrad set his story in the Belgian (King Leopold II's) Congo of the 1890s when the Africans in the Congo region were being forced to extract ivory and rubber for the Empire at gunpoint. Those who resisted got killed or dismembered and to imagine a kind of discourse that saw blacks as having equal humanity with other races was unthinkable. They even think that Conrad attacks imperialism because he identifies it with clear plunder and not the pretensions of civilizing the savage and spreading Christianity.

However, even then, Conrad's attack of imperialism has its contradictions. Conrad questions the morality of colonialism and exploitation but he does not question the colonial mission itself. Although Conrad's Africans are pitiable, they are nonetheless...
niggers and are victimised quite as much by their own stupidity and ignorance as by European brutality.

One of Kurtz's last utterances: "Exterminate the brutes!" demonstrates that the term "going native" does not mean becoming one with the savages. Despite the delirium, Kurtz knows the clear cut racial divisions and his white man's duties in Africa.

In addition, "Darkness" in Heart of Darkness tends to be metaphorical. Darkness holds a multiplicity of meanings.

The only clear meaning of darkness in the novel seem to be one's descending to inhuman levels of thought and behaviour — like Kurtz and the whole Belgian colonial establishment. In Heart of Darkness evil is portrayed as African and if it is also African that is because some white men in the Heart of Darkness behave like Africans!

Reading Heart of Darkness, we are certain that for the western readers of the 1890s, it must have shown the extremities of conquest, of course, but, it definitely must have confirmed the western concept of Africa as the land of savages. If the novel caused sympathy towards the African, it was that sympathy one has for an animal in agony, not fellow human beings.

**Character of Kurtz in Heart of Darkness**

Heart of Darkness is an important novella in terms of pre 1914 literature and is considered by many one of the most important books in literature. In the 1890's Conrad sailed up the river Congo, so the novel was written from a good knowledge of the surroundings and personal experience of colonialism and the oppression that was a major part of Africa in the late 1800's. Although slavery was abolished in most places, slavery was still a major part of African life in those days due to many European countries fighting over the prospect of ivory and land and when they did get the land they slaved the Africans either keeping them in Africa to help with the ivory trade or shipping them off to Europe to be slaves there. In the novel Conrad presents Kurzt as a mystical being a god almost to the native people but he also shows him to be an evil and sinister man with a 'heart of darkness' he does this by not actually presenting Kurtz as a human but a figure a 'vapour of the earth.' Conrad also leads the reader along by not actually meeting Kurtz until the very end the rest of the book relies on peoples tales of Kurtz and what he has done which lead us to believe that he is a supernatural being.

The role of the narrator in the novel is a key part of what makes the novel so appealing because it is the story teller Marlow who has been through all of it, although there is one other narrator at the start of the novella who sets the scene. The primary narrator also talks about Marlow in a strange way he claims that he was sat in a way that 'resembled an idol.' This infers that Marlow is a very wise and very powerful figure. He also talks a lot about the light and the dark 'the sky, without a speck, was a benign immensity of unstained light.' Only the gloom to the west. Brooding over the upper reaches became more sombre every minute, as if angered by the approach of the sun.' This extract
paints a very vivid picture in the reader's minds it talks about getting closer to Africa every minute and the evil is just waiting there as if angered by their presence. This could be a warning sign as to how the story could end up as the narrator is referring to Africa as the gloom, when the first narrator ends it is quite difficult to see where he ends and Marlow begins but it becomes clearer when you read on. But before the first narrator stops he tells us that Marlow has 'the propensity to spin yarns.' This means he has the habit of over exaggerating this gives the reader doubts if this whole story is true and the way Marlow talks about Kurtz later on in the story as a supernatural being may well be and over exaggeration of Kurtz's power. This makes the reader feel doubtful and question Marlow's integrity as he may be exaggerating some parts of the story particularly Kurtz, and this may make the reader unable to trust Marlow's farfetched stories.

Although this has been said there was absolutely no mention of Kurtz until page 38 were Marlow is talking to the accountant Marlow is keen to find out what Kurtz has done and why he is so praised and feared all over Africa he asks the accountant who Mr Kurtz was and the accountant simply said 'he was a first-class agent.' He then added 'he was a very remarkable person' this is the first time Marlow gets any information about Kurtz and he realises how powerful and inspirational this man really was. This mention of Kurtz only makes the reader want to read and as Kurtz is talked about as a supernatural being and as the story progresses the reader is more aware of the impact that Kurtz has had and is more anxious to meet him.

The setting is a big part of how the story unfolds, and the closer the boat gets to Kurtz up the river the more sinister and edgy the descriptions of the settings are. Conrad shows vivid pictures of sinister rainforests and murky rivers. 'silent wilderness surrounding this cleared speck on the earth struck me as something great and invincible, like evil or truth, waiting patiently for the passing away of this fantastic invasion.' This could show the silent power of the jungle just lying in wait for colonialism to end and for those people to go. Conrad writes about the jungle in unexplainable darkness and is linking this with Kurtz's path of destruction up the river 'for me it crawled towards Kurtz exclusively.' This shows the way that Marlow had somehow become obsessed with the finding of Kurtz and now it had consumed him so much that all he thought about was him. The forest had done that to him as there was so much evil in the leading to Kurtz it was hard not to see it 'a treacherous appeal to the lurking death, to the hidden evil, to the profound darkness of its heart.' The jungle also seemed to become an enemy to Marlow as there was an heir of uneasiness all around this is because of the way Conrad writes about the setting the way he talks about the darkness the impenetrability of it, it seemed like a fortress was surrounding Kurtz and slowly Marlow was getting to it.

Kurtz is in many ways the most important character of the novella and although he is not present for most of the book the reader feels that there was something of him there in the way that the forest was described and the way that the river seemed to be against Marlow, there always seemed to be a part of Kurtz there the evil of his mind. Conrad makes this possible by making Kurtz a god like being a 'vapour of the earth' and his mind and spirit was everywhere in the jungle that he owned. He was described and praised by many people 'whatever he was he was not common' but even though we hear
so much about him there is no evidence of he has done they are all just rumours and maybe exaggerations. Kurtz was described and talked about by most people Marlow came across but he was said to have been an evil person only when Marlow was sailing up the river there are hints of his immense evil. ‘the inner truth is hidden – luckily, luckily' this could show that maybe Marlow might be going insane slowly, the constant thinking of Kurtz and his power may have slowly been making Marlow insane. And when the realisation dawns upon him that he might not even be able to see Kurtz he realises that ‘now I will never hear him.” The man presented himself as a voice.' This shows the amount that Marlow respects and honours Kurtz he can't even imagine him being a real person. Kurtz was definitely a mystery to Marlow because he doesn't know anything about Kurtz and what he has done all that has been said about him was that he was an extraordinary man.

Kurtz's effect on others was very strong. He made people believe that he was something special something amazing and people worshiped him for it a good example of a person that worshiped Kurtz was the harlequin character. The harlequin was in awe of Kurtz's abilities and talked about him as if he was a god or a supernatural person as if he could not be real. Marlow was in awe of how much he had got in such little time. 'Everything belonged to him – but that was a trifle. The thing was to know what he belonged to, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own.' This is a very important quote as it shows what Marlow really knows about Kurtz and his powers have made him so great but Marlow asked himself what made him so powerful how did he become this great and how many powers of darkness did Kurtz himself belong to. 'He had taken a high seat amongst the devils of the land - I mean literally.' But ultimately the prospect of Kurtz was too much for Marlow as when Marlow does finally see Kurtz he had fallen ill and was facing death 'it was as though an animated image of death carved out of old ivory had been shaking its hand with menaces at a motionless crowd of men made of dark and glittering bronze.'

Kurtz's character in many ways is a real character and could be a realistic and real person and therefore is convincing. Although he shows unremorseful evil all through the book and is seen to be the heart of darkness when Marlow finally does meet him he seems to be quite sane. 'Believe me or not his intelligence was perfectly clear' he also shows remorse with his dying words 'the horror, the horror.' This is open to many interpretations and is a very famous quote but in my opinion Kurtz has realised that mankind given the chance can do horrific things like what he did in Africa and only when he dies he realises this. Although the character is convincing to be a man of pure evil, there may have been some exaggeration in the novel as at the start of the novel the anonymous narrator does tell us Marlow has the ‘propensity to spin a yarn.' And therefore Kurtz's whole story and background could be an exaggeration. But in my opinion Kurtz was a very real character and was a convincing and intriguing character all the way through the novel.
They proclaimed to educate the people civility,

But how bewildered are beasts they at their brutality,

But fondness got they to make cities devastated,

Graveyards everywhere have they populated,

The world has never seen such a tyrant hypocrite,

To fellowmen they are snare, to beasts affectionate.
Ahmed Ali

Ahmed Ali (1910 in New Delhi – 14 January 1994 in Karachi) was an Indian (later Pakistani) novelist, poet, critic, translator, diplomat and scholar. His writings include Twilight in Delhi (1940), his first novel.

Born in Delhi, India, Ahmed Ali was educated at Aligarh and Lucknow universities, graduating with first-class and first in the order of merit in both B.A. (Honours), 1930 and M.A. English, 1931. He taught at leading Indian universities including Lucknow and Allahabad from 1932–46 and joined the Bengal Senior Educational Service as professor and head of the English Department at Presidency College, Calcutta (1944–47). Ali was the BBC's Representative and Director in India during 1942–45. During the Partition of India, he was the British Council Visiting Professor to the University of China in Nanking as appointed by the British government of India. When he tried to return to India in 1948, K.P.S. Menon (then India's Ambassador to China) did not let him and he was forced to move to Pakistan.

In 1948, he moved to Karachi. Later, he was appointed Director of Foreign Publicity, Government of Pakistan. At the behest of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, he joined the Pakistan Foreign Service in 1950. The first file he received was marked 'China' and when he opened it; it was blank. He went to China as Pakistan's first envoy and established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic in 1951.

**Literary career:**

Ali started his literary career at a young age and became cofounder of the All-India Progressive Writers' Movement and Association with the publication of Angare in 1932, a collection of short stories by four young friends, which was later banned by the British Government of India in March 1933. Shortly afterward Ali and Mahmud-uz-Zaffar announced the formation of a "League of Progressive Authors", which was later to expand and become the All-India Progressive Writers' Association. Ali presented his paper "Art kaTaraqqi-PasandNazariya" (A Progressive View of Art) in its inaugural Conference in 1936. A pioneer of the modern Urdu short story, Ali's works include collections of short stories: "Angare" (Flames), 1934; HamariGali (Our Lane), 1940; QaidKhana (The Prison-house), 1942; and Maut Se Pehle (Before Death), 1945.

Ali achieved international fame with his first novel written in English Twilight in Delhi, which was published by The Hogarth Press in London in 1940. During the 1950s, Ahmed Ali worked for the Pakistan Foreign Service, establishing embassies in Morocco and China.

**Twilight in Delhi : A Critical Review**
Ahmad Ali’s *Twilight in Delhi* is a marvellous novel. It brings before our eyes a true “motion-picture” of how the Muslims of the sub-continent used to live their religious, social, cultural, single and collective life during the tumultuous years of 1857-1919. Another important thing to note is that, Ahmad Ali shows us all the positive as well as negative aspects of the Muslim Cultural life of sub-continent. So there is no taboo binding the hands of the writer to omit this or that part of the life: he presents life as a whole in all its aspects and colours. The details of Mebro’s marriage with Meraj, the son of Bhopal millionaire, added with the details of Mushtari Bai and Babban Jan, provide ample proof for our statements in this respect. We also find details of two pastimes that were very popular at those times among the gentlemen and others: pigeon-flying and kite-flying. There would be only a few such cities in the world which have become living landmark in the history or civilization of the world at large and of the related country in particular. Constantinople (now known as Istanbul) is one. Rome is another. Delhi is still another. Delhi can boast rightfully of a culture and civilization that has its long, deep roots going back into the 2nd century B.C. Built in 1453 B.C. by the name of Hastnapur by Raja Yudhishtra after the great battle of Mahabharat, Delhi had seen many ups and down in its long history. It has seen the age of Kauravs and the Pandaus. It has seen the rise and fall of the Khiljis. It has seen the regime of the Sayyeds. And lastly it has seen the supreme, superb and colourful reign of the great Moghals; Babur, Huamyun, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, the grand and great line culminating in Bahadur Shah (Zafar), the last of the Moghal dynasty who was overthrown by the Britiehers, or Farangis, as the people of the sub-continent including the Delhiites used to call them. According to the novelist himself:

“Destruction is in its foundations and blood is in its soil. It has seen the fall of many a glorious kingdom and listened to the groans of birth. It is the symbol of life and Death ...”

Ahmad Ali has seen the lanes, by-lanes and streets of Delhi with great affection. So Ahmad Ali has drawn a detailed picture of the life going on in these lanes and by-lanes during the last years of the 19th and the earlier years of the 20th century. The life is the true representation of the decaying Indian Muslim civilization during the period referred to above.

When this novel was published in 1940 by Hogarth Press, London, a lot of reviews appreciations about the same appeared not only in India but also in England. The novel gained spontaneous attention of the literary critics in India and abroad. One of the main aims of Ahmad Ali in writing this novel in English language was to acquaint the English-speaking world about the Indian civilization and its presentation through the life of novel’s characters. In his essay entitled “Some Reflections on the Novel” Ahmad Ali himself writes:

“The Novel is not an imitation but representation of life and its changing shadows, reflecting their movement and directing the changing scene of human activity in all ages and societies.... For the canvas of life is too vast and can be presented only in the moments of shattered desire or contemplation calm and rising hopes and ambitions. In all forms it shows man and society their true
semblance, and life, its picture which, in the movement, life itself does not often understand.”

So, Ahmad Ali lived a rich life and created, out of that, a rich, living and throbbing novel as such which is Twilight in Delhi. If we care about the unity of impression and vitality of life, we are to find it only in Twilight in Delhi. Loo-stricken life being lived/passed in the lanes and by-lanes of Delhi right from the darkness of dejection to the radiating hopefulness has been immortalized in its own subtle and sublime manner by Ahmad Ali.
Plot Construction of Twilight in Delhi

Prepared by Atta Ur Rahman Jadoon
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Ahmed Ali's Twilight in Delhi is a well-knit and brilliantly constructed novel. It consists of four parts and every part has the chapters which gave additional meaning to the course of events. The plot is constructed in a particular style—in the act of narration. Every character is in descriptive or in evaluating style which gives additional significance and beauty to the plot. Mostly the plot revolves around the family of Mir Nihal representing on symbolical level the Muslim class's present and past life. The Novelist Ahmed Ali relates a person's tale in this novel that, in the end, looks alienated and apart from the surroundings and all this happens only through his out dated attitude in the present condition.

Ahmed Ali has utilized his events of the story to construct an organic whole in the shape of plot of the novel "Twilight in Delhi". This thing tells us about his expertise in the field of novel-writing or fiction-writing as such. The novel under reference has basically been designed by the writer to give us a rich glimpse of the Indian Muslim society along with its customs, traditions and ways. This purpose has been achieved by the writer by taking a large number of characters from the span of 1911-1919 from the city of Delhi from among the Muslim population. As it is not inside his goal to tell the readers anything about the Hindu society, so he does not include any Hindu character in the novel, so much so that even the bania (basically the money lender of the sub-continent society) of the novel is Saddiq, a Muslim, although mostly Hindus were the banias of the sub-continent.

The plot of Twilight is Delhi "seems purposeful in every way. There are many characters and events only included in the novel to make the novel realistic and to give a true colouring to the Muslim Indian society as such. NawabPuttan is one of such characters. His character has nothing important to do with the advancement of the story. Still he is very important for the reasons that he is the representation of Nawabi culture and life. For giving complete a social picture of the Indian Muslim Society, Ahmed Ali has told us in detail about Ramazan and the traditions of Ramazan. He tells us a detail about how Eid is celebrated, and including that famous, classical verse used at this occasion by numberless people:

"It is the day of Eid, my dear,  
Ah come, let me embrace thee.  
It is the custom and besides  
There's time and opportunity "

Mir Nihal, in his sixties has a family, a mistress named Babban Jan from whom he gets mental and sexual levels pleasure. He has a son, Asghar, a boy in twenties, who desperately wants to marry a girl, Bilqeece. His marriage takes place after a huge amount of resistance from Mir Nihal's side. In the background of these events, Ahmed All has portrayed a graphic picture of historical moments of violence and tyranny in this novel and also the pathetic condition of Delhi on a big canvass. The marriage of Asghar is caught in a fiasco and the relations weaken day by day and after Bilqeece's death the whole scenario changes. Asghar thinks himself responsible for her death but Bilqeece'syounger sister Zohra again turns Asgher to the beauty of life. Zohra, a young girl, full of charming and alluring beauty, fascinates him to marry her but finally nothing happens according to his desires. In the end we see Mir Nihal as a paralyze
has faced many hard blows from fate like, death of Babban Jan, death of his pigeons and the end of his rule—all pathetic. His wife Begum Nihal, who has spent her life honestly and devotedly, is unable to retain happiness in Mir Nihal's life.

In the background, the plot of the novel advances through the story of the freedom struggle of the people of India and of the Indian Muslims. We read about the fall of Delhi and about the fateful time for Jama Masjid, Delhi, as well as for the Muslims of Delhi. We read about the fires burning petrol depots and the royal canopy at Delhi-Darbar before it was held. We read about rallies, procession, agitation, marches and strikes. We read about the non-cooperative movement. So we see the advancement of the struggle for freedom going in the background of the story of the novel. But the thing is so well knit into the texture of the plot that we are ready to take it as an integral part of the main story.

The story, which started from the first section, shows every character's attitude and ordinary view about life. All the subsequent events end in the fourth part where we get not the conclusion but the actual condition that if they spend the same life they shall not be able to retain themselves in the changing conditions.

The plot, on the whole, is compact; there is very little irrelevant or unnecessary. Even the smallest details promote the action, produce the necessary atmosphere and fulfil the purpose of the novel. The concentration on the main theme is well maintained to achieve the desired purpose. All the strings are gathered at the end to give the final touch. Thus the plot construction in Twilight in Delhi, is nothing but remarkable. There can be arguments that the plot has some drawbacks or loose ends but it was never easy to pack a rapidly changing culture in limited pages and Ahmed Ali's realistic technique in describing the actual conditions is not only brilliant but also shows his precision in every way.

**Art of Characterization in "Twilight in Delhi"

In "Twilight in Delhi" Ahmed Ali has used descriptive method to show the characters in the development of novel's plot. Every character is close to the actual condition of Delhi. Ali's realistic mode of expression in describing the relation of plot and character is remarkable. The opening section of the novel and its first chapter seems as a prologue to city's actual condition and its inhabitants. When we go through the novel, we find that the writer has used the art of characterization as a nice tool to realize his end. He has a plot and for the completion of the plot the characters come at the stage at a particular time and then leave the stage. Still there is one central character that is most of the time there in one or the other manner. This is the main male character of Mir Nihal who plays the pivotal role in the novel. All the events have a direct or indirect bearing at his character: all the characters are related to his character in one or the other way. So the spot light remains most of the time on Mir Nihal.

Mir Nihal's character has been portrayed with utmost precision and accuracy. He is a man who has witnessed the last event/episode of the surrender of Delhi on 14th September, 1857, the fateful day, with his own eyes. He is a patriot in the core of his
heart. He feels pain and torture at Hindustan's slavery but he believes in direct use of sword (i.e., weapons) to liberate his country whereas people are resorting to some other "useless" ways and means, like rallies, marches, strike and non-cooperative movement.

Mir Nihal's character is a representative of the older generation who has seen the country going into the clutches of slavery with his own eyes. So he hates the rulers. On the other end is Asghar, his younger son, who likes the English fashion and ways. Although, he also represents Indian Muslim culture in his own way but he belongs to the younger generation and, as such, differs with Mir Nihal. Both of them are having their own singing and dancing girls: Mir Nihal has Babban Jan and Mir Asghar has Mushtari Bai but the former "keeps" Babban Jan till her death whereas the latter leaves Mushtari Bai in the lurch and starts loving Bilqueece so intensively that he leaves no stone unturned for her achievement as a wife. It is another story that he, even then, does not keep himself limited and goes out on his romantic adventures or errands to find out new women for him.

Ahmad Ali is depicting the story of the dying Indian Muslim society in his novel, so he picks and chooses from the society only such characters that can be helpful to him in the context. These characters may be as overwhelming as Mir Nihal and Asghar and these may be as summarized as Kabiruddin, the elder brother of Asghar, and Habibuddin. We hardly see Kabiruddin in any scene of the novel. Similar is the case with Ashfaq, the nephew of Begum Jamal, who has married with the eldest daughter of Begum and Mirza Shahbaz Beg. These are the characters that perform their duty behind the scenes. Even Ahmad Wazir, the family barber of Mir Nihal, has to perform his duty at two places in the novel. Dilchain and Ghafoor do the duties of servants in zanana and mardana of Mir Nihal's house. Once we see that Dilchain wears men's clothes (at the age of near about 60) and dances in a lewd manner on the occasion of the marriage of Asghar. But all this is done to represent the dying Indian Muslim culture.

As the society depicted in the novel is basically a male-oriented society, so we see that generally males are taking lead in all the matters of importance and generally females are lagging behind or following them. Strangely enough, if we look deeply into the matter, there are two trees growing in the middle of the courtyard of Mir Nihal's house. One is the date-palm tree. It is tall and manly. The other is the henna tree. It is small and womanly. And, as such, the "male" date palm tree has been talked about at more times and in more manners (although we never see any dates being plucked from the tree!) than the "female" henna tree has been talked about (although henna leaves are practically plucked from the tree and applied for practical utilization!).

Ahmed Ali also shows a complete picture of female class. Female characters like Begum Nihal, Dilchain, Babban Jan, Begum Shahbaz, Bilqueece, and Zohra—all of them are the part and parcel of this man-made community. They have their own ways of living which the outside world is unable to comprehend and they themselves are not able to understand their frustrated life. It seems that Ali has tried his level best to maintain a connection between the characters and the historical events. The events of the 14 September 1857 which are described in the Twilight of Delhi, have close relation with them. There are also many historical events which are portrayed in this novel like Mir Nihal and Begum Nihal's remembering about the pathetic conditions of British
So if we look at Ali’s art of characterization on large canvas we can say, he has used direct as well as indirect way of describing the characters. Every character, from its appearance to his way of life, is remarkably close to reality. We see that different characters of the novel Twilight in Delhi (by Ahmed Ali) advance the plot of the novel in their own peculiar manner. So it can be said that Ahmed Ali has superbly portrayed the condition of Delhi and her inhabitants and his art of characterization shows his sagacity and brilliance of thought.

**Major Themes in "Twilight in Delhi" by Ahmed Ali**

Ahmed Ali’s classic novel Twilight in Delhi is a nostalgic tale set in nineteenth-century Delhi between two revolutionary moments: subsequent to the collapse of the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, and prior to the rise of the independence movement which culminated in the violent partition of the Indo-Pak subcontinent. In the novel, Ali depicted a scene after early morning prayers on the day of Eid at the Jama Masjid in Old Delhi. He wrote: *When the prayer ended they all began to embrace, falling on each other’s necks, pressing the chests together warmly. All those who knew one another went through this show and expression of affection. And the lovers found the opportunity of their lives. A middle-aged man quoted these lines to a young man with arms open for an embrace:*

’It is the day of Eed, my dear,  
Ah come, let me embrace thee.  
It is the custom and besides  
There’s time and opportunity …’ (Ali 1940: 95)

Ali, in his novel, depicted most movingly and melancholically the loss of a culture and way of life in the city of Delhi as it was altered by the rebellion of 1857. He presented this moment as a vestige of a pre-modern cultural Indo-Islamic milieu that was in the process of a traumatic disruption at the hands of colonialism. The above incident, although of a literary nature, demonstrates that a context and environment for the expression of same-sex attraction and love existed in Muslim societies.

**The Struggle over Memory:** - In “Twilight in Delhi” memory is seen both as source of personal identity and as a burden preventing to attain happiness. Each character is involved in a struggle to remember but more importantly in a struggle to forget certain aspects of their past. Mir Nihal the protagonist of the Novel wants to seek refuge in the past. He wants to live in past not in present. The other characters, like Begum Nihal, Begum Jamal and the elder sons of Mir Nihal, all of them are found in struggling condition. The grandeur and wonderful Muslim’s past, in which they were rulers, not wipe out from Mir Nihal and his family’s mind, like Asghar seemed rebellious but in the end of the Novel he was caught in the trap of cruel and remorseless fate. The city “Delhi” had faced the rise and fall of many Kings and princes like a poet said.

**Delhi which was once the Jewel of the world,  
Where dwelt only the loved ones of Fate,  
Which has now been ruined by the hand of time,**

*Prepared by Atta Ur Rahman Jadoon 03335499069*
I, m a resident of that storm-tossed place . . . .

But now the present scenario has impolitely changed people who were rulers now they are under the domination of colonial forces. So Mir Nihal like madam Ranevsky in “The cherry orchard” is not able to forget the grandeur of past his management, attitude and behaviour in his family totally reflect the king like way as Mughals did in past. He never able to comprehend the change in his own family when Asghar showed his consent to marry Bilqueece, the problem solved and everything happened according to his will. Ahmad Ali showed all the characters and especially Mir Nihal in a struggling position, the whole family and the surrounding area’s people never able to come out from the memory of their glorious past.

Modernity vs. the Old India: - With the arrival of the British colonial forces in the sub-continent everything had changed. People who were habitual in living under the kings of were not able to face a change which as far as British was concern a change which civilizes the Brutes, the major character or the protagonist of the Novel, Mir Nihal never able to compensate with the new traditions. Britishers gave change to their style of living and the government structure but he wants to live according to the past like Ahmed Ali relate in part 4 chapters 4.

“New ways and ideas had come into being a hybrid culture which had nothing in it of the past was forcing itself upon Hindustan a wedge-people of Indian and Western ways which he failed to understand. The whole culture of India was a mixture of two cultures the new generation want to adopt the English culture like in the beginning of the Novel Asghar’s first appearance was in wearing English shirts and Mir Nihal scolded on it His sudden anger on him showed his hatred and non-accommodateable attitude towards and modernity.”

He was a backward person like in the mid-end of the Novel. The episode when he tried to give punishment to the children he said to Dilchain that you go and take my sword and he took his sword and children seemed terrified not in real sense, this shows that he did not left the past, but he did not want to think about it.

Theme of Sex: - Sex is the most important theme of the novel. All the women characters in the novel were sexually suppressed figures. Mir Nihal, a tall handsome and energetic man, desperately wanted a woman who knew well the art of sex and the art of capturing man. So Babban Jan, a young girl, gave him all these pleasures. When she died his whole world disturbed. He felt a kind of flux in his life, which cannot be full-filled. He had also sexual relations with Dilchain (His Maid) and when she got pregnant Begum Nihal surprised to hear this that she is not a married one and her quarrel with Mir Nihal shows that Mir Nihal’s sexual appetite was not satiated from Begum Nihal.

If we look at Delhi’s society we came to know that most of the male society went to prostitutes. When they became habitual of them then they were not able to accommodate with their wives because they (wives) were not well-versed in the art of capturing man through sex. We can see that most of the men had no time for their wives.
Asghar was also one of them who went to prostitutes like Mushtari Bai who was a young girl; beautiful, fascinating and charming girl. Asghar often went to her Kotha and became habitual of her. But when he saw Bilqueece he was bewitched by her extreme beauty. He desperately wanted to marry her and after huge amount of reluctance from Mir Nihal he succeeded to marry with her. But later on he felt that she lacked sexual understanding. So Bilqueece was unable to feel the gulf. It wasn’t her fault because in Indian culture mostly the women spent her youth in the four walls of Zanana where no male allowed enter in it. So she can’t able to understand why her husband left her in the house for weeks. But Begum Shahbaz felt the actual problem or the cause which created the gulf. She quarrelled with him but Asghar was unable to manage the whole issue.

The whole Mir Nihal, s family represent the Muslim class of India and throughout India they have the same life style. Men often satisfy their sexual appetites to go to the prostitutes and women remained ignorant because they had no knowledge about what is going on there.

**Passing away of Muslim civilization in India:** One of the Major themes is the passing away of Muslims civilization in India. “Twilight in Delhi” basically showed the decay of Mughal Kingship or the Muslim civilization.

Muslims ruled on India from many centuries but with the arrival of Britishers, the whole civilization had faced a huge set back. Mir Nihal, who lived in the illusions of splendid past, was not able to accommodate with the present condition. His appearance and attitude represent the Muslims community of that time. He was unable to live according to the changed conditions because they felt that this is the most humiliating condition for the Muslims. Like Niven says

“*Despite the rhapsodic(passionate) treatment of Asghar’s love Bilqueece (Ali’s own wife is called Bilqueece), the autumnal mood at the Novel’s close the grief-stricken regrets for the Mughal past and the frequent coherence in his prose style, Ali writes less from a romantic than a classic stand point. He recognizes the immutability of the basic elements in human life individual remains the same in every age.”*

Yet classicism in so far as it refers to recognition of the permanence of the change brought about by the passing of time is perhaps the intention of the Novel’s plot.

**Symbolism in "Twilight in Delhi" by Ahmed Ali**

Ahmed Ali’s Twilight in Delhi of been regarded as masterpiece. His writing is immensely visual. He wants to recreate a world which is real, vivid and close to the actual traditional ways of old Delhi. Throughout the whole novel symbolical elements are used vehemently. His direct and indirect ways of using symbolism, is very unique in Pakistani literature. He wanted to go beyond sub-continental sounds and words, to convey the essence of traditional Indo-Muslims culture in which poetry plays a pivotal role. The poetry, use of Urdu words art of narration all seemed remarkable.
“Twilight in Delhi” is a book whose opening description has symbolic significance. It shows the down to earth life of Indians, the delay of Muslim civilization, the darkness in minds or in life which on a literal level is the product their own inefficiencies and mismanagement in handling Govt. or State.

“Night envelopes the city covering it like a blanket. In the dim starlight roofs and houses and by-lanes lie asl sleep wrapped in a restless slumber, breathing heavily as the heat become oppressive or shoots through the body like pain, in the courtyards, on the roofs, in the by-lanes, on the roads, men sleep on brave beds, half naked, tired after the sore day’s labour. A few still well on the otherwise deserted roads, hand in hand, talking; and some have jasmine garlands in their hands. The smell from the flowers escapes, scents a few yards of air around them and dies smothered by the narrow by lanes, from under the plants gutting out of shops, and luck the earthen cups out of which men had drunk milk and thrown away”

All deserted conditions of men and their surrounding shows nation miserable plight under the colonial forces rule.

The title is symbolical as well as metaphorical, symbolical in a way that it symbolizes the downfall or deterioration not only of Delhi but ways of Delhi as well ,people’s moral ,religious and social values all were on the verge of death and metaphorical in a way that the title not only refers to the twilight of Delhi but also the Twilight of Mir Nihal

Asghar’s character seemed disillusioned as he was a typical Indian Muslim bachelor who was not sexual satiated and spend life without any prior aim of life. His approach seemed un-realistic of the conclusions like in part 1 chapter 2 when he thought about Bilqueece Ahmed Ali’s creates.

“His heart begins to beat and he follows her until he overtakes her, and arm in arm they go. But soon the road comes to an end, and in front there is a void, deep and dark and dim, As he looks its depth his head begin to reel, and beads of perspiration came upon his brow. He turns to say is not there upon the brink of that void he finds himself alone, and are unknown fear grips his heart.

The character of Asghar symbolically represents the whole trading Muslim are generation who desperately wanted something near because they in a hodgepodge (jumble) of Indian and British culture. He has got the disillusionment and was not able to foresee the coming circumstances, and it also shown uncertainty and nihilistic attitude from his part because he hadn’t the courage to make a charge.

Mir Nihal’s family represent the whole Muslim community in India. Mir Nihal’s family is an embodiment and passionate picture of the Indian Muslim, who had spent the same type of lining from many centuries. Their sceptic approach, religious atmosphere, beliefs, customs, traditions, thinking and superstitions all can be packed by Ahmed Ali in one family Death of Mir Nihal’s pigeons. The chapter in which we came to know about death of Mir Nihal’s Pigeons; is highly symbolical. At was turning point in Mir Nihal’s life. A healthy tall and handsome person turned into the weakest person in the
whole episode symbolically foretell the defeat of a certain traditional way of life; life which showed the static side of Muslim world life. The habit of keeping pigeons was old nobody thought about at this time so Mir Nihal had to adopt the change but he didn’t comprehend the reality or the modern standards.

Cat episode is also the most symbolic event of the novel. When Mir Nihal went upstairs to release his pogroms he saw feather and the stairs and many more on the roof. When he looked inside the loft he found that there had been massacre. He had forgotten to close the door last night and the cats had found their opportunity to kill many of Mir Nihal’s pigeons. Cat is a potent symbol Ali has used repeatedly in his short stories to represent cunning, stealth, and destruction. He also identifies the cat with the British who have succeeded in altering of not destroying these cherished ways of life by introducing new ideologies and mores; which Mir Nihal’s generation stands for.

Mir Nihal’s Paralysis has highly symbolical meanings. It represents a parting away of old order or the end of the old orthodox beliefs. His desperation increases when came to know about Babban’s death. In the last chapter Ahmed Ali relates about his paralyzed condition:

"His days were done and beauty had vanished from the earth. But life remained over which men had no command and must go on.

He was weary and tired, limp like a shaken hand. His world had fallen to pieces all around him, smothered by indifference and death. Yet he was still alive to mope like on owl, and count his days at the merry of time and fate. He lay on the bed in a state of coma, too feeling less to sit up or think. The sun went down and hid his face. The rooks cawed and flew away”.

The whole gloomy picture of Mir Nihal’s paralyzed condition also shows his authority, or a rule’s end. His soul or inward condition is totally shattered, his dominating figure and his grandeur scattered or destroyed. He was more than nothing now.

Begum Nihal’s Blindness also shows her lack of comprehension in maintaining or in making proper decisions. Her Blindness also shows the Blindness of that age’s women who can’t able to manage the matters.

**Significance of the Title “Twilight in Delhi”**

The name or title of Ahmed Ali’s novel as “Twilight in Delhi” is very significant in itself. This is the most proper and appropriate name of the story he has told in the novel. “Twilight” is a word that signifies the short span of time that spreads itself between a dying day and emerging night just as “dawn” is the opposite term that signifies the death of the night and the arrival of the day.

“Twilight in Delhi” deals with the dying culture and civilization of Muslim India as such. If we take Mir Nihal as a symbol of that culture etc. which he really is, we can see the civilization crumbling with our own eyes. When we go through the novel, we find out that
its main male character has passed his middle age and is almost knocking at the door of old age. We are talking of Mir Nihal who is nearing sixty in the beginning of the novel as he had witnessed the fateful day of the fall of Delhi, 14th September, 1857, as a ten-year old boy. Still he is so healthy and strong that he can pick up a running snake from the gutter of the house with a swift movement of his hand and he can break its spinal cord by hitting it on the floor of the house with a powerful jerk of his hand.

But, later on, we find his health going to dogs. He gets a paralysis attack and is unable even to talk. Then, three days later, his power of speech is restored to a great extant but not so the physical or bodily power. Hakim Ajmal Khan comes to Mir Nihal twice or thrice a week and brings costly medicines from his home for him. Still his condition is not improved. Mir Nihal's nice friend, Kambal Shah, advises "Pelican oil" for massaging on the body of Mir Nihal. A pelican is arranged from somewhere. It is slaughtered and the oil is prepared under the supervision of Kambal Shah himself. Later on, the famous wrestler of Delhi, Shammoo, is called daily for massaging but with no improvement at all. At last, Mir Nihal becomes totally bed-ridden. He lies drown and goes on remembering his past. Then his son Habibuddin falls sick and dies. This tragedy casts a terrible effect on Mir Nihal and he becomes almost unable now even to remember his past. He is in a living death, so to speak. The same is the case of the Indian Muslim civilization and culture that faces a living death.

When Mir Nihal is healthy and jovial in the beginning, he looks after his hobby: pigeon flying. He also earns more money because he also has to arrange for his beloved keep, Babban Jan. He also looks after the family name and honour because they are Sayyeds and Bilqeece is a Mughal. But when the conditions deteriorate, Mir Nihal loses his beloved keep, a very great extant. Mir Nihal leaves his hobby and asks Nazir to sell out all his pigeons. Mir Nihal leaves to work for extra income. He leaves to care for family honour and self-respect etc. and gives his consent to the marriage of Asghar with Bilqeece. The world has stopped caring for him: let him stop caring for the world! So we find out that Mir Nihal has been used as a top-priority symbol to portray the deterioration of the customs, traditions, ways and means of which he has been the proud representative.

We can find this deterioration in other characters as well, symbolically enough. Begum Nihal becomes blind slowly and steadily. Begum Jamal leaves her classical residence at Mir Nihal's. Shams loses his wife. Hafizji does not get "pulao" on the very first uttering. Asghar stops loving Bilqeece and starts to find other women for his love.

This does not happen to the world of human beings alone. Even the buildings etc. are affected by time. The gutters of the city which were deep down are dug up and laid on a shallow level. The city walls are demolished. So the stink and sand attack on the city dwellers. The Jamia Masjid whose floor has been coloured redder by Muslim sacrifices on 14th September, 1857, wears a cheap garland to welcome the procession of King George V on the Coronation Day. Even the date-palm tree standing in the middle of the courtyard of Mir Nihal's home throws away its leaves and becomes yellow and seared (dry as a bone).
All these things have been aptly and appropriately used by the writer to show us, symbolically, the dwindling and dying Indian Muslim Civilization and Culture. The novel dealt with the twilight of cultural exhaustion, the twilight of social preferentialism and the twilight of economic backwardness. The city which has for so long enjoyed the ‘dawn’ – the embellished position of prosperity – cultural richness, economic strength, religious freedom, and above all political supremacy has now been expropriated with all its possessions.

So we can justly claim that although there could be many other names or titles of the novel under discussion, but the most appropriate and the best title for the same could only be “Twilight in Delhi”. We can wind up the discussion with a verse from Bahadur Shah Zafar:

**Delhi was once a Paradise**
**And great were the joys that used to be here,**
**But they have ravished this bride of peace,**
**And now remain only ruins and care.**

**Muslim Community as depicted in “Twilight in Delhi”**

Ahmed Ali belongs to the post-world war II Indian writer in English. His novel “Twilight in Delhi” is a study of the middle class Muslim society of India in the pre-independence days. Twilight in Delhi is a novel where social history has been believably acknowledged. It is set in a society whose religious, cultural and social ambiance was changing and disintegrating under the impact of the British rule. This society had a history of hundreds of civilized years behind it.

**Social values of the culture and society:**  
Ahmed Ali shows the movement of social forces, memories of the disaster caused by the colonial regime and its strong impact on the thinking and behaviour of the middle class society. The most glaring aspect of Ahmed Ali’s style is the pessimistic tone built-up right from the outset of the novel and maintained throughout.

Ahmed Ali’s protagonist – the sixty year old, sturdily-built, and typically feudal, manager of a shop of the lace-dealers- Mir Nihal, and his household personify the crumbling feudal society that the novel uncovers. Mir Nihal is the head of his middle-class Muslim household living in the area near Lal Kuan. His is a fairly large family with two daughters, four sons and a typical middle-class Muslim wife in her fifties called Begum Nihal. Mir Nihal is a hen-pecked head of the family. He owns some property also, which keeps the household running quite soundly. And the other monthly income which Mir Nihal makes from his services as a manager of the lace-dealer’s shop, he spends on his hobbies. He is a free-lancing old man spending much of time and earnings in kite and pigeon-flying Mir Nihal is an aristocrat in his habits – typical feudal gentleman. Besides pigeon-flying he was very fond of collecting old China-ware and also devoted some of his time to alchemy and medicine. Every morning and evening he would be seen flying pigeons-feeding them, or beating the roof with his shoes to drive the pigeons away from home.
Social relations: - Once Mir Nihal was busy at the pigeons’ loft, giving water to and tying feathers of the newly bought pigeons, Gafoor, his servant, comes running to inform that Babajan is critically ill. Mir Nihal immediately leaves for Babajan, forgetting altogether even to close the loft door.

With the demise of Babbanjan, a very different phase in the life of Mir Nihal began. The death of this mistress being a mournful occasion many unfortunate incidents occur as a result of the utter disillusionment and melancholy that descended upon Mir Nihal following the tragedy. He forgets to close the door of the loft and becomes almost mad to find that wild cats had had a nice feast there - almost to the extent of society. As it was impossible to overcome this second shock, he decides in anger to do away with the hobby itself. He plans to sell the remaining pigeons on the same day.

He found himself weak and broken. The piling up of grief made hm pessimistic. He then decided to give up his jot itself for where was the income to be spent now, as it is his sons were asking him not to do the job – and – what was there now to protect his demeanour or position – he could as well lead a life of dependence on his children. Remarks the novelist: “Now she was dead, and he did not care what mattered if he was dependent on his sons or anybody else he decided to give up his work.” These incidents evoke in him a consciousness of his own impending end. He begins to think about death.

It was after these incidents that Mir Nihal decides to give his consent for the son Asghar’s alliance with Mirza Shahbaz Baig's daughter. And he said to himself: ‘Why withhold consent? It mattered little whether Asghar married a low-born or a girl with blue blood in her veins. He would not be in it anyway. If Asghar refused to see his point of view he could go his own way and ruin himself. He did not care, Life had not treated him well, and if a son was also lost it must be borne.’

Then in idleness his old hobbies of medicine and alchemy revived. He took out his notes and began to study about herbs and plants. A new circle of friends began to form. Hakims and Fakirs come to him to sit for hours comparing notes and relating anecdotes. Besides, he thought, the atmosphere of alchemy and medicine was “ a world which was still his own where no one could disturb him or order him about.’ Such was the old man’s hatred for being ordered about and being imposed upon.

Social Values: - Begum Nihal, a woman in her early fifties, was a dutiful wife of the easy-going husband. She reprimanded him for his careless ways. She often had to remind him that their children Mehro and Asghar – were coming age and that he should look for a proper alliance for them. Begum Nihal is the only person in the entire household who performs the religious rites with a mechanical regularity. The others only did it occasionally. In the morning, after the dawn prayers, she would sit and recite the holy Quran aloud in a rhythmic tone –rhythmically moving back and forth. She is the symbol of the self-less and calm middle-class Muslim Woman of the early twentieth century.

The culture of Delhi: - All of Mir Nihal’s children were married and settled. Whether they were happy or not was not his worry now. He himself was on the way
This he had begun to understand. And he thought it to be certain. Similarly the beloved of the heart of the Indians, the city of Delhi, has also got dismembered, giving birth to a New Delhi. Though the inhabitants of Delhi had become disillusioned the fortune of the foreign government had begun to assert itself poignantly. In the city of Delhi many changes were being proposed. New people meant new customs and traditions. The old culture would, therefore be in a danger of annihilation. The language on which Delhi had once prided itself would become adulterated and impure. The people of Delhi were most unwilling to let this happen.

Ahmed Ali’s hero, Mir Nihal’s personification of the society at the moment when the social fabric was being altered, becomes clearly discernible. A proud and stable civilization was destroyed by the encroachment of an outside culture, just as a happy family was dismembered by the modernistic trends. The traditional society, hitherto protected by the common force of social and religious values, breaks and collapses with the arrival of the white man and his ideology. Similarly the erosion of traditional values in the family of Mir Nihal is seen as a result of the effects of the new civilization. Mir Nihal tells Asghar: “You are again wearing those dirty English boots; I don’t like them. I will have no aping of the Farangis in my house. Throw them away.”

The foreign occupation of India seems to have made some of the citizens withdraw into a world of their own. Though there are no direct references in Ahmed Ali’s novel to the ravages wrought by the rule of the white man, the novel deals with it very subtly. Mir Nihal the protagonist adopts a leave-me-alone attitude. When the Home-Rule movement sweeps across India he is almost untouched. Ahmed Ali says: “His world had fallen. Let others build their own.”

Ahmed Ali describes the popular sport of Pigeon flying. And this is contrasted with the family scenes within the old house. The family tale which reaches its climax with the marriage of Asghar and Bilqueeece is set against the aerial background of kite flying and pigeon flying. As the flying of pigeons and kites fade into the background the family becomes the central metaphor. Then the novelist subjects the husband and wife to the inevitable blows of fate. Asghar’s happy life is covered with gloom with the death of his wife. The novelist strikes a fatalistic note here. “who can meddle in the affairs of God?”

Ahmed Ali begins his novel with a description of the night enveloping the city like a blanket, and ends it by showing Mir Nihal the head of the family, in a state of coma when the sun is about to set. On another level a segment of Indian history comes to an end.

**Political Conditions depicted in ‘Twilight in Delhi’**

Ahmed Ali is known as the pioneer of English fiction and poetry among the Muslims of India. His literary career began during British rule over India and his significance as a writer is both historical and social. He moved from Urdu, his mother tongue and the literary language of Indian Muslims, to English. He is the first to get hold of modernity, social-realism and then symbolism from Western origin among Indian Muslim writers. His revocation is chiefly for his historical significance. ‘Twilight in Delhi’ is one of his finest
literary achievements in which he depicts the prevailing political conditions of pre-independence Delhi.

**Description of Delhi in ‘Twilight in Delhi’:**

The city of Delhi was once the vice-like grip of art, culture, architecture and learning. Its throne was adorned by the kings and monarchs who patronized learning and encouraged fine arts. Many victorious wars were fought on its battlefields. It has seen their glory as well as their disaster. They were those who beautified the city by erecting great monuments and creating magnificent buildings. And whose only work was to invade the city, raid its fortresses, destroy the monuments and loot the wealth. And the city of Delhi stands a witness to all these happenings like a mute spectator. It has no reaction to show against the damage done to its culture and civilization.

The novelist speaks pessimistically: “Gone are the poets now and gone is its culture”. Only the coils of the rope, when the rope itself has been burnt, remain to remind us of the past splendour. Delhi stands for both life and death. It has seen how glory descended upon it with the rise to power of the Guptas, the Mauryas, the Kushans, the Pandabas, the Khiljis, the Sayyids and the Lodhis, and the great Moghuls. And it had also seen the dethroning of the poet-king Bahadur Shah – the last of that great line of rulers, at the hands of the foreigners who came into the country as mere traders but gradually dug their feet deep into the soil of statecraft. With their invasion a kind of silence and apathy, as of death, descended upon the city. Its glory began to wither away. The city of Delhi is the definitive symbol of loss and Muslim sense of nostalgia.

The city, at least six or seven times in history, has been plundered and destroyed. Ali captures the image of Delhi as:

“**But the city of Delhi, built hundreds of years ago, fought for, died for, coveted and desired, built, destroyed and rebuilt, for five and six and seven times, mourned and sung, raped and conquered, yet whole and alive, lies indifferent in the arms of sleep. It was the city of kings and monarchs, of poets and story tellers, courtiers and nobles. But no king lives there today, and the poets are feeling the lack of patronage; and the old inhabitants, though still alive, have lost their pride and grandeur under a foreign yoke.**” (Ali 1983: 1-2)

**Depiction of political orientation among middle-class Muslim families in Delhi:**

The novel depicted the life of the first two decades of the twentieth century middle-class Muslim family in Delhi. The novel describes that the city of Delhi that was under the control of British ruling over it and moreover described the conditions prevailing during the period. In the second edition of the novel, Ahmed Ali articulated his intention:

**My purpose was to depict a phase of our national life and the decay of a whole culture, a particular mode of thought and living, now dead and gone already right before our eyes. Seldom is one allowed See a pageant of History whirl past and partake in it too.** (Twilight in Delhi Vii)

In 1918, nature was rebellious and angry with people of India. Thousands were killed in the war, with the German guns. There was inhumanity and could find Delh’
city of the dead. People of Delhi were very particular of the traditions of the past. They made songs and sang them, and the leaflets containing them were sold for a piece each.

How deadly this fever is,
Everyone is dying of it.
Men become lame with it
And go out in dolis
The hospitals are gay and bright,
But sorry is men’s plight.

The reader could measure the mind of the protagonists, Mir Nihal's memories of the ferocious British 1857 revolt. When the family’s wedding ceremony coincide with coronation of George V took place. Mir Nihal’s view point, the celebration of a British monarch in Delhi turned the city “which was once the greatest in Hindustan.” Into “an exhibition ground.”

Here it was in this very Delhi, Mir Nihal thought, that Kings once rode past. Indian Kings his kings, kings who have left a great and glorious name behind. But the Farangis came from across the seven seas, and gradually established their rule. By egging on Indian chiefs to fight each other and by giving them secret and open aid they won concessions for themselves; and established their’ empire’

Mir Nihal believes the city of Delhi once ruled by Muslim kings with glorious name became dead and decay with the intervention of Farangis. The crowd reached at the Fort in Delhi to see the King, it only happened during the Mughal Kings. People of Delhi could not able to distinguish the king and the officials because the English looked alike with their white faces and similar military uniforms.

The novel presented at a time the political activity and the religious activity. It also presented in detail the celebration of the British and their servants who passed by the main mosque, Jama Masjid centre and it is symbol of the anti-colonialist resistance:

The procession passed by the Jama Masjid whose façade (frontage) had been vulgarly decorated with a garland of golden writing containing slavish greetings from the Indian Mussalmans to the English king, displaying the treachery of the Priestly class to their people and Islam. (pg.150)

There is a celebration of George V in Twilight in Delhi but in his third novel, "Of Rats and Diplomats," there is a criticism, of British ruler as he felt useless to present their celebrations: “that the British celebrating the death of an Edwardian king by holding a grand durbar on the ashes of Mughal pride in ravished Delhi.” It has described the intention of British who likes to destroy Jama Masjid, there is anti-British sentiments with Islam.

The conflict between British and Muslim as shown in 'Twilight in Delhi': The conflict between British and Muslim continue till Gandhi’s non-cooperation movement
started. While attending the movement’s meeting, they heard the death of Muslim youth who had been killed and then Habibuddin, Mir Nihal’s favourite son, declares,

"the English frankly say that they fear no one but Muslims in India and that if they crush the Mussalmans they shall rule with a care- free heart."(262)

William Howard Russell wrote in the Times in early 1858:

The Mohammadan element in India is that which causes us most trouble and provokes the largest share of our hostility. Our antagonism to the followers of Mohammed is far stronger than that we bear to the worshippers of Shiva and Vishu. They are unquestionably more dangerous to our rule. If we could eradicate the traditions and destroy the temples of Mohammad by one vigorous effort, it could indeed be well for the Christian faith and for the British rule.

There was no peace for the soul of man. Azaans were called and prayers were done to stop the evil. But it was of no use. Death passed through towns and cities. People of Delhi became conscious and wished to change the conditions of India. As the country was under the British Raj so Home Rule Movement began. Although, Mir Nihal was not affected as he had his own aspirations which he neither understood nor sympathized with. However, his grandson Nasim (Habibuddin’s son) recited the poem or political song written after the Balkan war had sentiments of Mussalmans

The wish for glory and martyrdom  
Has begun to sway our hearts again  
We shall try his skill and see  
What strength is in the enemy’s hand  
Let the time come we will show  
What courage there is in us still  
Why should we tell you nows what we  
Have in our hearts? The power of will  
But, traveler on the road of love,  
Tire and weary not in the way.  
The pleasure of tramping the desert is  
Greater the father is the goal away. (pg263)

Mir Nihal’s painful thoughts were in his mind. When he tried to close his eyes he could see the Red Fort that was built by Shahjahan. Humayun’s tomb or a Qutub Minar proved to be mighty Hindustan in those days. He remembered with blood in his eyes when he was ten years of age, the English insisted to demolish Mosque into a church during 1857. On 14th September 1857 when thousands of Mussalmans gathered to do prayers, Thomas Metcalf with his army destroyed the Jama Masjid. The Muslims when came to know of this wanted to attack on Metcalf, but hey had no guns with them they had only swords. They were informed that if they want to save their lives they should go to the southern gate and if they want to prove their mettle should reach to the northern gate of the mosque. There was not one soul who went to southern gate of the mosque. Hundreds fell down dead on the steps of the mosque.
Finally, the Muslims dominated during the revolt of 1857, and so the British called it “a Mohammadan rebellion” and “a handiwork of the Muslims”. Muslims challenged them and made as mortal enemy from the entire population of India. Many thousands of people died and were massacred and some thousands made guilty for their deeds and sent to death. After 1857 the heavy hand of the British fell more on the Muslims than on the Hindus. They considered the Muslims more aggressive and militant than the Hindus, possessing memories of recent rule in India and therefore more dangerous.

**A Study of the City in "Twilight in Delhi"**

Ahmed Ali a prolific Pakistani writer sets his masterpiece, Twilight in Delhi, in late 19th century. He wants to portray a picture of Delhi in its true perspective. He said:

“my purpose was to depict a phase of our national life and the decay of a whole culture, a particular mode of thought and living, now dead and gone already right before our eyes.”

Ahmed Ali’s representation of the middle class Muslim family of Mir Nihal and the depiction of Delhi is really a wonderful task. He adequately shows the decay of the whole culture on the whole this novel shows the element of universality because it infuses many layers of meaning in it, like Delhi as an embodiment of the whole culture, and Mir Nihal as true Delhi citizen or the representative of the Indian Muslim class novelist doesn’t want to show a complete picture of Muslim society in Delhi but also show the pragmatic understanding of life, religious identities, and the harsh realities of life.

Seven Delhis have fallen: and the eighth is going way of its predecessors, yet to be built and demolished again life, like the phoenix must collect spices from its nest and set fire to it, and arise resurrected out of the flames, by using the highly suggestive image of phoenix as death in life, and also as, life in death, the novelist makes us recognise the cyclic phenomenon, birth-growth decay-resurrection, that governs the lives of men and cities. At the same time, he suggest to us behind the man-infected havoc against another man , there is a greater and omnipotent force.... great are the ravages of time, and no one can do anything against its indomitable might. Kings die and dynasties fall. Centuries and aeons pass. But never a smile lights up inscrutable face of time,(text). Most of the time plot revolves around the protagonist and reveal the past condition of Delhi from 1857 to 1911. When Mir Nihal saw the coronation ceremony he remembered:

“as ten-year old boy the mutiny of 1857 when their relations were killed by the British soldiers ruthlessly and their houses were demolished and destroyed, property looted, residents turned out and their emperor Bahadur Shah cruelly dethroned. All this he could never forget and consequently, he had been smouldering with rage in his soul.”

The deep study of the novel delineates that the historical study and individual study went side by side. Further we can say it shows the life by time and life by values. Throughout the whole novel we heard the uneven life of Mir Nihal and Delhi.
which was built by Shah Jahan. The novel is not a mere sad commentary on the plummeting of Mir Nihal and the city, as it also records the inevitable disillusionment of human beings. The major crack in the life of Mir Nihal is the proposal of his son with Bilqueeece. It is totally difficult for a man who brought up in the four walls of class and blood, to change his entire values. In the beginning, Begum Nihal also reluctant to give her consent to marry a low-born but son’s threat of committing suicide bowed down her but Mir Nihal vehemently protests to her: “You don’t want to bring a low born into the family”

But neither Mir Nihal nor begum Nihal can change the sweeping winds of change. Mir Nihal’s life can be considered as the account of a disillusioned man. His attempts to build a small personal world within the world, which in a way is also everyone, desperate attempt to live, life is as per one’s dreams in the face of the apathy of ate. The splendid past and the aristocratic habits die hard in Mir Nihal, it seems that he wants to live in his own private world; his belief on his supremacy sustains himself, to keep going.

Mir Nihal’s pigeon flying hobby testifies to his determined will to hold on living his life despite the vagaries of time. His zealous attempts to safeguard his hobby further substantiates this. His attempts to excel in the game of pigeon calling props up his sagging ego.

Babban Jan is another character who was not his wife but a person who gives him solace: “His wife was there no doubt, and so were the children. But the world they lived in was a domestic world. Here at Babban Jan’s he had built a quiet corner for himself where he could always retire and forget his sorrows in its secluded peace”

The hobby of pigeons flying and Babban Jan both have great meaning in the life of Mir Nihal his unsatisfied sexual appetite often create disturbance in his marital life. Sometimes we have found Mir Nihal with the maid servant Dilchain. His unfullfillment and emptiness is the recurring motif of this novel. The beating of the cat shows his helplessness and anger towards fate. “the cat gave a piercing how and instinctively rushed to the door of a staircase ...he beat her until he was tired and the cat looked dead ...but something within him died; and he did not go to the shop that day.”

After these incidents he gave up his normal life and hope for death. Yet death was alive and would come to him too and free him from misery and care. His agony is also around when he saw the coronation of the king George v. his deep rooted association with Delhi makes him grieve over the fate of Delhi.

“there it was that the Hindu kings had built the early Delhi’s, Hasthinapur or Delhi, and still in Mahroli stands the iron pillar as a memory of Asoka and other of the day of India’s golden age; and dynasties greater than history has ever known today it was this very Delhi which was being deposited by a western race who had no sympathy with India or her sons...
Asghar seemed revolutionary because he led life in his own modern English style. In the relay race of life, Asghar is too busy to take note of the fate of a way side player. The ever enchanting charms of life cast their spell on Asghar too.

Asghar seemed on seventh heaven when he realized that his dream of marrying Bilqeece came true, without prior apprehension about her sexual coldness. By the time he aligns himself from her and the feelings of the others. “yet he was not so much in love with her as with his own self, his own dreams and illusions which he had created in his mind”.

Asghar also failed to sympathise with the dancing girl Mushtari Bai with whom he dallied for some time. Mushtari Bai bemoans her fate and said: “I am like a caravan-serai where people come, rest their tried bodies for a while and depart... my life is a desert in which no oases exist.” The whole episode shows the disillusionment and decay of the novel and its character.

After marriage there is a gulf of disillusionment increased between Asghar and Bilqeece. Asghar become father of Jahan Ara and she is like a change in his knife Asghar had become indifferent his dreams had come to an end and he did not find his wife as charming as he had done over a year ago. Both husband and wife are in agony but Bilqeece’s agony ended when she died as a tube regular. She feels that world is falling to pieces all around her and in the midst of the debris she stood without a friend or sympathises all alone.

Bilqeece’s death made him sad he feel that he is responsible for her death; so Jahan Ara not able fill the blank but Asghar has fallen for the charms of Zohra who knew well what sex is and how to attract men. So Asghar wanted to marry her but his desire remained unfulfilled. It seemed that he is like his father who spends his life in a living death condition.

The seventh Delhi is swiftly declining and Mir Nihal a well built and tall man with noble and majestic face, dwindled into the status of a complete wreck. He is totally defected and never able to bring the peace of mind. He can’t able maintain the glories of Delhi.

He is a spectator who sees with his own eyes the decline of Delhi. He lays on his bed more dead than alive, too broken to think even of the past. His world had fallen to pieces all around him smothered by indifference and death. So the whole novel Twilight in Delhi shows the two characters first the city Delhi and second Mir Nihal both seemed in decay throughout the whole Novel.

**Gender Issues in Ahmed Ali’s Twilight in Delhi**

Women consist half of the species. They are the makers of family, society, and nation. Since the ages, women have been relegated to the periphery for being inferior to men. The fetters of the society and culture have led women to imprison themselves in the houses and dream only about their husband, children and family.
Gender issues are very obvious in Ahmed Ali’s Twilight in Delhi. It is a beautifully written novel in English. Primarily the novel deals with the downfall of Delhi culture due to the arrival of British in the beginning of the twentieth century and simultaneously it gives us a glimpse of Indo-Muslim family life. The novel becomes the storehouse of various images drawn from Delhi and its culture. Not only the pigeon flying and kite flying have been projected as the major part of Indian culture but the subordinated women’s life also becomes its chief issue.

This novel covers the period of nine years i.e. from 1910 to 1919. It is set in pre-independent Delhi and remarkably deals with the plight of women during that era. The society projected in the novel is male dominated and it brings out the fact that how the feudal lord of the family restrains a large section of the society from actively participating in the works outside the household affairs. Ali makes his novel a mirror of society and tells through the extended family of Mir Nihal that how the Indo Muslim family were divided into two parts: the one called mardana the men’s part of the house and another called zenana the women’s part of the house. Women observed purdah from the outsiders as well as the male members of the house. This purdah system was actually started to protect women from the eyes of the strangers.

Women were not allowed to take any important decision in the family as in the case of Begam Nihal who after confronting the secret love of her son Asghar could not think to give her consent without her husband’s approval. Nevertheless, finding her son at the door of death and due to the fear of his committing suicide she stealthily settles Asghar and Bilqueece’s marriage. She realizes her rights in the case of marriage and says, “For though women hold a subordinate position in Indian life yet in certain matters they can take the law in their hands, and marriage is one of them”. This fact reveals that women had the rights but they never realized this out of their modesty.

Mir Nihal, one of the leading characters in the novel, enjoys an extra marital love affair with a courtesan named Babban Jan and keeps telling a lie to his wife. These visits to the courtesans were considered royal in the Mughal period. Begam Nihal who used to wait for her husband’s arrival in the night was entirely unaware of this dark side of her husband’s character. Not only this but after her mistress’ death he gradually washes his hands away from all the duties. Mir Nihal did not have only Babban Jan in his life but in the very early years of his married life, he had a son from his maid Dilchain who died later on, and due to which his wife went mad.

On the other hand, Mir Nihal’s son Asghar also visits Mushtari Bai, another famous courtesan and starts having visions of her in the night. The female beauty of Mushtari Bai charms Asghar. But as men, due to their tendency are fickle minded in case of women and keep vacillating from one to another, Asghar also soon loses his interest in Mushtari Bai and turns to Bilqueece, and marries her against his father’s wishes.

Indian scenario is such that girls, since their childhood, are taught to be humble and docile as they have to be sent to their husband’s house sooner or later. As soon as the proposal comes for Mehro’s marriage, she starts thinking about her ultimate destiny. The romantic and fantastic images that revolve in her mind take her into another world and she is preoccupied with an idealistic picture of her husband. She thinks:
Mehro lies on her bed and looks up at the stars,...She thinks of a man far away whose proposal has come for her hand. What can he be like? She wonders. She has never seen him...Meraj –that is his name --. And she associates him with the prince in the story with whom the princess was in love.

Not only Mehro dreamt of her future life partner but she was thrilled at his thought also. She was too young to understand the complexity of married life. Ahmed Ali gives us a peep inside her heart:

She, of course, liked it in her heart of hearts;...that not only disturbed her emotional balance, but also exposed her inhibitions which grow in the repressed lives of the Indian women like cobwebs and mushrooms. To conceal her consciousness of sex, she flew into a temper, without, of course, realizing its unconscious and hidden cause.

Even though it was the time of freedom struggle and women were also breaking the barriers and coming out of their houses, but still the common people kept their daughters and women in purdah and they were always brought and sent in dolis.

Ahmed Ali has presented the conventional women caught in their household affairs. Patriarchy (male dominated system) always considers women as irrational, emotional, and sentimental fools and men have this pre-conceived notion that women are good for nothing. They are simply the gossipmongers and only know to kill their time by chatting endlessly. Ali does not remain away from this belief and throughout the novel; he has depicted these details at length:

Everyday Begam Jamal and AnjumZamani, her sister in law, came down and peeling potatoes or some other vegetable for dinner, or just sitting idle, cutting areca nut into small bits which they collected in circular purses, they let their tongues loose, and talked and talked, of marriage and death, of this and that, but mostly of people and family.

Ali is deft at portraying men as paragon and hides their inadequacies. Through the character of Saeed Hasan he tells what to be expected from women and what a man wants in his wife:

A wife should be of moderate stature, neither short nor very tall nor too fat. She could not be short because then she would give birth to many children. She should not be very tall as she would bend down soon after the birth of one child. She would not be too fat for then she will never have a child at all. That is why a man must give preference to one who combines all qualities harmoniously and proportionately.

Not only the women belonging to the refined, honourable families are our issue in the novel but the courtesans like Babban Jan and Mushtari Bai have their own miserable life. They neither gain sympathy from the readers in the novel nor pitied by the people in society. They are only looked at with hatred and contempt. For them it is only their physical beauty, which they use to get money to survive. They are conscious of this fact.
that in their old age they will be left alone to suffer as Mushtari Bai says, “But when old age knocks at the door, beauty of the body dies: only virtue is beauty which I do not possess”. The cursed fate of Mushtari Bai becomes more heart rending when she very philosophically says, “I am that candle which burns its own self, shedding tears of blood, and blackens the walls of the niche with its smoke”. This is very ironical that these neglected women of the society who sang and danced only for the Nawabs and the upper classes to entertain them, they themselves remained ruined and neglected throughout their life.

The central attraction of the novel is the passionate love of Asghar for his wife Bilqueece. Bilqueece’s beauty forces Asghar to marry her against his father’s desire. However, the problem arises when after marriage Asghar finds Bilqueece not as sensuous and passionate as he himself was and thus his dream shattered. Bilqueece worshiped him like her God but Asghar could not pacify himself with the cold attitude of Bilqueece and did not pay any regard to her. On the very first night of their wedding, Asghar finds himself in chaos when he expects the romantic talks and gestures of Bilqueece and gets nothing, not even the response to his own advances. This lack of warmth in his beloved resulted in Asghar’s indifference towards her. He started keeping himself away from all the duties of a husband, often shouted at Bilqueece, and busied himself in official works.

Surprisingly enough Asghar, who has once left Mushtari Bai for Bilqueece, again moves towards his mistress. The reason for the detachment of Asghar from Bilqueece was not only her coldness but also the birth of a girl child whereas Asghar expected a son. This negligence of Asghar led Bilqueece suffer in her heart and ultimately forced her to die. Asghar now left with his only daughter was grief stricken, as he could do nothing to keep his daughter happy. Nothing could bring him solace and comfort. However, destiny has its own role to play and the life has to go on, believing in the same dictum soon after the death of his wife Asghar started planning for his second marriage with no one else but his dead wife’s younger sister Zohra. Man does not dare to accept his infidelity; therefore, Asghar gives the excuse of his young daughter Jahan Ara that only for her sake he was getting married. Nevertheless, Zohra’s mother, after seeing her first daughter’s condition, did not approve the match and rejected the proposal.

The novel Twilight in Delhi forces the readers to look deep into the realities. However, the novel was written in mid twentieth century but still Muslim women’s condition is not praiseworthy. They still go through the same agonies and sufferings. A conventional Muslim family still does not allow a girl child so easily to educate and purdah system is so deep rooted in their custom that to break this system is a sin for them.

**Twilight in Delhi : Indianness’ of the novel,**

Ahmed Ali tries to infuse his work with indigenous concerns by deploying a particular theme, style, imagery and setting. His style is realism. Ahmed Ali says:

“Our literature so far has been of an individualist type, sentimental, unrealistic, irrational, mystical. Conditions demand an uncompromising realism, looking the
problems in the face, a literature brutal even in its ruggedness without embellishments and unnecessary insistence on form and technique”.

In accordance with these views, everything is treated to realistic detail. Describing the by lanes of Delhi, the author comments “Dogs go about sniffing the gutters in search of offal; and cats slink out of narrow by lanes, from under the planks jutting out of shops, and lick the earthen cups out of which men had drunk milk and thrown away”. Though the novel gives a sweeping view of members of different social strata and accordingly has a huge number of characters with markedly different personalities, it gives us a glimpse of the everyday doings and concerns of the Nihals. Then there is the realistic depiction of the elaborate rituals involved in marriage ceremonies, funerals and religious festivals of Id, kite flying, pigeon flying and the pervasive belief in superstition.

We are given a close view of the Indian joint family where women are shut up in their zenanas while men are free to keep mistresses. Referring to the realm of the zenana, the author says eloquently, “The world lived and died, things happened, events took place, but all this did not disturb the equanimity of the zenana, which had its world too where the pale and fragile beauties of the hothouse lived secluded from all outside harm, the storms that blow in the world of men”. Ahmed Ali gives an apt picture of the Indian woman who is subjected to so many restrictions that “the idea of love does not take root in the heart”. Bilquees is such an Indian woman who is ‘unromantic’ but a ‘perfect housewife’ and the novelist gives a poignant picture of her later passive suffering. He also gives a psychological insight into Mehro’s temper whenever her fiancé’s name is mentioned. This novel does not portray any female resistance to the patriarchal biases prevalent in the home and the family.

The specifically hot Indian summer with which each part of the novel begins, the beauty and sadness of the Indian spring and rainy season, the date palm and the henna tree which stand in the courtyard as witnesses to the family’s joys and sorrows, the song of the domnis and the riot of colours in the marriage ceremonies, the smell of kababs near Jama Masjid – all these make the novel quintessentially Indian.

But the question arises as to whether the novel tries to impute homogeneity to Indian tradition and culture. Mourning the passing away of a great art and culture, the author makes Mir Nihal consider only posts like Mir, Ghalib and Insha as the “great poets of Hindustan”. The Mughal Empire and monuments built by Mughals are regarded as the mark of glory and splendour of the city of Delhi, though there is a minor reference to the Kauravas and the Pandavas. By doing this, the author imparts singularity to India’s rich and plural cultural heritage. Vinayak Krishna Gokak in his book The Concept of Indian Literature remarks that an integral cultural awareness is an indispensable feature of Indianness. I would not say that the novel here falls short of Indianness but it does infuse homogeneity by glorifying only a portion of the entire Indian heritage and calling it the whole.

Commenting on the themes handled by the older generation of Indo-English novelists, Meenakshi Mukherjee in her essay “The Anxiety of Indianness” says that they were predictably pan-Indian, defining Indian concerns as against

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Mukherjee does not refer to Ahmed Ali, but his novel, though marked by spatial specificity and attempt an exploration of Muslim society, also deals with similar time-worn clichés of east-west confrontation, the clash between tradition and modernity, the disintegration of the Indian joint family, etc. As Mukherjee says, this can be seen as an attempt to construct a national identity, through “erasure of differences within the border and accentuating the difference with what lies outside”.

K. Satchidanandan in Indian Literature: Positions and Propositions has pointed out that Indian writers are first and foremost Indian, no matter what language they write in, because of their works’ rootedness in their social, historical and cultural contexts. But this basic unity has in no way eroded the fascinating diversity of our literatures. Twilight in Delhi is very different from the other literary texts already done in this course both in theme and form – a pointer to the heterogeneity of Indian literature. But an Indian setting and theme marks it, reflecting Vinayak Krishna Gokak’s comment that Indian literature is a thread of continuity against a background of continuous change. In conclusion, it can be pointed out that Indian novels in English and works in Indian languages are, as Mukherjee says, “disparate literary products of a complex plural culture” (168) and they should not be congealed into rigid and opposed positions.

From our situatedness in a time when upper and middle class Indian society has internalized so many Western habits and ways of life, Twilight in Delhi can be seen as looking into a time when the situation was very different, and as trying to articulate a people’s helplessness in the face of what colonialism was doing to their culture and to their beloved and once glorious city.

**Literary and non-literary purposes in the novel**

The novel has two main purposes or good intentions. One is literary or creative or artistic and the other one is essentially non-literary. It does not mean that there can be contradiction in the book. Suppose the writer has a good talent in his writings, then non-creative purpose does no harm to work.

According to Mohammed Hasan Askari the actual purpose of Ahmed Ali is to write a guide to Delhi for Englishmen. He called it ‘a guide’ because the book has been written for Englishmen who are unfamiliar with life in Delhi and that the author wishes to acquaint them in this way. When asked about this point, Ahmed Ali stated that the thought had never entered his mind. Actually, his purpose was to depict life a culture, a mode of living and thought, all of which were passing away. He did this in his own realistic manners, which are considered the detail are essential and part of its method. He noticed that the details are historical and Mir Nihal’s generation lost the culture and forgotten them and reached to history.

The non-literary purpose has restriction on the writer- that life of Delhi has to be depicted in English. The problem the author might have faced could be to create a style in English to represent atmosphere and harmony of life in Delhi into a foreign language or English. Ahmed Ali has been most successful in this effort and made English as
subservient to his artistic will. Edwin Muir said that ‘one could smell the Jasmine flowers in the book, which in turn means that Ahmed Ali has achieved the impossible.

The masterly artistic techniques could be seen in the novel. Ahmed Ali has done two things with great artistry. On the one hand, he presented the atmosphere of an average Muslim household, and on the other hand, commenced his story. The picture of the family which Ahmed Ali has drawn was ordinary and colourless to look at from this point of view Ahmed Ali’s task was the more difficult, for he has created colour from colourlessness.

Ahmed Ali mentioned in his book different individuals, a city, a particular culture, a period of history. His theme is not confined to a few characters and their biographies but to an entire city. It is actually a collective novel whose hero is the city of Delhi. One can raise a point that Muslims were not alone lived in Delhi and the author has given importance to one particular section, as he want to see the reality through his own eyes. The fact is that Ahmed Ali knew Delhi as millions of Muslims whether a class society or a classless one, there is always a section of society, large or small, that occupies a central place and is the source of cultural values. Delhi created a particular set of values. There is a sense of defeat for the period with great courage and honesty. Ahmed Ali could not conceal the fact that he love these dying values and felt sorry for its decay. He has shown sympathy for the culture, and in doing this sympathy shows itself as a personal catharsis, his emphasis in the book is on something larger – life itself brings unmindful of social changes, continues and never dies. Thus Ahmed Ali’s attitude did not change from its original progressivism. This definition of progress was not understood or appreciated by many readers, especially member of the All-India Progressive Writer’s Association, who were according to Ahmed Ali, ‘carried away by the panorama of passing things.’

**Method of depicting collective life:** In the collective life of a whole society can be presented through the ideas and actions of a group against the background of a revolutionary movement or war. It is most difficult to produce events or extraordinary thing with the art and technique. But Ahmed Ali has done it. That’s the author has taken one family and shown its members daily life. All these are considered to be simple and insignificant things such as eating, drinking, sleeping festivals and fairs, marriage birth, and death, naïve love affairs, quarrels and arguments. Hence the works of women novelist and the incidents of the novel are more or less alike. The difference one can find in the arrangement and selection of incidents in the novel are different and considered or believed to have a universal significance. These details also presented the spirit of collective life and the values of collective unity. With the insignificant details we come to know collective life and the soul of society that is its subject. These details are as essential for the artistic purpose of the book as they are for the non-artistic ones.

The other method of depicting collective life, apart from incidents is through characters. Their action lasts only as long as need demand. The action for the character takes place when it is needed and authors of such novel do not allow their characters to continue with their action. In contrast to this, Ali allowed his characters to live a complete life with right. Actually, each character believed and felt significant or important of themselves and we tried to identify them and sometimes feel unaware of the some characters.
E.M. Forster said of Twilight in Delhi: “it is beautifully written and very moving. The detail was almost all of it new to me, and fascinating. It is a sort of poetical chronicle. At the end one has a poignant feeling that poetry and daily life have got parted and will never come together again.”

Ahmed Ali presented the character of Asghar who falls in love three times. First, he flirts courtesan out of a desire. The courtesan falls in love with him, but he turns her down. Then he loves Bilqueese, after a struggle to marry her, he makes his love successful. As there is a saying “familiarity breeds contempt,” he becomes indifferent to her when she becomes ill. After Bilqueeces’ death, Asghar falls in love with her younger sister, but unfortunately he cannot marry her. Thus, this love remains unsuccessful. Ahmed Ali thus depicted the emotional ups and downs of an ordinary man’s life.

Through the character of Mir Nihal Delhi’s culture has been produced life that has neither depth nor expanse, there is no balance and uniformity, who is culturally a mixture and in fact whose finest emotions are lacking beauty and dignity the qualities that arouse from the traditions of the harmonious culture. But if once a balance achieves stability, it becomes static and turns to death. Therefore, the character of Mir Nihal ends in the novel. Baseless and lack of balance signifies a compromise with life. But Asghar’s defeat does not end there – he has not met his final defeat. He still likes to love again. There is a symbolic significance of the date palm tree, there is a sadness that deepens as the plot develops with the gradual decay of the spring of life into autumn one can find man’s helplessness in their life. The author has beautifully described the pain of the transience of life and doubts about the purpose of life itself.

The remarkable character of the book is Mir Nihal. Something unique one can find in the character of Mir Nihal. The nature is passive in him. He has two interests in life, his pigeons and his mistress, Babanj. When his courtesan or Babanj dies, he gives up flying pigeons and also his job and take interest in alchemy and mysticism. His intention is to escape the changes that are taking place in life and to withdraw from the world formerly. Mir Nihal wished to cry over the ups and downs of life, but in the end he does not even have the desire to do that. Asghar comes to him wearing English clothes, but Mir Nihal does not even object. His body becomes paralyzed. He has no hoe to survive. Already his young daughter-in-law and son have died. Mir Nihal dies on his bed and watches with open eyes and cannot heave a sigh. Asghar, may forget his sorrows, but Mir Nihal cannot forget. All his physical and mental strengths have decreased, but his memory is alive. The grief of the minor characters have become the grief of Mir Nihal.

One can find at the end of the book, the intensity becomes so strong that, life of Nihal grieve for unfulfilment, haplessness, transience and seems to cast basic doubts on its own reality. Ahmed Ali’s great achievement is the creation of the character Mir Nihal. One cannot separate this character from the body of the book, because the whole book contains life in him. The description of Mir Nihal’s illness is a masterpiece in itself. We cannot compare either with Urdu novels or with western fiction.

Ahmed Ali is most sympathetic to his characters. Sometimes the comic elements in Ahmed Ali produce an effect of pity example. After Pelican being procured with much difficulty, it is killed and everybody comes to watch it not only the children...
old maidservant Dilchain. One can judge the writers when they produce in their work death and illness during such situations, the writers would either become emotional or ineffective. But Ahmed Ali managed to be good. He gave the description of death in detail that of Bilqueece and then of Habibuddin with subtlety. After World war-I, Ahmed Ali gave details of plague which was marvellous. Ahmed Ali created the horrific atmosphere of universal death and all-round dishonesty.

After reading his work one can say that he has used masterly artistic techniques. Ahmed Ali has done two things with great artistry. One the one hand, he presented the atmosphere of an average Muslim household, and on the other hand, commenced his story. The picture of the family which Ahmed Ali has drawn was ordinary and colourless to look at from this point of view Ahmed Ali’s task was the more difficult, for he has created colour from colourlessness.

Ahmed Ali has given individual life to each- that is nature, the days, and nights of Delhi, the sunsets and dawn, the summer, the rainy season and the changing shades the sky, the breezes, the hot wind, the dust storms and sunshine have a separate existence in themselves in the novel. He described the lanes of the city, the gutters, dogs and cats, the flying pigeons, hawks and paper kites – all appear often in the novel. With these changing seasons, with the moods off nature and all the rest, Ali has given the city an eternal and living identify and name. He described the summer season of Delhi with great artistry. The seasons have a symbolic value, and the atmosphere of the whole novel is imbued with them, the whole story take s place in this atmosphere. In the Urdu novel there can be sensitive appreciation of nature. Hence, we can compare the writing of Ali with that of Urdu writer. Mohammed HasanAskari says:

“I cannot recall any novel or short story in Urdu where nature has thus come to life, or in which nature has played such a role in making the novel so meaningful.”

Another factor in this novel is a sense of unity and intensity: the awareness of the flight of time. A thought of time is so intense in Ali that his imagination acquires momentum and becomes the source of his artistic vitality. Ali has produced a few emotional sentences, but the feelings are not sentimental and sound. Through which one could form an idea of Ali from the character of Mir Nihal. One cannot or may not find Urdu authors equal to him. There is an attachment and love for whole civilization and so the sense of time does not lead to more sadness or passions in him, but carries within it tragic elements.

The novel does not remain the story of Delhi alone, but is simultaneously the story of the life of mankind. The centre of our tragic sense is not Delhi alone, but life itself. After reading a book, one can ask fundamental and knotty questions about life and the human condition. Why beauty does come to an end? Why does life rush involuntarily towards death? If death is the final goal of all things, why was life created in the first place. The difficulty in finding answers to these questions is clear from the fact that at the close of the book nature in all its wonder and awe overshadows man and engulfs him within itself.
This is the cumulative impress of the book. Yet there is another aspect which remains Mir Nihal becomes paralysed and asks his grandson to struggle for freedom when he reaches to the age. Mir Nihal’s bones must be buried and decay, but his grandson must dream the dream to a new life, a new harmony, a new civilization and the way of life. Mirza the milk seller sacrificed his son in the path of independence. Hundreds of such brave heroes must still be alive. From the twilight in Delhi arose the dawn of Pakistan. Until Ahmed Ali writes the second part of the novel, his book remains incomplete.

**Style in "Twilight in Delhi" by Ahmed Ali**

Twilight in Delhi provides a real and accurate portrait of the static and decaying tradition of culture of Delhi while the British arranged the coronation Durbar of 1911 and draw up plans for new imperial city, New Delhi. The novel has planned to reveal interconnecting levels and has been praised for its lucid style, its use of symbolism and the manner in which it merges the life of its main protagonist, Mir Nihal, with that of the family. Much attention has also been paid to this feeling that it had universal appeal because it focuses on the life, birth, marriage and deaths which are intrinsic to every culture.

**Use of metaphor:** - Twilight in Delhi is filled with extensive use of metaphor. It begins with the description of the city:

“Night envelops the city, covering it like a blanket in the dim straight roofs and wrapped in rustle slumber breathing heavily as the heat becomes apprentice or shoots through the body like pain. In the bay came on the road men sleep on bare bed, half naked tired of for the sore days capture a few still walk on the other wise deserted roads, hand in hand, talking and some have jasmine garlands in their herds, the smell from the flower escapes scents a from yards of air around by them and alias smothered by the heat dogs so about sniffing the gutter in search of offal.”

**Attitude of Indian Muslims:** - Another way in which the ethos of Indian Muslims has been conveyed is by making the characters quote poetry. As Coppola points out: “It is a custom of long standing among Urdu _ speakers to quote lines of poetry copiously, appropriately, and energetically in order to emphasize, to make a point in conversation, or to add elegance to speech and writing.”

**Use of couplet:** - Thus it would be naïve to look for existential despair in Asghar’s reply to his friend Bari’s question as to where he has been. He replies by quoting someone else’s couplet which does not represent his real feelings but is merely an elegant way of replying to any query:

**Life has become a burden; the time is ripe for death.**
**The space of existence has shrunk into a narrow cell (P. 28)**

The couplet is merely used for ornamentation and factitious dramatization of commonplace disappointment in love. The function of poetry was mostly rhetorical in Urdu speaking culture and that is how been used by the characters. The couplets are,
therefore, clichés which substitute a hackneyed formula for an intellectual response to a given experience. But of course, the couplets prefacing chapters are intellectually relevant and emotionally evocative.

Most of the couplets used by narrator express the ethos of the Urdu-speaking middle class. And this class had a distinct world view, a world view which was essentially romantic in eighteen nineties. Three qualities can be discerned in this special world view: nostalgia, sublimation of sexual feelings into vague aestheticism, and world weariness. A pose of wistfulness, ennui and jadedness complement these three dominant qualities. And all these are found in most of the verses quoted. For instance:

\[
\text{I’ m the light of no man’s eye,} \\
\text{The rest of no one’s heart am I.} \\
\text{That which can be of use to none} \\
\text{—Just a handful of dust am I.}
\]

These kinds of couplets the theme of regret for a dying culture directly. The self-pity in the poetry is, of course, a reflection of the self-pity which was a part of the Indian ethos before the partition. Ahmed Ali’s novel has been able to catch this aspect of Indian culture faithfully.

\text{False sense of diffidence: -} \quad \text{One aspect of the male-dominated Urdu speaking culture which has not been revealed out of a false sense of modesty by most other writers, but which has been revealed by Ali, concerns the sexual emotion. As I have mentioned above, sex was suppressed or sublimated. But, mainly because women were in purdah (behind the veil), it took unusual forms. It took, for instance, the form of celebrating the beauty of boys rather than that of women in poetry. Thus the sown on the face (khat) became a conventional attribute of the beloved. One reason for doing this was that in Iran, where the ghazal had its genesis; boys did actually become the beloveds of certain poet. The other reason was that when Persian mystic poets started writing love poetry symbolizing the souls’ quest for merging with the Soul of God, the symbol they chose for the beloved was that of a beautiful youth rather than a woman. On the other hand the Indian mystics, Muslims and Hindus, represented God as the lover and the soul as the woman who desires union. As Urdu poetry followed Persian fashions the beloved was addressed by the male pronoun and had some of the physical attributes of adolescent boys (such as khat) though it was often clear otherwise that a woman was being referred to. This literary fashion, and perhaps the absence of women, led to talk between men becoming full of homosexual innuendoes. Ali, with relentless honesty, tells us about this aspect of Muslim culture.}

He tells us, for example, that when Asghar lives in Bhopal as an adolescent youth, he was the beloved of men:

\text{He had just to cast a glance and there were many who would have given their lives to do his bidding. At the least sign from him they would have done anything. Then he was the bestower of favours; there he was the loved one and not the lover. To be loved is sweet, he thought, whereas to love is full of sorrow and grief and pain (TD, 23).}
We are also told that a man called ‘Huzoor Ali was devoted to him’ (p.23) and if Asghar had happened to look at him kindly even ‘one there had appeared such joy on his face’ (p. 23). When Huzoor Ali invites Asghar or dinner and Asghar ‘refused and refused until the old man was broken-hearted’ (p.24) the lover recites these lines:

**Would to God that You**  
**Might also fall in love and suffer**  
**As I am suffering now.**

This special kind of homosexuality in which the youth or boy is sought as a female surrogate by the male is also a feature of Greek, Persian and some Arab literature. To distinguish it from the adult peer-group homosexuality common in modern Western literature I have suggested elsewhere that is should be called paedophilia. It is this which was a part of Indian Muslim culture and is not hypocritically dissembled in Twilight.

At its noblest the love between man and youth is described as a mystic or sacred emotion. Kambal Shah, the mystic, tells Mir Nihal and his friends that the real cause of the downfall of the Mughal Empire ‘was that they had separated lover and beloved from each other by burying Mohammad Shah between the graves of HazratMahboobElahi and Hazrat Amir Khusro’. The audience listens to this with religious emotion because the two saints mentioned are revered by all. At its most vulgar, of course, the nature of the emotion is purely sensual. In ‘Our Lane’, for instance, Munno tells Aziz:

**I had a cousin. The boy was rather handsome. It was about ten years ago. I sort of fell out with him over a kiss (PH, 21).**

This is said seriously but most allusions to sexual feelings of this kind are fictitious. Sometimes there is open buffoonery:

**As he [an old man] crossed Asghar, his stick unwittingly touched the old man’s behind. As once he turned round and remarked:**

**I say, moon-bridegroom, even with an old man? ....**

**A eunuch who sat on the balcony just above in the hope of some stray customer, clapped loudly in a vulgar way and gave a loud guffaw (p.79).**

And sometimes the humour is more refined but, in fact behind the humour there is sexual flirtation as in the following scene:

And the lovers found the opportunity of their lives. A middle aged man quoted these lines of an young man with arms open for an embrace,

**It is the day of Eid, my dear,**  
**Ah come, let me embrace thee.**  
**It is the custom and besides**  
**There’s time and opportunity**
What is even more remarkable is that the narrator offers no comment on these scenes. That makes Ahmed Ali one of the few Indian writers who could reveal such tabooed areas of Indian life without either falsifying reality or preaching as Muslim. However, unfortunately, Ali does offer platitudinous comments of a moralistic kind at some places and this flaw of his work must not go unnoticed.

**Realism:** - To continue with the discussion of the quality of Ali’s realism in Twilight, it has been noted that he presents the corporate life through the minor characters who help to create the illusion that one is in India, the land of the crowded houses in which something is always going on. The novel is full of ‘servants, beggars and craftsmen’. In fact no other novel catches the nuances of the Muslims culture in Delhi as convincingly as Twilight in Delhi. One can find out all about the details which make a culture come alive in Ali’s descriptions. And the descriptions are not as if they were a part of a documentary, they form an organic whole and are, therefore, artistically successful whereas those of Scented Dust were intrusions. In this respect Twilight in Delhi represents an aspect of Indian culture as successfully as Chinua Achebe’s Novel Things Fall Apart represents African culture.

**Realistic portrayal of culture and traditions:** - The novel evokes the culture of Delhi through describing customs and ceremonies minutely and – says Brander – ‘the fine wedding chapter reads like an epithalamium in which verse and prose alternate in wonderfully refreshing bridal music’. Even the beggars are described and their songs and mannerisms make them concrete presences and not allude to the superstitions of the time he does so in a manner which reveals his own beliefs. For instance, Kambal Shah, a Faqir who visits Mir Nihal, is described as follows: **He was said to be high up in the mystical order although no one knew his hidden spiritual powers, for such faqirs never reveal themselves to human beings.**

The above quoted lines seem to suggest that the narrator shares in the belief or Mir Nihal and his friends. Since there is no indication that the author was deliberately distinguishing himself from the narrator in this instance, one may assume that Ali to believes in this. On the other hand Mir Nihal also believes that mercury can be converted into silver but here he narrator shows his own scepticism by correcting Mir Nihal credulity when he says: **‘Yet no one really did it. Still Mir Nihal believed in its truth and went on hoping against hope’.**

This suggests that the narrator, and by implication the author, had shed off some of the beliefs and ways of looking at life of the Muslim gentlemen of U.P but not all: a conclusion which will help us to understand the theme of the novel.

**Theme and Structure:** - The theme, the philosophical import of the novel, is based in Ali’s subjective response to his declining culture and is, in the last analysis, sentimental and therefore, unsatisfactory. For the theme is the passing away of Muslims civilization in India. The narrator’s attitude towards this culture is romantic.

Despite the enthusiastic treatment of Asghar’s love for Bilqueece (Ali’s own wife is called Bilqueece), the autumnal mood at the novel’s close, the grief-stricken regrets for the Mughal past and the frequent opulence of his prose style, Ali writes from a romantic
than a classical standpoint. He recognizes the immutability of the basic elements in human life. Individual dramas come and go ...Yet the denominator remains the same in every age.

Ahmad Ali bangs his fatalistic drum and suggests that fate is to blame when things wrong; Achebe relegates the supernatural to the background and shows tragedy to be consequent on the interaction of social forces and human character.

For if it not for hope men would commit suicide by the scores, and the world would remain a barren desert in which no oasis exist. On this tortuous road of life man goes on hoping that the next turn of road will bring him in sight of the goal (TD, 128).

**Conclusion:** Several such passages mar the book. Most of the ellipses too suggest much more than is actually warranted by the situation. For this situation in itself does not evoke the response of inexpressible emotion which the ellipses seem to suggest. The author hints at a profundity through them, which is not really there. The purple passages the pseudo philosophical dictums, and the incomplete sentence, point out that the writer is relying on rhetorical devices in order to evoke pathos for a civilization to which he responds for personal reasons but which does not really deserve this response from the reader.

**Character-Sketch of Mir Nihal in "Twilight in Delhi"**

**Mir Nihal: Appearance:** He is tall and well built, and is wearing a white muslin coat reaching down to the knees, and an embroidered round cap is put at a rakish angle on his bobbed head. His white and well-combed beard is parted in the middle, and gives his noble face a majestic look......

The whole physical description shows that he had a royal appearance with a sober style of wearing cloth. He is nearly a sixty -two year old person whose outward appearance is a picture of Muslims grandeur which they had in past. Ahmed Ali showed him as a “noble”. So it can be said about him that he is the representative of the royal Muslim class. his physical appearance has showed the same magnificence as Muslims had in past but inwardly he wasn’t able to comprehend the actual scenario .It seems that Ahmed Ali made this character before writing this novel ,there is no further scope for any fundamental change in it.

**Passive character:** The nature of this character is totally passive. He has only interest in life: his pigeons and his mistress Babban Jan. The passivity lies in his unreceptive mind in understanding the change in surroundings. He felt that he remained immortal as the Muslims thought in past that their dignity remained forever, but when the colonial forces came in the sub -continent they had changed the entire atmosphere. The matter of Asghar’s marriage is the most crucial moment in his life when he showed his refusal then the whole family turned against his decision,and it was the beginning of change.
I had never approved of Ashfaq’s marriage to Mirza Shahbaz’s daughter,’ Mir Nihal said angrily. ‘And I do not approve of Asghar’s friendship with Bundoo. Why don’t you stop him?’…..

But Mir Nihal not able to stop the change and a time came when the women of the family themselves decides to take step;”The best thing to do is to settle the thing quietly .brother –in-law will come round in the end .if you wait for his consent nothing will ever come off……””Begum Nihal seemed to agree with her sister-in-law…”

The whole speech from begum Jamal has showed the courage to do something against Mir Nihal .The women in India has a subordinate position in certain matters like marriage etc. so they rebel against the authority.

Snake episode: - Mir Nihal has managed to catch hold of the snake’s tail, and pulling it out with all his force he jerks his hand backwards with a quick movement. The snake is seen flying in the air and the next moment Mir Nihal strikes it on the ground and leaves it. It lies there trying to move, but it is only the front half of the snake which is curling and twisting. The back half wriggles but cannot move forward. Its spine is broken. Taking the stick he crushes the hood, and wriggling and moving painfully for a while, it becomes motionless and dies.

The whole episode shows this ability to deal with the danger from outside. He shows his anger on this little invasion but when his own son Asghar shows rebellious attitude then he not able to prove strong resistance because everything worked against him.

Importance of Babban Jan: - Babban jan is the most important personality in Mir Nihal’s life. She is the symbol of courage, love and hope in his life. He loved her from the core of his heart but her death destroyed him because

Like Ahmed Ali shows in these lines;”Mir Nihal got up with a heavy heart and, giving the old woman some money, cast a last lingering glance at the dead body and walked away. She who was Babban Jan had gone,. She who brought him here had walked the way of death, and nothing could bring her back to life again . . ..”

He was nearly mentally disabled; he left everything because there was no one who gave him mental and sexual solace.

Pigeon’s death: - The death of pigeons is one of the severe blows to Mir Nihal. After he came to home and found the loft’s door open he got frightened but when he looked in it his whole world sunk because there were few pigeons left and others wings and scattered parts of the body were found here and there. So his whole world now reduced to dust. Pigeons were his treasure now killed by the outside forces (cat).

Cat imagery: - Cat is mostly a symbol of stealth, cunning and destruction in most of his writings. Ahmed Ali has used the cat in this novel to show the dominance of
outside forces. He also identifies cat with the Britishers who have succeed in altering the old ways and they introduced the new progressive ideologies and mores.

**Hatred against British:** - His hatred against the British or Farangis is quiet obvious throughout the novel. Most of the time he shows his contemptuous remarks about the British. Like in the first part of the novel he said:

“You are again wearing those dirty English boots! I don't like them. I will have no aping of the Farangis in my house. Throw them away! . . . And where have you been so late in the night? I have told you I don’t like your friendship with Bundoo. Do you hear? I shouldn’t find you going there again.’……”

**A traditional Indian Muslim:** - “Twilight in Delhi” is basically a novel about traditions and customs. The whole novel shows Mir Nihal family’s lives who were the staunch believers of traditions and customs. Mir Nihal, the head of the family and the protagonist of the novel, is a traditional Indian Muslim who spend life with the same idea of grandeur and magnificence which the Mughals had in past, he believed in caste system, and his negation of Asgher’s marriage with Bilqeece is the proof of his belief on royal blood. His life is a typical Indian Muslim’s life who gave importance to the prostitutes not their wives because what he want his wife cannot able to give him.

**Mir Nihal’s paralysis:** - Mir Nihal’s paralysis is highly symbolical; it shows the paralyzed condition of the Muslims in the world of British colonial forces. Throughout the whole novel he showed huge amount of resistance in adopting change and in the end time had restricted him in one place and the whole civilization had changed.

**Conclusion:** - The world or the affairs of the family, his wishes are no consequence. Formerly he wished to cry over the ups and the downs of life but in the end he does not even have the desire to do that. Asghar comes to him wearing English clothes but not even object. His body has already become paralyzed; his heart and the mind are atrophied as well. The spring of life now seemed to an end.

**Asghar’s Character in "Twilight in Delhi"**

**Appearance:** - Asghar is the second most important character of the novel. He seemed revolutionary in approach and intention (as far as Mir nihal, s authority is concern). He is a young man of twenty-two and the youngest son of Mir nihal. Ahmed Ali introduces him in the first chapter of part I of the novel:

“He (Asghar) is a tall and handsome young man with his hair well-oiled and his red Turkish cap cocked at a smart angle on his head. The upper buttons of his sherwani are open and show the collar of the English shirt that he is wearing under it. He looks an aesthete, and has a somewhat effeminate grace about him. And round his wrist is wrapped a jasmine garland. As he enters his pumps creak”
The whole appearance of Asghar shows the difference. He belonged to one of those youngsters whose life is in transition, they lived in a multicultural society. So Asghar's appearance shows the eastern and western touch in it. Asghar seemed as the representative of the Indian Muslim youth who are directionless.

**Asghar a symbol of change:** Mir Nihal stops and turns to Asghar and says in an angry tone: “**You are again wearing those dirty English boots! I don't like them. I will have no aping of the Farangis is my house. Throw them away! ...**”

This statement from Mir Nihal shows that right from the beginning Asghar seems entirely changed from his family.

Asghar is the only son of Mir Nihal who showed his opinion to choose bride himself, on a superficial level it seems nothing but on a symbolical level it is a threat to the dominance of Mir Nihal. His view of marrying Bilqueece; shows the rebelliousness from the old orthodox style of Mir Nihal. The two severe blows in Mir Nihal, s life made him weak that is why Asghar and his family can able to take the step against the authority.

**Asghar: A Traditional Lover:** Asghar went hurriedly past and was lost in the crowd which flowed outside the mohallah. His eyes fell on an oldish man in the crowd. He was dressed only in a shirt and pajama, and on his head rested a round cap stiff with starch, and flowers were embroidered on it in brown thread. His long beard fell over his chest in a fine array. There was something sad and unknown in his eyes and they seemed to be looking for someone, a friend who had been separated, or a loved one far away. Asghar was reminded of his life at Bhopal and of those happy days when he had love to receive and nothing to give at all. He had just to cast a glance and there were many who would have given their lives to do his bidding. At the least sign from him they would have done anything. There he was the bestower of favours; there he was the loved one and not the lover. To be loved is sweet, he thought, whereas to love is full of sorrow and grief and pain. He had never known that the path of love was fraught with so much hardship and frustration.

As he saw this man in the crowd he suddenly realized that he must have caused so much pain to so many. He had never known what it meant, so he did not do it knowingly. Even if he had known, would it have changed his attitude? He did not know. He was filled with the pride of youth, and the wine of life was coursing in his veins. He did not ask those people to lavish love and care on him. If they burnt themselves like moths he was surely not to blame.

Still, he could not help thinking of one of them especially, Huzoor Ali, who resembled the man in the crowd. Time and again he had seen the same sad look in his eyes. Huzoor Ali was so devoted to him, but he had always ignored him. If Asghar had happened to look at him kindly even once there had appeared such joy on his face.

But though Asghar had behaved more kindly with others he was always, somehow, indifferent to Huzoor Ali. He wanted him to do things for him, perhaps, but he did not wish to please him even with a kind word.
He realized all this today when he was himself in love and there seemed no way of compelling his sweetheart to take notice of him. Yet an insidious wave of optimism swept over him and he repeated to himself the line of Hafiz:

Love is created first in the heart of the beloved. But it was so short-lived. Huzoor Ali had not succeeded in making Asghar love him. And he thought of an evening when Huzoor Ali had insisted on his coming to dinner at his place. He had refused and refused until the old man was broken-hearted and, heaving a sigh, he had cursed him gently by repeating the lines. All this description about Asghar's attitude shows that he is like a traditional lover of the sub-continent.

Right from the beginning we came to know that he is an in-satiated personality. His longing for sexual pleasure and intimacy can found nearly in every chapter of the novel. He felt that there is no pleasure in his fate. After the refusal from father, s side about his marriage with Bilqueece; he become utterly disappointed from life always remained depressed he often thought of death. His remembering of the man’s curse:

“Would to god that you
Might also fall in love and suffer
As I am suffering now.

The curse had come true, Asghar thought: and there seemed no way out of it .”

Asghar's restlessness and disappointment can be found in these lines “Asghar felt very self –conscious. There was a peculiar sadness in his heart, and he felt restless.”

“ o god, give me death. I am tired of this life...
"life has become a burden , the time is ripe for death;
The space of existence has shrunk into a narrow cell"

Views about Bilqueece: - 'She is beautiful, Bari, very beautiful,' Asghar said. 'She is graceful as a cypress. Her hair is blacker than the night of separation, and her face is brighter than the hours of love. Her eyes are like narcissi, big and beautiful. There is nectar in their whites and poison in their blacks. Her eyebrows are like two arched bows ready to wound the hearts of men with the arrows of their lashes. Her lips are redder than the blood of lovers, and her teeth look like pearls studded in a row.... I tell you she is beautiful.’.......

Conclusion: - Ahmed Ali has showed a complete picture of sub-continent bachelor who is the representative of the young generation of the early part of the twentieth century. His complex personality, his longing for true intimacy and rebellious attitude nearly found throughout the whole course of the novel.
Chinua Achebe : Things Fall Apart

Early Years: - Chinua Achebe (pronounced Chee-noo-ah Ah-chay-bay) is considered by many critics and teachers to be the most influential African writer of his generation. His writings, including the novel Things Fall Apart, have introduced readers throughout the world to creative uses of language and form, as well as to factual inside accounts of modern African life and history. Not only through his literary contributions but also through his championing of bold objectives for Nigeria and Africa, Achebe has helped reshape the perception of African history, culture, and place in world affairs.

The first novel of Achebe's, Things Fall Apart, is recognized as a literary classic and is taught and read everywhere in the English-speaking world. The novel has been translated into at least forty-five languages and has sold several million copies. A year after publication, the book won the Margaret Wong Memorial Prize, a major literary award.

Achebe was born in the Igbo (formerly spelled Ibo) town of Ogidi in eastern Nigeria on November 16, 1930, the fifth child of Isaiah Okafor Achebe and Janet Iloegbunam Achebe. His father was an instructor in Christian catechism for the Church Missionary Society. Nigeria was a British colony during Achebe's early years, and educated English-speaking families like the Achebes occupied a privileged position in the Nigerian power structure. His parents even named him Albert, after Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria of Great Britain. (Achebe himself chose his Igbo name when he was in college.)

Education: - Achebe attended the Church Missionary Society's school where the primary language of instruction for the first two years was Igbo. At about eight, he began learning English. His relatively late introduction to English allowed Achebe to develop a sense of cultural pride and an appreciation of his native tongue — values that may not have been cultivated had he been raised and taught exclusively in English. Achebe's home fostered his understanding of both cultures: He read books in English in his father's library, and he spent hours listening to his mother and sisters tell traditional Igbo stories.

At fourteen, Achebe was selected to attend the Government College in Umuahia, the equivalent of a university preparatory school and considered the best in West Africa. Achebe excelled at his studies, and after graduating at eighteen, he was accepted to study medicine at the new University College at Ibadan, a member college of London University at the time. The demand for educated Nigerians in the government was heightened because Nigeria was preparing for self-rule and independence. Only with a college degree was a Nigerian likely to enter the higher ranks of the civil service.

The growing nationalism in Nigeria was not lost on Achebe. At the university, he dropped his English name "Albert" in favor of the Igbo name "Chinua,"
Just as Igbo names in Things Fall Apart have literal meanings, Chinualumogo is translated as "My spirit come fight for me."

At University College, Achebe switched his studies to liberal arts, including history, religion, and English. His first published stories appeared in the student publication the University Herald. These stories have been reprinted in the collection Girls at War and Other Stories, which was published in 1972. Of his student writings, only a few are significantly relative to his more mature works; short stories such as "Marriage is a Private Affair" and "Dead Man's Path" explore the conflicts that arise when Western culture meets African society.

**Career Highlights:** After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1953, Achebe joined the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation as a producer of radio talks. In 1956, he went to London to attend the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Staff School. While in London, he submitted the manuscript for Things Fall Apart to a publisher, with the encouragement and support of one of his BBC instructors, a writer and literary critic. The novel was published in 1958 by Heinemann, a publishing firm that began a long relationship with Achebe and his work. Fame came almost instantly. Achebe has said that he never experienced the life of a struggling writer.

Upon returning to Nigeria, Achebe rose rapidly within the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation. As founder and director of the Voice of Nigeria in 1961, Achebe and his colleagues aimed at developing more national identity and unity through radio programs that highlighted Nigerian affairs and culture.

**Political Problems:** Turmoil in Nigeria from 1966 to 1972 was matched by turmoil for Achebe. In 1966, young Igbo officers in the Nigerian army staged a coup d'état. Six months later, another coup by non-Igbo officers overthrew the Igbo-led government. The new government targeted Achebe for persecution, knowing that his views were unsympathetic to the new regime. Achebe fled to Nsukka in eastern Nigeria, which is predominantly Igbo-speaking, and he became a senior research fellow at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. In 1967, the eastern part of Nigeria declared independence as the nation of Biafra. This incident triggered thirty months of civil war that ended only when Biafra was defeated. Achebe then fled to Europe and America, where he wrote and talked about Biafran affairs.

**Later Writing:** Like many other African writers, Achebe believes that artistic and literary works must deal primarily with the problems of society. He has said that "art is, and always was, at the service of man" rather than an end in itself, accountable to no one. He believes that "any good story, any good novel, should have a message, should have a purpose."

Continuing his relationship with Heinemann, Achebe published four other novels: No Longer at Ease (the 1960 sequel to Things Fall Apart), Arrow of God (1964), A Man of the People (1966), and Anthills of the Savannah (1987). He also wrote and published several children's books that express his basic views in forms and language understandable to young readers.
In his later books, Achebe confronts the problems faced by Nigeria and other newly independent African nations. He blames the nation's problems on the lack of leadership in Nigeria since its independence. In 1983, he published The Trouble with Nigeria, a critique of corrupt politicians in his country. Achebe has also published two collections of short stories and three collections of essays. He is the founding editor of Heinemann's African Writers series; the founder and publisher of UwaNdi Igbo: A Bilingual Journal of Igbo Life and Arts; and the editor of the magazine Okike, Nigeria's leading journal of new writing.

**Teaching and Literary Awards:** In addition to his writing career, Achebe has maintained an active teaching career. In 1972, he was appointed to a three-year visiting professorship at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and, in 1975, to a one-year visiting professorship at the University of Connecticut. In 1976, with matters sufficiently calm in Nigeria, he returned as professor of English at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, with which he had been affiliated since 1966. In 1990, he became the Charles P. Stevenson, Jr., professor of literature at Bard College, Annandale, New York.

Achebe has received many awards from academic and cultural institutions around the world. In 1959, he won the Margaret Wong Memorial Prize for Things Fall Apart. The following year, after the publication of its sequel, No Longer At Ease, he was awarded the Nigerian National Trophy for Literature. His book of poetry, Christmas in Biafra, written during the Nigerian civil war, won the first Commonwealth Poetry Prize in 1972. More than twenty universities in Great Britain, Canada, Nigeria, and the United States have awarded Achebe honorary degrees.

**About “Things Fall Apart”**

**Introduction:** Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is probably the most authentic narrative ever written about life in Nigeria at the turn of the twentieth century. Although the novel was first published in 1958 — two years before Nigeria achieved its independence — thousands of copies are still sold every year in the United States alone. Millions of copies have been sold around the world in its many translations. The novel has been adapted for productions on the stage, on the radio, and on television. Teachers in high schools, colleges, and graduate schools use the novel as a textbook in many types of classes — from history and social studies to comparative literature and anthropology.

The novel takes its title from a verse in the poem "The Second Coming" by W. B. Yeats, an Irish poet, essayist, and dramatist:

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre*
*The falcon cannot hear the falconer;*
*Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;*
*Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.*

In this poem — ironically, a product of European thought — Yeats describes an apocalyptic vision in which the world collapses into anarchy because of an internal flaw in
humanity. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe illustrates this vision by showing us what happened in the Igbo society of Nigeria at the time of its colonization by the British. Because of internal weaknesses within the native structure and the divided nature of Igbo society, the community of Umuofia in this novel is unable to withstand the tidal wave of foreign religion, commerce, technology, and government. In "The Second Coming," Yeats evokes the anti-Christ leading an anarchic world to destruction. This ominous tone gradually emerges in *Things Fall Apart* as an intrusive religious presence and an insensitive government together cause the traditional Umuofian world to fall apart.

**Literary Purpose:** When *Things Fall Apart* was first published, Achebe announced that one of his purposes was to present a complex, dynamic society to a Western audience who perceived African society as primitive, simple, and backward. Unless Africans could tell their side of their story, Achebe believed that the African experience would forever be "mistold," even by such well-meaning authors as Joyce Cary in *Mister Johnson*. Cary worked in Nigeria as a colonial administrator and was sympathetic to the Nigerian people. Yet Achebe feels that Cary, along with other Western writers such as Joseph Conrad, misunderstood Africa. Many European writers have presented the continent as a dark place inhabited by people with impenetrable, primitive minds; Achebe considers this reductionist portrayal of Africa racist. He points to Conrad, who wrote against imperialism but reduced Africans to mysterious, animalistic, and exotic "others." In an interview published in 1994, Achebe explains that his anger about the inaccurate portrayal of African culture by white colonial writers does not imply that students should not read works by Conrad or Cary. On the contrary, Achebe urges students to read such works in order to better understand the racism of the colonial era.

Achebe also kept in mind his own Nigerian people as an audience. In 1964, he stated his goal:

> to help my society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement. . . . I would be quite satisfied if my novels . . . did no more than teach my [African] readers that their past — with all its imperfections — was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them.

In *Things Fall Apart*, the Europeans' understanding of Africa is particularly exemplified in two characters: the Reverend James Smith and the unnamed District Commissioner. Mr. Smith sees no need to compromise on unquestionable religious doctrine or practices, even during their introduction to a society very different from his own. He simply does not recognize any benefit for allowing the Nigerians to retain elements of their heritage. The District Commissioner, on the other hand, prides himself on being a student of primitive customs and sees himself as a benevolent leader who has only the best intentions for pacifying the primitive tribes and bringing them into the modern era. Both men would express surprise if anyone suggested to them that their European values may not be entirely appropriate for these societies. The Commissioner's plan for briefly treating the story of Okonkwo illustrates the inclination toward Western simplification and essentialization of African culture.
To counter this inclination, Achebe brings to life an African culture with a religion, a government, a system of money, and an artistic tradition, as well as a judicial system. While technologically unsophisticated, the Igbo culture is revealed to the reader as remarkably complex. Furthermore, *Things Fall Apart* ironically reverses the style of novels by such writers as Conrad and Cary, who created flat and stereotypical African characters. Instead, Achebe stereotypes the white colonialists as rigid, most with imperialistic intentions, whereas the Igbos are highly individual, many of them open to new ideas.

But readers should note that Achebe is not presenting Igbo culture as faultless and idyllic. Indeed, Achebe would contest such a romantic portrayal of his native people. In fact, many Western writers who wrote about colonialism (including Joseph Conrad, George Orwell, Herman Melville, and Graham Greene) were opposed to imperialism but were romantic in their portrayal of noble savages — primitive and animalistic, yet uncorrupted and innocent. The opposition to imperialism that such authors voiced often rested on the notion that an advanced Western society corrupts and destroys the non-Western world. Achebe regards this notion as an unacceptable argument as well as a myth. The Igbos were not noble savages, and although the Igbo world was eventually destroyed, the indigenous culture was never an idyllic haven, even before the arrival of the white colonialists. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe depicts negative as well as positive elements of Igbo culture, and he is sometimes as critical of his own people as he is of the colonizers.

Achebe has been a major force in the worldwide literary movement to define and describe this African experience. Other postcolonial writers in this movement include Leopold Senghor, Wole Soyinka, AimeCesaire, Derek Walcott, NgugiwaThiong'o, and BiragoDiop. These writers not only confront a multiethnic perspective of history and truth, but they also challenge readers to reexamine themselves in this complex and evolving world.

As an African novel written in English and departing significantly from more familiar colonial writing, *Things Fall Apart* was a groundbreaking work. Achebe's role in making modern African literature a part of world literature cannot be understated.

**Note:** Throughout this novel, Achebe uses the spelling *Ibo*, the old spelling of the Umuofian community.

**A Brief History of Nigeria:** The history of Nigeria is bound up with its geography. About one-third larger than the state of Texas, Nigeria is located above the inner curve of the elbow on the west coast of Africa, just north of the equator and south of the Sahara Desert. More than two hundred ethnic groups — each with its own language, beliefs, and culture — live in present-day Nigeria. The largest ethnic groups are the mostly Protestant Yoruba in the west, the Catholic Igbo in the east, and the predominantly Muslim Hausa-Fulani in the north. This diversity of peoples is the result of thousands of years of history; as traders, nomads, and refugees from invaders and climatic changes came to settle with the indigenous population, and as foreign nations became aware of the area's resources.
The events in *Things Fall Apart* take place at the end of the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth century. Although the British did not occupy most of Nigeria until 1904, they had a strong presence in West Africa since the early nineteenth century. The British were a major buyer of African slaves in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In 1807, however, the British outlawed slave trade within their empire. At the time, they did not yet control Nigeria, and internal wars continually increased the available supply of captured slaves. In 1861, frustrated with the expanding slave trade, the British decided to occupy Lagos, a major slave-trading post and the capital of present-day Nigeria. Slowly and hesitantly, the British occupied the rest of Nigeria.

Ultimately, the British were prompted to occupy Nigeria for more than the slave trade. The British were in competition with other Europeans for control of the natural wealth of West Africa. At the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 — a meeting arranged to settle rivalries among European powers — the British proclaimed Nigeria to be their territory. They bought palm oil, peanuts, rubber, cotton, and other agricultural products from the Nigerians. Indeed, trade in these products made some Nigerian traders very wealthy. In the early twentieth century, the British defined the collection of diverse ethnic groups as one country, Nigeria, and declared it a colony of the British Empire.

The British moved into Nigeria with a combination of government control, religious mission, and economic incentive. In the north, the British ruled indirectly, with the support of the local Muslim leaders, who collected taxes and administered a government on behalf of the British. In the south, however, where communities (such as Umuofia in *Things Fall Apart*) were often not under one central authority, the British had to intervene directly and forcefully to control the local population.

For example, a real-life tragedy at the community of Ahia was serves as the historical model for the massacre of the village of Abame in Chapter 15 of *Things Fall Apart*. On November 16, 1905, a white man rode his bicycle into Ahia and was killed by the natives. A month later, an expedition of British forces searched the villages in the area and killed many natives in reprisal.

The Ahia incident led to the Bende-Onitsha Hinterland Expedition, a force created to eliminate Igbo opposition. The British destroyed the powerful Awka Oracle and killed all opposing Igbo groups. In 1912, the British instituted the Collective Punishment Ordinance, which stipulated punishment against an entire village or community for crimes committed by one or more persons against the white colonialists.

The British operated an efficient administrative system and introduced a form of British culture to Nigeria. They also sent many capable young Nigerians to England for education. The experience of Nigerians who lived overseas in the years preceding, during, and after World War II gave rise to a class of young, educated nationalists who agitated for independence from Great Britain. The British agreed to the Nigerians' demands and, in 1947, instituted a ten-year economic plan toward independence. Nigeria became an independent country on October 1, 1960, and became a republic in 1963.
With the British long gone from Nigeria, corruption and a lack of leadership continued to hamper Nigeria’s quest for true democracy. A series of military coups and dictatorships in the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s replaced the fragile democracy that Nigeria enjoyed in the early 1960s. In 1993, Nigeria held a democratic presidential election, which was followed by yet another bloodless coup. And so continues the political pattern for the troubled, violent, most populous country in Africa.
Things Fall Apart: Book Summary

Things Fall Apart is about the tragic fall of the protagonist, Okonkwo, and the Igbo culture. Okonkwo is a respected and influential leader within the Igbo community of Umohu, a fierce warrior, a successful farmer, and a leader of the African Igbo community. He is known for weakness and lack of responsibility, which leads to his downfall.

Okonkwo's life is marked by a series of events that lead to his ultimate failure and doom. His relationship with his son, Nwoye, is strained due to their differences in values and beliefs. His young wife, Ezinma, is a product of a union between his people and the white missionaries, which Okonkwo cannot accept.

The novel explores themes of cultural clash, colonialism, and the clash of traditional and modern values. The Igbo culture is portrayed as strong and resilient, yet fragmented by the arrival of the white missionaries. Okonkwo's attempt to maintain his traditional values and way of life ultimately fails, leading to his downfall.

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Umuofia in eastern Nigeria. He first earns personal fame and distinction, and brings honour to his village, when he defeats Amalinze the Cat in a wrestling contest. Okonkwo determines to gain titles for himself and become a powerful and wealthy man in spite of his father's weaknesses.

Okonkwo's father, Unoka, was a lazy and wasteful man. He often borrowed money and then squandered it on palm-wine and merrymaking with friends. Consequently, his wife and children often went hungry. Within the community, Unoka was considered a failure and a laughingstock. He was referred to as agbala, one who resembles the weakness of a woman and has no property. Unoka died a shameful death and left numerous debts.

Okonkwo despises and resents his father's gentle and idle ways. He resolves to overcome the shame that he feels as a result of his father's weaknesses by being what he considers to be "manly"; therefore, he dominates his wives and children by being insensitive and controlling.

Because Okonkwo is a leader of his community, he is asked to care for a young boy named Ikemefuna, who is given to the village as a peace offering by neighbouring Mbaino to avoid war with Umuofia. Ikemefuna befriends Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, and Okonkwo becomes inwardly fond of the boy.

Over the years, Okonkwo becomes an extremely volatile man; he is apt to explode at the slightest provocation. He violates the Week of Peace when he beats his youngest wife, Ojiugo, because she went to braid her hair at a friend's house and forgot to prepare the afternoon meal and feed her children. Later, he severely beats and shoots a gun at his second wife, Ekwefi, because she took leaves from his banana plant to wrap food for the Feast of the New Yam.

After the coming of the locusts, Ogbuefi Ezeuder, the oldest man in the village, relays to Okonkwo a message from the Oracle. The Oracle says that Ikemefuna must be killed as part of the retribution for the Umuofian woman killed three years earlier in Mbaino. He tells Okonkwo not to partake in the murder, but Okonkwo doesn't listen. He feels that not participating would be a sign of weakness. Consequently, Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna with his machete. Nwoye realizes that his father has murdered Ikemefuna and begins to distance himself from his father and the clansmen.

Okonkwo becomes depressed after killing Ikemefuna, so he visits his best friend, Obierika, who disapproves of his role in Ikemefuna's killing. Obierika says that Okonkwo's act will upset the Earth and the earth goddess will seek revenge. After discussing Ikemefuna's death with Obierika, Okonkwo is finally able to sleep restfully, but he is awakened by his wife Ekwefi. Their daughter Ezinma, whom Okonkwo is fond of, is dying. Okonkwo gathers grasses, barks, and leaves to prepare medicine for Ezinma.

A public trial is held on the village commons. Nine clan leaders, including Okonkwo, represent the spirits of their ancestors. The nine clan leaders, or egwugwu, also represent the nine villages of Umuofia. Okonkwo does not sit among the other eight leaders, or elders, while they listen to a dispute between an estranged husband and
wife. The wife, Mgbafo, had been severely beaten by her husband. Her brother took her back to their family’s village, but her husband wanted her back home. The egwugwu tell the husband to take wine to his in-laws and beg his wife to come home. One elder wonders why such a trivial dispute would come before the egwugwu.

In her role as priestess, Chielo tells Ekwefi (Okonkwo's second wife) that Agbala (the Oracle of the Hills and Caves) needs to see Ezinma. Although Okonkwo and Ekwefi protest, Chielo takes a terrified Ezinma on her back and forbids anyone to follow. Chielo carries Ezinma to all nine villages and then enters the Oracle's cave. Ekwefi follows secretly, in spite of Chielo's admonitions, and waits at the entrance of the Oracle. Okonkwo surprises Ekwefi by arriving at the cave, and he also waits with her. The next morning, Chielo takes Ezinma to Ekwefi's hut and puts her to bed.

When Ogbuefi Ezeudu dies, Okonkwo worries because the last time that Ezeudu visited him was when he warned Okonkwo against participating in the killing of Ikemefuna. Ezeudu was an important leader in the village and achieved three titles of the clan's four, a rare accomplishment. During the large funeral, Okonkwo's gun goes off, and Ezeudu's sixteen-year-old son is killed accidentally.

Because the accidental killing of a clansman is a crime against the earth goddess, Okonkwo and his family must be exiled from Umuofia for seven years. The family moves to Okonkwo's mother's native village, Mbanta. After they depart Umuofia, a group of village men destroy Okonkwo's compound and kill his animals to cleanse the village of Okonkwo's sin. Obierika stores Okonkwo's yams in his barn and wonders about the old traditions of the Igbo culture.

Okonkwo is welcomed to Mbanta by his maternal uncle, Uchendu, a village elder. He gives Okonkwo a plot of land on which to farm and build a compound for his family. But Okonkwo is depressed, and he blames his chi (or personal spirit) for his failure to achieve lasting greatness.

During Okonkwo's second year in exile, he receives a visit from his best friend, Obierika, who recounts sad news about the village of Abame: After a white man rode into the village on a bicycle, the elders of Abame consulted their Oracle, which told them that the white man would destroy their clan and other clans. Consequently, the villagers killed the white man. But weeks later, a large group of men slaughtered the villagers in retribution. The village of Abame is now deserted.

Okonkwo and Uchendu agree that the villagers were foolish to kill a man whom they knew nothing about. Later, Obierika gives Okonkwo money that he received from selling Okonkwo's yams and seed-yams, and he promises to do so until Okonkwo returns to Umuofia.

Six missionaries, including one white man, arrive in Mbanta. The white man speaks to the people about Christianity. Okonkwo believes that the man speaks nonsense, but his son, Nwoye, is captivated and becomes a convert of Christianity.
The Christian missionaries build a church on land given to them by the village leaders. However, the land is a part of the Evil Forest, and according to tradition, the villagers believe that the missionaries will die because they built their church on cursed land. But when nothing happens to the missionaries, the people of Mbanta conclude that the missionaries possess extraordinary power and magic. The first recruits of the missionaries are efulefu, the weak and worthless men of the village. Other villagers, including a woman, soon convert to Christianity. The missionaries then go to Umuofia and start a school. Nwoye leaves his father's hut and moves to Umuofia so he can attend the school.

Okonkwo's exile is over, so his family arranges to return to Umuofia. Before leaving Mbanta, they prepare a huge feast for Okonkwo's mother's kinsmen in appreciation of their gratitude during Okonkwo's seven years of exile.

When Okonkwo returns to Umuofia, he discovers that the village has changed during his absence. Many men have renounced their titles and have converted to Christianity. The white men have built a prison; they have established a government court of law, where people are tried for breaking the white man's laws; and they also employ natives of Umuofia. Okonkwo wonders why the Umuofians have not incited violence to rid the village of the white man's church and oppressive government.

Some members of the Igbo clan like the changes in Umuofia. Mr. Brown, the white missionary, respects the Igbo traditions. He makes an effort to learn about the Igbo culture and becomes friendly with some of the clan leaders. He also encourages Igbo people of all ages to get an education. Mr. Brown tells Okonkwo that Nwoye, who has taken the name Isaac, is attending a teaching college. Nevertheless, Okonkwo is unhappy about the changes in Umuofia.

After Mr. Brown becomes ill and is forced to return to his homeland, Reverend James Smith becomes the new head of the Christian church. But Reverend Smith is nothing like Mr. Brown; he is intolerant of clan customs and is very strict.

Violence arises after Enoch, an overzealous convert to Christianity, unmasks an egwugwu. In retaliation, the egwugwu burn Enoch's compound and then destroy the Christian church because the missionaries have caused the Igbo people many problems.

When the District Commissioner returns to Umuofia, he learns about the destruction of the church and asks six leaders of the village, including Okonkwo, to meet with him. The men are jailed until they pay a fine of two hundred and fifty bags of cowries. The people of Umuofia collect the money and pay the fine, and the men are set free.

The next day at a meeting for clansmen, five court messengers who intend to stop the gathering approach the group. Suddenly, Okonkwo jumps forward and beheads the man in charge of the messengers with his machete. When none of the other clansmen attempt to stop the messengers who escape, Okonkwo realizes that they will never go to war and that Umuofia will surrender. Everything has fallen apart for Okonkwo; he commits suicide by hanging himself.
Sources of Achebe's Things Fall Apart

"Things Fall Apart" provides an important moral lesson to its leaders. Achebe conceives the primary function of literature to be moral or ethical in nature. According to him the power of the novelist lies on his ability to appeal to the mind and to reach beyond his or her particular circumstance and thus, speak to different periods and generations; the good story-teller is not bound by narrow political or personal concerns or even by the demands of specific historical moments.

Achebe's sympathies, then are not with the heroic character (in this case Okonkwo), but the witness or storyteller (Obierika) who refuses to endorse Okonkwo's commitment to the central doctrines of his culture or the European colonizer's arrogant use of power.

However, the novelist's ability to bring the historical period and his moment of writing together also depended on a notable relationship between his life and his work. As an author, Achebe may be separated from the central event in Things Fall Apart by a period of seventy years, but his own biography is very much a part of the story he tells and its context. Achebe's family occupies a central role in the history which his novel narrates. We know, for example, that his great grandfather was the man who first received Christian missionaries in the village of Ogidi (Umuofia in the novel). More significantly, Achebe's father, Isaiah Okafo (like Nwoye in the novel), was one of the first converts to Christianity in the area and worked for many years as an evangelist and teacher in the Christian Missionary Society, the evangelical branch of the Church of England. This family history is important to our understanding of Things Fall Apart not so much because it invites us to read the author's life in the novel itself. For if the African identity of the novel derives from its acute sense of the oral tradition, and then this is an acknowledgement of the influences of the Ibo stories which Achebe used to hear from his own Christian relatives. It was from the older people in his village that Achebe came to develop an awareness of the history of Ibo people before colonization, a history which is an important aspect of the First Part of Things Fall Apart.

But it would be a mistake to assume that Achebe grew up with a profound understanding and respect for the African past. One of the ironic aspects of being born in a family of African converts to Christianity was that one's status in society depended on a certain self-alienation from the old culture. 'The line between Christian and non-Christian was much more definite in my village forty years ago, than it is today, Achebe observed in 1973.

Although Achebe's first novel is a celebration of the pre-colonial past, it is important to emphasize this sense of superiority among African Christians for one overwhelming reason, it was out of this identification with the culture of colonialism—and his ultimate disillusionment with it—that Achebe became a writer. He was not only brought up in a Christian family, and thus, identified with European culture; his early education was in church schools where the influence of the Bible and biblical stories, Christian moral codes, and indeed modern civility were emphasized. In addition, Achebe's secondary education at the prestigious government school at Umuabia could not but draw him even further into the culture of colonialism. Such schools were modelled after British public schools.
schools which meant that the values they promoted—in scholarship, sports, and conduct—were essentially English. When he arrived at the University of Ibadan in 1948, Achebe was expected to read the major texts of the English tradition, including most notably Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth. But by 1948, this acculturation in Englishness was being challenged by African nationalism: advocates of African independence and cultural renewal were beginning to question the central notion in colonial education—the assumption that an African destiny included a future European identity for which the present is but an apprenticeship; in addition, the nationalist movement had brought about a mental revolution.

Since his mental revolution was connected so implicitly to the writing of Things Fall Apart, it is important that readers consider what we may call its cultural politics. Simply put, the writing of this novel marked a radical change in Achebe's way of looking at himself and his culture and in his conception of literature itself. For if we accept the general argument that colonial rule justified itself through the process of writing and rewriting other people's histories and cultural practices, as the last paragraph of Things Fall Apart seems to assert, then we must pay closer attention to the fundamental relationship between the kind of reading communities in which Achebe was brought up and the kind of novel he produced in 1958. Two forms of reading communities are involved: that of the family, and that of the school.

Achebe grew up in a household in which books were revered and played an important role in the visualization of modern life: As the fifth in a family of six children and with parents so passionate for their children's education, "I inherited many discarded books ... I remember also my mother's IjeOnyeKraist which must have been an Ibo adaptation of Pilgrim's progress." Many of these books, most notably the Bible, were later to influence Achebe's literary works as much as the Ibo stories he heard as a child. The Ikemefuna episode in Things Fall Apart, to cite just one example is fashioned after Abraham's aborted sacrifice of Isaac in the Old Testament.

In high schools, as Achebe observed later, he was exposed to English books such as Treasure Island and Oliver Twist. The most significant impact of these books was on Achebe's view of the world: on reading these books, he observed, 'I did not see myself as an African to begin with ... I went through my first level of schooling thinking I was of the party of white man in his hair-raising adventures and narrow escapes' (Chinua Achebe). At University College, Ibadan, Achebe was introduced to famous European writers who had set their novels in Africa, such as Joseph Conrad, Joyce Cary, and Graham Greene. But by now, instead of identifying with the European adventurers against their African counterparts, Achebe felt impelled to represent the historical encounter between Europe and Africa from an African perspective. The connection between Achebe's reading of the colonial novel and his decision to become a writer is found a mental to our understanding of the cultural function of Things Fall Apart. 'I suddenly saw that these books had to be read in a different light.' "Reading 'Heart of Darkness', for instance,... I realized that I was one of those savages jumping up and down on the beach. Once that kind of enlightenment comes to you, you realize that someone has to write a different story."
Things Fall Apart is certainly not the first African novel, but it was probably the first work in which the author set out to represent the African experience in a narrative that sought, self-consciously, to be different from the colonial novel. Since its publication in 1958, Achebe's novel has served as a model for other African writers, and indeed, for a different kind of literature in English Achebe's goal in this novel is to Indicate to his readers that we in Africa did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans has changed the way African readers perceive their own cultures and their relationship to colonial institutions. Achebe is the man who invented African literature because he was able to show, in the structure and language of his first novel, that the future of African writing did not lie in simple imitation of European forms but in the fusion of such forms with oral traditions. Achebe is the conscience of African literature because he has consistently insisted on the power of story tellers to appeal to the morality and humanity of their readers and to give their life fuller meaning.

**Religious life of Ibo society**

Human faith in different spiritual powers is regarded as religion which also includes spiritual customs and traditions relating to gods and goddesses. Ibo society also believed that one must have faith in one's ancestors to be blessed with good health, good luck, and many children. Achebe, in 'Things Fall Apart' depicts religious beliefs of the Ibo society in detail. Minute study of the novel reveals that these people did not act contrary to the customs and traditions akin to their duties.

Every man of the clan was well aware of the ill consequences if he violated the rules of the conduct as provided for in their religious scriptures. The religion of the above society was based on two forms of religion—higher and lower. The belief in the supremacy of God was termed a higher form of religion and the faith in the existence of other gods and goddesses was regarded as lower term. Besides a few like Akunna, Ibo people believed in the worship of the smaller gods, who according to them controlled everything. So they worshipped them to be flourished in their lives and also to be saved from facing calamities. Few of the gods and goddesses whom Igbo people worshipped are as under:

(a) Oracles—Oracles were religious shrines that discharged both judicial and messenger's duties from dead relatives and passed them on to the living beings. They explained to curious relatives why a person had died. They warned individuals and whole community about impending dangers and offered advice on ritual matters. A community might consult Oracles if disturbed by a high death rate, or an unduly high rate of twin-births, or successive bad harvests. Oracles also acted as courts of appeal in judicial matters. Individuals might take their dispute to an Oracle if they failed to reconcile their differences. If a man felt that he had been wrongfully accused of a crime, he might take the matter to an Oracle, who might exonerate him or confirm the guilt. Oracles were feared and respected for miles around, one example was that of the Aro Oracle, known to Europeans as the long Juju. The Aro Oracle was consulted by traders from many areas to settle business disputes. Oracles were housed in secret groves, surrounded by thick bush. The home of an Oracle was a forbidden territory. For the Ibo believed that anyone who saw an Oracle would surely die. Only the chief priestess (or priest) ever looked upon
the face of the Oracle. Supplicants never approached an Oracle directly. The chief priestess of an Oracle served as the mouthpiece of the deity that dwelt in the shrine. Her words were final in all matters, because the forces she represented were higher than all secular powers. To disobey the orders of the priestess was to disobey the deity she represented. The chief priestess might combine her oracular services with other vocations like trading or farming. She and her agents received gifts of money, foodstuffs, and livestock for their services, and they might demand certain sacrifices as well.

The Ibo believed that their Oracles would offer impartial decisions in judicial matters. So great was the confidence they reposed in their oracles that they would willingly pay large sums of money to consult them and accept whatever verdict they might pronounce. Most of the agents of the oracles travelled far and wide as medicine men, divines, traders and smiths, playing their different roles.

In Achebe's novel, Things Fall Apart, we find reference of oracle's importance. The oracle of the hills and the caves could not be disobeyed by the inhabitants of the nine villages. If the clan did not abide by what the oracle wished, it used to be cursed and beaten badly. Chiela was the priestess of Agbala, the oracle of the hills and the caves. In ordinary life, she was a widow with two children but she was a different person who prophesied when the spirit of Agbala was upon her. People came from far and near to consult Agbala when they were haunted by misfortune. No one had seen this deity except his priestess Unoka, once went to Agbala to know why he did not have good harvest. It was said that when such a spirit appeared, the man saw it vaguely in the darkness. Some people had seen this spirit flying in the cave.

(b) Chukwu—In every religion, there is one supreme power governing the whole world. Ibo people called this power 'Chukwu'. There were special shrines for his worship. The name of this great power is referred to in a discussion held between Mr. Brown and Akunna, an Ibo. Chukwu made the world and the other gods to serve him as his messengers. Chukwu can be approached through them. Akunna remarked, "We make sacrifices to little gods but when they fail and there is no one else to turn to, we go to Chukwu. It is right to do so.

We approach a great man through his servants but when his servants fail to help us, then we go to the last source of hope." According to Akunna, everything small or great was made by God. "The tree from which it (piece of wood) came was made by Chukwu, as indeed, all minor gods were." According to Ibo-mythology, Chukwu lived in the sky. He is origin of all things and controlled everything. The names which the Ibo gave their children expressed these beliefs.

Ibo people had much reverence for Chukwu. They did not know how to approach him but they were sure that he is spirit and those who are devoted to him must worship him in spirit. They, therefore communed with him through the spirits and ancestors.

(c) Ani—One of the chief deities of the Ibo people was Ani, the earth deity, the great mother goddess, and the spirit of fertility. Every lineage and, indeed, every homestead had a shrine dedicated to her. Ani had her own special priestesses, who played leading roles in many aspects of community life. They officiated durin

Prepared by Atta Ur Rahman Jadoon 03335499069
that concerned Ani and presided over all matters involving crime against the earth goddess. Their presence was vital when matters concerning incest, birth, death and burial were being discussed. The ultimate resting place for all men and women who had led a good life was in the bosom of Ani. On the other hand, all men and women who practised witchcraft or died a shameful death, including those who committed suicides had no place in Ani's abode. Usually their corpse were left unburied in the 'bad bush'.

As referred to in Chapter 5 of "Things Fall Apart" the feast of the New Yam was held every year before the harvest began, to honour the earth goddess and the ancestral spirits of the clan. It was an occasion for giving thanks to Ani, the earth goddess and the source of all fertility. Ani played a greater part in the life of the people than any other deity. She was the ultimate judge of morality and conduct. And what was more, she was in close communion with the departed fathers of the clan whose bodies had been committed to earth.

(d) Chi—She was a man's personal god, chi-chi was similar to the Christian concept of a guardian angel. A person's Chi followed him or her throughout life, and could be either benevolent or malignant. A person with a good Chi was always successful in his or her endeavours, while a person with a bad Chi was an unfortunate person, who would labour without reaping.

The Ibo people did not believe that a man's Chi controlled his entire destiny. No matter how 'good' his Chi was, person would achieve success only if he worked hard and led an upright life. They emphasized the importance of hard work in the saying, "If a person says "yes"? that person's Chi says "yes". In addition, the Ibo believed that diviners and other medicine men and women could intervene on behalf of an unfortunate person to change his or her malignant Chi into a benevolent one. Most private prayers, sacrifices, and invocations were directed towards chasing off misfortune and keeping oneself in a state of harmony with one's Chi.

(e) Ekwensu—According to African mythology, he was like a Satan. His prime aim was to lead people astray. Ekwensu had several servants who helped him carry out his evil thoughts. One of them was death itself. The malicious being who would visit a man on the day he enjoyed life the most. Ekwensu used people to commit crimes against other people and would then turn around and punish the same people as served him. Ekwensu was Chukwu's principal enemy and at the same time his faithful servant. Acting on the powers bestowed on him by Chukwu, he would cause an evil deer to suffer, or die in a strange manner should a man meet with an unexpected misfortune. It was a punishment for some crime he had committed. The crime might have escaped the attention of his neighbours but not the watchful eyes of the higher forces. Until a sinner atoned for a transgression he might not even remember committing he remained in a state of conflict with the higher forces, who would punish him continuously. When a person felt disturbed by certain inexplicable misfortunes, he would approach a diviner, who might recommend that the unseen forces be propitiated. Fear of unconsciously offending the higher beings was responsible for the large number of propitiation rites.
The Ibo also approached the higher forces when they wanted special favours. Should a family want to have many children, it would approach a diviner who might recommend some sacrificial offerings. Sacrifice was an important element in Ibo religious ceremony.

**Things Fall Apart : Historical Perspective**

**Tribal Society:** Things Fall Apart was published in 1958 just prior to Nigerian independence, but it depicts pre-colonial Africa. Achebe felt it was important to portray Nigerians as they really were—not just provide a shallow description of them as other authors had. The story takes place in the typical tribal village of Umuofia, where the inhabitants (whom Achebe calls the Ibo, but who are also known as the Igbo) practice rituals common to their native traditions.

The Ibo worshipped gods who protect, advise, and chastise them and who are represented by priests and priestesses within the clan. For example, the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves grants knowledge and wisdom to those who are brave enough to consult him. No one has ever seen the Oracle except his priestess, who is an Ibo woman but who has special powers of her own. Not only did the gods advise the Ibo on community matters, but also they guided individuals. Each person had a personal god, or chi, that directed his or her actions. A strong chi meant a strong person; people with weak chis were pitied. Each man kept a separate hut, or shrine, where he stored the symbols of his personal god and his ancestral spirits.

A hunting and gathering society, the Ibo existed on vegetables, with yams as the primary crop. Yams were so important to them that the Ibo celebrated each new year with the Feast of the New Yam. This festival thanked Ani, the earth goddess and source of all fertility. The Ibo prepared for days for the festival, and the celebration itself lasted for two days. Yams also played a part in determining a man’s status in the tribe—the more yams a man has, the higher his status. Trade with other villages was facilitated by small seashells called cowries which were used as a form of currency.

Within the village, people were grouped according to families, with the eldest man in the family having the most power. On matters affecting the whole village, an assembly of adult men debated courses of action, and men could influence these assemblies by purchasing “titles” from the tribal elders. This system encouraged hard work and the spread of wealth. People who transgressed against the laws and customs of the village had to confront the egwugwu, an assembly of tribesmen masked as spirits, who would settle disputes and hand out punishment. Individual villages also attained various degrees of political status. In the novel, other tribes respect and fear Umuofia. They believe that Umuofia’s magic is powerful and that the village’s war-medicine, or agadi-nwayi, is particularly potent. Neighboring clans always try to settle disputes peacefully with Umuofia to avoid having to war with them.

**Christianity and Colonization:** While Christianity spread across north and south Africa as early as the late fifteenth century, Christianity took its strongest hold when the majority of the missionaries arrived in the late 1800s. After centuries of taking slaves out of Africa, Britain had outlawed the slave trade and now saw the continent as ripe for
colonization. Missionaries sent to convert the local population were often the first settlers. They believed they could atone for the horrors of slavery by saving the souls of Africans.

At first, Africans were mistrustful of European Christians, and took advantage of the education the missionaries provided without converting. Individuals who had no power under the current tribal order, however, soon converted; in the novel, the missionaries who come to Umuofia convert only the weaker tribesmen, or efulefu. Missionaries would convince these tribesmen that their tribe worshipped false gods and that its false gods did not have the ability to punish them if they chose to join the mission. When the mission and its converts accepted even the outcasts of the clan, the missionaries’ ranks grew. Eventually, some of the more important tribesmen would convert. As the mission expanded, the clan divided, discontent simmered, and conflicts arose.

**English Bureaucrats and Colonization:** After the arrival of the British, when conflicts came up between villages the white government would intervene instead of allowing villagers to settle them themselves. In the novel, a white District Commissioner brings with him court messengers whose duty it is to bring in people who break the white man’s law. The messengers, called “Ashy-Buttocks” for the ash-colored shorts they wear, are hated for their high-handed attitudes. These messengers and interpreters were often African Christian converts who looked down on tribesmen who still followed traditional customs. If violence involved any white missionaries or bureaucrats, British soldiers would often slaughter whole villages instead of seeking and punishing guilty individuals. The British passed an ordinance in 1912 that legalized this practice, and during an uprising in 1915, British troops killed more than forty natives in retaliation for one dead and one wounded British soldier.

One of the most important results of Europe’s colonization of Africa was the division of Africa into at least fifty nation-states. Rather than being a part of a society determined by common language and livelihood, Africans lived according to political boundaries. The divisions often split ethnic groups, leading to tension and sometimes violence. The cohesiveness of the traditional society was gone.

**Nigerian Independence:** British colonial rule in Nigeria lasted only fifty-seven years, from 1903 to 1960. Although Nigerians had long called for self-rule, it was not until the end of World War II that England began heeding these calls. The Richards Constitution of 1946 was the first attempt to grant some native rule by bringing the diverse peoples of Nigeria under one representative government. The three regions (northern, southern and western) were brought under the administration of one legislative council composed of twenty-eight Nigerians and seventeen British officers. Regional councils, however, guaranteed some independence from the national council and forged a link between local authorities, such as tribal chiefs, and the national government. There were three major tribes (the Hausa, the Yoruba and the Igbo) and more than eight smaller ones living in Nigeria. This diversity complicated the creation of a unified Nigeria. Between 1946 and 1960 the country went through several different constitutions, each one attempting to balance power between the regional and the national bodies of government.
On October 1, 1960, Nigeria attained full status as a sovereign state and a member of the British Commonwealth. But under the Constitution of 1960 the Queen of England was still the head of state. She remained the commander-in-chief of Nigeria’s armed forces, and the Nigerian navy operated as part of Britain’s Royal Navy. Nigerians felt frustrated by the implication that they were the subjects of a monarch living over 4,000 miles away. In 1963, five years after the publication of Achebe’s novel, a new constitution would replace the British monarch with a Nigerian president as head of state in Nigeria.

**Literary Traditions:** Achebe wrote Things Fall Apart just before Nigeria received its independence. He intended the book for audiences outside Africa; he wanted to paint a true picture of pre-colonial Africa for those people who had no direct knowledge of traditional African societies. As a result of the Nigerians’ acquisition of independence, the Nigerian educational system sought to encourage a national pride through the study of Nigerian heritage. The educational system required Achebe’s book in high schools throughout the English-speaking countries in Africa. The book was well received. Chinua Achebe has been recognized as “the most original African novelist writing in English,” according to Charles Larson in The Emergence of African Fiction. Critics throughout the world have praised Things Fall Apart as the first African English-language classic.

**Significance of the Title**

Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe is a novel whose title bears the central massage of the work. The very title ‘Things Fall Apart’ foreshadows the tragedy which takes place at the end of the novel. The novel depicts the tragedy of an individual as well as the tragedy of a society. The protagonist of the novel Okonkwo who was rich and respectable at the beginning of the novel meets a tragic fate at the end of the novel. Achebe portrays how an ambitious, well known, and respected African Okonkwo’s life falls apart. But when he suffers, his whole tribe also suffers. At the beginning of the novel, the Ibo society was a peaceful, organic society, but at the end of the novel it falls into pieces. Thus, the novel records not only falling apart of Okonkwo’s life but also his whole society.

**The Title- A Literary Allusion:** The phrase "things fall apart" is taken from the poem, “The Second Coming” by W.B Yeats, which Achebe quotes more extensively in the epigraph. Achebe’s literary allusion to Yeats’ poem might deepen or extend—by comparison and/or contrast—the meaning(s) of Achebe’s title and his novel. The beginning four lines of the poem are referred as a preface of the novel.

"Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,"

"Things fall apart" can be said when something we believed would last forever, comes to an end. The title Things Fall Apart refers to the fact that without proper balance, things do fall apart. The notion of balance in the novel is an important theme throughout the
book. Beginning with the excerpt from Yeats' poem, the concept of balance is stressed as important; for without balance, order is lost. In the novel, there is a system of balance, which the Igbo culture seems but at the end of the novel the society people cannot listen the leader, so a chaotic situation is created.

**Okonkwo’s Life Falls Apart:** At the beginning of the novel we see Okonkwo as a prosperous leader of the Igbo people. But the novel ends with his tragic end. Thus, we can say that the novel Things Fall Apart depicts how Okonkwo’s life falls apart. Okonkwo is definitely a man of importance for his society. He is a well-known person throughout the nine villages and beyond. He is a warrior and wrestler who gains respect through his athletics. He is a fierce-free individual. He hasn’t lost one fight or any battles. And for this the people of the village love him. He is also respected because of his wealth.

Okonkwo’s life first begins to fall apart when he kills Ikemefuna, a prisoner who stayed at Okonkwo’s home. Okonkwo considers Ikemefuna as one of his own sons. It has been decided from the oracle that Ikemefuna will be killed. Okonkwo takes part in his murder, despite warning from his friend, “That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death.” But when he hears Ikemefuna’s crying, “My father, they have killed me!” as he ran towards him. Dazed with fear, Okonkwo drew his machete and cut him down.” Okonkwo’s fear of being weak, which is one of his tragic flaws, drives him to rashness, and in the end it contributes to his own tragedy that his own life falls apart.

Another significant incidence where Okonkwo's life falls apart was when he was thrown out of the clan for seven years. From this event, one can see that Okonkwo's hopes dreams have begun to fall apart. His hopes of being a rich and popular individual had drifted away with this disturbing incident. Okonkwo had no longer had his farm or animals. Also Okonkwo lost faith with most of his friends. This goes to show that Okonkwo lost faith with his friends, like his father lost faith with his friends. Another episode that showed the downfall in Okonkwo's life was when Nwoye, his oldest and favorite son, converted to the white mans.

Okonkwo’s life finally shattered after his returning to his village where he finds that everything is changed. After the clansman burn the Church building down, the District Commissioner asks the leaders of the clan, Okonkwo among them, to go and see him for a peaceful meeting. The leaders arrive, and are quickly seized. While they are in detention waiting for the fine to be collected from their people, they are beaten severely by the court messengers and their heads are shaved. They are held in jail until the clan pays a heavy fine. Embittered and grieving for the destruction of his clan’s independence, and fearing the humiliation of dying under white law, Okonkwo commits suicide and his life totally falls apart.

**Igbo Society Falls Apart:** Like Okonkwo his Igbo society also falls apart. In the first part of the book we see a socially, politically and religiously organic Igbo society. But this organic society becomes divided and virtually loses all energy at the end of the book. Thus, the novel documents the falling apart of the Igbo tribe due to its own brutal rules as well as the coming of the Christian missionaries and the rule of the English government.
The Society Itself Responsible For Falling Apart: - At the beginning of the book we see that the Igbo people have a strong faith in their traditional religion. The religion of the Igbo people consisted in the belief that there is a supreme God, the creator of the universe and the lesser gods. The supreme God was called Chukwu. The other gods were made by Chukwu to act his messengers so that people could approach him through them. People made sacrifices to the smaller gods, but when the failed, the people turned to Chukwu. Ancestor worship was also an equally important feature of the religion of the Igbo people. There were man superstition ideas related with their religious belief. They believed in evil spirits and oracle. One of such Oracles is responsible for Okonkwo’s sacrifice of Ikemefuna. This incident underlines the superstitious brutality of traditional Igbo society. We also find the brutality, injustice and the inhuman activities in some other rituals or rules such as - people who are affected by some severe diseases are carried on the Evil Forest to die and they do not get any burial and twain babies are thrown out in the Evil Forest just after their birth. The ultimate result of such brutality is when the people, who are dissatisfied with these rules such as Nwoye, the mother of three twin babies, get the opportunity to change their religion they do it and the society ultimately falls apart.

Igbo Society Encounters the Colonial Masters and Falls Apart: - Prior to the coming of the white the political life of the Igbo people was also very organic and strong. They were very loyal to their political leaders. After the entrance of colonial masters, the colonial religion, mostly replaces the traditional religion. When the white man arrives, however, they ignore the Igbo’s values and tries to enforce his own beliefs and religious practices. Missionaries would convince these tribesmen that their tribe worshipped false gods and that its false gods did not have the ability to punish them if they chose to join the mission. Like many others, Okonko’s son Nwoye is also affected by the colonial religion.

The only point in the book in which the title is referenced is Chapter Twenty, when the main character, Okonkwo, and his friend, Obierika, are discussing the invasion of white men into their community. Obierika says, "The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart." His passage clearly ties the destruction of the Igbo people’s way of life to sneaky, divisive action on the part of European missionaries and imperialists.

The colonial politics affects the Igbo society. Okonko’s life is also affected by the colonial politics. The Igbo people become the victims of the colonial politics and many people die as a result of colonialism. The same things happen to Okonkwo.

The novel concludes with the end of the Igbo society and the death of the hero. In the face of the chaos caused by the incursion of Christianity, Okonkwo becomes a murderer and then hangs himself. His world has literally fallen apart, and it symbolically represents that Igbo society has fallen apart. Thus, we can say, the title of the novel, Things Fall Apart denotes its theme appropriately.
Clash of Civilizations in 'Things Fall Apart'

Things Fall Apart is an amazing novel by Chinua Achebe that illustrates the conflict occurring during the period of British colonization of Africa. Things Fall Apart explores the struggles between the old traditions of the Igbo community and the effects of Christianity on the people of different calibres within that society. The novel is told from the perspective of the native people of Ibo. The novel takes place in Umuofia, in Nigeria, in an area where their culture is indigenous to the Ibo people. In "Things Fall Apart" it seems that the African Ibo culture was strong and functional, such as in its religious beliefs and customs, government, economic, and social coherence. The order of Ibo society became interrupted and began to unravel when the white missionaries entered Africa and introduced Christianity.

The colonial religion first attacked the outcasts of the Ibo society in order to expand on the ideas of Christianity and how their belief system was not an accurate portrayal. The traditional belief system had been corrupted by the impact of the missionaries and there was encouragement of disavowing the traditional beliefs of the Ibo society. There were changes due to the entrance of the white man; it was no longer the same society that had been known to the Ibo people. The missionaries who came to Umuofia set out to reach everyone in order to convert him or her to Christianity. Kiaga approached two outcasts and told them they must shave their hair in order to let go of their heathen beliefs. The Christians even lived in the Evil Forest in order to prove that their belief system was not accurate.

The colonizers used religion as a tool of Conquest in Things Fall Apart. In the novel Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe, the white men who come to Umuofia find success in conquering the village by challenging Ibo religion. Because the first white men to appear in Umuofia were missionaries, the slaughter of Ibo society began with the challenging of the highly-regarded religion of the Ibo people. The white men began their religious assault by openly denouncing the many gods worshipped by the Ibo in order to convert them to the new faith. After accomplishing this, the white men set out to prove that the Christian religion was superior to all others by defying the powers of the Ibo gods when they built their church upon the cursed ground of the Evil Forest. With the Ibo religion being proved powerless, the converts began challenging their former religion by killing the sacred python, revered by the people of Umuofia. By attacking the fundamental teachings of the natives’ religion, the Christians were able to effectively conquer the Ibo people.

One of the main themes of the novel is change. It is also seen through religion. The tribe have lived for thousands of years in an untouched and unviolated existence. The arrival of the missionaries and the conversion of many to the Christian faith make it very difficult for some to cope with. Especially those who choose not to convert, and have to watch as their friends/family take a different path. The Clan has a different perception when it comes to the gods. Whereas the Christians believe in only one god, the Ibo have various gods who they worship. There is one supreme god, but they call him Chukwu because "he made all the world and the other gods." They also worship other gods such as the Oracle of the Hills, the sacred python, and the chi, (or personal god).
these are animate gods, in the form of a woman and a reptile. This illustrates another difference between the two religions as the Christian’s god is inanimate. The Umofians had a religion that worked out great for them, but when the white men came, they took over their religion and forced them to believe something else. Thus, the colonial religion has brought a change into the system of religion in Ibo society.

**Tragedy of an individual or tragedy of society**

Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe is a tragedy of an individual as well as the society. The protagonist of the novel, Okonkwo who was rich and respectable at the beginning of the novel meets a tragic fate at the end of the novel. But when he suffers, his whole tribe also suffers. At the beginning of the novel, the Ibo society was a peaceful, organic society, but at the end of the novel it falls into pieces. Thus the novel records not only the sufferings of Okonkwo but also his whole society.

At the beginning of the play we see Okonko as a prosperous leader of the Ibo people. But the novel ends with his tragic end. Thus, we can say that the novel Things fall apart is a depiction of Okonkwo’s tragic fall. Okonkwo was definitely a man of importance for his society. He was a well-known person throughout the 9 villages and beyond. He was a warrior ad wrestler who gained respect through his athletics. He was a fierce-free individual. He hadn't lost one fight or any battles. And for this the people of the village loved him. He was also respected because of his wealth.

Okonkwo had three wives and many children. He was able to take care of his wives and children. But suddenly a disaster takes place in his life. He unconsciously kills the son of a man who had warned him not to kill Ikemefuna. Although the killing was an accident, Okonkwo and his family are forced before nightfall to flee to his distant native village to Manta. When they are gone his compound and his possessions are destroyed by his fellow tribesman in a ritual cleansing and purification of his sin.

When Okonkwo came back to his village he found that everything was changed. After the clansman burn the Church building down, the District Commissioner asks the leaders of the clan, Okonkwo among them, to go and see him for a peaceful meeting. The leaders arrive, and are quickly seized. While they are in detention waiting for the fine to be collected from their people, they are beaten severely by the court messengers and their heads shaved. They are held in jail until the clan pays a heavy fine.

Embittered and grieving for the destruction of his clan’s independence, and fearing the humiliation of dying under white law, Okonkwo ends his life. The District Commissioner and his messengers arrive at Umuofia to find Okonkwo has hanged himself. They are asked to take down his body, since Ibo mores forbid clan members to touch it, as suicide is regarded as a act of weakness and as attack against nature.

Like Okonkwo his Ibo society also meets a tragic fate. In the first part of the book we see a socially, politically and religiously organic Ibo society. But this organic society becomes divided and virtually loses all energy at the end of the book.
At the beginning of the book we see that the Ibo people have a strong faith in their traditional religion. The religion of the Ibos consisted in the belief that there is a supreme God, the creator of the universe and the lesser gods. The supreme God was called Chukwu. The other gods were made by Chukwu to act his messengers so that people could approach Him through them. People made sacrifices to the smaller gods, but when the failed, the people turned to Chukwu. Ancestor worship was also an equally important feature of the religion of the Ibo people. There were many superstition ideas related with their religious belief. They believed in evil spirits and oracle. One of such Oracles is responsible for Okonkwo's sacrifice of Ikemefuna. This incident underlines the superstitious brutality of traditional Ibo society. Thus we find a very strong and extremely detailed picture of Ibo life society prior to the coming of the white man.

But later the Christianity, the colonial religion, mostly replaces the traditional religion. When the white man arrives, however, he ignores the Ibo's values and tries to enforce his own beliefs and religious practices. Missionaries would convince these tribesmen that their tribe worshipped false gods and that its false gods did not have the ability to punish them if they chose to Join the mission. Like many others, Okonkwo's son is also affected by the colonial religion.

Prior to the coming of the white the political life of the Ibo people was also very organic and strong. They were very loyal to their political leaders. The colonial politics affects the Ibo society. Okonkwo's life is also affected by the colonial politics. The Ibo people become the victims of the colonial politics and many people die as a result of colonialism. The same things happen to him.

When conflicts came up between villages, the white government would intervene instead of allowing villagers to settle them themselves. In the novel when the white man's government has come to Umuofia, the clan is no longer free to judge its own; a district commissioner, backed by armed power, judge cases in ignorance of tribal custom.

Things Fall Apart chronicles the double tragedies of the deaths of Okonkwo, a revered warrior, and the Ibo, the tribe to which Okonkwo belongs. In literature, tragedy often describes the downfall of a great individual which is caused by a flaw in the person's character. Okonkwo's personal flaw is his unreasonable anger, and his tragedy occurs when the tribe bans him for accidentally killing a young tribesman, and he returns to find a tribe that has changed beyond recognition. The Ibo's public demise results from the destruction of one culture by another, but their tragedy is caused by their turning away from their tribal gods.

**Role of Fear in Okonkwo’s Life and Action**

Things Fall Apart, written by Chinua Achebe, is a story of Okonkwo whose life is dominated by his fears—"the fears of failures". There are many subtle themes throughout the book Things Fall Apart. One theme that cries out over the rest is Okonkwo’s, the main character, fear of weakness as seen through his childhood, his oldest son, and eventually his death. The novel is also a tragedy and Okonkwo is a tragic hero. Okonkwo's tragedy can be connected to a tragic flaw in his character. He was afraid of...
being considered weak. His fear motivates him to take actions which are often unnecessary and ultimately destructive. His fear of being feminine leads him to assist in the murder of Ikemefuna whom he loved, to beat his wives, be emotionally distant from his children, and to disown his oldest son. In the end, his fear of being thought weak was his final undoing. He killed the white man’s messenger because he did not want the other elders to consider him weak.

An ambitious man who has risen from nothing to a man of importance in his tribe, Okonkwo rules his family with an iron fist. The cause of being so strict and rude to his family is his fear of being considered as weak. Since his childhood, Okonkwo was ashamed of his father, “In his day he (Unoka) was lazy and improvident and was quite incapable of thinking about tomorrow”. His father Unoka was a failure in every sense of the word. Unoka was lazy, wasteful and un-ambitious. He loved a life of pleasure without hard work. He was always in debt and was not able to take any titles in accordance with tradition. By the standard of his clan, Unoka was a coward and squanderer. When he was a child, a boy called Okonkwo’s father an agbala. This word means “woman” as well as a man who has no title. His carelessness left numerous debts unpaid at his death. Ashamed of his father, Okonkwo worked hard and fought well to gain a reputation of high status and influence in his clan. He acquired three wives, one whom gave him his first son. Okonkwo’s first wife, whose name is never mentioned, gave birth to his first son, Nwoye. Okonkwo saw Nwoye weak and lazy from an early age. For this, Nwoye was beaten constantly.

Okonkwo was highly demanding of his family because of his obsession not to be like his father. He mistook this behaviour as masculinity. He wished his son were a promising, manly son like his friend Obierika’s son, Maduka, who was also a great fighter. One night the town of Umuofia was told that someone in Mbao had killed one of their “daughters”. The woman was OgbuefiUdo’s wife. The blood price for the murder was a virgin and young man to Umuofia. The virgin was given to OgbuefiUdo as his wife. They did not know what to do with the young boy, Ikemefuna. Okonkwo was asked on behalf of the clan to take care of the boy. Secretly, Okonkwo grew fond of Ikemefuna, “Even Okonkwo himself became very fond of the boy-inwardly of course. Okonkwo never showed any emotion openly, unless it be the emotion of anger”. Ikemefuna lived with Okonkwo and his family for three years until the time came when the Oracle said that Ikemefuna had to be killed. Okonkwo was warned not to have any part in killing the boy who called him father. He ignored this and upon returning sank into a deep depression which kindled the affliction inside of him. Not only the death of Ikemefuna, but also the accidental killing of Ogbuefi Ezeudu’s son, which gets Okonkwo and his family exiled for seven years, aides in his depression. To atone for the killing of his clansmen’s son, Okonkwo and his family were cast out of Umuofia and were forced to go live with his mother’s clan in Mbanta.

In their second year a group of six missionaries travelled to Mbanta and tried to persuade the people from their false gods of wood and stone to the one true God. They captured Nwoye and he later joined their congregation. When Okonkwo was informed of the news he strangled Nwoye in anger. He questioned how he could have fathered such a weak son. At the end of the seven-year exile, Okonkwo was able to return home. However, the church had taken over Umuofia also. Nothing
refused to integrate with the new visitors. He thought that the clan’s failure to remove them was “womanly”. Almost happy again, Okonkwo began to accept the new Umuofia. Then the leaders of the clan, including Okonkwo, were taken for ransom by the church. Deeply angered by what was happening, Okonkwo killed one of the leaders at a meeting. The pacification of Okonkwo’s clan is what depressed him. He knew his clan would not go to war. This desire to act violently all goes back to his father’s lack of desire. In the end the violence settled on Okonkwo, when he hung himself.

In conclusion, all these aspects: his childhood, his first son and Ikemefuna, and his death contribute in explaining Okonkwo’s fear of weakness. Okonkwo’s life was controlled by his fears. He valued the success of his family and the community with his own success. If Nwoye was weak it was because he had failed as a father. The pacification of the town was a reflection of Okonkwo’s failures, he thought. Not being able to control those events, Okonkwo, out of desperation or either out of the pride in his manhood or perhaps both, killed himself.

In the final analysis, Okonkwo's character is typical of tragic heroes in every tragedy. He was a great man but he was destroyed because he had a tragic flaw - fear.

**Culture of the Igbo society**

“Things Fall Apart” is a novel written in English by Nigerian author Chinua Achebe. The novel depicts the life of Okonkwo, a leader and local wrestling champion in Umuofia - one of a fictional group of nine villages in Nigeria inhabited by the Igbo people. It focuses on his family and personal history, the customs and society of the Igbo and the influence of British colonialism and Christian missionaries on the Igbo community during the late nineteenth century.

Through Achebe's use of language, it is apparent how unique the Igbo’s culture is. By using traditional Igbo words, folktales, and songs into English sentences, the author shows us that African languages are comprehensible. Achebe is noted for his inclusion of proverbs from Igbo oral culture into his writing:

"*The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did.*"

Okonkwo, explains his capacity for hard work before Nwakibie, his sons and neighbors.”The Feast of the New Yam” is an occasion of joy throughout Umuofia to convey thanks to Ani, the earth goddess. Every year the Igbo people celebrate the event before the harvest commences. On the occasion, a large number of people are fed with vegetables soup, fresh yam foo-foo and so on.

In the Igbo society, a man is known for his own achievement and activeness and here a man who fails to progress beyond the junior title is a man without status in the eyes of his people and such a man is called an ‘agbala’ meaning a woman. The father of the protagonist is called so as he attains no title. In the behaviour of the protagonist, the sense of self-respect is traceable.
Because of the great value placed on masculinity, women are, to a great extent, inferior to men in the Ibo society. Wives' main duty is to serve their husbands. Women's value is directly tied to their ability to produce children, as shown by the fact that the birth of children is "a woman's crowning glory". Wife beating and domestic violence are very common practices. Okonkwo constantly beats his wives for some very trivial matters such as forgetting to prepare meals for him. In one occasion, Okonkwo nearly killed Ekwefi with his gun. Often women are merely properties of men who are even inferior to yams. The value of a man is measured by the number of yams and wives he has, with the former bearing more importance than the latter. When a man suits a woman, he negotiates a bride price using "a small bundle of short broomsticks," showing that women are only treated as properties and commodities in Ibo society.

They had a sharp sense of community, 'The Week of Peace' comes at the end of the carefree season and before the harvest and planting season. During the 'Week of Peace', Okonkwo breaks the peace and is punished, as is the custom, by Ezeani, the priest of the earth goddess. He told Okonkwo, even though his wife may have been at fault, he commits a great evil. During the 'Week of Peace' one has to live in complete peace no matter what the circumstances. The community fears that the evil he did could ruin the whole clan.

Many a superstition runs through the Igbo society as we observe regarding the twin-born babies. They believe that it is a sign of evil omen. For this reason, they cast away the twins in the 'Evil Forest' as soon as they are born. Similarly Okonkwo's father's ailment invites the same consequences and he is not buried with the traditional respect and rituals because a diseased person in the society is left in the forest to die.

The lives of the Ibo people revolve around great traditions and supreme beings. The Oracle in the mountain is greatly respected and feared by the villagers. His decisions are viewed as edicts that people who defy them will be damned. The powerful clan of Umuofia never goes to war unless its case was accepted by the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves. After the Oracle decrees Ikemefuna's death, Okonkwo, despite his affection for Ikemefuna, obeys and kills Ikemefuna. When Chielo the priestess, sent for by Agbala, comes to Okonkwo's hut to get Ezinma, even the fearless Okonkwo gives way after incessantly pleading Chielo to allow Ezinma stay.

Religion has been the integral part of the Igbo society, as they believe in a supreme god, Chukwu, who has created all things and demands obedience. In "Things Fall Apart", the mask, the earth, the legends and the rituals all have significance in the history of the Igbo culture. According to Baldwin:

"Religion looms large in the life of primitive man."

First, there is the use of the mask to draw the spirit of the gods into the body of a person. A great crime in the Igbo culture is to unmask or show disrespect to the immortality of an egwugwu, which represents an ancestral spirit. Toward the end of the novel, a Christian convert unmasks and kills one of his own ancestral spirits. The clan weeps, for "it seemed as if the very soul of the tribe wept for a great evil that was
coming—its own death." They also believe in ‘chi’ a man personal god and many other gods and goddesses.

To conclude the discussion, it can be said that the Igbo society was much enriched but as soon as the colonisers came to their land, their society, and cultural values commenced falling apart and the old way of life gets disrupted.

**Gender Roles in the Igbo Society**

In the novel by Chinua Achebe, “Things Fall Apart”, the Igbo people are at a watershed moment in their history and culture. The incursion of the colonizing force is changing or threatening to change almost every aspect of their society: religion, family structure, gender roles and relations, and trade, to name just a few. In “Things Fall Apart”, Achebe shows how the Igbo society is changing because women, who were typically confined to the home and who had little decision-making power prior to colonialism, suddenly find themselves agents of important social exchanges through the roles they play in the trade that occurs in the market, as well as in the production of the crops that are sold at market.

The novel, “Things Fall Apart” is, at its heart, a novel about a rapidly changing culture. Because of the quick introduction of new ideas in “Things Fall Apart” from the outsiders, nearly every aspect of Igbo culture begins to change, including, rather predictably, the nature of gender relationships. Before the introduction of new cultural influences in “Things Fall Apart” the gender roles were quite standardized as was depicted both by the interactions of Okonkwo and his wives and other Igbo men and women in “Things Fall Apart”. Clearly the women were given certain responsibilities and these were not mutable aspects of Igbo culture but were sedentary cultural norms. With new ideas from outside, however, the roles of women in “Things Fall Apart” and Igbo culture began to shift, bringing larger cultural implications. For example, one of the rapid cultural changes that takes place in Igbo society is apparent in terms of the harvesting of crops. While they still do not harvest yams, “a man’s crop” (Achebe 22), and symbol of “manliness...[and] great[ness] (Achebe 33), the “coco-yams, beans and cassava” (Achebe 22) become increasingly important to the Igbo and their trade, despite men’s clinging to the yam as an important symbol of the Igbo culture. As the result of their position in the enterprise of trading, women had more direct contact with foreigners than did the men. As this contact and their selling success increased, so too did women’s influence in society and their boldness in asserting themselves and their ideas and opinions to the powerful male elders who held traditional decision-making power.

For the men in “Things Fall Apart”, such a transition represented a particular threat. The main character is a very gender-role oriented male, Okonkwo, for instance, reflected on the colonial enterprise and remarked that the white man “has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart” (Achebe 124-125). Women’s growing power, conferred upon them through their status acquired in trading, contested the historical notions of gender relations, summarized in the idea that, as stated by Chinua Achebe in the book says, “No matter how prosperous a man was, if he was unable to rule his women and his children (and especially his women) he was not really a man”
Trade, then, and women’s role in this vital activity of Igbo society, changed gender dynamics, family relations, and the very concepts upon which Igbo culture was founded. Okonkwo’s relationship with his late father shapes much of his violent and ambitious demeanour. He wants to rise above his father’s legacy of spendthrift, indolent behaviour, which he views as weak and therefore effeminate. This association is inherent in the clan’s language—the narrator mentions that the word for a man who has not taken any of the expensive, prestige-indicating titles is agbala, which also means “woman.” But, for the most part, Okonkwo’s idea of manliness is not the clan’s. He associates masculinity with aggression and feels that anger is the only emotion that he should display. For this reason, he frequently beats his wives, even threatening to kill them from time to time. We are told that he does not think about things, and we see him act rashly and impetuously. Yet others who are in no way effeminate do not behave in this way. Obierika, unlike Okonkwo, “was a man who thought about things.” Whereas Obierika refuses to accompany the men on the trip to kill Ikemefuna, Okonkwo not only volunteers to join the party that will execute his surrogate son but also violently stabs him with his machete simply because he is afraid of appearing weak.

Okonkwo’s seven-year exile from his village only reinforces his notion that men are stronger than women. While in exile, he lives among the kinsmen of his motherland but resents the period in its entirety. The exile is his opportunity to get in touch with his feminine side and to acknowledge his maternal ancestors, but he keeps reminding himself that his maternal kinsmen are not as warlike and fierce as he remembers the villagers of Umuofia to be. He blames them for their preference of negotiation, compliance, and avoidance over anger and bloodshed. According to Okonkwo, his uncle Uchendu exemplifies this opposition to war mode.

Much of the traditional Igbo life presented in this novel revolves around structured gender roles. Essentially all of Igbo life is gendered, from the crops that men and women grow, to characterization of crimes. In Igbo culture, women are the weaker sex, but are also endowed with qualities that make them worthy of worship, like the ability to bear children. The dominant role for women is: first, to make a pure bride for an honourable man, second, to be a submissive wife, and third, to bear many children. The ideal man provides for his family materially and has prowess on the battlefield. The protagonist in the novel is extremely concerned with being hyper-masculine and devalues everything feminine, leaving him rather unbalanced. Much of the gender theme in the book centers around the idea of balance between masculine and feminine forces – body and mind/soul, emotionality and rationality, mother and father. If one is in imbalance, it makes the whole system haywire.

The Igbo women of Nigeria contribute their quota towards bettering the lot of Africa despite all that worked and still work against them. To these women, globalization has proven to be positive as it has not affected who they are or their traditional roles as African Women. Nigerian history is interesting in the pre-colonial age. Nigeria was a stateless society. The leaders were usually a hierarchy of elders and age groups. The occupation of Igbo women was mainly local trade, farming, pottery, fishing etc. The people actively participated in providing for their families and in the welfare of their communities. For the Igbo, sex and gender are different, while sex is biologically determined, gender is determined by role. So some woman
(masculine women) simply because of the roles they play in the society and not because of their sexual acts. Sex determined by sex organs and therefore biologically determined, determined Nwoke (man) and Nwanyi (woman). Gender on the other hand, determined by role plays, is constructed culturally and socially. That defined male/masculine as Oke and female/feminine as Nne. Early contact with the whites established legal commerce, slave trade, Christianity and education, and imposition of the “Victorian gender ethos” on Igbo women. Women’s status reduced to those of children and they could not inherit, must submit to their husbands, only male heads of households, no more dual-sex political system, no more religious roles, suppression of the voice of Igbo women.

The New Gender Construct laid grounds for political, occupational, educational reforms. Sex and gender roles combined. Male meant man; and female meant woman. Men trained in a way that facilitated their taking over from the Colonial Masters. Women trained in occupations that enabled them to attend hands and feet to their families mainly their husbands and children. Occupations included seamstresses, teachers, housewives, childcare, cooking, etc. There was more advanced technology. Colonialism enabled men to delve into areas that were predominantly women’s like farming, palm oil production, salt mining, etc. Also, natural resources, new jobs and migration to other places. They had a good rapport with the colonial masters and the Igbo had the majority of workers in many government offices and also occupied the highest ranks in the military. The British rule in Nigeria also made way for more educated Igbo women. There were more Igbo women in the public sectors than men. The colonial period helped the Igbo people to escape from slavery. They learnt to speak broken English and Igala languages. The people continued to serve their community and the colonial masters with new linguistic skills. Igbo Women have been able to hold up and find their place in the History of both Nigeria and Africa. They have become very active in the political, economic, and social arenas. The Igbo has produced many women lawyers, Professors, Teachers, Engineers, CEOs of businesses and enterprises, many of them have occupied different positions in the government etc. Statistically, Igbo women in the US are all educated people. The Igbo men who come here usually have first degrees or at least high school diplomas and they marry equally educated Igbo women who can easily fit in. Most Igbo women are high earners and even earn more than their husbands. Thus they contribute more in most cases to the economic development of their people.

Though a lot has changed in the social status of the Igbo woman, their roles have not changed as they continue to be wives, mothers, daughters and sisters and they continue to play their traditional roles of being their families’ economists and managers both in their natal communities and communities of marriage. The Igbo women do not just lie down and bemoan themselves and their situations, they have turned so many tragedies into victories and are using globalization and its agents as strong and positive tools to advance the causes of the Igbo nation and Nigeria as a whole.

**Colonialism in “Things Fall Apart”**

It is undeniable that literature, aside from depicting the creative imagination of humanity, has also served to record the various things which has happened to humanity.
in the course of history. Though it is known that literature has fictitious elements in it, it also quite known that literature has been able to employ certain truths about society and the world at large by the incorporating facts in its pages. Thus, while literature has managed to be about fairy tales or romantic novels and others, it has also managed to depict serious issues concerning the psychology of being a child, the characteristics of the Victorian era and even global issues like racism, capitalism and colonialism. In fact, the latter issue, which is on colonialism, is what will be explicated in this essay as to how it has affected a certain group in Africa. In the famous novel of Chinua Achebe entitled Things Fall Apart, it can be seen how colonialism has affected people and has managed to pull them apart in many directions that it even eventually destroyed relationships of families, friends and tribes. Though the novel is a work of fiction, there is a certain truth in how colonialism has indeed affected people to the point that the life of the protagonist is destroyed and resulted to his own death.

Achebe's novel can mostly be seen as a narrative on the life of a single member in an African tribe, but on a bigger and deeper perspective, the book embodies the collective situation and life of the African people at the time wherein outside forces are trying to change the traditional practices of the people. In the novel, the strong warrior by the name of Okonkwo is depicted as the protagonist and his various struggles concerning his tribe and the changing times are shown. Okonkwo is heralded as a most apt and talented farmer from the clan of Umuofia and has become quite known for having such positive and appreciated traits. However, Okonkwo is having a hard time in trying to reign in his personality as he refrains from becoming like his father while trying to keep with the traditions and culture of his people. In the end though, as the English colonizers try to teach the people regarding the “truth” on God and certain practices, Okonkwo realizes that he cannot keep up with the changing times. He takes his own life in the end as the remaining people of his clan fully embrace change and the new things that the colonizers are teaching them.

In the novel, it is quite evident that Okonkwo is the central figure. However, his life is not the central point or theme in the novel. Instead, the theme relies on how the battle of tradition versus modernization takes place in the form of the culture of Okonkwo's clan and the teachings of the English colonizers; as how Gikandi (2000) puts it:

The central theme of the novel is what happens to the values that define Okonkwo's cultural community, and his own sense of moral order, when the institutions he and fought so hard to sustain collapse in the face of European colonialism (ix).

It may be seen that European colonialism is something which is vile as it has totally destroyed the culture and traditions of a group of people which in turn destroyed their identity. However, in how Okonkwo and his tribesmen practice their tradition, it can be seen that colonialism also has good effects since it has stripped the rather inhumane and illogical practices of the people such as how they exalt cultural violence. This type of violence can be seen in certain practices they had like "ritual sacrifices, punishment for crimes, and other kinds of communal sanctioned violence" which is normal and accepted by the clan but is not entirely humane to the missionaries (Hoegberg, 1999, 69). Of all the positive effects of colonialism as appearing in the novel and more than the economic progress it brings, it is the lessening of ignorance of the clai
avenue for new knowledge and erasure of such violent cultural practices which is more poignant and more impacting.

On the other hand, colonialism has also had its negative and appalling effects by how the missionaries and the European officers have completely stripped the identity of the tribe and more than forced them to accept the new teachings while eradicating the tribe’s previous teachings with the argument that such things were not true. It is not a matter of whether such traditions are true or not—what matters is that a person practices ethical customs that does not strip away the basic human right of anybody. Ironically, while colonialism wanted to put forth new knowledge on “true” faith and eradicating unlawful customs, the nature of forcing the Christian faith towards people who are reluctant to accept them can also be judged as an unlawful act.

In conclusion, there are many aspects of how colonialism can affect a certain group or certain person as how it was portrayed in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart. Economically and socially, colonialism shows its effects by the growing opportunities given to people, making them more prosperous and more open to a wide avenue of profits and discovery. On the aspect of culture, religion and traditional practices, it is inevitable that those things take a complete turn for change as people would tend to be more open or forced to new knowledge and information, making them re-think on the previous things they do know and practice. These aspects in turn affect the most important facet of the person or the people which is the psychological aspect—in trying to influence how a person or the group thinks, it will pave the way and become the determiner if there would be a chance for a change to occur. The effects of colonialism can be seen in two ways as with all things in this world, as either positive or negative and it should be accepted as such. While colonialism showed that something as important to the people like tradition and culture can be erased or changed, it is undeniable that colonialism has also brought on positive changes for the people. In the end though, what matters is that it is important to not lose one's sense of identity in the process of change and still keep one's own pride in heritage, culture and tradition—while people embrace modernity, one should never forget one's history.

‘Things Fall Apart’: Case against imperialism

When Chinua Achebe showed the horrors of colonial rule in ‘Things Fall Apart,’ the narrative easily became the African story that impinged itself on our consciousness. The novel epitomized the case against imperialism

The death of the renowned Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe, has thrust one of the most popular African books in the news. Although Achebe wrote multiple books and produced several works of scholarship, ‘Things Fall Apart’ acted as the catalyst for his popularity, sending the Nigerian writer to the highest plateaus of academic fame. How did ‘Things Fall Apart,’ a book written about the Igbo people in Nigeria, become an explanatory voice for colonially oppressed societies all over Africa? The literary tenor used by Achebe to write ‘Things Fall Apart,’ is the first reason behind the book’s popularity. Any exhaustive commentary on ‘Things Fall Apart,’ must recognize the book’s flair for weaving Igbo words and phrases with the English language. By partly Africanizing the English language
to tell an African story, Achebe was able to show a pre-colonial Igbo society equipped with the ability for self-rule. Through the book’s main character, Okonkwo, Achebe showed how pre-colonial Igbo society dealt with crime and punishment. When Okonkwo committed what could be termed in today’s legal systems as manslaughter, the response from the oracles at Umuofia was swift and judicious. Once it became clear that Okonkwo’s accidentally-discharged gun was responsible for killing a citizen of the land, the oracles pronounced a verdict, which ordered Okonkwo’s seven-year exile from the land he loved. Despite his enormous stature in Igbo society, Okonkwo was subjected to the rule of law through a cultural edict, forcing a seemingly untouchable man into seven anguishing years of exile.

**Depiction of a politically organised people:** By the time Okonkwo served his seven-year sentence in banishment, Umuofia—his beloved land was already chafing under the assault of imperialism. European mercenaries, deceptively casting themselves as ‘missionaries,’ were already in Umuofia to carry out a frontal assault on the political, cultural and social institutions which held Okonkwo’s people together. The tragic story of Ikemefuna, which revealed the truest depths of Okonkwo’s compulsive feelings of insecurity, also showed us another feature of Igbo society. Contrary to racist falsities, most of which opine that pre-colonial African societies were clusters of disorganized tribes, Achebe’s ‘Things Fall Apart’ proved otherwise. Governance and conflict-resolution worked in tandem in Okonkwo’s Umuofia. When the land of Umuofia felt offended by the killing of its citizen in a neighbouring jurisdiction, the young Ikemefuna was handed over—through an emissary—to the people of Umuofia as a symbol of peace. Throughout his short lifespan, the young Ikemefuna served as a conciliatory symbol from the clan which sued for peace. Indeed, Ikemefuna’s presence in Okonkwo’s household was seen in Umuofia as a gesture of peace. There were times when the people of Umuofia waged war, but only after the failure of pacifism. Similarly, Europeans—from the Peace of Westphalia in the 17th century to the emergence of Nazi Germany in the last century—did go to war on multiple occasions when conflict-resolution proved futile. Despite all the bloody episodes in its history, imperial Europe did justify the conquest of Africa by postulating that ‘civilization’ is an exclusive, Western virtue! ‘Things Fall Apart’ is both a refutation of, and a counterblast to, the racist theories used to demean pre-colonial Africa as a heathenish land without God or government! Chinua Achebe successfully showed that before things literally fell apart, Africans lived under various systems of government overseen by the rule of law.

**The multiple faces of ‘Things Fall Apart’:** Apart from its utility as an African response to European imperialism, ‘Things Fall Apart’ has other uses in academia. The book has proven itself as a work of scholarship usable in multiple, academic disciplines. Prescribed in some African countries as a literature book, ‘Things Fall Apart’ has also been used in American universities as a sociology book. Additionally, “Things Fall Apart” can lend itself to the voracity of a historian because book deals with the political, cultural and social developments of a people, whose history was perverted by foreigners.

Sociologically speaking, ‘Things Fall Apart’ deals with the behavioural patterns of a society that suffered a civilizational eclipse when attacked from outside. Lastly, ‘Things Fall Apart’ has been internationally used as a literature textbook because its European and African characters have stirred a lot of pensiveness among
Europeans have spent centuries, trying to justify their uninvited presence in Africa. With its sociological teachings, ‘Things Fall Apart’ can be used to ask a specific question: Why did Europeans force their so-called “civilizing mission” on a people who were readily spiritual and culturally sure of themselves? Even today, in the twenty-first century, the colonial rampages seen in ‘Things Fall Apart,” continue in several guises, mostly through Western agencies like the IMF and international trade, which has been booby-trapped enough to be called ‘unfair trade.’ There is a reason why things have fallen apart in Africa: a rape victim—psychologists say—could live with the trauma of defilement for an endlessly long time! When the infliction of horror is both physical and psychological, the ensuing trauma can be eternally destabilizing. Little wonder the subversive presence of Europeans in Umuofia, disoriented Okonkwo so much that he committed suicide. Today’s African countries are a bigger representation of Okonkwo’s Umuofia, where normalcy was replaced with the chaos unleashed by European colonialists.

**The destructiveness of imperialism:** - Colonial rule lasted well over a century in some African countries. Britain pompously took over Sierra Leone and kept the country as a personal property for at least 150 years! Colonial rule was very thorough in its destruction of Africa, both from a psychological and socio-economic perspective. Land-seizures and the total usurpation of African authority are few of the horrors committed in Africa by colonial Europe. By the time Europeans pulled out of Africa in the 1960s, the damage was already done. After a century of colonial degradation, the skills needed to run a modern, nation-state, became dangerously scarce in the newly-independent African States. Portuguese colonial rule, for example, proved so damaging that Africans were NOT allowed to acquire any skills other than those needed to make them serve as cooks and servants. When Portugal grudgingly pulled out of Angola in 1975, the newly-independent Angolan state staggered with incompetence, nervously searching for teachers, doctors and the managerial competence needed to run a country. Colonial rule was the crime that came close to enslaving the African all over again. When Chinua Achebe showed the horrors of colonial rule in ‘Things Fall Apart,’ the narrative easily became the African story that impinged itself on our consciousness. Chinua Achebe has passed onto the land of our silent ones. However, the African story he told in ‘Things Fall Apart,’ will always remain piercingly loud.

**Okonkwo as a tragic hero in "Things Fall Apart"**

In Chinua Achebe’s novel "Things Fall Apart” Okonkwo is a tragic hero. Aristotle’s Poetics defines a Tragic Hero as a good man of high status who displays a tragic flaw ‘hamartia’ and experiences a dramatic reversal ‘peripeteia’, as well as an intense moment of recognition ‘anagnorisis’. Okonkwo is a leader and hardworking member of the Igbo community of Umuofia whose tragic flaw is his great fear of weakness and failure. Okonkwo’s fall from grace in the Igbo community and eventual suicide, makes Okonkwo a tragic hero by Aristotle’s definition.

Okonkwo is a man of action, a man of war and a member of high status in the Igbo village. He holds the prominent position of village clansman, due to the fact that, he had shown incredible prowess in two intertribal wars. Okonkwo’s hard work had made him a wealthy farmer and a recognized individual amongst the nine villages of Umuofia and
beyond. Okonkwo’s tragic flaw is not that he was afraid of work, but rather his fear of weakness and failure that stems from his father’s, Unoka, unproductive life and disgraceful death.

“...his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and weakness…….
It was not external but lay deep within himself. It was the fear of himself, lest he should be found to resemble his father.”

Okonkwo’s father is a lazy, carefree man whom has a reputation of being poor and his wife and children have just barely enough to eat... they swear never to lend him any more money because he never paid back. Unoka has never taught Okonkwo what is right and wrong, and as a result Okonkwo has to interpret how to be a good man. Okonkwo’s self-interpretation leads him to conclude that a good man is someone who is the exact opposite of his father and therefore anything that his father does is weak and unnecessary.

Okonkwo’s fear leads him to treat members of his family harshly, in particular his son, Nwoye. Okonkwo often wonders how he, a man of great strength and work ethic, could have had a son who is degenerate and effeminate. Okonkwo things that,

"No matter how prosperous a man was, if he was unable to rule his women and his children … he was not really a man"

Okonkwo wrestles with his fear that any sign of weakness will cause him to lose control of his family, position in the village, and even himself. Like many heroes of classical tragedy, Okonkwo’s tragic flaw, fear, also makes him excessively proud. Okonkwo’s downfall is a result of the changes created by the coming of the British Colonisers to Igbo. The introduction of the Colonisers into the novel causes Okonkwo’s tragic flaw to be exacerbated. Okonkwo construes change as weakness, and as a result of his interpretation, Okonkwo only knows how to react to change through anger and strength. He derives great satisfaction, “hubris” or proud arrogance, from the fact that he is a traditional, self-made man and thinks that to change would mean submitting to an outside force (Christianity).

Following Okonkwo’s seven year exile, the village Okonkwo once knew has changed due to the influence of Christianity and the influence of the British missionaries and officers. Okonkwo’s initial reaction is to arm the clan against the Colonisers and drive the British people out of Igbo.

“He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart” (152).

Okonkwo has always used his strength and courage to protect the community from destabilizing forces, and as Okonkwo is a traditional man, the introduction of Christianity poses a threat to all the values, morals and beliefs he sought to protect. Okonkwo resists change at every step and instead resorts to violence toward anything he perceived as a threat to his culture or values.
Okonkwo’s arrogant pride makes him believe that the clan leaders would eventually reunite the clan and drive the British Colonisers out of Umuofia. Hoping that the clan will follow his lead, Okonkwo beheads a messenger of the British who is sent to break up a village meeting regarding the possibility of going to war. However, the clan instead of following Okonkwo’s symbolic action is shocked by Okonkwo’s brutality. Okonkwo recognizes (“anagnorisis”) that Umuofia would not go to war, because the clan “had broken into tumult instead of action”. Okonkwo knows that he must now face his disgrace alone.

The Igbo culture had made Okonkwo a hero, but the Igbo culture changed with the coming of the British Colonisers. Okonkwo, a hero, would rather die than be humiliated by his enemies and by committing suicide Okonkwo prevented the European Colonisers from getting revenge. Aristotle’s statement, “Man, when perfect, is the best of animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all”, embodies the rise and fall of Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe’s novel. Okonkwo, like many tragic heroes before him, maybe a hero but his tragic flaw prevents him from achieving true greatness as a human being.

**Use of Language in Things Fall Apart**

Writers in Third World countries that were formerly colonies of European nations debate among themselves about their duty to write in their native language rather than in the language of their former colonizer. Some of these writers argue that writing in their native language is imperative because cultural subtleties and meanings are lost in translation. For these writers, a "foreign" language can never fully describe their culture.

**Choosing a Language:** - Achebe maintains the opposite view. In a 1966 essay reprinted in his book Morning Yet on Creation Day, he says that, by using English, he presents "a new voice coming out of Africa, speaking of African experience in a worldwide language." He recommends that the African writer 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. [The writer] should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience." Achebe accomplishes this goal by innovatively introducing Igbo language, proverbs, metaphors, speech rhythms, and ideas into a novel written in English.

Achebe agrees, however, with many of his fellow African writers on one point: The African writer must write for a social purpose. In contrast to Western writers and artists who create art for art’s sake, many African writers create works with one mission in mind — to re-establish their own national culture in the postcolonial era. In a 1964 statement, also published in Morning Yet on Creation Day, Achebe comments that African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans. . . . their societies were not mindless, but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, . . . they had poetry, and above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that African people all but lost during the colonial period, and it is this that they must now regain.
To further his aim of disseminating African works to a non-African audience, Achebe became the founding editor for a series on African literature — the African Writers Series — for the publishing firm Heinemann.

**The Use of English:** Achebe presents the complexities and depths of an African culture to readers of other cultures as well as to readers of his own culture. By using English — in which he has been proficient since childhood — he reaches many more readers and has a much greater literary impact than he would by writing in a language such as Igbo. Writers who write in their native language must eventually allow their works to be translated, often into English, so readers outside the culture can learn about it.

Yet by using English, Achebe faces a problem. How can he present the African heritage and culture in a language that can never describe it adequately? Indeed, one of the primary tasks of Things Fall Apart is to confront this lack of understanding between the Igbo culture and the colonialist culture. In the novel, the Igbo ask how the white man can call Igbo customs bad when he does not even speak the Igbo language. An understanding of Igbo culture can only be possible when the outsider can relate to the Igbo language and terminology.

Achebe solves this problem by incorporating elements of the Igbo language into his novel. By incorporating Igbo words, rhythms, language, and concepts into an English text about his culture, Achebe goes a long way to bridge a cultural divide.

The Igbo vocabulary is merged into the text almost seamlessly so the reader understands the meaning of most Igbo words by their context. Can any attentive reader of Things Fall Apart remain unfamiliar with words and concepts represented by chi, egwugwu, ogbanje, and obi? Such Igbo terms as chi and ogbanje are essentially untranslatable, but by using them in the context of his story, Achebe helps the non-Igbo reader identify with and relate to this complex Igbo culture.

Chi, for example, represents a significant, complex Igbo concept that Achebe repeatedly refers to by illustrating the concept in various contexts throughout the story. Achebe translates chi as personal god when he first mentions Unoka's bad fortune. As the book progresses, it gradually picks up other nuances. As discussed in the Analysis section for Chapter 3, the chi concept is more complex than a personal deity or even fate, another frequently used synonym. Chi suggests elements of the Hindu concept of karma, the concept of the soul in some Christian denominations, and the concept of individuality in some mystical philosophies. The understanding of chi and its significance in Igbo culture grows as one progresses through the book.

Another example of Achebe's incorporation of Igbo elements is his frequent reference to traditional Igbo proverbs and tales. These particular elements give Things Fall Apart an authentic African voice. The Igbo culture is fundamentally an oral one — that is, "Among the Igbo, the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten" (Chapter1). To provide an authentic feel for Igbo culture would be impossible without also allowing the proverbs to play a significant role in the novel. And despite the foreign origin of these proverbs and tales...
relate very well to many of them. They are woven smoothly into their context and require only occasional explanation or elaboration. These proverbs and tales are, in fact, quite similar in spirit to Western sayings and fables.

Modern-day readers of this novel not only relate easily to traditional proverbs and tales but also sympathize with the problems of Okonkwo, Nwoye, and other characters. Achebe has skillfully developed his characters, and even though they live in a different era and a very different culture, one can readily understand their motivations and their feelings because they are universal and timeless.

Speech patterns and rhythms are occasionally used to represent moments of high emotion and tension. Consider the sound of the drums in the night in Chapter 13 (go-di-di-go-di-go); the call repeated several times to unite a gathering followed by its group response, first described in Chapter 2 (Umuofia kwenu. . .Yaa!); the agonized call of the priestess seeking Ezinma in Chapter 11 (Agbala do-o-o-o!); the repetitious pattern of questions and answers in the isa-ifi marriage ritual in Chapter 14; the long narrated tale of Tortoise in Chapter 11; and the excerpts from songs in several chapters.

Achebe adds another twist in his creative use of language by incorporating a few examples of Pidgin English. Pidgin is a simplified form of language used for communicating between groups of people who normally speak different languages. Achebe uses only a few Pidgin words or phrases — tie-tie (to tie); kotma (a crude form of court messenger); and Yes, sah — just enough to suggest that a form of Pidgin English was being established. As colonialists, the British were adept at installing Pidgin English in their new colonies. Unfortunately, Pidgin sometimes takes on characteristics of master-servant communication; it can sound patronizing on the one hand, and subservient on the other. Furthermore, using the simplified language can become an easy excuse for not learning the standard languages for which it substitutes.

Achebe's use of Igbo language, speech patterns, proverbs, and richly drawn characters creates an authentic African story that effectively bridges the cultural and historical gap between the reader and the Igbo. Things Fall Apart is a groundbreaking work for many reasons, but particularly because Achebe's controlled use of the Igbo language in an English novel extends the boundaries of what is considered English fiction. Achebe's introduction of new forms and language into a traditional (Western) narrative structure to communicate unique African experiences forever changed the definition of world literature.

**Pronunciation of Igbo Names and Words:** Like Chinese, the Igbo language is a tonal one; that is, differences in the actual voice pitch and the rise or fall of a word or phrase can produce different meanings. In Chapter 16, for example, Achebe describes how the missionary's translator, though an Igbo, cannot pronounce the Mbanto Igbo dialect: "Instead of saying 'myself' he always said 'my buttocks.'" (The form k means strength while k means buttocks.)

Igbo names usually represent meanings — often entire ideas. Some names reflect the qualities that a parent wishes to bestow on a child; for example, Ikemefuna means my power should not be dispersed. Other names reflect the time, area...
circumstances to which a child is born; for example, Okoye means man born on Oye Day, the second day of the Igbo week. And Igbo parents also give names to honour someone or something else; for instance, Nneka means mother is supreme.

Prior to Nigerian independence in 1960, the spelling of Igbo words was not standardized. Thus the word Igbo is written as Ibo, the pre-1960 spelling throughout Things Fall Apart. The new spellings reflect a more accurate understanding and pronunciation of Igbo words. The List of Characters includes a pronunciation that uses equivalent English syllables for most of the main characters’ names.

**To The Lighthouse**

**Twentieth Century Novel**

The Novel as the Modern Epic
The stream of Consciousness Novel
The modern Psychological Novel

**Introduction:** Modern novels have taken place of the ancient epics. The magnitude of epic is not its volume or narrative enlargement; rather it is expansion of thought and perception. An epic reflects the conscience of an age, its life style and thought equilibrium. Thus, from Homer to Milton the epics become the carriage of social, moral and communal representation. Later, the same search of age – consciousness is done, at least tried, through the dramas. The dramas have their limitation in its time frame and dramaturgic setting. Even Shakespeare fails to cross these limitations. After many currents and cross currents of prose-lyrics become multi-faceted, many – sided, complex and abundantly rich in it astonishing variety. The modern novelists are reading the conscience of his characters through the medium of his own, and by the process the dimensional mirror of novel is reflecting an age conscience which we have already read in epics. Modern novel is truly the ‘comic prose epic’. (Fielding)

**Dialogism:** Mikhael Bakhtin has pointed out a singular characteristic of the novel – the dialogic quality. The traditional epics compact diverse elements in life and looks upon humanity with a vaster sweep of vision. The novels, however, actively assimilate aspects of life – crisis, correlation and combination – out of which a dimensional thought is expressed. In the 19th century, Dickens and Balzac have successfully depleted the multidimensional qualities in their pragmatic fictional works.

In all these efforts there have been a giant leap into the terrain of humanism but yet the possibility of grossness looms large. The totality of the storyline seems here mechanical – a piling of facts, elements, incidents and characters. Here is no harmony, rather assimilation. Henry James thus accuses these traditional
monsters’. Thus through the passage of James, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Tomas Mann there comes an inwardness in the novel and give birth to the stream of consciousness novel.

**The Stream of consciousness Technique in Fiction:** A withdrawal from the external phenomena into flickering half shades of the author’s private world is the basic pattern of stream of consciousness novel. It occupies with time, subjectivity, inwardness, absence of action, plot and catastrophe. The stream of consciousness novel does not adhere to the concept of reality. From the Freudian and Youngian concept here the reality lies not in the outer actions, but in the inner working of the human mind, in the inner perceptions. Consciousness is a constant flow, not jointed, and not chopped up in bits. It is the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life. By this technique, the novelists try to catch the flow of life before it hardens into intellectual concepts and mechanical habits.

The novel based on this technique is mostly psychological. Emphasis lies on the individual and that too on the inner working of his mind. There is definite change in the concept of reality. There is decay of plot, decay of character. Actually the entire method of characterization is changed. The ‘stream of consciousness’ technique novelists record the impressions upon the mind of the character. It is the interior monologue of the character.

The modern novel is free and frank treatment of sex, love and marriage. The preoccupation of the modern novel with sex themes is very much due to the theories of psychologists like Freud and Havelock Ellis and the frustration, boredom and brutality caused by the two devastating world wars. The writers’ life of Kafka, James Joyce, and Henry James rightfully exhibits this.

The novels written by Stream of Consciousness writers clearly reflect the decay of plot and there is a tendency of discontinuity instead of continuity of action. They do not particularly care about neatly finishing off a given action, following it through the fall of the curtain. In short, these novels are like incomplete sentence. The great modern novels like Ulysses by Joyce or Pilgrimages by Dorothy Richardson are still stories, but they are stories without an ending, and the characteristic modern novel is a story without an ending. Despite of these, these novels are a serious art form which is well constructed in its aesthetic unity. Henry James, Conrad, Mrs. Woolf and other novelists have given careful thought to the aesthetics of the novel and propounded their own theory.

**A few notable writers of Stream of consciousness novels:** Undoubtedly Dorothy Richardson is the English writer who is the pioneer in this field and who presents stream of consciousness writing at its purest. But among the other writers Mrs Woolf is notable writer whose Mrs Dalloway and To The Lighthouse are her immortal creation. Her Mrs. Dalloway is the interior monologue of Clarissa Dalloway whose party remains a delusive notion of our culture. Clarissa in her stream of thought finds out the hoax meaningless sociological norms and customs. The suicide of Septimus has no impact on anybody even to Dr Brads who instigated her to commit suicide. The crisis of the society haunts in this novel.

James Joyce’s Ulysses is a masterpiece in this genre. The hero of the novel Leopold Bloom and his monologue of a single day in the slum of Dublin city constitut
novel. Bloom is loitering to and fro, interacts with different persons – particularly with his wife and affectionate son like youth Stephen Dedalus. Within these twenty four hours of stream of conscience the three thousand years history of European culture, creative and experimental assimilate into a harmonious whole. His other novel A Portrait also roughly defines the stream of consciousness in the opening and closing pages of the novel. The emphasis in the stream of consciousness method is on the psychic being of the characters and the associate mode is kept in the forefront of Stephen’s consciousness.

Virginia Woolf’s To The Lighthouse is an experiment towards a new method of satisfactory re-creating the reality inherent in human personality. The Pilgrimage by Dorothy Richardson is without plot, comedy – tragedy, love interest or catastrophe. Here is only Miriam Henderson, living from day to day, experiencing, feeling, and reacting to the stimuli of the outside world of people and things.

Conclusion: The stream of Conscience is also called the psychological novel, the novel of subjectivity, the novel of the interior monologue. Enriched by the philosophic thinkers like James, Freud, Jung, Adler and Bergson, the novelists like Proust, James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf preoccupy with the subjectivity, inwardness, absence of plot and action and to the deepest recesses of the human psychology. But above all these novels as an organized symmetry have tried to rich the ‘dialogism’ and ‘carnivalesque’ – the two true essence of any epic writing.

Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf was born on January 25, 1882, a descendant of one of Victorian England’s most prestigious literary families. Her father, Sir Leslie Stephen, was the editor of the Dictionary of National Biography and was married to the daughter of the writer William Thackeray. Woolf grew up among the most important and influential British intellectuals of her time and received free rein to explore her father’s library. Her personal connections and abundant talent soon opened doors for her. Woolf wrote that she found herself in “a position where it was easier on the whole to be eminent than obscure.” Almost from the beginning, her life was a precarious balance of extraordinary success and mental instability.

As a young woman, Woolf wrote for the prestigious Times Literary Supplement, and as an adult she quickly found herself at the centre of England’s most important literary community. Known as the “Bloomsbury Group” after the section of London in which its members lived, this group of writers, artists, and philosophers emphasized nonconformity, aesthetic pleasure, and intellectual freedom, and included such luminaries as the painter Lytton Strachey, the novelist E. M. Forster, the composer Benjamin Britten, and the economist John Maynard Keynes. Working among such an inspirational group of peers and possessing an incredible talent in her own right, Woolf published her most famous novels by the mid-1920s, including The Voyage Out, Mrs. Dalloway, Orlando, and To the Lighthouse. With these works she reached the pinnacle of her profession.

Woolf’s life was equally dominated by mental illness. Her parents died when she was young—her mother in 1895 and her father in 1904—and she was prone to intense, terrible headaches and emotional breakdowns. After her father’s death, she attempted
suicide, throwing herself out a window. Though she married Leonard Woolf in 1912 and loved him deeply, she was not entirely satisfied romantically or sexually. For years she sustained an intimate relationship with the novelist Vita Sackville-West. Late in life, Woolf became terrified by the idea that another nervous breakdown was close at hand, one from which she would not recover. On March 28, 1941, she wrote her husband a note stating that she did not wish to spoil his life by going mad. She then drowned herself in the River Ouse.

Woolf’s writing bears the mark of her literary pedigree as well as her struggle to find meaning in her own unsteady existence. Written in a poised, understated, and elegant style, her work examines the structures of human life, from the nature of relationships to the experience of time. Yet her writing also addresses issues relevant to her era and literary circle. Throughout her work she celebrates and analyses the Bloomsbury values of aestheticism, feminism, and independence. Moreover, her stream-of-consciousness style was influenced by, and responded to, the work of the French thinker Henri Bergson and the novelists Marcel Proust and James Joyce.

This style allows the subjective mental processes of Woolf’s characters to determine the objective content of her narrative. In To the Lighthouse (1927), one of her most experimental works, the passage of time, for example, is modulated by the consciousness of the characters rather than by the clock. The events of a single afternoon constitute over half the book, while the events of the following ten years are compressed into a few dozen pages. Many readers of To the Lighthouse, especially those who are not versed in the traditions of modernist fiction, find the novel strange and difficult. Its language is dense and the structure amorphous. Compared with the plot-driven Victorian novels that came before it, To the Lighthouse seems to have little in the way of action. Indeed, almost all of the events take place in the characters’ minds.

Although To the Lighthouse is a radical departure from the nineteenth-century novel, it is, like its more traditional counterparts, intimately interested in developing characters and advancing both plot and themes. Woolf’s experimentation has much to do with the time in which she lived: the turn of the century was marked by bold scientific developments. Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution undermined an unquestioned faith in God that was, until that point, nearly universal, while the rise of psychoanalysis, a movement led by Sigmund Freud, introduced the idea of an unconscious mind. Such innovation in ways of scientific thinking had great influence on the styles and concerns of contemporary artists and writers like those in the Bloomsbury Group. To the Lighthouse exemplifies Woolf’s style and many of her concerns as a novelist. With its characters based on her own parents and siblings, it is certainly her most autobiographical fictional statement, and in the characters of Mr. Ramsay, Mrs. Ramsay, and Lily Briscoe, Woolf offers some of her most penetrating explorations of the workings of the human consciousness as it perceives and analyses, feels and interacts.

**About To the Lighthouse**

To the Lighthouse (1927) is widely considered one of the most important works of the twentieth century. With this ambitious novel, Woolf established herself as one of the leading writers of modernism. The novel develops innovative literary techniques to reveal women’s experience and to provide an alternative to male-dominated views of
reality. On the surface, the novel tells the story of the Ramsay family and the guests who come to stay with them at their vacation home on the Hebrides Islands in Scotland. At its heart, however, the novel is a meditation on time and how humans reckon with its relentless passage.

The novel was written and published during one of the most dense and impressive periods of development in English literary history. The modernist period gave rise to many ground-breaking and enduring masterworks, such as T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land, William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury, and James Joyce's Ulysses. This was also a period of rapid intellectual achievement, and Woolf's emphasis on consciousness and a character's inner lives is consistent with the scientific and psychological ideas posited at the time. As Sigmund Freud explored theories of consciousness and sub consciousness, Virginia Woolf wrote a novel that focuses not on the events of the external world but on the richness and complexity of mental interiority.

Thus, to convey this sense of human consciousness, Woolf's narrative departs from the traditional plot-driven structure as it is often expressed by an objective, third-party narrative. Instead she incorporates highly innovative literary devices to capture the thought process, using in particular stream of consciousness and free indirect discourse. Given that the novel is defined by subjectivity, it focuses on the subjectivity of reality, experience, and time. The novel also represents the interweaving of various perspectives and individual trains of thought that, strung together, constitute a cohesive whole.

**Character List**

**Mrs. Ramsay:** Mrs. Ramsay is the loving and hospitable wife of Mr. Ramsay. She is highly domestic, focusing on her roles as mother and wife. She deeply admires her husband, although she cannot tell him that she loves him. She is responsible and strong, but she dies unexpectedly in her fifties.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Mr. Ramsay is dominated by rationality and scientific reason. He is in search of truth and greatness, and he fears that he is rather inadequate for not achieving his aims. Neither affectionate nor sentimental, he nevertheless inspires admiration in his wife, although she becomes irritated with his insensitivity.

**Lily Briscoe:** A young, unmarried painter friend of the Ramsays. She is extremely fond of Mrs. Ramsay and feels a profound sense of emptiness after she dies. She begins a portrait at the beginning of the novel that she cannot finish until the end, ten years later, when the Ramsays reach the Lighthouse.

**James Ramsay:** The youngest Ramsay child, James is six years old when the book begins. He adores his mother and is violently resentful of his father. He enjoys cutting images out of magazines and wants desperately to go to the Lighthouse when he is young.

**Paul Rayley:** A young friend of the Ramsays, visiting them at their summer home, Paul proposes to Minta Doyle on the beach as Mrs. Ramsay wished.
Minta Doyle: - A young woman visiting the Ramsays at their summer home, Minta accepts Paul Rayley's marriage proposal.

Charles Tansley: - An odious atheist whom none of the Ramsays particularly like, Charles is one of Mr. Ramsay's philosophy pupils. He is insulting and chauvinistic, trying to discourage Lily from painting. He is often concerned with the affairs and status of others and is very self-centred. He finds Mrs. Ramsay quite beautiful and is proud to be seen walking with her.

William Bankes: - An old friend of the Ramsays visiting their summer home, William is a botanist. He is a gentle man of about 60, and Mrs. Ramsay hopes that he will marry Lily Briscoe—making thinly veiled attempts at getting them together. He and Lily remain close friends, and she trusts him deeply.

Augustus Carmichael: - An unhappy poet who takes opium and achieves little success until after World War I. Because of his controlling wife, he is not fond of Mrs. Ramsay.

Andrew Ramsay: - The oldest son of the Ramsays, Andrew accompanies Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle on their engagement walk to the beach. He is a gifted mathematician, but he dies fighting in World War I.

Jasper Ramsay: - One of the Ramsay sons. He enjoys shooting birds, which disturbs his mother, while Mr. Ramsay thinks that doing so is normal for a boy of his age.

Roger Ramsay: - One of the Ramsay sons, Roger is adventurous and most similar to his sister, Nancy.

Prue Ramsay: - Prue is the oldest of the Ramsays' daughters, and her mother expects her to be an exceptional beauty when she grows up. Although Prue marries, she dies during the following summer of an illness related to childbirth.

Rose Ramsay: - One of the Ramsay daughters, Rose is aesthetically inclined. She enjoys making beautiful arrangements and choosing her mother's jewelry.

Nancy Ramsay: - One of the Ramsay daughters, Nancy is adventurous and independent, secretly hoping for a life much different from her mother's. She does not seem domestic. She accompanies Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle on their engagement walk to the beach.

Cam Ramsay: - Cam is the Ramsays' youngest daughter. She is an energetic and mischievous child, and Mrs. Ramsay laments that she must grow up and suffer. Cam sails with James and Mr. Ramsay to the Lighthouse in the final section of the novel.

Mrs. McNab: - The witless and leering housekeeper, Mrs. McNab is asked to enter the Ramsays' home after years of disuse to open the windows and dust the bedrooms.

Macalister: - A fisherman friend who accompanies the Ramsays to the Lighthouse.

Macalister's boy: - The fisherman's son who rows the Ramsays to the Light
**Badger:** - The Ramsays' toothless dog.

**Kennedy:** - The Ramsays' lazy gardener.

**Mrs. Bast:** - A woman who comes to help Mrs. McNab clean the Ramsays' summer home during the "Time Passes" interlude.

**George Bast:** - Mrs. Bast's son, who also helps clean the Ramsays' house.

**Mrs. Beckwith:** - A visitor to the Ramsay house at the Lighthouse.

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**To The Lighthouse: Plot Overview**

To the Lighthouse is divided into three sections: “The Window,” “Time Passes,” and “The Lighthouse.” Each section is fragmented into stream-of-consciousness contributions from various narrators.

“The Window” opens just before the start of World War I. Mr. Ramsay and Mrs. Ramsay bring their eight children to their summer home in the Hebrides (a group of islands west of Scotland). Across the bay from their house stands a large lighthouse. Six-year-old James Ramsay wants desperately to go to the lighthouse, and Mrs. Ramsay tells him that they will go the next day if the weather permits. James reacts gleefully, but Mr. Ramsay tells him coldly that the weather looks to be foul. James resents his father and believes that he enjoys being cruel to James and his siblings.

The Ramsays host a number of guests, including the dour Charles Tansley, who admires Mr. Ramsay’s work as a metaphysical philosopher. Also at the house is Lily Briscoe, a young painter who begins a portrait of Mrs. Ramsay. Mrs. Ramsay wants Lily to marry William Bankes, an old friend of the Ramsays, but Lily resolves to remain single. Mrs. Ramsay does manage to arrange another marriage, however, between Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle, two of their acquaintances.

During the course of the afternoon, Paul proposes to Minta, Lily begins her painting, Mrs. Ramsay soothes the resentful James, and Mr. Ramsay frets over his shortcomings as a philosopher, periodically turning to Mrs. Ramsay for comfort. That evening, the Ramsays host a seemingly ill-fated dinner party. Paul and Minta are late returning from their walk on the beach with two of the Ramsays’ children. Lily bristles at outspoken comments made by Charles Tansley, who suggests that women can neither paint nor write. Mr. Ramsay reacts rudely when Augustus Carmichael, a poet, asks for a second plate of soup. As the night draws on, however, these missteps right themselves, and the guests come together to make a memorable evening.

The joy, however, like the party itself, cannot last, and as Mrs. Ramsay leaves her guests in the dining room, she reflects that the event has already slipped into the past. Later, she joins her husband in the parlor. The couple sits quietly together, until Mr. Ramsay’s characteristic insecurities interrupt their peace. He wants his wife to tell him that she loves him. Mrs. Ramsay is not one to make such pronouncements, but she concedes to his point made earlier in the day that the weather will be too rough for a trip...
to the lighthouse the next day. Mr. Ramsay thus knows that Mrs. Ramsay loves him. Night falls, and one night quickly becomes another.

Time passes more quickly as the novel enters the “Time Passes” segment. War breaks out across Europe. Mrs. Ramsay dies suddenly one night. Andrew Ramsay, her oldest son, is killed in battle, and his sister Prue dies from an illness related to childbirth. The family no longer vacations at its summerhouse, which falls into a state of disrepair: weeds take over the garden and spiders nest in the house. Ten years pass before the family returns. Mrs. McNab, the housekeeper, employs a few other women to help set the house in order. They rescue the house from oblivion and decay, and everything is in order when Lily Briscoe returns.

In “The Lighthouse” section, time returns to the slow detail of shifting points of view, similar in style to “The Window.” Mr. Ramsay declares that he and James and Cam, one of his daughters, will journey to the lighthouse. On the morning of the voyage, delays throw him into a fit of temper. He appeals to Lily for sympathy, but, unlike Mrs. Ramsay, she is unable to provide him with what he needs. The Ramsays set off, and Lily takes her place on the lawn, determined to complete a painting she started but abandoned on her last visit. James and Cam bristle at their father’s blustery behavior and are embarrassed by his constant self-pity. Still, as the boat reaches its destination, the children feel a fondness for him. Even James, whose skill as a sailor Mr. Ramsay praises, experiences a moment of connection with his father, though James so willfully resents him. Across the bay, Lily puts the finishing touch on her painting. She makes a definitive stroke on the canvas and puts her brush down, finally having achieved her vision.

“**To the Lighthouse**” : **Historical Context**

**Victorian to Modern:** The period of Virginia Woolf’s life spanned the transition from the Victorian to the modern world. In the nineteenth century, the industrial revolution had made Britain the ‘factory to the world’ and solidified its economic power. The British Empire was at the height of its power and influence. In people’s daily lives the church occupied a central place, and class positions and gender roles seemed fixed. Yet between the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, when Woolf was 19, and the end of the Second World War, almost every aspect of British life changed. The impact of two world wars, prolonged economic depression in the 1930s, and the rise of the USA and the Soviet Union as rival world powers meant that by the latter half of the twentieth century, Britain had lost its global pre-eminence, and witnessed radical social, cultural, and political changes.

When Virginia Woolf was born in 1882, horses and carriages rattled past her home in Kensington; by the time she died in 1941, formations of jet aircraft roared overhead and threatened oblivion from the air. Less deadly, but no less revolutionary, the radio, the telephone and the automobile altered the rhythms and expectations of everyday life. The expansion of the voting franchise and increases in leisure time for workers meant that class divisions were weakened, and more of the population than ever before had a voice in politics and a share of cultural life. The creation of a welfare state in 1945 represented to many in Britain a clean break from a world organized by the wealthy, for the wealthy.
As the radical ideas of thinkers such as Marx, Freud, and Einstein began to take hold, and the influence of religion weakened, people began to challenge orthodoxy and tradition, and agitate for fairer treatment of the poor and of women. It was in this spirit of modern rebellion that Virginia moved with her adult siblings out of the family home and into the (then rather seedy) London district of Bloomsbury to forge a new kind of living arrangement. Virginia and her sister Vanessa rejected the idea of a home presided over by a woman like their mother, the Victorian ‘angel in the house,’ and determined that instead of serving tea and looking decorative, they would take part in intellectual discussions with their brothers and friends. At the same time, however, Woolf and her friends and acquaintances in the free-thinking ‘Bloomsbury Group’ never questioned the necessity of employing servants to run even their most progressive of households.

To the Lighthouse in its time: - The First World War broke out suddenly in the summer of 1914 and dragged on far longer, and at vastly greater cost, than anyone had dared to predict. In Britain, thousands of young men responded to appeals to join up in defense of nation and ‘civilization,’ and found themselves stuck, in Ezra Pound’s words, ‘eye-deep in hell,’ living in trenches alongside rats and corpses, and measuring their progress and victories in inches. The destruction of the landscape of battle, of human bodies, and of lives was unprecedented and indescribable, and for many writers and artists like Woolf, grouped under the loose term ‘modernist,’ it represented a decisive, irreparable break from the past and a need for new forms of representation in art and literature.

To The Lighthouse (1927), along with Woolf’s two preceding novels Jacob’s Room (1922) and Mrs. Dalloway (1925), emerges from the period of painful recovery from the war, and displays Woolf’s innovations in prose fiction. Most strikingly, the major events of the novel -are contained in brief, condensed parentheses, while the day-to-day thoughts and memories of the characters expand to fill the surrounding pages. Although the novel is set on an island off the coast of Scotland, the house and surrounding landscape (including the lighthouse) are closely based on St. Ives, Cornwall, where the Stephen family spent their summers until Virginia’s mother’s death in 1895. It has therefore often been read as one of Woolf’s most autobiographical novels. To the Lighthouse was first published by the Hogarth Press, established by Virginia and her husband Leonard in 1917 in the basement of their home, Hogarth House, in Richmond, west London. Woolf called it ‘easily the best of my books,’ and it sold so well that she and Leonard were able to buy their first car.

To the Lighthouse: Major Themes

Ephemerality: - Ephemeral means something which lasts for a short period of time. Few novels capture the ephemeral nature of life as poignantly as Virginia Woolf’s To the Lighthouse. Reality, when conceived of as a collection of fleeting moments, seems as chaotic and fluid as ocean waves. Each of the main characters struggles with this realization, and they all grasp for symbols of permanence and stability despite their understanding of the transience of experience. Mrs. Ramsay, consumed by a need to connect herself to lasting experiences, looks to the pulsating glow of the Lighthouse to unite her experience with a sense of endurance. For her, the steady stroke of the Lighthouse light represents stability and permanence. For this reason, she connects herself to it, unites herself with it, in the hope of gaining a similar sense of connection.
both to her present and to eternity. In fact, she seeks not only to unite herself with the permanent objects in the physical world, but also to unite her friends, family, and guests in the creation of lasting beauty.

Whereas Mrs. Ramsay's search for permanence lies in the emotional realm of experience, her husband's is based entirely in the intellectual sphere. He longs to transcend his own lifetime with an important philosophical contribution, yet feels practically certain that this goal is unachievable. Lily Briscoe suffers from a similar fear that her paintings will be thrown into the attic, never to be fully appreciated and never to make a lasting impression.

By the culmination of the novel, however, Lily is able to surrender this need for permanence and meaning, and she is thus finally able to fulfil her artistic vision. This final scene suggests that Lily can only achieve a sense of fulfilment because she is able to relinquish her need for a permanently significant existence. She finally embraces the ephemeral nature of the countless experiences that constitute a lifetime.

**Subjective Reality:** The omniscient narrator remained the standard explicative figure in fiction through the end of the nineteenth century, providing an informed and objective account of the characters and the plot. The turn of the 20th century, however, witnessed innovations in writing that aimed at reflecting a more truthful account of the subjective nature of experience. Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* is the triumphant product of this innovation, creating a reality that is completely constructed by the collection of the multiple subjective interiorities of its characters and presented in a stream-of-consciousness format. Woolf creates a fictional world in which no objective, omniscient narrator is present. There is a proliferation of accounts of the inner processes of the characters, while there is a scarcity of expositional information, expressing Woolf's perspective on the thoughts and reflections that comprise the world of the Ramsays.

Time is an essential component of experience and reality and, in many ways, the novel is about the passage of time. However, as for reality, Woolf does not represent time in a traditional way. Rather than a steady and unchanging rhythm, time here is a forward motion that both accelerates and collapses. In "The Window" and "The Lighthouse," time is conveyed only through the consciousness of the various characters, and moments last for pages as the reader is invited into the subjective experiences of many different realities. Indeed, "The Window" takes place over the course of a single afternoon that is expanded by Woolf's method, and "The Lighthouse" seems almost directly connected to the first section, despite the fact that ten years have actually elapsed. However, in "Time Passes," ten years are greatly compacted into a matter of pages, and the changes in the lives of the Ramsay's and their home seem to flash by like scenes viewed from the window of a moving train. This unsteady temporal rhythm brilliantly conveys the broader sense of instability and change that the characters strive to comprehend, and it captures the fleeting nature of a reality that exists only within and as a collection of the various subjective experiences of reality.

**The Presence of the Lighthouse:** The Lighthouse is distant, old, and set against a landscape that fades to the farthest horizon, encompassing the length of visible space. This is a majestic image of a pillar of presiding stability and constant observation. It is a presence that extends beyond the physical and chronological boundaries of the Ramsay's...
and their world, observing them and illuminating the rooms in which the contents of their minds are bared.

The Lighthouse offers a life force to Mrs. Ramsay and her family, propelling both the plot (the novel opens with the conflict surrounding James's desire to go to it) and the streams of consciousness that ensue. It has a clear and significant presence in this world, yet it is inanimate, not conscious, and it is a figure characterized by its distance from the immediate events of the novel. It seems somewhat elusive and intangible, having indistinct boundaries and features. The setting of the Lighthouse recedes into a realm "uninhabited by men" and therefore signifies a realm and life force that the characters cannot enter themselves. It is distant, intangible, and elusive.

Yet its qualities are permanent and ever-present. The Lighthouse is Mrs. Ramsay's source of stability and permanence, and it is the force that defines and joins the members of the Ramsay family. It is even present in their home during the ten years that the family is not there-presiding over the abandoned house.

**Art as Unity and Permanence:** - In the novel, art is defined by Lily (the novel's central artist) as something able to unify disparate elements into a cohesive whole. When she looks at her canvas, awaiting the fulfilment of her vision, she contemplates how she will incorporate several people and objects into the work in order to create a unified and singular product. This goal, she believes, is the responsibility of the artist, and her artistry represents her way of finding a sense of meaningful permanence in her existence.

Unity is also directly associated with permanence in the novel. Mrs. Ramsay's most active desire is to create moments of complete connection and unity between people. At her dinner party, she is disturbed by the lack of cohesion, and it is not until a fleeting moment when everyone seems to merge and assimilate into a single unit that she feels fulfilled. Such moments provide her with a sense of stability and endurance, for she knows that they will continue to exist in the memories of others even after she is dead.

In Mrs. Ramsay's preoccupation with cohesion, and in the connection between cohesion and art, Mrs. Ramsay herself comes to be a sort of artist. Lily acknowledges this figuration near the end of the novel, creating yet another connection with the deceased woman.

**The Dichotomous Representation of Water:** - Water has a great role throughout the novel, in particular as the characters spend a great deal of time looking at the sea that separates the Ramsay's summer home from the Lighthouse. The symbolism of the water is complex, however, for it seems to represent both permanence and ephemerality. Mrs. Ramsay enjoys listening to the waves beating against the shore. The rhythm is steady and constant, serving as a symbol of consistency and eternity. She learns to depend upon this sound, and it soothes her, providing a deep sense of stability.

Yet water also represents a destructive and erosive force. As Mr. Ramsay stands outside viewing the sea, he reflects that the piece of land beneath his feet will one day be completely worn away and consumed by the sea. In this sense, the sea is a constant and eternal force that magnifies its effects over time and ultimately proves the ephemerality of whatever it touches.
Time: - Time is one of the major themes of To the Lighthouse. Most of the adult characters fixate on the concept of time in one way or another. Mrs. Ramsay cannot help but notice that the present moment becomes the past, and she seeks objects in the external world to ground her in the moment. She also frets endlessly about how time will change her children's lives. She does not want James and Cam to grow up, for she knows that they will inevitably suffer. In essence, she wishes to stop time for her children, allowing them to be young and carefree forever.

Mr. Ramsay is obsessed with the future and, more specifically, the future of his career. He desperately longs to achieve greatness as a philosopher, but is almost certain that he will not, and he is preoccupied by envisioning the future and predicting whether or not he will be recognized and remembered. He is grief-stricken with the notion that no one will read his books after he has gone, and he laments the fact that young scholars are not interested in his work because they are, after all, the future leaders in the field.

Lily Briscoe is also preoccupied with time, but her fixation changes shape over the course of the novel. Originally, she shares similar concerns with Mr. Ramsay, wondering if her paintings will amount to anything and whether anyone will ever see them. By the final section of the novel, however, her thoughts are located more in the past and in her memories of Mrs. Ramsay. It is partially the effect of these memories that propels her forward and brings her vision into focus.

The Subversion of Female Gender Roles: - Many of the women in To the Lighthouse either overtly or silently subvert conventional female gender roles. Lily Briscoe, for example, has no desire to marry, but rather wants only to dedicate herself to her work (much like Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Bankes). She is independent and self-sufficient, and she is able to disregard Mr. Tansley's chauvinistic comments about women being unable to paint. Despite Mrs. Ramsay's persuasion, she holds her ground throughout the novel, refusing to become any man's wife. These choices and ideas were very unconventional in the early 20th century.

Three of Mrs. Ramsay's daughters (Nancy, Rose, and Cam) also silently reject the life that their mother chose for herself, in all of its domesticity. They know that they want their lives to be different and more complex than what they perceive as the limited realm of wife-mother, and they are headstrong and adventurous.

Moreover, the novel promises only misfortune for the women who accept the roles carved out for them. Mrs. Ramsay dies unexpectedly at a relatively young age. Prue, shortly after getting married, dies as a result of childbirth. Even Minta, who had been a somewhat unconventional lady, suffers in her marriage, for Paul leaves her for another woman. The novel seems to punish the women who accept positions as wife and mother, while it abounds with young women who are sure that they want a different existence.

To The Lighthouse : Stream of Consciousness Novel

The phrase “Stream of Consciousness” was coined by William James to describe the flow of thoughts of the waking mind. It is a person’s thoughts and conscious reactions to events, perceived as a continuous flow. In literature it is a literary style in which a character's thoughts, feelings, and reactions are depicted in a conti
uninterrupted by objective description or conventional dialogue. The related phrase “interior monologue” is used to describe the inner movement of consciousness in a character’s mind. The use of devices of the stream of consciousness and the interior monologue marks a revolution in the form of the novel because through these devices the author can represent the flux of a character’s thoughts, impressions, and emotions and reminiscences (recollections), often without any logical sequence.

According to Virginia Woolf, the conventional novel did not express life adequately. She was of the opinion that life was a shower of ever-failing atoms of experience, and not a narrative line. Life, she said, was a luminous halo (radiance), a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to end. She tried to experiment with the same technique in her novel, ‘To the Lighthouse’. In which the characters reveal themselves very much in the same way. Although she depicts character through the inner consciousness of the person whom we meet in this novel but she herself remains the controlling intelligence, speaking in the third person. While she very seldom slips in comments of her own, she remains the narrator, telling us what is going on in the various minds.

Virginia Woolf shows us a particular person in this novel not only through the consciousness of that person himself or herself, but also through the consciousness of the other persons. We are given the interior monologues of the various characters in this novel, and it is largely through the twin devices of stream of consciousness and the interior monologue that we come to know the various characters. Thus we see Mrs. Ramsay not only through her own consciousness but through the consciousness of Mr. Ramsey, the child James, Lily Briscoe, Mr. Tansley and Mr. Bankes. Similarly we come to know Mr. Ramsay not only through his own consciousness but also through the consciousness of Mrs. Ramsay, the young James, Lily Briscoe, and Mr. Bankes. In fact, every character in the novel is presented to us through his own consciousness and also through the consciousness of the other characters. At the same time, the characters are occasionally presented to us directly by the all-knowing author of the novel, and also sometimes bits of conversation or dialogue between the characters.

Mrs. Woolf’s Concern in writing novels was not merely to narrate a story as the older novelists did, but to discover and record life as the people feel who live it. Hence it is she rejected the conventional technique of narration and adopted a new technique more suited to her purposes. It is for this reason that in ‘To The Lighthouse’ she did not tell a story, in the sense of a series of events, and has concentrated on a small number of characters, whose nature and feelings are represented to us largely through their interior monologues. In order to capture the inner reality, the truth about life, she has tried to represent the moving current of life and the individual’s consciousness of the fleeting movement, and secondly, also to select from this current and organize it so that the novel may penetrate beneath the surface reality and may give to the reader a sense of understanding and completeness.

The readers are not placed directly within the minds of characters, as in the modern psychological novel, but the central intelligence of the novelist is constantly at work as the narrator, controlling and organizing the material, and illuminating it with its comments, and order emerges out of chaos. The interior mc
characters are, no doubt, given, but the novelist, the central intelligence, is also constantly busy, organizing the material and illuminating it by frequent comments. In this respect Mrs. Woolf’s technique of narration is quite different from that of the “Stream of Consciousness” novelists. Far from being a stream of Consciousness novel, ‘To the Lighthouse’ is the objective account of a central intelligence that approaches and assumes the characters. Consciousness, but does not become completely identified with any one consciousness. This central intelligence is thus free to comment upon the whole in what seems a completely impersonal manner, as this short passage shows:

“It is a triumph’ said Mr. Bankes, laying his knife down for a moment. He had eaten attentively. It was rich; it was tender. It was perfectly cooked. How did she manage these things in the depths of the country? He asked her. She was a wonderful woman. All his love, all his reverence, had returned; and she knew it.”

“It is a French recipe of my grandmother’s said Mrs. Ramsay, Speaking with a ring of great pleasure in her voice. Of course it was French. What passes for cookery in England is an abominations; it is pulling cabbages in water. It is roasting meat until it is like leather. It is cutting off the delicious skins of vegetables. ‘In which’, said Mr. Bankes,

“All the virtue of vegetables is contained” Here the central intelligence is reporting a part of the dinner Conversation.

Suspense and Curiosity are another aspect of Mrs. Woolf’s technique of narration. She taking us into the middle of scene; Mrs. Ramsay’s opening remark is the answer to unstated question, which we have to supply by picking up clues from what follows. The reader’s natural curiosity thus becomes involved. We wonder who these people are, what they are talking about and so on. As we read on, prompted by this desire to know, we begin to recognize a pattern in the narrative at same time as we assimilate names, facts, ideas. Then, too, the pattern begins to establish itself; the pattern that is, of Conversation and reaction, of the actual words in the first person and the present tense, and the reflections of the characters in the third person and the past tense. This violence of feeling is seen first in the child, James and seems natural to the exaggeration of childhood; we are thus prepared in an acceptable way for the emotions of the adult character, Tempe real by age and experience, but made more complex too.

The third person narration is a very Common novel device used by Virginia Woolf. She is very careful to mock her direction of the narrative as little noticed as possible. Her use of direct speech for the interior monologues of her characters makes it easy for her to work into these mental soliloquies a number of statements and ideas which are outside the range of knowledge of character she is dealing with.

When, for example, at the beginning, she describes the feelings of James about his father, she moves from what the child is thinking to what Mrs. Ramsay habitually did and said, through impersonal sentences:

“Had there been an ate handy, a poker, or any weapon that would have gashed a hole in his father’s breast and killed him, there and then James would have seized it. Such were the extremes of emotion that Mr. Ramsay excited in his children’s brt
mere presence: Standing: disillusioning his son and casting ridicule upon his wife, who was ten thousand times better in every way than he was (James thought), but also with some secret conceit at his own accuracy of judgment. What he said was true. It was always true. He was incapable of untruth; never tampered with a fact; never altered a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure or convenience of any mortal being, least of all of his own children, who sprung from his loins, should be aware from childhood that life is difficult.......

We can see the two currents of thoughts flowing together. Just as this third person narration makes it possible for Virginia Woolf to move smoothly from one character to another, so in the novel as a whole it is a unifying principle.

The completion of the circle is another quality of Virginia Woolf. If the arrival at the lighthouse and the completion of Lily Briscoe’s picture complete the circle of the book, and if Time Passes forms a sort of landing between the upward movements of The Window and the downward, resolving movements of The Lighthouse, we find here the same structural design. The Part I conforms to this design. Section II, when the fairy tale is finished and James has gone, has a perfect moment, rich with solitude and revelation, certainly forms a peak that communicates its exaltation to the second half of the chapter, which however, never reaches the same intensity at this may moment.

To sum up, Virginia Woolf has employed the lighthouse as a symbol and it has a number of undertones of meaning, and serves the purpose of a unifying factor in the novel. The action moves on normal constructional lines from scene to scene and from the mind of one person to that of another. These shifts from one consciousness to another and these movements are made further easy by allowing every incident to take place in a close knit homogenous world. ‘To the Lighthouse’ is a masterpiece of Construction. It is an organic whole. It is a great work of art which fully deserves the praises that have been lavished on it.

“To The Lighthouse” : Symbolism

Written from multiple perspectives and shifting between times and characters with poetic grace, “To the Lighthouse” is not concerned with ordinary story telling. Rather through integrate symbolic web it reads the mind and recounts the passage of multiple experiences of different characters in the novel. The key symbols in “To the Lighthouse” are – the sea, the lighthouse, Lily’s painting, the window, and the personalities of Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Ramsay. They are all woven together, along with many other less important ones, into a central meaning, which suggests Mrs. Woolf’s conception of life and reality. Let them study closely under the following heads.

The sea as the eternal flux of time and life The Sea with its waves is to be heard throughout the novel. It symbolizes the eternal flux of time and life, in the midst of which we all exist; it constantly changes its character. To Mrs. Ramsay at one moment it sounds soothing and consoling like a cradle song, at others, “like a ghostly roll of drums remorselessly beating a warning of death it brings terror. Sometimes its power “sweeping savagely in, “seems to reduce the individual to nothingness, at others it sends up ‘a fountain of bright water” – which seems to match the sudden springs of vitality in the human spirit.
The Lighthouse holds a whole cluster of suggestion. It is a mystery, yet a concern for day-to-day living. It is at once distant and close at the mercy of its destructive forces. The lighthouse surrounded by sea always illumines and clarifies the human condition in some way. Farther, it is the quest for the values the lighthouse suggests. The tower is frequently shadowed in mist, its beams are intermittent in the darkness, the moments of assurance they bring the momentary, but upon these assurances reality rests, by landing on the general doubts, something which seems to triumph over the eternal cycle of change. To reach the lighthouse is to establish a creative relationship.

Indeed, the lighthouse is the most important symbol and different critics have explained it in different ways. For example Russell declares that the lighthouse is the feminine creative principle. Jon Bennett calls the alternate light and shadows of the lighthouse the rhythm of joy and sorrow, understanding and misunderstanding. F.L. Overcarsh finds the novel as a whole an allegory of the old and New Testaments: Mrs. Ramsay is Eve, the Blessed virgin and Christ; Mr. Ramsay is among other things God the Father; the lighthouse is Eden and Heaven. The strokes of the lighthouse are the persons of the Trinity, the third of them, long and steady representing the Holy Ghost. The lighthouse as symbol has not one meaning, that it is a vital synthesis of time and eternity: an objective correlative for Mrs. Ramsay’s vision, after whose death it is her meaning.

The Window is a symbol of a view to oneself. It is from the window that we have the little of the part-I of “To the Lighthouse”. It is not a transparent but a separating sheet of glass between reality and Mrs. Ramsay’s mind. Mrs. Ramsay experiences such moments of revelation and integration at watching the window. It is the very symbol of the imperfection of our knowledge and riddle of human mind. It is debates about philosophy, particularly theories about visual reality on the three main philosophers of British empiricism, John Locke, George Berkeley, and David Hume. The basic argument of empiricism is whether or not a person can be empirically certain that objects have a distinct and continued existence apart from our perceptions of them.

The characters are carefully arranged in the novel in their relation to each other, so that a definite symbolic pattern emerges. Mrs. Ramsay pervades the whole book. Mrs. Ramsay is the mother of the Ramsay family who dies during the middle section of the novel. A beautiful, caring woman, she means all things to all people, and each character of “To the Lighthouse” has a different perception of her personality. Lily sees her as a mother, and doesn’t think she has ever inspired romantic passion. William Bankes and Charles Tansley adore her, and think she doesn’t realize how beautiful she is. The children see her as the “Lighthouse” of their lives—the stable, warm force that protects and guides them. She is above all the creator of fertile human relationships symbolized by her love of match making and her knitting; and of warm comfort symbolized by her green shawl. Just as Mrs. Ramsay stands for creative vitality, so Mr. Ramsay stands as the symbol of the sterile, destructive barriers to relationship. Just as Mrs. Ramsay is described in images of fertility and the warmth and comfort of love and harmony with others, Mr. Ramsay is evoked in images of sterility, hardness and cruelty and of deliberate isolation. It is to be noted that Mr. Ramsay is the father of the family is the most misunderstood character in the book, a man whose children hate him because they think he is viciously unemotional and cold.
Lily’s Picture has also got symbolic importance. Lily sees that Mrs. Ramsay’s gift of harmonizing human relationship into memorable moments is “almost like a work of art” and in the book art is the ultimate symbol for the enduring ‘reality’. In life, as Mrs. Ramsay herself well knows relationships are doomed to imperfection, and are the spot of time and change; but in art the temporal and the eternal unity in an unchanging form-through, as in Lily’s picture, the form may be very inadequate. We cannot doubt that Lily’s struggles with the composition and texture of her painting are a counter part of Virginia Woolf’s tussles and triumphs in her own medium, but she chooses poetry as the image that reminds mankind that the ever changing can yet become immortal. Lily is a Postimpressionist painter, descendant of a poor family, and has spent most of her life taking care of her father. In many ways, Lily is the chorus figure of the book—providing the histories of the characters and commenting on their actions. The beginning and completion of her painting form the frame of To the Lighthouse, and her final line, “I have had my vision,” is the final line of the novel, acting as Woolf’s own comment on her book.

To sum up, the use of symbols serve the purpose of introspection, self-awareness, and openness to the unconscious in the novel. Composed on the flow of sensations, thoughts, memories, associations, and reflections in the ambit of symbol the action moves on normal constructional lines from scene to scene and from the mind to mind. There is less complication. These shifts from one consciousness to another and these movements are made further easy by allowing every incident to take place in close-knit homogeneous world. To The Lighthouse is a masterpiece of construction through symbolism. It is an organic whole.

“To the Lighthouse” : Study of Human Relations

“To The Lighthouse” has a galaxy of fictional characters whose earnest endeavour is to establish, with varying degrees of success, happy and healthy relationship with the people around them. Accepting this as its main theme, the novel may justly be called a study of the ways and means by which satisfactory human relationship might be established with the people around them. This is because human beings seemed to Mrs. Woolf isolated and communication between them partial and often far from satisfactory.

In human society words are the main sources of communication between one person and another. Unfortunately words are very often inadequate for the purpose. This is one of the main reasons for the failure to establish healthy and satisfactory human relationships. The difficulty is that very often words cannot express the full complexity of a character’s thoughts and feelings. Then again what the words express is only a fraction of what a character thinks and feels, and as a result they become misleading. These aspects of verbal inadequacy were quite evident to Mrs. Woolf. And many of her characters reveal this inadequacy in a distinct manner. Lily feels this strongly as in the third part of the novel when she is seen standing near to Carmichael on the lawn and trying to explain Mrs. Ramsay:

“And she wanted to say not one thing, but everything. Little words that broke up the thought and dismembered it, said nothing. ‘About life, about death; about Mrs. Ramsay’—no she thought one could say nothing to nobody. The urgency of the moment...
always missed the mark. Words fluttered sideways and struck the object inches to low. Then one gave it up; For how could one express in words these emotions of the body?"

Very often it is found that silence is more expressive and eloquent than words. And Lily realises it fully. She feels in greater communication with Carmichael than if they had spoken. There sitting on the lawn in perfect silence they seem to understand each other perfectly well without exchanging even a single word. And in the final chapter of the novel Lily justly feels: ‘They had not needed to speak. They had been thinking the same thing and he had answered her without, her asking him anything’. Thus it is revealed to us that silence is often more expressive and more eloquent than words —words that fail to express ‘these emotions of the body’, and lead to the establishment of happy human relationships.

In the novel we also find that how trivial things of very little importance are greatly helpful in establishing congenial human relationships. In the beginning of the third or final movement of the book we find Mr. Ramsay the widower coming to Lily demanding sympathy. She really feels very helpless and words fail her in the beginning. Suddenly his boots catch her eyes and she praises his boots. This brings great relief and Mr. Ramsay feels satisfied. Apparently Lily’s remarks may seem silly or comic. But ‘Mr. Ramsay smiled. His pall, his draperies, his infirmities fell from him’. Thus it helped to establish perfect sympathy and understanding between Lily and Mr. Ramsay and Lily ‘felt her eyes swell and tingle with tears’.

Congenial and satisfactory human relationships are essential for happiness in our life. Logic, reason and intellect are of very little help to us for this purpose. It is through emotions that we can establish such relationships. Emotional understanding and a genuine sympathetic attitude are greatly needed for satisfactory relationships even between parents and children, and husband and wife. In the very first scene of the novel we find how far the lack of these mental aspects Mr. Ramsay becomes an intolerable tyrant or a ‘sarcastic brute’ in the eyes of his children. He tells James the dire truth ‘it won’t be fine’—without caring a bit for a young child’s dreams and desires. James feels like gashing a hole in his father’s breast to kill him there and then. But Mrs. Ramsay with her loving soul and sympathetic understanding wins the heart of the children and is tremendously loved and admired by her children. She undoubtedly soothes them by telling them that the weather might change for the better. But it is only to make the world a better and happier place.

Virginia Woolf shows us in many ways that Mrs. Ramsay plays a very significant part in To the Lighthouse to establish communication between people. This is first revealed in her genuine attempts to get Paul and Minta as well as Lily and Mr. Bankes married. And it is shown very nicely and convincingly at the dinner party where she makes the most sincere effort to get people talking, to involve them and so to create something of the time they are together.

There is a note of pretence and falsehood even in the husband-wife relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. Mrs. Ramsay cannot but praise Mr. Ramsay to his face just to booster up his confidence in a way she feels should not be necessary. He is in constant need of being reassured. His fear of failure, his resentment that he has achieved less than he should have and that his books will not last, pervert his judgement, leading him to see in praise of other men’s works disparagement
of himself. This undoubtedly puts a strain on his wife and she has to conceal things for him. Again on Mr. Ramsay’s, side too there is some sort of reserve. Mrs. Ramsay’s pessimistic conviction of the misery of life distresses him, and then he is unable to communicate with her in her moods of sadness.

The first movement of the novel The Window, traces the pattern of their relationship very skilfully from one extreme to another. In the very first scene we find them at their farthest apart when their disagreement about going to the Lighthouse brings out their difference quite sharply in their attitudes to life. Mr. Ramsay is upset, is rather infuriated. “The extraordinary irrationality of her remark, the folly of women’s minds enraged him…..and now she flew in the face of facts, made her children hope what was utterly out of the question, in effect, told lies.”

Mrs. Ramsay’s Attitude brings final reconciliation. Mrs. Ramsay is also upset in her own way. With her loving heart and sympathetic bent of mind she wants to make people happy in this world and longs for protecting her children from losing the contented innocence of childhood. Hence her husband’s irrational and stern attitude seems to her equally repugnant, “to pursue truth with such astonishing lack of consideration for other people’s feelings, to rend the thin veils of civilization so wantonly, so brutally, was to her so horrible an outrage of human decency”. But very soon after this incident they begin to come together again. It starts with Mrs. Ramsay’s apology. And after this we find that the remaining sections of ‘The Window’ move towards the moment at the end, when the firm severity of the masculine mind, which she admires in him, curbs her gloomy thoughts and she is able, though indirectly, to assure him of her love.

“And as she looked at him she began to smile, for though she has not said a word, he knew, of course that she loved him”.

To sum up, We may now rightly assert that “To the Lighthouse” reveals a very close study of the ways and means by which satisfactory and congenial human relationships might be established. Mrs. Ramsay is the centre around which action and movement are built. She plays the most significant role as a force by holding together almost all the characters and incidents of this great novel.

**Constrictions of family life & concept of god**

In “To the Lighthouse” Woolf tried not only to recover the memories of her childhood but also to record her tangled feelings about Victorian marriage and family life as well as about the substitutes for them that some rebellious modern spirits had proposed. Well she says in the following lines:

“… so that is marriage, Lily thought, a man and a woman looking at a girl throwing a ball...And suddenly the meaning which for no reason at all as perhaps they are stepping out of the Tube or ringing a doorbell, descends on people, making them symbolical, making them representative, came upon them and made them in the dusk standing, looking, the symbols of marriage, husband and wife.”
Throughout her novel, she stresses the fact that **each one of us is alone** in a world where family bonds are nothing but manacles to personal freedom and that we live in a universe ungoverned by an All-mighty God. Her view of the world, though, is by no means a bleak one as there is the light and warmth of Art to surround us and unify us. Woolf’s father, Leslie Stephen describes the family as a sort of First Cause. Virginia Woolf, though, born in 1882 was destined to witness and be a part of a remarkable change as far as family and marriage were concerned. Consequently, the way she depicts Mr. Ramsay in “To the Lighthouse” is her way of showing the insecurity, confusion and even the desperation hiding behind the Iron-mask of the Powerful Patriarch.

She **strips the King of the House** off his psychological defences and leaves him naked before us. She wants us to see the Victorian Myth of domestic relationships collapse. Her psychological stripping of her major characters- like Strachey’s in Eminent Victorians- is a version of The Emperor’s New Clothes. This “emperor” here, Mr. Ramsay cannot communicate with his children, he is impatient, demanding, short-tempered and so self-absorbed that he is always preoccupied with his professional success seeking confirmation from his wife. He has, also, idolized Mrs. Ramsay as a perfect representative of the Victorian Patriarch Moreland he strongly holds that each sex is destined to live and act in its own private sphere with no interferences of any kind. Tansley’s remark “women can’t write, women can’t paint” is nothing but a more crude articulation of Mr. Ramsay’s attitude.

Virginia Woolf wants to emphasize the **sexual polarization of Victorian family life** and the effect it had on the women and offspring of a typical Victorian family. Mrs. Ramsay, who “often felt she was nothing but a sponge sopped full of human emotions” reads her son the Grimm’s tale “The Fisherman and His Wife’. Woolf’s choice of this story is by no means a random one; it voices Mr. Ramsay’s belief that women are inferior to men and should conform to their wishes. Mrs. Ramsay is, nevertheless, the only one who believes in family and in fact uses all her charm to bring people together. She is the luminous Angel of the House and an ardent matchmaker. Apart from her, no one else is happy with marriage or family life.

Every single character in “To the Lighthouse” stresses the right to choose. Mr. Ramsay regards his wife and family as impediments to his nobler aim to reach letter “R” intellectually. “**He would have written better books if he had not married**”. Mr. Bankes justifies the fact that Mr. Ramsay broke his promise assuming that married life must be a burden: “**He had seen him divest himself of all those glories of isolation and austerity which crowned him in youth to cumber himself definitely with fluttering wings and clucking domesticities**”.

Charles Tansley disapproves of Mr. Ramsay’s career after his marriage by saying: **“Of course Ramsay had dished himself by marrying a beautiful woman and having eight children.”** Lily Briscoe, too, chooses work and Art over getting married as she thought she, “need never marry anybody and she felt an enormous exultation”. Woolf, though, does not blame any of her characters for their belief that vocation; work and family life cannot be integrated. She blames the Victorian World, which groomed and nurtured her characters. Woolf wants to stress that ossified sexist beliefs, as well, as the idolization of Women as Angels of the Hearth and of men as devoted people of career, have isolated people from each other. In this sense the self-pitying utter
Ramsay “we perished, each alone” is a realistic cry: a morn depicting the core of human relationships in his times. Mrs. Ramsay is obsessed with trying to push people towards the altar of marriage. She wants Mr. Bankes and Lily to get married. Lily, though, prefers her Art, while Mr. Bankes, at the dinner table, thinks to himself: “How trifling it all is, how boring it all is, compared to the other thing-work.”

One of Mrs. Ramsay’s children rushes off to the attic “to escape the horror of family life”. She knows that her daughters, Cam and Prue, already have dreams different from hers: “infidel ideas which they had brewed for themselves of a life different from hers; in Paris, perhaps; a wilder life; not always taking care of some man or other.” After Mrs. Ramsay’s death, in Part III, the traditional Victorian family is turned upside down. We see a change in everything. Women can be devoted careerists and artists too, unmarried people can feel happy and fulfilled with themselves, unlike Lily’s past declaration that she felt “a skimpy old maid, holding a paint brush in the lawn” and of course, love is not always the basis of a marriage. Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle, the couple brought together by Mrs. Ramsay’s hard efforts is not happily married. Lily remains a “spinster”; Mr. Bankes remains a “bachelor” and as Lily says to the spirit of Mrs. Ramsay: “It has all gone against your wishes... Life has changed completely”. Minta’s frequent infidelities and Paul’s taking up a mistress haven’t broken up their marriage, though: “far from breaking up their marriage, that alliance had righted it. They were excellent friends”. Life changes and what is moral or immoral changes as well.

The whole book is about change that is why it characterized as an inclusive Fiction. It allows divergences to coexist in order to bring about harmony. Her characters move towards the same goal through different paths. Mr. Ramsay and his son are brought together when the former praises the boy. While at the same time, Lily Briscoe finishes her painting and concludes her “vision”. Symbolically, the past returns and shapes the present. Mrs. Ramsay comes back in Lily’s picture and the murderous instinct towards his father is wiped out from James’ heart. All the tiny threads of the story come together, forming a harmony and a delight that owes nothing either to a God or to an ossified Victorian Institution but to life, love and the power of people to change things and transform them.

To the Lighthouse” : A Portrait of a Real Woman

Virginia Woolf was an important precursor in Feminism. She comes after a long line of eminent Victorians of her own sex, who have joined the immortals of English literature- George Eliot, Jane Austen and the two Bronte’s. She was not of their stature but only against their background can her peculiar feminine contribution to English novel be fully assessed or appreciated.

‘To the Lighthouse’ projects challenges or realization of productive and creative possibilities of female characters like Mrs. Ramsay, Lily Briscoe, Nancy Ramsay, and other characters who move around these central characters. These characters are to be studied with the feministic point of view and built as a portrait of real woman in the Victorian England as well as its relevance in the present scenario.
Generally speaking, the word ‘sex’ plays an essential role in defining the gender of a woman when she is put in the flow of Society’s stream of socialization. The existence of a woman is not supposed to identify by the physical appearance, but by the actions and thoughts also. There is no any suspicion in telling truth that ‘Sex’ is born identity whereas ‘Gender’ is coined identity by society in which a woman lives. It is imposed upon her to behave, to think and to play a female role in specific way.

To commence with the idea of writing a novel by lady novelist (not female novelist) itself is a strong element in discussing these female characters. Virginia portrays female characters as a typical female, doing her household work, beguiling other family members what they would prefer to have and docile as a passive character, actively participating in what she is supposed to do. Character like Mrs. Ramsay is depicted as a working woman in the house, as not responsibility but as a duty. Because the atmosphere is created in such a way that they should not create any problem or complain, found by the boss (husband) Mr. Ramsay.

From start of the novel to its end, it names her as Mrs. Ramsay, not her actual name. She directly seems to be a subjugated woman with the name of superiority’s surname. The very logic lies in this context is that Mrs. Ramsay plays her duty what her imposed name will urge her to do.

Apart from naming the characters, female character Mrs. Ramsay plays plenty of roles like a wife, a mother, a care-taker, organizer of the household work, protector of her family’s reputation and social credit, friend, as a relative matchmaker for Lily and Tansley and so on and so forth. It is incredible to assume that such a multi-dimensional responsibility performing her duties simultaneously, defines the role of woman in the society. Such a female character, having eight children to bring up, taking much care of them not being distracted toward evil path and being practical in the flow of the time, seems impossible for a moment but Woolf has portrayed such motherly figure in her novel. But the sudden sharp turn in the novel, revealing Mrs. Ramsay’s unexpected death. It challenges the modern codes and conducts of Post-Modern time in which the people fail to recognize the need and necessity of the women.

People do not value of what they keep or what they have. Mrs. Ramsay might have been respected by family members and guests but being not there, may not make Mr. Ramsay need of her but changing time changes the minds of the people, too. Death of Mrs. Ramsay does matter, because there is a crucial association between her and the lighthouse. To adjust people and other things and to reach people to the lighthouse, Mrs. Ramsay seemed much active as far as male’s contribution to organize life and sustenance is concerned.

The novelist selects the female characters to arrange a day for the lighthouse, to keep balance in social relationships, and what is more important is to satisfy male-ego. She makes her husband uncomfortable because of her being died. She makes other characters to talk about the person who is died now. Why the novelist plays with the female characters is still in vagueness. Life before her death was like; she was lonely but never alone. It means, albeit, she was never surrounded by the people, felt lonely and never satisfied by the intimate relatives being with her.
Mrs. Ramsay thinks that with whom she was living, are ‘sterile’ and incapable, and that “if she did not do it, nobody would do it.” So taking care of children and guests, Mrs. Ramsay ponders that the way she was playing a role of giver and arranger, will not be maintained by others. She sees life not as it should be but as it may be. Deferring from her husband, she finds her children’s happiness in telling what they want to deserve. The happiness of the children like James and others, is not supposed to mar, rather it is to be maintained, and increased.

Mrs. Ramsay’s attitude toward children and relatives, somehow, keeps Mr. Ramsay separated, because what is real and the fact is to be taught to the children. But somewhere, Ramsay fails to realize that such a delicate and fragile period of kids should be kept joyful and society known enough. To help children to see world beautifully, goes to the side of Mrs. Ramsay and it is followed. But ramset interrupts this cycle of learning. James asks for visiting the lighthouse and his urge causes invisible controversies among the husband and wife.

Woolf challenges the wrong perception about the male’s mind-set. The children become happier when a mother interacts with them yet she speaks a lie but it is a white lie that makes children very happy. Generally, progenies are more inclined to mother’s way of nurturing. So Mr. Ramsay feels jealousy and tells that that day’s weather would be drowsier and cloudy, not good for him. This can be called a creative faculty of female to bring up offspring. She is an artist, the house, husband, children and relatives are her medium; if indeed if the purpose of the art for her, as it is for Lily, is to unite and allow them to experience the life together in brief, prefect understanding, then the party is nothing less than her masterpiece, impeccably perfect one.

When the matter of creation comes forward, Lily Briscoe’s interest in painting comes as a part of studding her role in the society and place of creative and flowered faculty of mind. Tansley always debases her paintings and gives several examples of famous paintings of the other countries. Hence creative ability of the women is suppressed in terms of demotivating them. Just the critical words of the male characters make whole novel as a feministic text taking Post-Modern generation into consideration. Lily is an independent, educated little creature, not confined to the home domestically. Women want to be free in their thinking. Their thoughts are bound by the invisible shackles of male’s criticism.

Even other female characters, moving around these two, play a vital role that is mentioned in the starting of the essay. They are not much mentioned itself suggests that existence of women in the society is mandatory but if the crisis occurs becomes compulsory. The concept of morality in depicting Mrs. Ramsay defers from page to page of the novel and incidents to incidents. To endure, to suffer, to be subdued and docile, and not to remain talkative but it engenders the readers to think that male-dominated society should claim women’s place in it.

In a nutshell, the depiction of a woman in the novel is subjugated by the educated husband who is a philosopher and intellectual. Various readings of the novel bring the point of stream of consciousness that it also affected by feministic reading. One character thinking about what he [or she] thinks about what, thinking.
in the novel. Thinking process is lacking the need of Mrs. Ramsay who is not supposed to
die but to remain alive until the last page of the novel to come.

“To the Lighthouse” : The relation of art and life

In “To the Lighthouse” we find that Mrs. Ramsay opens the novel and Lily Briscoe closes
it, as the stuff of life may be converted, through a particular medium, to a work of art.
So, if life and art are viewed as polar opposites in “To the Lighthouse”, Mrs. Ramsay and
Lily Briscoe may be regarded as their respective exponents. And in our first view of Mrs.
Ramsay she is already the subject of Lily’s painting. The main reason for Mrs. Ramsay
becoming the chief character of the novel is that as personification or as abstraction, life
is longer than art. Probably, that is why Part I, in which life dominates, is almost twice
the length of Part III, in which art is the focal centre.

Art Needs Life to Nourish It: - It cannot be disputed that art can be nourished only
in life. But whereas art needs life to nourish it, life is often unaware of the power of art
to give it permanence. Thus, although Lily the painter is in love with Mrs. Ramsay and,
we may add, with all her family and their diverse doings, she cannot take Lily’s painting
seriously. Thus, too, Mrs. Ramsay’s quite literal short-sightedness is played against Lily’s
‘vision’. To Lily it seems ironic that Mrs. Ramsay presided with immutable calm over
destinies which she completely failed to understand; Mrs. Woolf wants to suggest that
life may be its own worst enemy, even as the artist may rebel against art’s strict
exigencies. Although it is only momentary, Mrs. Ramsay ‘felt alone in the presence of her
old antagonist, life’. And Lily is ‘drawn out of gossip, out of living, out of community with
people into the presence of the formidable ancient enemy of her....this form....roused
one to perpetual combat.’

Mrs. Ramsay and Lily: - It may be noted that the two women are not monolythic
symbols, but reveal vivid personalities behind their major meaning. Hence it is not
‘artistic’ Lily but ‘living’ Mrs. Ramsay, who is endowed with rare beauty. But both women
have a slightly exotic quality—Lily her Chinese eyes, and Mrs. Ramsay, a Hellenic face.
And both women dress soberly in grey. Inspite of her easy, direct spontaneity, we never
become familiar enough with Mrs. Ramsay to learn her first name. On the other hand,
Mrs. Ramsay calls Lily by her Christian name, suggesting the pure virgin which by Part
III, when she is forty four becomes a skimpy old maid holding a paintbrush’. These
humanizing details root the character to a literal ground, so that they never become
figures of allegory, but rather magnetic poles for particular lines of force.

Mrs. Ramsay Dominates Part I Completely: - In Part I we find that Mrs. Ramsay who
is at the heart of all the busy, indiscriminate activities of her large family and her too
numerous summer guests. With her masterfulness, her positiveness, something matter-
of-fact in her enables her to manage superbly other people’s lives, from trivial to
important aspect. On the other hand, Lily can barely manage to manipulate her paint
brushes, and shrinks from anything strange on her canvas. And then by Part III Lily has
become aware of a fundamental difference between herself and Mrs. Ramsay. Mrs.
Ramsay might fall occasionally into meditation but she ‘disliked anything that reminded
her that she had been seen sitting thinking.’ But both in Lily the painter and Mr.
Carmichael the poet there was some notion about the ineffectiveness of action, the supremacy of thought.

**Efforts to Render Her Actions Effective:** We find Mrs. Ramsay bending all efforts to render her actions effective. The most important of them is her endeavour to supply emotional sustenance for her husband and children and it is found that when she dies they are left in a chaotic confusion. This is clearly revealed in the opening of Part III. This is how Lily felt after coming back to that old summer-house after so many years:

“She had come last night when it was all mysterious, dark. Now she was awake.....There was this expedition—they were going to the Lighthouse, Mr. Ramsay, Cam, and James. They should have gone already—they had to catch the tide or something. And Cam was not ready and, James was not ready and Nancy had forgotten to order the sandwiches and Mr. Ramsay had lost his temper and banged out of the room”. Mrs. Ramsay is a very ardent match-maker and she also feel protective towards the whole male sex. She is also eager to help the poor and the sick. And then she is found striving earnestly for the unity and integrity of social scenes such as her dinner party. Lily Briscoe also acknowledges Mrs. Ramsay’s manipulation of life. But, ironically, Mrs. Ramsay is seen ‘making’ while Lily merely ‘tried’. But unfortunately Mrs. Ramsay’s efforts are doomed from the start; life cannot stand still; time must pass. It is only in another sphere can moments be given permanence. And the notable difference between the two is that Mrs. Ramsay has the rare beauty of ordering a scene so that it is, ‘like a work of art’, but it is Lily who creates a concrete work of art.

**Lily and Her Art:** From our first view of Lily in the first part of the novel, ‘standing on the edge of the lawn painting’ to the significant final view, ‘Yes, she thought laying down, her brush in extreme fatigue. I have had my vision’-the insistence is upon her art. From the very beginning, in spite of all her doubts and diffidence, she is found painting with stubborn integrity to her vision, in the bright colours which Mr. Paunceforte’s pastels have rendered unfashionable. It is the resolution to move her tree to the centre of the canvas that sustains her through the dinner party, protects her against Charles Tansley’s pronouncement that women cannot paint or write. And by Part III we find that Lily’s paint brush has become for her ‘the one dependable thing in a world of strife, ruin, chaos’ and she seems more sure of her technique: the lines are nervous, but her brush-strokes are decisive. It is she who imagines the artistic creeds of Carmichael “how ‘you’ and ‘I’ and ‘she’ pass, and vanish; nothing stays all changes; but not words not paint”. Yet even then, even to the final brush-stroke that brings the novel to a close, she continues to be haunted by the problematical and shifting relationship of art and life.

**Part III: Art and Life:** This relation of art to life has been most beautifully treated in Part III of the novel. The structure of this section is based upon the shuttling back and forth between Lily on the island and those in the boat watching the island, who in turn get further away. This is accompanied by the corresponding movement of those in the boat getting closer to the Lighthouse and Lily, getting closer to the solution of her aesthetic problem. And the determining factor of each is love (the art of life), which might perhaps be defined as order or the achievement of form in human relations through the surrender of personality. Lily finishes her pa
sympathy for Mr. Ramsay which she had previously refused to give. James and Cam give up their long-standing antagonism towards their father. Mr. Ramsay himself, at the same time, attains a resolution of his own tensions and worries. Hence 'the two actions, the arrival at the lighthouse and the last stroke of the push are also united; both are acts of completion and it is obvious that they are meant to happen together.'

In “To the Lighthouse”, Mrs. Virginia Woolf Stood Apart from her Age

Virginia Woolf turned over in our minds to be "stood apart from her age", for she had no part and parcel with the noisy trafficking of the years between the wars. Virginia Woolf is more in the mood of investigating and portraying the inner realities of human mind than the husk of life or external world. In a word, this would be appropriate to say that Virginia Woolf’s novels do not mirror her age. Now we would discuss how far this remark is in the vicinity of verisimilitude. A momentous work of art may or may not be triumphant in having immediate approbation but to be significant at all, it may, in some direct or indirect, have contemporary significance.

Even a work of universal importance is willy-nilly a work of contemporary judiciousness. The plays of Shakespeare are the case in point. Of course, this does not mean that an exceptional writer always keeps him busy in social nit-picking. It interprets and expresses the contemporary truth which is more than mere social criticism. The statement that Virginia Woolf stood apart from her age is not entirely accurate; Virginia Woolf’s opus is an oeuvre of considerable contemporary momentousness. The period between two great wars was a period of transition, a period of breaking up and settling down, a sort of cultural weekend between two full weeks of full time cultural activity. The two days of the weekend reflect the twenties and thirties respectively of this century. There is a considerable difference between these two decades. The imaginative and romantic literature of the twenties is not so much of sociological importance. It does not concern itself with the study of man as a member of a community. It falls in twenties that Virginia Woolf bore the best of her talented part of work.

To be truly a representative of this age, this oeuvre could only communicate the “Orts, scraps and fragments” of a distinguished and disintegrated society. If by standing apart from her age, we mean that in her composition, she is aloof from the contemporary scene in its material manifestations, the predicaments of business, industry and politics, the charge is veracious. Virginia Woolf did not stand apart from her times in the sense that she did not leave alone the fundamental law of literature that is of spiritual significance to the age and the people for which it is jotted down. Most of her novels are related to stream of consciousness movement. Mrs. Ramsay is the protagonist of the novel “To the Lighthouse”. Her stream of outlook has divergent traits. Like all other women, her children, her shabbiness, gossip and rumours of surroundings are her concern. Only at times, the problem of suffering death and penury captivate her imagination. Her stream of thought bears the fillip of her personality.

Another universal phenomenon, the novelist presents and exhibits in her work of fiction through Lily Briscoe. She shows us that from what sort of circumstances, an artist undergoes in the process of creation. Lily like Mrs. Ramsay puts her endeavours to denude reality. She paints her picture, which is accomplished with flying cc
the journey “To the Lighthouse” comes off. Unlike James Joyce, Mrs. Virginia Woolf unveils the contemporary colour of stream of awareness through a number of characters. Many of her novels as Mrs. Dalloway, The Waves, Between the Acts, The years and To the Lighthouse are the evidence of the reality that Mrs. Virginia Woolf has not stood apart from her age.

Moreover, Virginia's staging of her age is according to the grapevine hidden but through the characters that she has dilated, it turns out to be lucid like daylight that she is not in some dingy, shabby, in-house world where the outer circumstances cannot enter. She exudes the breath and odour of realistic human behaviours in her works. So by all means we can opine that Virginia is a writer of extreme understanding of human behaviours and psychology, she lives in a time specific but thinks and visualises it in universal backdrop. That is why, sometime critics feel that she stood apart from her age, but it is not possible for a realistic writer like Virginia to turn a deaf ear to the cries of her age.

“To The Lighthouse” as a novel of manners presenting a picture of the middle class academic society

**Introductory Remarks:** In her one of the most well-known essays included in The Common Reader: First Series, while expressing her views about the early work of James Joyce Virginia Woolf has given us her ideas about the significance of small events which are worth noting. This is what she says about it.

“Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness. Let us not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small. Anyone who has read The Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man or what promises to be a far more interesting work, Ulysses now appearing in The Little Review will have hazarded some theory of this nature as to Mr. Joyce’s intention. Mr. Joyce is concerned at all costs to reveal the flickering of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain, and in order to preserve it he disregards with complete courage whatever seems to him adventitious, whether it be probability, or coherence, or any other of those signposts which for generations have served to support the imagination of a reader when called upon to imagine what he can neither touch nor see.... If we want life itself, here surely we have it.”

**Treatment of Minor Events:** A careful study of Virginia Woolf’s novel clearly reveals that there is a tendency to give importance to minor and random events such as measuring the stocking, a fragment of a conversation with the maid, a telephone call, or throwing of the mutilated fish into the sea in To The Lighthouse. According to an eminent critic—great changes, exterior turning points, let alone catastrophes, do not occur and though elsewhere in To The Lighthouse such things are mentioned, it is hastily, without preparation or context incidentally, and as it were only for the sake of information.” This is how Time Passes, the second part of To The Lighthouse tragic deaths of Prue Ramsay and Andrew Ramsay are announced and that also in brackets:
“[Prue Ramsay died that summer in some illness connected with child-birth, which was indeed a tragedy, people said. They said nobody deserved happiness more.]”

And this about Andrew:

“[A shell exploded. Twenty or thirty young men were blown up in France, among them Andrew Ramsay, whose death, mercifully, was instantaneous]”. The same tendency is revealed in works of some very different writers, such as Proust of France or Hamsun of Norway. But we now find writers presenting minor happenings, which are insignificant as exterior factors in a person’s destiny, for their own sake or rather as points of departure for the development of motives, for a penetration which opens up new prospective into a milieu or a consciousness or the given historical setting. “They have discarded presenting the story of their characters with any claim to exterior completeness in chronological order, and with the emphasis on exterior turning points of destiny. James Joyce’s tremendous novel—an encyclopaedic work, a mirror of Dublin, of Ireland, a mirror too of Europe and its millennia—has for its frame the externally insignificant course of a day in the lives of a school teacher and an advertising broker. It takes less than twenty-four hours in their lives—just as To The Lighthouse describes portions of two days widely separated in time.’,

**Importance of Apparently Small Affairs:** Very often Virginia Woolf has tried to reveal the importance of small and trivial affairs just to suggest the deal of inadequacy of human relationship. In the first part of To The Lighthouse we find Mrs. Ramsay having a feeling of a very disagreeable sensation when she becomes conscious of the fact that she had to hide many small things from her husband—that the mending of the greenhouse roof would cost fifty pounds, ‘that his last book was not quite his best book.’ She sadly felt that all this diminished the entire joy, the pure joy, of the two notes sounding together’. Then the sight of Augustus Carmichael shuffling past strongly reminded her the inadequacy of human relationships. She remembered how odious it was on the part of Mrs. Carmichael to turn her husband out of their house. She could never understand Mr. Carmichael, the poet, whom Lily Briscoe understood and appreciated so much and who seemed to her ‘like on old pagan god, shaggy with weeds in his hair and the trident…..in his hand’. So the Carmichael and the fairy story of the fisherman and his wife, which Mrs. Ramsay was reading to James, her youngest son, become the symbol of the inadequacy of human relationships to her.

**A Picture of Middle Class Society:** Virginia Woolf’s special linking for this apparently small and trivial affairs is mainly responsible for making To The Lighthouse a picture of the middle class society. Ralph Freedman has elaborately discussed this point in his book. According to him:’To The Lighthouse-like most novels by Virginia Woolf—is also a novel of manners. Not only the Ramsays and their observer Lily Briscoe but also of the other figures comprise a picture of middle class academic society at the beginning of the Georgian era. Characters are treated with the sharp satire and the eyes for the incongruous within prescribed conventions which is the heritages of Jane Austen. As in its traditional prototypes, the novel is set in a rambling summer-house where society can be depicted at leisure with ample opportunity for personal interaction. Charles Tansley, the ‘atheist’, blundering, aggressive, ‘writing his dissertation is treated with pitiless satire at one moment and with warm insight at another. The fastidious bachel...
William Bankes, is shown with excellent manners and his limited sensibility. On the other hand, old Mr. Carmichael, the social blunderer, emerges as a successful lyrical poet who alone can communicate with Lily Briscoe. This group is carefully devised as a satire portrait of the times, and of a particular way of life, but it also suggests a pattern of sensibilities illustrating the movement of the narrative. The dinner table, divided between husband and wife, acts as a magnetic field in which the members of his group are in continuous suspension, drawn hither and thither by either pole.” Thus we may conclude by asserting that the depiction of this particular aspect of life is really a distinctive feature of this great novel.

**To The Lighthouse : Characters as vehicle for ideas**

Virginia Woolf discarded both the first person and the third person narration in her novel because she found the method of narration known as multiple inner points of view as the best means to project her theme in the novel. Therefore, the mental processes of the characters seem to be presented without any interference from the author. The external world is depicted through its reflection in the observing consciousness.

The effect of this narrative mode is to force the reader to construct the world of the novel for himself and to apply his own judgments to that world. While the omniscient narrator at one end of the scale of narration guides the reader carefully through the fictional world and the values by which that world is to be assessed, the multiple inner viewpoint of novel provides no certain or reliable ‘truths’ and forces the reader to become the novelist’s active partner in creating the novel’s fictional world. Another effect of this narrative mode is to concentrate the reader’s attention on how characters experience events rather than on what is experienced.

Virginia Woolf’s method of creating the characters in “To the Lighthouse” is a cumulative one. Our knowledge of the characters depends on the accumulated impressions of them we receive, both from their own reflections and observations and from the responses they elicit from the other characters.

In “To the Lighthouse” The characters are used as a Vehicle of Virginia Woolf’s ideas. The reader is obliged to recreate for himself the characters of this novel. The opening section of the novel gives us a clear impression of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. The two, as they are presented here, provide a study in contrasts; Mrs. Ramsay is portrayed in images of softness and fertility — the fountain, the flowering fruit tree — while Mr. Ramsay is symbolised by the arid scimitar, the beak of brass. The husband-wife, male-female polarity of this opening section is a theme developed through the novel, and is reflected in the contrasting qualities of intellect possessed by both.

**Mrs. Ramsay** is portrayed as possessing instinctive, intuitive intelligence, while her husband’s intellect is of the rational and orderly variety symbolised by his perception of human knowledge as a series of letters of the alphabet. To over-emphasise the symmetry of these characteristics is, however, to do an injustice to the complexity and suggestiveness of the novel’s characterisation. These symbolic intimations of characters are part of a larger scheme of characterisation which provides a psychologically realistic
series of portraits. A fine example of the powerful juxtaposition of symbolic and realistic portraiture can be found in the description of Mrs. Ramsay as she sits with her husband after the dinner party. There is psychological realism in the description of her puzzling over her husband’s desire for fame, and in the description of a mind drifting through association rather than logic from one idea to another.

As Mrs. Ramsay’s is the dominating point of view in the early sections of the novel; the reader may easily be persuaded to take her side. She appears to represent femininity, maternity and sympathy, and we feel some aversion from the uncompromisingly severe truthfulness of Ramsay and Charles Tansley. Our sympathy is increased when we look through her eyes at her reflection in the mirror and see a fading beauty that is a model of unselfishness. This early limited version of her character and that of her husband is soon modified by her complex reflections about Charles Tansley, who arouses in her a mixture of maternal desire to please and protect and an equally strong feeling of repugnance based on his awkwardness.

Her attitude towards the young student reveals social condescension and snobbery. When her husband corrects her forecast of the weather, she responds with strong anger to what she feels is blindness to the feelings of others, and a sense of martyrdom and moral superiority. She dwells on their financial insecurity and her suspicion that his most recent book is not as successful as earlier ones. Another guest, Mr. Carmichael, makes her feel uncomfortable because he makes no demands on her; her characteristic response is to feel pity for him. Yet she is aware of the ambiguity of her emotional response, however much she may try to evade personal responsibility.

She wishes to keep her youngest son and daughter in a state of perpetual childhood, and she admits to herself that she prefers ‘boobies’ to intelligent young men, for she can control children and boobies. This manipulative element in her character is alien to her perception of herself, and she is puzzled that Minta’s mother should have accused her of alienating her daughter’s affections. Mrs. Ramsay defends herself from this accusation by direct reference to her appearance, to her fading beauty and to the shabbiness of her clothes, all of which are made to reflect her internal self-sacrifice as a kind of theatrical costume signifying goodness and thereby absolving her of hostile criticism.

Mrs. Ramsay instinctively identifies herself with Lily the artist and with Carmichael the poet. Like them, she is a creator but her medium is human beings and her form, human relationships. The novel makes it clear that she is only partially successful in her art; the radiance of her dinner party may draw people together momentarily, but it is inevitably destroyed by time. Paul and Minta may have their courtship of intense happiness under her guidance, but time destroys their marriage. Mrs. Ramsay’s attempts to shield her children from the force of mutability are defeated and she too is destroyed by her familiar antagonist, death.

The complexity of Mrs. Ramsay’s character is revealed through her consciousness of reality and the language and images she uses to describe it. It is created also through her reflection in the eyes of the other characters. The three male guests-Tansley, Bankes and Carmichael show varying responses to her. Carmichael is emotionally self-sufficient and is aware of the degree of manipulation involved in Mrs. Ramsay’s self-sacrifice.
Bankes, Ramsay’s long-time friend and colleague, responds to her mystery and beauty, but is also partially conscious of her destructive powers. Tansley also responds to her beauty but is even more attracted by her pity for him. The young couple, Paul and Minta, are completely under her spell and obey her wish that they should marry. The Ramsay children respond with love and with varying degrees of admiration, ranging from James who adores her unquestioningly, to Jasper who reflects that ‘being his mother she lived away in another division of the world’.

Lily Briscoe’s perception of Mrs. Ramsay and how she responds is more complex than any of the other characters. She is fully aware of her friend’s ability to dominate through love and pity, but she also recognises her worth. Of all the characters in the novel, Lily is the one who fully grasps the ambiguities of her hostess’ character and comes to love the whole Mrs. Ramsay. It is Lily who has the final vision of Mrs. Ramsay, and it is Lily who makes that vision permanent through her art. Mr. Ramsay is, in many respects, the direct antithesis of his wife. He loves her very deeply, but can still be infuriated by her disrespect for factual truth. His worship of truth matters more to him than the feelings of his friends and family. His intellectual integrity gives him a quality of aloofness, but this is deceptive for he loves and needs his family more than his seemingly emotional but inwardly withdrawn wife. Unlike Mrs. Ramsay, Mr. Ramsay gives little thought to his effect on others; he stalks around the garden reciting poetry aloud, contemptuous of the responses of his family and guests. He makes overt demands on the sympathies and emotions around him. These traits are quite different from his wife’s acute self-consciousness and her covert manipulation of others.

Like the character of Mrs. Ramsay, Mr. Ramsay’s is portrayed through his own consciousness and through the eyes of those who see him. An apparently contradictory web of images surrounds him: he is hard and arid like a scimitar, cruel as a beak of brass that gorges upon his wife’s energy and fertility. Yet he is also an intrepid explorer the sailor who travels where lesser mortals do not care. He is a loving, protective paterfamilias who responds with warmth to the sight of a mother hen and her chickens, and who can be overwhelmed by admiration for his wife.

The other characters, especially Bankes and Lily, flesh out the details of his portrait. Bankes remembers Ramsay as a young bachelor and, in accordance with Bankes’ own emotional aridity, regrets the domestic and emotional aspects of Ramsay’s life which he feels, have weakened his potential and destroyed their friendship. Yet Bankes envies his friend and sees him in a powerful image that combines elements of Ramsay’s intellectual integrity and domestic affection as the father with the child on his shoulder, looking at a picture of in eruption. Lily is, once more, the most astute and balanced of the observers, noticing his single-minded fidelity to the truth as well as his egotistical pursuit of sympathy and admiration, while acknowledging his tenderness and courage. In Virginia Woolf’s portrayal of Mrs. Ramsay following the dinner party we noted a balance between symbolism and realism in the very language and style of the novel. This equilibrium is apparent also in the depiction of the Ramsays as a couple. Their portrait is drawn in a manner which makes them credible in terms of psychological realism but they exist also as powerful, generalised symbols.
To The Lighthouse : Concept of Time

Virginia Woolf admitted that life reflected in fiction is not a regularly patterned universe with an objective existence; it is a state of mind. Life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.

Because existence is not objective, it cannot be absolute. And even time, as thoroughly interwoven into the fiber of being, cannot be absolute itself. This is why all of Virginia Woolf's novels are, in one way or another, experiments upon the concept of time. Perhaps the most obvious is “Mrs. Dalloway”, which envisions time as a complex interplay between the present experience and what remains in our minds in the form of memories. But other novels, like “To the Lighthouse”, make use of the concept of time in a much deeper sense: they create an intricate temporal fabric that is meant to underline the destructive force of the universe, upon which the human being watches helplessly. “To the Lighthouse” is an elegy upon time and that is why time appears in such novels as a complex entity itself.

The Window

“To the Lighthouse” is made up of three distinct parts, each of which envisions time differently. In the first section, entitled “The Window,” Virginia Woolf conceives of time as a matter of psychology rather than chronology. She creates what the French philosopher Henri Bergson termed durée, a conception of the world as primarily intuitive and internal rather than external or material. “The Window” deals with the minute details of a single afternoon and evening, stretching them out into a considerable piece of prose: we are able to follow the thoughts of the key figures of the Ramsays as they take care of their guests at the holiday house in the Hebrides. This is how we also realize that time itself is interiorized and seen different by the two protagonists, it is actually a mosaic of the different perceptions each of the guests at the house have. For Mr Ramsay, time is not forgiving. As a philosopher, he most fears for his popularity and that in the end, he will be forgotten under the thick veil of time:

And his fame lasts how long? It is permissible even for a dying hero to think before he dies how men will speak of him hereafter. His fame lasts perhaps two thousand years. And what are two thousand years?. What, indeed, if you look from a mountain top down the long wastes of the ages? The very stone one kicks with one’s boot will outlast Shakespeare. His own little light would shine, not very brightly, for a year or two, and would then be merged in some bigger light, and that in a bigger still.

It seems that the only comfort he can find is not in knowledge, which seems relative and absurd, but in the surrendering to the soothing existence of his family:

Who shall blame him? Who will not secretly rejoice when the hero puts his armour off, and halts by the window and gazes at his wife and son, who, very distant at first, gradually come closer and closer, till lips and book and head are clearly before him, though still lovely and unfamiliar from the intensity of his isolation and the waste of ages and the perishing of the stars, and finally putting his pipe in his pocket and bending his
magnificent head before her—who will blame him if he does homage to the beauty of the world?

He considers their existence the only beauty of life, but is also embarrassed, as an intellectual individual, for his incapacity to fully admire the beauty of the world without remorse and with detachment.

Mrs. Ramsay, on the other hand relies more on intuition than on intelligence in order to make sense of the world. She even admits that the intellectual air of the men around her (including her husband) is sometimes too tiring for her simple, yet beautiful and gracious mind: “they were walking on and Mrs. Ramsay did not quite catch the meaning, only the words, here and there … dissertation … fellowship … readership … lectureship. She could not follow the ugly academic jargon, that rattled itself off so glibly.” She accepts the passing of time just as well as she accepts the authoritative nature of her husband, because she knows she can make the world better with her beauty and give everything the air of rightfulness:

She went out of her way indeed to be friendly. She bore about with her, she could not help knowing it, the torch of her beauty; she carried it erect into any room that she entered; and after all, veil it as she might, and shrink from the monotony of bearing that it imposed on her, her beauty was apparent. She had been admired. She had been loved. She had entered rooms where mourners sat. Tears had flown in her presence. Men, and women too, letting go to the multiplicity of things, had allowed themselves with her the relief of simplicity. It injured her that he should shrink. It hurt her. And yet not cleanly, not rightly. That was what she minded, coming as it did on top of her discontent with her husband;

But at the same time, there are things that startle her. First, it is the fact that some people are immune to her charms and accuse her of trying to impose a philosophy upon life on everyone. Then, there is the transactional level of life, the financial problems for example, that contrast so deeply with her natural, pervading beauty. And thirdly, it is her own fear that her children will grow up and lose the innocence of childhood. These are all signs that in the end time wins the fight, and that the temporary paralysis that happy moments instill is just a fleeting victory upon the inevitable nature of the universe.

**Time passes**

And indeed, in the second chapter of the novel, “Time Passes” Mrs. Ramsay is defeated and with her the narrative flow of the beautiful summer day is disrupted. Many of the characters from the first section disappear. In “Time Passes” time is fully objective and compresses an entire decade into barely twenty pages. Virginia Woolf chooses to portray the effects of time on objects like the house and its contents rather than on human development and emotion. “Time Passes” validates Lily’s and the Ramsays’ fears that time will bring about their demise, as well as the widespread fear among the characters that time will erase the legacy of their work. Here, everything from the garden to the prized Waverley novels slowly sinks into oblivion.
Because the focus shifts from psychology in “The Window” to chronology in “Time Passes,” human beings become secondary concerns in the latter section of the novel. This effect replicates the anxieties that plague the characters. Mr. Ramsay’s fear that there is little hope for human immortality is confirmed as Virginia Woolf presents the death of the novel’s heroine in an unadorned aside:

[Mr Ramsay, stumbling along a passage one dark morning, stretched his arms out, but Mrs Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, his arms, though stretched out, remained empty.]

What we learn of the central character in this brief section is presented as an aside, set apart by brackets. Here, Virginia Woolf starts to chart the relentless, cruel, and more conventional passage of time by adopting the tone of news bulletins and marching orders. The passage may well allude to the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, a husband losing his wife at the gates of Hell.

This choice is remarkable on two levels. First, thematically, it skillfully asserts that human life is, in the natural scheme of things, incidental. Second, the offhand mention of Mrs. Ramsay’s death challenges established literary tradition by refusing to indulge in conventional sentiment. The emotionally hyperbolic Victorian deathbed scene is absent for Mrs. Ramsay, and Virginia Woolf uses an extreme economy of words to report the deaths of Mrs. Ramsay, Prue, and Andrew.

In this section, the darkened tone that begins to register toward the end of “The Window” comes to the fore both literally and figuratively. Mrs. Ramsay’s death constitutes the death of womanhood and the dismantling of domesticated power in the novel. With the deaths of Prue and Andrew, the world’s best potential and best hope seem dashed. Prue’s death in childbirth strikes out at beauty and continuity, while Andrew’s demise brings out the impact of war and the stunting of masculine potential so important to the novel’s historical context. In a way, the novel miniaturizes a vast historical moment for Europe as a whole. “Time Passes” brings to the Ramsays destruction as vast as that inflicted on Europe by World War I. When the Ramsays return to their summer home shaken, depleted, and unsure, they represent the postwar state of an entire continent.

The Lighthouse

In the final part of the novel, named “The Lighthouse”, Virginia Woolf returns to the narrative technique of the first chapter, giving the time back its subjective nature. In fact, if we try to see the novel through the eyes of the young James, who wanted to go to the lighthouse in the first chapter, we realize that the writer wants to give the impression that only a day had passed. The short intermezzo chapter Time Passes has taken place during the night and now the morning finds the remaining characters returning at the house in the Hebrides.

Gently the waves would break (Lily heard them in her sleep); tenderly the light fell (it seemed to come through her eyelids). And it all looked, Mr Carmichael thought, shutting his book, falling asleep, much as it used to look.

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But there is a fundamental difference between the time here and the time of the first
chapter. If at first time was more of a sensorial perception, now time makes a different
imprint upon the minds of the characters; it operates to forge the matter of memory,
“leaf upon leaf.” And we might say that memory, concretized, and does appear to James
just as they enter into a strange proximity with the lighthouse that has lain for so long in
imagination only.

“He could see the white-washed rocks; the tower, stark and straight; he could see that it
was barred with black and white; he could see windows in it; he could even see washing
spread on the rocks to dry. So that was the Lighthouse, was it?”

The lighthouse that comes into view as they approach in the boat emerges as a solid,
material object in contrast to the “silvery, misty-looking tower with a yellow eye” that
had sat nestled among “leaves and flowers” of “that happy world” of his past. Both are
the lighthouse, he quickly decides, as Virginia Woolf insists on leaving open the ethics of
memory and immediate experience to their inherent pluralisms:

“For nothing was simply one thing. The other Lighthouse was true too”

Not only may memory be traced as a physical impression “folded” within, returned to as
a material object, but in the middle of the novel Mrs. Ramsay imagines the past as
something “sealed up” that one might return to through volition. During the climactic
dinner party that occupies the exact center of the novel, Mrs. Ramsay takes brief
moments out of her demanding role as orchestrator and unifier of the diverse needs of
her guests to take respite in the past: “that dream land, that unreal but fascinating
place, the Mannings’ drawing-room at Marlow twenty years ago; where one moved about
without haste or anxiety”

The past is “more real than the present” because it is available both to experience and
re-experience – to understanding and to the enhanced re-cognition involved in knowing
again. As Henri Bergson proposes in his 1911 lectures at Oxford, “We tend to represent
the past as if it were non-existent”; while this is an “illusion,” he claims, that is essential
for life, it is “dangerous in the highest degree.” Further, “the past makes a body with the
present and continually creates with it.” One’s position toward the past is open both to
the on-going becoming of the past, and to a stabilization of previous experience that the
present cannot yet offer.

For Woolf – as for Freud – the intenser moments of the past leave palpable psychic and
sensual remains, while memorialization itself, and especially writing of the past, becomes
a way of approaching a temporality deepened by the past’s enduring becoming.

Cubist Time

As a conclusion, in To the Lighthouse, Woolf approaches time with a near-cubist
depiction. We end up with a triangle of temporality, with each aspect of past, present,
and future often synchronically evoked. In retrospective, we could say that the second
part, “Time Passes,” works as a pure present, rendered with an acceleration of narrative
time alongside a condensation of intensely lyrical prose; while...
section, “The Lighthouse,” as the pure, realized and realizable, future. This seems simple, but what is interesting is that in this text the present is always anticipating its future while registering the materiality of the past, while the future finds its meaning in enacting a similar return.

After Part One – which already through its title, “The Window,” proposes a kind of vantage outlook to both space and time – the text changes its focus from futurity to anteriority, from hoping for a trip to the lighthouse, to alternately remembering and repressing the past and its original motherly figure. The novel as a whole bears the pressure of answering to the intensely pure willed, desiring “I” of James as a six-year old boy. From the moment when James’s desire – with all the profound metaphorical significance this yearning implies (we wonder if James does not want to go to the root of symbol or to the heart of metaphor itself in wanting to go “to the lighthouse”) – is refused, his delighted fervour is transformed into a memory of thwarted desire.

**Mr. Ramsay : The Two-Dimensional Character**

In the novel, To the Lighthouse, Virginia Woolf illustrates the character of Mr. Ramsay, a husband and father of eight children. As a husband, he degrades and mentally abuses his wife, Mrs. Ramsay, and as a father, he disparages and psychologically injures his children. Yet, Mr. Ramsay has another side -- a second dimension. He carries the traits of a very compassionate and loving husband and a securing and nurturing father. Although Woolf depicts Mr. Ramsay as crude, brusque, and insensitive, he, nonetheless, desires happiness and welfare for his family.

Even though Mr. Ramsay frequently scolds and denounces Mrs. Ramsay, he still seeks happiness and comfort for his wife. For example, after Mrs. Ramsay lies to James about the next day's weather, "He [Mr. Ramsay] stamped his foot on the stone step. 'Damn you,' he said." (31) Mr. Ramsay devastates his wife's emotions. Because of a little lie, the temperamentally Mr. Ramsay hurts, if not kills, Mrs. Ramsay's emotions. Still, right after the incident, Mr. Ramsay self-reflects and "[he was] ashamed of that petulance [that he brought to his wife]." (32) Mr. Ramsay understands and regrets the sorrow he brought on Mrs. Ramsay. He sympathizes with her and is "ashamed" for what he had done. Mr. Ramsay wants to appease his wife and make her happy as a result of the torment that he inflicted on her. Next, Woolf again illustrates Mr. Ramsay's insensitive dimension when Mr. Ramsay makes Mrs. Ramsay "bend her head as if to let the pelt of jagged hail, the drench of dirty water, bespatter her unrebuked." (32) Mr. Ramsay is heartless to his wife's feelings; it is as if he enjoys "drenching" Mrs. Ramsay and enjoys seeing her in mental anguish. However, Woolf later contrasts the callous Mr. Ramsay with a more sensitive and caring Mr. Ramsay:

So stiffened and composed the lines of her face in a habit of sternness that when her husband passed... he could not help noting, the sternness at the heart of her beauty. It saddened him, and her remoteness pained him. (64)

Therefore, here Mr. Ramsay is portrayed as a sympathetic and caring husband that is "pained" by the expression of sorrow on his wife's face. Mr. Ramsay is sensitive to his wife's feelings and desires her well-being. Woolf illustrates the inconsistency of Mr. Ramsay's character through his and Mrs. Ramsay's interactions.
Next, Woolf portrays Mr. Ramsay as a brusque and callous father by his harsh interactions with his children, when his true motive is to help and secure his children's welfare. Mr. Ramsay is depicted as a father whom, "had there been an axe, or a poker, any weapon that would have gashed a hole in [Mr. Ramsay's] breast and killed him, there and then, James would have seized it," because of the Mr. Ramsay's constant, pessimistic rambling, "it won't be fine." (4) Mr. Ramsay is depicted as a sharp, deadly, and sarcastic killjoy that destroys the anticipation and happiness of his child, James. His children regard him with the utmost rancor that they even think of stabbing him to death. However, little do his children know that, "he [Mr. Ramsay] was incapable of untruth; never altered a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure... of any human being, least of all of his own children, who... should be aware from childhood that life is difficult; [he would instill] courage, truth, and the power to endure." (4) The main purpose for his bluntness is not to intentionally hurt his children, but instead to strengthen them. He wants his children to grow up as successful, self-sufficient people. Thus, even though Mr. Ramsay does have a crude dimension in his character, he also has a second dimension of sensibility.

Virginia Woolf pictures the character of Mr. Ramsay as an authentic human being; he has a second-dimension that allows him to have both evil and sincere attributes. She does not write about either a very humble and generous man or a very insolent and cruel man; instead, Woolf gives the readers a real character with both traits that allow readers to understand the foibles of characters like Mr. Ramsay.

Mrs. Ramsay: A powerful Charter alive & dead

Introductory Remarks: - Mrs. Ramsay, one of the finest creations of Virginia Woolf, is without the least shade of doubt the central figure around which action and movement in To The Lighthouse is built. She is definitely radiating through the entire novel and impregnating all the other characters, major or minor. From the very beginning of the novel, structurally or psychologically, she is the cohesive force and the source of unity in it. In fact the first part of the novel is completely dominated by the towering personality of this great lady. It is none but Mrs. Ramsay who holds together almost all the divergent characters and the various incidents of the novel. All the characters of the novel have gathered at the summer house of the Ramsays in the Isle of Skye. All have their own inhibitions and idiosyncrasies and hence are incapable of establishing a rapport with one another. So she has to provide a cohesive force to bring the scattered stones together and to carve out a unified structure.

Mrs. Ramsay: the Opening Scene: - In the very opening scene of the novel the focus is in on Mrs. Ramsay. She serves as the model for Lily Briscoe as is found sitting at the window that links the lawn with the interior. People come and people may go, but Mrs. Ramsay’s part is like that of a milestone in movement of various characters. Mr. Ramsay and Charles Tansley are first to come to Mrs. Ramsay. And Mrs. Ramsay's impressions about them, as revealed in her stream of consciousness, fill out the scene for the readers. Then Mr. Bankes and Lily Briscoe come within the range of her vision. So Mrs. Ramsay becomes the centre around which all seem to be moving. A large variety of people with all their ideas and idiosyncrasies take part in this novel. And the most remarkable thing is that Mrs. Ramsay with her great tact, sympathy and understanding holds them all together.
The Dinner Party: Mrs. Ramsay's Unifying Force: - Mrs. Ramsay’s great role as a unifying and cohesive force is superbly revealed to us at the dinner party that forms the climax of the first movement of To The Lighthouse. In this sense she performs very creditably her duty of connecting the different individuals. And for this she has also to engage herself with some of them. Lily and Charles Tansley are at opposite poles. Her look falls on Tansley and she strongly feels:

“Nothing seemed to have merged. They all sat separate. And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her. Again she felt, as a fact without hostility, the sterility of men, for if she did not do it nobody would do it,...”

Hence we find Mrs. Ramsay, simply by a look, compelling Lily to be considerate to Tansley. Thus she tactfully intervenes and Tansley is brought out of his isolation. He gets the required attention to make him feel at ease. Next Mr. Carmichael is also brought out of himself by the beauty of that ‘yellow and purple dish of fruit’ placed on the middle of the table. Even old Mr. Bankes, who thinks it to be a terrible waste of time to attend such dinners, feels elated and reconciled after hearing from her that he has just relished a French recipe of her grandmother’s. Thus it is clearly revealed to us that ‘the whole effort of the merging and flowing and creating rested on her’.

Mrs. Ramsay’s Warmth and Compassion: - An emblem of Mrs. Ramsay’s compassion or power to heal is the ‘nurse carrying a light across a dark room’ assuring a cross or fractious child; the light here stands for what Mrs. Ramsay has it in her power to give to others. A similar kind of emblem is used by Mrs. Ramsay herself in her reflection on her own beauty and ability to succeed with people: ‘She bore about with her, she could not help knowing it, the torch of her beauty’. The ‘light’ here is that quality to attract people which people respond to, and through which they find access to her compassion. The warmth and brightness of Mrs. Ramsay’s ‘light’ creates the ‘circle of life’ into which she can take her husband and make him secure. It fills the house too as she created drawing-room and kitchen, set them all aglow’. It is responsible too for the almost golden world of the Ramsay children, or of the childhood which she fosters and cherishes. So she creates a sun-filled world, though it has its shadows. And in her world she wants men and women to be united and become fruitful like herself. She offers her protection to all. At the intellectual level she offers her protection and inspiration to both science and art—to Lily Briscoe the painter, to Bankes the botanist, to Carmichael the poet, to Tansley the scholar and above all to her husband the philosopher. Thus she seems to have the whole of the other sex under her protection. For all this some critics suggest that Mrs. Ramsay may rather be taken as a symbol of the female principle in life.

Two Kinds of Truth and Mrs. Ramsay: - James Hafley has rightly remarked:

“"To The Lighthouse is really the story of a contest between two kinds of truth—Mr. Ramsay’s and Mrs. Ramsay’s. For him truth is factual truth; for her truth is the movement towards truth; since truth is always being made, and never is made, the struggle for truth is the truth itself. The form of this novel at once expresses and verifies Mrs. Ramsay’s truth. According to Bergson, certainty can follow only from factual extension of knowledge resulting in scientific order, such is the order which Mr. Ramsay sees.”
So it is evident that Mr. Ramsay’s is a logical scientific procedure toward truth.

"Mrs. Ramsay, on the other hand, knows by intuition rather than analysis and is, therefore, able to know reality-mobility, qualitative rather than quantitative diversity, time instead of space, movement itself and not merely the path of movement in space."

This shows that Mrs. Ramsay knows that feeling for others consideration and sympathy, are the eternal truths which never perish like the scientific and matter of fact truth which her husband seeks. That is why we find that ultimately Mr. Ramsay’s truth—factual truth—is short-lived and Mrs. Ramsay’s truth, which is the movement towards truth, prevails in the long run, in fact the second and final movement of To The Lighthouse clearly establishes that it is none but Mr. Ramsay ‘had blundered’ and Mrs. Ramsay’s intuition in spite of its apparent illogicality has triumphed.

"Time Passes": Testing of Mrs. Ramsay’s Truth: - “Time Passes,” the second part of the novel, has been hailed as a masterpiece of description, probably unsurpassed in twentieth century English prose. But, in fact it is actually the testing of Mrs. Ramsay’s vision by Mr. Ramsay’s facts, and the apparent triumph of those facts, During the ten years’ time everything seems to be slowly gravitating towards inevitable doom and destruction. “But there was a force working; something not highly conscious; something that leered, something that lurched…..They come with their brooms and pails at last, they get to work.” And slowly some rusty laborious birth seems to take place. And the birth brings the house back to what it was and we find the Ramsays, Lily Briscoe and Mr. Carmichael back to the old summer-house after a lapse of ten years. The long night is over. And though she is no more in the land of the living, it reveals the ultimate triumph of Mrs. Ramsay’s illusions.

Dominates even after Death: - The dominating personality and the imposing physical presence of Mrs. Ramsay is felt by us only in the first part of To The Lighthouse. In the second part all of a sudden we find: “Mr. Ramsay stumbling along a passage stretched his arms out one dark morning, but, Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, he stretched his arms out, they remained empty.” Even then she pervades the whole book. Her influence on the important characters, especially on Lily Briscoe and Mrs. Ramsay, is really very significant. In the final movement of the novel Mrs. Ramsay is constantly presented through Lily Briscoe’s consciousness, and her full significance as a uniting force is clearly revealed. It is the apparition of this great lady, at the same window in the same summer-house, which enables Lily Briscoe to complete her picture after a lapse of ten years. And at the very same moment Mr. Ramsay, who under-took the journey to the lighthouse with Cam and James to fulfil one of Mrs. Ramsay’s cherished wishes, lands at his destination. This shows how Mrs. Ramsay dead is more powerful than Mr. Ramsay living.

Conclusion: - So in the last part of the novel it is clearly revealed to us that it is Mrs. Ramsay who is right and not Mr. Ramsay. And her ‘lies’ are proved to be the truth that can refute Mr. Ramsay’s ‘facts’. Mrs. Ramsay’s feeling for others, consideration and sympathy are the eternal truths — truths that never perish like the scientific and matter-of-fact truth sought by Mr. Ramsay.
The theme of “To The Lighthouse” is concerned with subject and object and Nature of reality

Introductory: Different Interpretations: - “To The Lighthouse” is, without any shade of doubt, a very complex novel having different interpretations from different critics. There is a general agreement that “To The Lighthouse” centres on questions of general order and chaos, male and female, permanence and change and intellection and intuition, the critics are far from unanimous in the actual tracing out of these themes. Thus, for example, it is clear that the simultaneous completion of Lily Briscoe’s painting and arrival of Mr. Ramsay, James and Cam at the Lighthouse are somehow functioning together to complete the book, but no two critics have agreed as to what the function means as an ending of what has gone before. One claims that Mr. Ramsay is undergoing a transition from his former intellectual personality to a newly discovered intuitive view, while another critic says that Lily is moving from a concern with form, that is art, to a concern with content, that is life. Another critic sees in the ending a shift from time to the timeless, while a fourth one sees here a shift from egotism to selflessness, and a fifth critic thinks of this simultaneous convergence as a clumsy device which solves no problem.”

We can multiply such examples, but it is evident that the dominant tendency is to interpret the thematic conflict—whatever it may be—as an antithesis to two mutually exclusive terms, one of which must be rejected in favour of the other. In fact, the full significance of the trip to the Lighthouse is not grasped. It is, more or less, seen as a one way affair. But a closer study of the novel will reveal that this either-or strategy is hardly adequate for dealing with the multiplicity of points of view through which each character is seen in the first section, the descending and the ascending movement of the second section and the shifting simultaneity of events which shape the third.

Relation of Self to Others: - It is mainly the first part of the novel that deals with the relation of self to others. Very soon it becomes clear that not one single trait or characteristic of a person can be seized upon and cherished in order to know him or her. Mrs. Ramsay for instance, is really a warm and beautiful woman, yet annoyingly concerned with ordering the lives of others. And this is quite clear from the resentment which many of her circles express against her mania for marriage. She is, no doubt, maternal.

Mr. Ramsay: - Next, let us take the example of Mr. Ramsay. Often he shows himself as a self-dramatising domestic tyrant, but still he is to be admired as a lone watcher at the dark frontiers of human ignorance. He is, no doubt, a detached and a lonely philosopher, yet he cannot but crave the contact of his wife and children. He is grim, yet optimistic, austere, yet fearful for his reputation; petty and selfish, and yet capable of losing himself completely in a novel of Scott; alert, yet he thrives on the simple company and the humble fare of fishermen.

Lily and Others: - In the same way Lily Briscoe is also a complex figure. She is a spinster disinterested in ordinary sexual attachment; she is nevertheless capable of a fierce outburst of love. She is, no doubt, an artist perpetually terrified by a blank canvas.
but still she is able to find a solution to the complex problem of art-life relationship. In the same way Mr. Bankes, Mr. Tansley, all are double beings or complex figures of the novel. And we find that the climax of the first section occurs at the dinner, a brilliantly dramatic communion meal where each ordinary ego, with its petty aggression and resentment, is gradually blended with the others into a pattern of completion and harmony. Thus it is clear that double vision or multiple perspective is very much necessary to know and understand human personality. And in this section we are able to have just such a perspective, as each character is presented from at least two points of view.

**Man to Nature:** We have seen how in the first section the relation of self to others has been dealt with. And Part II of the novel deals with the relation of man to nature. It does not portray merely the ravages of time and tide affecting the Ramsay family and their summer house. In addition the almost complete destruction of the house, we have also a chance to see its equally dramatic renewal. And then it is seen that its focus is on the comic-epic figure of Mrs. McNab, who lurches through the house wiping and dusting, breaking into a long dirge of sorrow and trouble, yet who feels, ‘looking sideways in the glass, as if after all, she had some consolation, as if indeed there were twined about her dirge some incorrigible hope’. Thus, it is she and her two helpers, Mrs. Bast and her son, who fetch up from oblivion all the Waverly novels, and who rescue the house from impending doom and destruction.

Further, we find in this very section that the fortunes of the Ramsay family suffer so many setbacks. Mrs. Ramsay dies unexpectedly, Andrew is killed in the battlefield in France, and Prue dies of childbirth. Even then we are made to understand that Mr. Ramsay’s work will endure, for the fate of his books was somehow tied up with the Waverly novels. Also, as the next section proceeds to demonstrate the family continues to develop. Thus it is clearly evident that section two or the central section of this great novel, therefore, demonstrates not the victory of natural chaos over human order, but rather the reverse. Man's power and will to live ultimately prevail over death and destruction.

**Relation of Art to life:** Now, in the third section of the To The Lighthouse, the third level of the theme, the relation of art to life is treated. We find that the structure of this section is based upon the shuttling back and forth between Lily on the island and those in the boat watching the island, who in turn get further away. This is accompanied by the corresponding movement of those in the boat getting closer to the Lighthouse and Lily gelling closer to the solution of her aesthetic problem. And it must be noted that the determining factor in each case is love (the art of life), which might perhaps be defined as order or the achievement of form in human relations through the surrender of personality. Hence we find Lily brushing her painting as she feels the upsurge of that sympathy for Mr. Ramsay, which she had previously been stubbornly unable to give. James and Cam give up their longstanding antagonism towards their father. Mr. Ramsay, himself, at the same time, attains a resolution of his own tensions and worries. The point is not that they have made a one dimensional transition from this to that attitude, but that, since each is aware simultaneously both of what is receding and what is approaching, each has received in his way a sense of double vision.
Double Vision through Imagery: - A closer look at the imagery of the book, its figure of speech, its scene and plot may further demonstrate the presence of this double vision. To begin with, the Lighthouse itself as the most conspicuous image functions in two ways as something to be reached, and as source of flashing light. This means has a symbolic role to play. As a source of light, it appears in two connections, first, as it impinges upon the consciousness of Mrs. Ramsay in the first section after she had finished reading to James, and second, as it flashes upon the empty house in section two.

Thus we find that Mrs. Ramsay, the busy mother of eight children often feels the need ‘to be silent, to be alone. Often she muses upon the alternating flashes of light in a mood of detachment, peace and rest. And this musing gives her a sense of victory over life, and she identifies herself with the third stroke—the long steady stroke—which becomes for her an image of purity and truth, of strength and courage, searching and beautiful. Her self, having shed its attachments, was free for the strongest adventures. When life sank down for a moment, the range of experience seemed limitless ... Losing personality, one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir, and there rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this serenity, and pausing there she looked out to meet the stroke of the Lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of the three which was—her stroke.’

Now this can be taken as the thesis of her emotional cycle, the antithesis is evoked as her mood soon changes into one of the grim recognition of inevitable facts of ‘suffering, death, the poor’, and she gradually descends from her state on triumphant freedom from the fact, the hurry and the stir by seizing upon the light from a different perspective, ‘for when one woke, all one’s relation changed’. Looking now at the light, it is the remorseless, the pitiless.

Reconciliation of Opposites: - Then it is found that only when these two moods become reconciled, will the cycle be complete. The second view seems ‘so much here, yet so little hers’, and then her meditations are crowned in their third phase by ‘exquisite happiness, intense happiness’, and she cries out, ‘It is enough. It is enough’. It seems to be apparent that by seeing the long steady flash of light in two different aspects—as an image of expansion and release and, then, as an image of contraction and confinement, she has received the final intuition of the truth about the nature of reality. And this intuition is that one must be both subjectively involved, and objectively detached from life, and that true happiness rests neither in the one sphere nor in the other exclusively, but in achieving a harmonious balance, however fragile, between the two. Now she can rest contented, if only for a moment.

The second part or the middle section of the novel portrays the death and rebirth of the decaying and deserted house. Here the light makes its second appearance by gliding over the rooms gently as if it laid its cares arid lingered stealthily and looked and came lovingly again. It is clear from the sentence which follows immediately that this is one side of doubleness. ‘But in the very lull of the loving caress as the long stroke leant upon the bed, the rock was rent asunder; another fold of the shawl loosened; there it hung, and swayed’. And a few pages on, just before the arrival of the forces of renewal in the house, in ‘that moment, that hesitation when dawn trembles and night”
Lighthouse beam as an image of expansion and release (life-love-hope) and contraction and confinement (death-destruction-terror) held in relation, entered the room for a moment, ‘sent its sudden stare over bed and wall in the darkness of winter looked with equanimity at the thistle and the swallow, the rat and the straw.’ So we find that the three moods—loving care, tearing apart and equanimity are well represented by the light, It may now be asserted that only by going through the opposing experience or multiple perspective one can get a comprehensive view of life.

**Lily’s Experience: Doubleness of Reality:** In the third section of the novel, Lily’s brush descends in stroke after stroke when she begins her painting for a second time. ‘And so pausing and so flickering she attained a dancing rhythmical movement, as if the pauses were one part of the rhythm and the stroke another, and all were related.’ Thus, in each of the lighthouse beam itself, her vision begins to emerge in stroke and pause in alternation, and ‘the truth, the reality which suddenly laid hands upon her emerged stark at the back of appearance and commanded her attention’. In other words, as the light flickers, as it goes and comes back, Lily begins to see the course that her painting was to take. This flicker, which to an ordinary observer is an endless dull repetition, holds Lily’s mind and enables her to discover the truth and reality that the appearance signifies to her. The stroke and pause of the Lighthouse beam symbolise the problem of subject and object and the perception of nature of reality. Hence it may be concluded that reality has always a doubleness; and this can be understood only through a double vision.

**Subject, Object and Native of Reality:** We find this phrase—subject and object and the nature of reality—in the first part of To The Lighthouse. Andrew Ramsay has used this phrase in answer to a question from Lily Briscoe about the content of his father’s books. And the words are significant and have underlying meaning also. In fact it is exactly this problem which works its way through the novel on three perceptible levels—human relations, metaphysics and aesthetics. The novel can be seen to have been built around the problem of how the knower looks at the known, how one person looks at another, how man looks at nature and how the artist looks at life. These points have been discussed in detail in the foregoing paragraphs. We have shown how the main characters of To The Lighthouse look at the world in various ways. In fact three specific ways of seeing the object can be examined in To The Lighthouse through the eye of the artist (Lily Briscoe) through the eye of a child (James Nancy and Cam), and through the feminine creative eye of Mrs. Ramsay, whose vision might be solid to be that of a poet. Hence the characters see themselves and the world differently and very often bring the objective world into subjective consciousness.

**Conclusion:** To understand life and the nature of reality the need of double vision is essential. We may now conclude with the very apt comments of Norman Friedman on this point: “A right understanding is achieved by those who try to understand the nature of reality simultaneously from two different stand points—subjective and objective—through which one must pass in making the transition from one perspective to the other. From whatever view point we regard life, whether it be that of a detached philosopher ironically contemplating from a height’ or that of the busy mother and the house wife frantically involved in the fever and fret of daily routine, one must give it up in favour of the other, becoming immersed in the waters of transition and emerging with a double perspective (synthesis). In
involvement in life and a certain detachment from it are necessary to understand it fully. Doing only one of the two would naturally give a partial view of a life, which can be quite misleading. One has to strike a balance, to lose which is to give way to the chaos, of a black and lovely darkness on the one side, and to the disorder of a terrifying and senseless force on the other.”

**To The Lighthouse : Virginia Woolf’s lyricism**

**Introductory remarks:** To rigidly define the form of a lyrical novel is rather a baffling task. A lyrical novel is a blend of lyrical poetry and the novel in the usual sense. In it the usual scenery of fiction becomes a texture of imagery. It also shifts the reader’s attention from men and events to a formal design. It has generally a poetic style. But this is not all. Any novel may rise to such great heights of language or present its narrative in imagery.

In fact the most important and distinguishing feature of a novel of this genre is that it transcends the casual and temporal movement of narrative within the framework of fiction. It rather uses the novel to perform the function of a poem. For such a novel it is not a matter of prime importance to reproduce external life truthfully. It discards the method of achieving objectivity through the dramatic and narrative form of the traditional novel, but combines the world in a strongly inward, yet an aesthetically objective norm. Thus its form is neither dramatic nor didactic, but poetic in the limited sense of being lyrical. And, generally speaking, a lyric is a short poem which a single emotion, usually personal, is expressed, although originally it was intended to be sung with the lyre. So it is musical and at the same time subjective, as it is built round a single mood, emotion or impression.

**Mrs. Woolf and Lyrical Novel:** Virginia Woolf was in quest of a meditative form through which she could convey simultaneously a picture of life and manners and a corresponding image of mind. In fact her essay 'Mr. Bennett and Mr. Brown opened the door of the novel to fresh conventions, foreshadowing a lyrical manner for the English novel through the conversion of characters and scenes into symbolic imagery. She sought to convey inner life and she realised that this could be best done in a lyrical manner. Finding that the conventional novel of motives and environment had proved insufficient she has suggested in one of her famous essays that its form should be such that it provides like poetry ‘the outline rather than details, and stands further back from life in order to achieve the symbolic distance of impersonality.’

**Lyrical Method:** Ralph Freedman has pointed out that in Virginia Woolf’s search for a form in which the inner and the outer can be combined, she conceived of the moment as a concentration of the manifold elements of life into significant images or scenes. In addition to the literary use the moments also serve the epistornological function of clarifying the implication of consciousness for the artist’s experience of life, a version of the imagination. In fact, for Virginia Woolf the inner and the outer are included in a single whole. The thing is that consciousness combines disparate elements and form; these elements thus combined, the moment moves to associations and memories which expand perceptions into scenes. But when the perceptions are being expanded into
Scenes, the consciousness always remains aware of the objects which feed its cognition, and realizes that for the time being these things are freed from their time-bound existence. So we find that Mrs. Woolf’s lyrical narrative is based on a design in which various contents of consciousness are juxtaposed. David Daiches has rightly remarked that the method is to ‘distil a significance out of the data discovered by the personal sensibility and by projecting that significance through the minds of others, to maintain an unstable equilibrium between lyrical and narrative art.’ And the unstable equilibrium between the lyrical and narrative art shows how Virginia Woolf brilliantly achieves the telescoping of the poet’s lyrical self and the novelist’s omniscient point of view. For Mrs. Woolf, poetry is a symbolic relationship between the individual self and its range of experience. So we find that the omniscient self of the poet-novelist is crucial to her concept of lyrical novel.

Poetic Prose: - We already know that Virginia Woolf’s aim was to convey inner life, to display life as an aspect and function of the mind. And she realised that the resources of ordinary prose were really inadequate for this purpose. Hence she had to adopt a very peculiar, a very individual style. Hers is a poetic style with poetic rhythms, repetitions and poetic imagery. We find her using vivid symbols and metaphors which carry a complex aura of associations and emotions just to enable her to enhance the expressiveness of the language. Hence her style becomes superbly allusive and suggestive. Rhythms, assonances, cadences and poetic refrains are the distinctive features of her poetic prose. R.L. Chamber’s apt remarks regarding this aspect of her style is worth noting: “This prose that approximates to poetry is not a spurious or hybrid form, but a genuine and legitimate medium of expression in its own right. Virginia Woolf is in a great tradition, which includes the names of Plato and John Donne and Sir Thomas Browne and the translators of the authoriscal version of the Bible. Furthermore it is a fact that by writing a poetic prose, by borrowing from the technique of poetry, while retaining the essential prose rhythms, all these writers exercised a true artistic insight into the possibilities and limitations of their medium. They realised the enormous advantage that was to be had for their purpose in shunning as far as possible that extreme pole of prose. Virginia Woolf realised this better than anyone else who was writing prose in her time.”

“Time Passes” Its Lyricism: - The poetical character or the lyric note of Virginia Woolf’s style is fully in evidence in the lyrical nature of Part II entitled, Time Passes in her To The Lighthouse. Jean Guiguet has very nicely dealt with a very beautiful analysis of the lyrical aspect of this chapter. The lyrical character of the “Time Passes” has been compared with the opening of chapter 5 of Orland.

In these two passages Mrs. Woolf treats of her favourite theme, ‘this impersonal thing, the flight of time. ’She has taken recourse to the same cosmic elements which bring about change-wind, water, light, shade, conceived of as mysterious powers, as an army of goblins attacking objects one by one to corrode them, to transform them, disintegrate them. Whether night in invading the Ramsays’ house or rainy gales assaulting the whole of England, the change of scale is scarcely noticeable, for the proportions of the opposing forces remain the same: man and his world on the one hand, and on the other the elfin army, unseen and immeasurable. The vision is the same in both cases.
**The Lyricism is Impersonal:** - In *Time Passes* the lyricism is essentially personal or subjective, hence doubts have been expressed if the lyrical quality of this chapter in this novel is genuinely lyrical. So Jean Guiguet has discussed this point in great detail. There is no character, no individual consciousness, no voice uttering the poetic words. There is only a scene taking place independent of any spectators, life pursuing its course independent of any living being. Is this depersonalization not antagonistic to the very essence of lyricism? If by lyricism we mean the expression of exalted feelings, as in Shakespeare’s sonnets, the Immortality Ode or Epipsychidion, it rather becomes difficult to accept ‘Time Passes’ as a lyric. Nevertheless the presence of an ‘I’ of an individual consciousness as the seat of such feelings, is perhaps only an accidental element in lyricism, a literary convention and all things considered, a superficial characteristic. In the poems above mentioned, we are scarcely concerned with the ‘I’, which has no distinct features and is only the transparent support for the emotion—love, anguish, nostalgia, aspiration—which is the real substance of the poem. That Virginia Woolf did away with this support is not surprising; it follows logically from her principles.

**Abstraction in this Lyricism:** - Evidently there is a degree of abstraction in this lyricism. Facing the cosmos, thinking about it and enduring it, we have only the anonymous human beings ‘we’, ‘one’, whoever’, the indefinite subject of an infinitive verb. This degree of abstraction appears to be a characteristic of one aspect of Virginia Woolf’s lyricism. Without passing through the intermediary of any individual experience it attempts to render directly the relations between the man and the universe. These are thus reduced to their most elementary form. The themes of traditional lyricism, nature, love and death are convenient labels for those fundamental complexities of which each poet creates his characteristic variant or blend. They are, in fact, so many questions without intelligible answer, whose mystery the artist tries to prove obliquely by means of a whole system of transpositions, whose evocative value and whose load of symbolism are destined to act on the sensibility and intelligence of the reader, so as to convey to him the inexpressible reality. And the two questions that absorbed Virginia Woolf and provided the matter for her lyric outbursts are the same as those which she asked and tried to answer under all the forms with which her art experimented in turn: time and—personal identity. They are complementary to such an extent that one cannot be contemplated without the other.

**Abstraction made Concrete and Perceptible:** - It is really creditable for Virginia Woolf to succeed in giving body and substance to what abstract thought had devitalized. She apprehends time in the form of the changes it brings about, just as an artist is recognised through his creation. But change is also an abstraction to make it concrete and perceptible to the sense, it is necessary to expand the present until it contains the past too, and to insert, between the two limits, mobility, or rather mutation, which includes permanence within change. And Jean Guiguet has pointed out that the opening of sections 3 and 9 of part I is quite significant in this connection.

“But what after all is one night? A short space, especially when the darkness dims so soon, and so soon a bird sings, a cock crows, or a faint green quickens, like a turning leaf, in the hollow of the wave. Night, however, succeeds night. The winter holds a pack of them in store and deals them equally evenly, with indefatigable fingers. They lengthen; they darken.”

Prepared by Atta Ur Rahman Jadoon 03335499069
“The house was left, the house was deserted. It was left like a shell on a sandhill to fill with dry salt grams now that life had left it. The long night seemed to have set in; the trifling airs nibbling, the clammy breaths fumbling seemed to have triumphed. The saucepan had rusted and the mat decayed. Toads had nosed their way Idly aimlessly, the swaying shall swung to and fro.”

There is not a verb here, either standing alone or modified by an adverb, which fails to indicate some alteration: yet at the same time, under the change of aspect, of colour, of texture, we feel the enduring nature of night, of the house, of the wave, of the breeze, the saucepan or the shawl. This seems to be a description, although distended by time and undermined by mutability; but that which is describable, that which is seen, is only a means of expressing the indescribable, the invisible, that is contained within it. Surely this is described and precisely that abstract-concrete reality so necessary to Virginia Woolf. These images and sensations, merging together in the synthesis of an inner landscape over and above all their plastic value, have a lyrical quality or symbolic power which makes them linger in the mind.

Words with Double Aspect: - It has also been explained that all the words in the two passages have a double aspect, night, the wave, the grain of salt, the wind, the toad, rust—these are agents of decay and destruction, the forces of time warning against the forces of life: the bird, the leaf, the house, the shawl...And so such passages expand into abstraction without a break, imperceptibly: the words, ruin, corruption, oblivion, insensibility of nature, which occur later are associated with so many images and sensations that they take on fresh life, an almost physical content. Meditation is superimposed on things seen, and it does not obliterate it, rather recalls it constantly. A few lines indeed can give no idea of the richness and artistry of these pages, in which words invoke and answer one another from one paragraph to the next, while awakening distant echoes from the book’s truest horizons. Their music moreover, adds to their incantatory power and perfects their poetic character.

Conclusion: - Virginia Woolf undoubtedly chose prose for her medium of expression, but her prose is a poetic-prose, ‘prose that approximates to poetry’. In spite of her great achievements she is, in fact, not the originator of ‘the stream of consciousness’ novel in England. Dorothy Richardson precedes her as the Path-finder. But she fully deserves the credit for poetising and musicalising the novel of subjectivity. Allusions and images, rhythm, refrain and metaphors all these combine to make Virginia Woolf’s style poetic. The great novels of Virginia Woolf not only reveal the stream of consciousness of their characters but flow like a stream themselves soothing our soul with its musical murmur.

"To the Lighthouse” : Virginia Woolf’s as a Novelist

Introduction: - Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) was an English novelist, essayist, biographer, and feminist. Woolf was a prolific writer, whose modernist style changed with each new novel. Her letters and memoirs reveal glimpses of Woolf at the center of English literary culture during the Bloomsbury era. Woolf represents a historical moment when art was integrated into society, as T.S. Eliot describes in his obituary for Virginia.
“Without Virginia Woolf at the center of it, it would have remained formless or marginal...With the death of Virginia Woolf; a whole pattern of culture is broken.”

Virginia Woolf broke free from tradition; she had also to discard the current form of the novel. But then she was driven to invent her own technique which would express her own vision of life. Her formula for the novel was not humanity in action but in a state of infinite perception. The novel in her hands is not just an entertainment, or propaganda, or the vehicle of some fixed ideas or theories, or a social document, but a voyage of exploration to find out how life is lived, and how it can be rendered as it is actually lived without distortion. She concentrates her attention on the rendering of inner reality and gives subtle and penetrating inlets into the consciousness of her characters. She cares very little for narrating dramatic events.

**The World of outer Reality not ignored:** It is to be noted that because her main purpose as a novelist is to depict inner life of human beings, she has not ignored the world of outer reality, the warm and palpable life of nature. In fact, in her novels we find that the metaphysical interest is embodied in purely human and personal terms that the bounding line of art remains unbroken, that the concrete images which are the very stuff of art are never sacrificed to abstraction, but are indeed more in evidence than in the work of such writers as Bennett and Wells. The essential subject matter of her novels is no doubt the consciousness of one or more characters, but the outer life of tree and stream, of bird and fish, of meadow and seashore crowds in upon her and lends her image after image, a great, sparkling and many-coloured world of sight and scent and sound and touch.

**Emergence of an Art Form:** In Virginia Woolf’s novels we find a rare artistic integrity and they display a well-developed sense of form. To communicate her experience she had to invent conventions as rigid as or more rigid than the old ones that she discarded. And this she does in her best novels of the middle and the final period—Mrs. Dalloway, To The Lighthouse, The Waves and Between the Acts. In each case a small group of people is selected, and through their closely interrelated experience the reader receives his total impression. We also find that in each case certain images, phrases and symbols bind the whole together. So there are certain resemblances between them in structure or style. Apart from these general resemblances each of these novels is a fresh attempt to solve the problems raised by the departure from traditional conventions. So it is observed that each of her novels grows out of the preceding one and we see the germ of her later works in their predecessors.

**Poetisation of the English Novel:** One of the most outstanding achievements of Virginia Woolf is that she represents the poetisation and musicalisation of English novel. Among the English novelists she is foremost in lyrical technique. She sets out on a quest for a mediating form through which she could convey simultaneously picture of life and manners and a corresponding image of minds. She aimed at conveying inner life and this could be best done in a lyrical manner. Hence it is found that in order to enrich her language, she used vivid metaphors and symbols which are peculiar to poetry. Her language is the language of poetry; her prose style has the assonances, the refrains, the rhythms and the accents of poetry itself. Virginia Woolf’s lyrical narrative is
design on which various contents of consciousness are juxtaposed. The equilibrium between the lyrical and narrative art shows how Virginia Woolf brilliantly achieves the telescoping of the poet’s lyrical self and the novelist’s omniscient point of view. It is a case of unified sensibility, that is, a blending of the objective and the subjective, which is considered to be the best form of poetry particularly in modern poetry. Virginia Woolf’s “To The Lighthouse” shows her lyricism in a superb manner and Time Passes’, the second part of this novel, has been described by the novelist herself as particularly representative of her lyric vein.

The Interior Monologue—Stream of Consciousness Technique: - To the novelists of the new school of human consciousness is a chaotic welter of sensations and impressions; it is fleeting, trivial and evanescent. According to Virginia Woolf, the great task of the novelist should be 'to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit'. His main business is just to reveal the sensations and impressions to bring us close to the quick of the mind. He should be more concerned with inner reality rather than outer. This is what is known as 'the stream of consciousness technique'. We are introduced into interior life of a character by means of interior monologue. There is very little intervention in the way of explanation or commentary on the part of the novelist. This has been done by Virginia Woolf by a very skilful use of 'the interior monologue' or 'the stream of consciousness' technique. She has very successfully revealed the very spring of action, the hidden motives which impel men and women to act in a particular way. She has been able to take us directly into the minds of her characters and show the flow of ideas, sensations and impressions there. Thus Mrs. Woolf has been able to create a number of memorable, many-sided and rounded figures, such as Mrs. Ramsay or Mrs. Dalloway, which are among the immortals of literature.

The Distinctive Nature of Reality: - Virginia Woolf’s novels have a distinctive nature of reality. Jean Guiguet’s comments on this are worth noting “Her reality is not a factor to be specified in some question of the universe: it is the Sussex towns, the London streets, the waves breaking on the shore, the woman sitting opposite her in the train, memories flashing into the mind from nowhere, a beloved being’s return into nothingness; it is all that is not ourselves and yet is so closely mingled with ourselves that the two enigmas—reality and self—make only one. But the important thing is the nature or quality of this enigma. It does not merely puzzle the mind; it torments the whole being, even while defining it. To exist, for Virginia Woolf, meant experiencing that dizziness on the ridge between two abysses of the unknown, the self and the non- self.”

Artistic Sincerity and Integrity: - Virginia Woolf had her own original vision of life and she has ever remained truthful to her vision. And this truthfulness and this artistic integrity is due to her perfect detachment from all personal prejudices and preconceived notions or from any personal end. Literary traditions and conventions, or social and political problems of the day—nothing could deter her from writing according to her vision, according to the ideal which exists in her mind with uncommon artistic sincerity and integrity. And then Mrs. Woolf was a ‘naturalist’ as well as a contemplative’. In the words of Bernard Blackstone, “She observes new facts, and old facts in a new way; but she also combines them, through the contemplative act, into new and strange
patterns. The outer is not only related to, it is absorbed into the inner life. Mrs. Woolf believed in the power of the mind and so she makes her reader think.”

**Aestheticism:** We have already discussed in detail Mrs. Woolf’s aestheticism. The significant thing about her is that there is nothing languid or academic about her aestheticism. She could find beauty ‘as much in a scrap of orange peel lying in the gutter as in the Venus de Milo’ She was a great lover of beauty and this love of beauty guides her in her selection and ordering of reality.

**Woman’s Point of View; Feminisation of English Novel:** It would have to be accepted that Virginia Woolf was a woman and naturally in her novels she gives us the woman’s point of view. That is why we find her relying more on intuition than on reason. We also find in her a woman’s dislike for the world of societies churches, banks and schools and the political, social and economic movements of the day have hardly any attraction for her. As a sheltered female of her age she had hardly any scope to have any knowledge of the sordid and brutal aspects of life. Thus we find that her picture of life does not include vice, sordidness or the abject brutality of our age. So it may be inferred that Mrs. Woolf thus represents the feminisation of the English novel.

**Limitations of her Range:** The limited range of Mrs. Woolf’s characterisation is clearly evident in her works. Her characters are definitely convincing in their own way, but they are drawn from a very limited range. They mainly belong to the upper middle class life and to a certain temperament too. She could paint only certain types of characters. They tend to think and feel alike to be the aesthetes of one set of sensations.

Being a woman of her times she avoids the theme of passionate love. She could not write of sex freely and frankly and so has avoided it altogether in her novels. But still she achieved greatness and artistic perfection by a clear recognition of these limitations, and by working within them.

**Conclusion:** Virginia Woolf’s greatest achievement is that in her novels the stream of consciousness technique finds a balance. She knew that art required a selection and ordering of material. Hence her work has a rare artistic integrity. In fact she wonderfully succeeded in imposing form and order on the chaos inherent in the novel of subjectivity or ‘the stream of consciousness’ novel. And it was Mrs. Woolf who was also one of the most forceful and original theorists of ‘the stream of consciousness’ novel, and be her exposition of aesthetics of this kind of novel, she did much to throw light on its technique, and to bring out its superiority to the conventional novel.