

I. Introduction to Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as a Historical novel

The present research work is a critical analysis on Chinua Achebe's historical novel *Things Fall Apart* from the perspective of new historicism. In the novel, Achebe has portrayed the socio political as well as cultural scenario of the late nineteenth century Nigeria when there was the beginning phase of colonization. At that time, the western colonizers were engaged in colonizing the Nigerian region ignoring the resistance of the native people. On the other hand, this novel includes the typical culture and way of life of the Nigerian people and their national awareness at that time. By exploring realistic image of the 1880s Nigerian history, Achebe has blurred the so called boundary between fact and fiction i.e. fiction and history to question the traditional concept of historicity.

The present novel *Things Fall Apart* captures the transitional period of Nigeria in which there is the struggle between the traditional culture and way of life and the another group who support the natural flow of change. Among them the protagonist of the novel, Okonkwo, is one who believes in the traditional norms and values and tries his best to conserve such tradition. But after the entrance of the western colonizers, the traditional norms and values of the country are gradually changed and especially the new generation has adopted such a new flow of change that creates a kind of tussle between the old and new generation. At the end of the novel the protagonist, Okonkwo killed himself which signifies that one who cannot change him with the flow of time is left behind.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is an almost iconic text in the postcolonial counter canon and especially in the context of African literature written during the intense introspection of Nigeria's self-fashioning on the eve of independence, Achebe's novel reflects the imprint of the past at a time when oppositional cultural

and national identities were being constructed to oppose the legacy of imperialism's othering of Africa. Written against the grain of colonial histories, Achebe's story of Umuofia is a work of historical affirmation deeply marked by the uncertainty and historical disenfranchisement from which it sprang. By narrating the past, Achebe tries to explore two things at a time. Firstly, he wants to expose the culture and tradition of Africa and its richness in its typical way of life. Second, he excavates the dominative as well as exploitative nature of western colonizers and the African attempt to avoid it.

Another aspect the novel is to highlight the reality and colonization in African countries especially in Nigeria. According to Achebe, Africa is not such barbaric and uncivilized as defined by the western colonizers. By defining the Africa as barbaric and chaotic, the western colonizers try to validate their unnecessary intervention in the Nigeria. But in is novel Achebe upsides down the western notion of civilized and uncivilized and argues that the typical culture and way of life of Nigeria is not the source of uncivilization rather it provokes the nationality and national identity. He more emphasizes in the point that Africa is not as backward as argues by western colonizers rather it is rich is its own culture and way of life.

Born on 16th November 1930 at Ogidi in Eastern Nigeria, Chinua Achebe studied at a Government College in Umuahia from 1944 to 1947 and University College in Ibadon from 1948 to 1953. After receiving a B.A. from London University in 1953, he began his career as talk producer for the Nigerian Broadcasting Service and was appointed as Director of External Broadcasting for Nigeria in 1961. He is the fifth out of six children of his father Isaiah, a Christian church man and mother Janet N. Achebe. He married to Christie Chiwe Okoli on September 10, 1961 and had four children.

In his literary career, Achebe became the icon of the African literature that includes the African life, history and culture in his literary creation. He has written over twenty books- novels, short stories, essays and collections of poetry- including *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God*; *Beware, Soul Brother and Other Poems*, *Anthills of the Savannah hopes and Impediments* and *Home and Exile* and many others are his most influential literary creation. Chinua Achebe has received numerous honors from around the world, including the honorary fellowship of the American academy of arts and letters as well as honorary doctorates from more than thirty colleges and universities.

Through his writing, Achebe exposes the bitter reality of African society in which so-called European culture dominates the norms and values of native society. Achebe published his first novel entitled *Things Fall Apart* in 1958 depicting the cultural society and its down fall. *No Longer At Ease* was published in 1960 during the year of Nigerian independence from British colonialism. His third novel *Arrow of God* (1964), fourth *A Man of People* (1966) and last novel *Anthills of Savannah* published in 1987. His works mainly deal with the tortures and sufferings of Nigerian people and the country as a whole.

Achebe is the first African writer who captured the essence of African culture and the vivid picture of the African life style. He also depicts the exploitative nature of colonizers and their socio-political intervention in the country like Nigeria. In his most notable novel, *Things Fall Apart*, cultural conflict between the old cultural ethos and the change scenario is presented. It also describes the cultural clash between the native African culture and the white colonizer culture. The white colonizers try their best to impose their culture and way of life upon the traditional culture and the way of

life of African people. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is, thus, the anthology of African lifestyle and culture.

Though, it is a literary creation written in 20th century, it captures the 1880's, African socio-economic and cultural aspect. The present novel is about a story of a Nigerian man named Okonkwo, whose rise and fall and his reaction towards the contemporary socio-political situation is the main subject matter of the novel. The economic status of the people, their emotional attachment towards the cultural and tradition and the entrance of western colonizers is vividly presented in the novel *Things Fall Apart*. That is why, through his fiction com historical novel, Achebe has crossed the boundary between traditional concept of historicity and fact.

The present novel *Things Fall Apart* solidly captures the economic system of Nigerian people and its link to their culture and tradition of that time. It was the time when there were not the massive invention in the field of industry and the new technology. So the Umofia, a small village of Nigeria, people totally based on traditional production system. "There was a wealthy man in Okonkwo's village who had three huge barns, nine wives and thirty children. His name was Nwakibie and he had taken the highest but one title which a man could take in the clan. It was for this man that Okonkwo worked to earn his first seed yams" (15). Okonkwo, the protagonist of the novel, is a son of a poor father who left his children in huge debt. But his hard labor Okonkwo improves his economic status and at last Okonkwo becomes a prosperous man. The economic system of the Umofia society is based on agriculture. They planted the yams and run their life.

Similarly, the novel *Things Fall Apart* includes the issues of culture, tradition and the way of life of the Nigerian people. There is the cultural conflict between two different society and the different cultural groups. That is why the novel represents the

1880s transitional period of Nigeria when the culture is in the constant way of change and new generation of the society accept it normally but a group of people who do not believe on the change naturally. That is why, there occurs the cultural conflict.

In the novel *Okonkwo*, Obierika, Uchendu and other people do not accept the new change easily. On the other hand, Okonkwo's son Nwoye represents the new generation and accepts the change easily. Nwoye, after coming in touch with white missionaries, changes his traditional religion and follows the Christianity. Such activities create a kind of religious tussle because Okonkwo and other people who do not accept the Christianity. In this sense, Achebe writes:

What moved Obierika to visit Okonkwo was the sudden appearance of the latter's son, Nwoye, among the missionaries in Umuofia. What are you doing here? Obierika had asked when after many difficulties the missionaries had allowed him to speak to the boy. I am one of them, replied Nwoye. How is your father? Obierika asked, not knowing what else to say. I do not know. He is not my father, said Nwoye, Unhappily. (47)

Here, the present extract from the novel shows the conflict between two generation as well as two different cultural and religious groups. After the entrance of colonization in Nigeria, it affects all the spheres of African life. It affects the social, economic cultural as well as religious aspect of Nigerian people. Nwoye, the son of Okonkwo influenced by the way of life of western colonizers and applies their religion without his father's consent.

The novel sets in the 1880s agrarian life of Nigerian people when the colonizers had just arrived in Nigerian to colonize the Nigerian people, until its interferences, the people were in their own way of life. They live happily and have

their emotional attachment to their culture and way of life. After the western colonization, their unity, sense of love for their culture and tradition is disrupting. Here, to prove their so called superiority, the western colonizers forcefully imposed the negative archetype such as barbaric, uncivilized, and chaotic to African people. But in reality the western people misrepresents the typical way of life and tradition as barbaric and uncivilization. In this way, through this novel, Chinua Achebe represents actual history of 1880s African country Nigeria.

Different critics and commentators have produced various criticisms about the present novel *Things Fall Apart* from different perspectives. Some critics have analyzed it from the perspective of post colonialism and some others from the perspective of feminism and masculinity. Emmanuel Obiechina has analyzed this novel in his essay entitled "*Structure and Significance in Achebe's Things Fall apart*". Talking about the concept of fact and fiction in *Things Fall Apart*, he writes:

The novels of Chinua Achebe illustrate the statement that life is chaotic, but art is orderly. Out of the chaos of real life, he has created a patterned and artistically organized fictional world. He is able to divine the formal techniques and principles of organization which help to achieve a meaningful exploration of experience and to crystallize important insight into life, human nature and society.(39)

Here, in the mentioned extract, Emmanuel Obiechina has interpreted the novel from the perspective of new historicism. According to him, any literary creation reflects the real image of society. For him, in his novel Achebe has artistically represented even chaotic picture of the society of the contemporary time period.

Similarly, David Hoegberg analyzes the novel *Things Fall Apart* in his essay *Principle and Practice: the Logic of Cultural Violence in Achebe's Things Fall Apart*.

He writes that in one scene early in the novel, Achebe shows the Igbos' capacity for self-consciousness regarding violence within their culture he reveals that some violent traditions have been changed. After Okonkwo pays his fine for breaking the week of peace, one of the oldest men in the village reflect on the way things used to be done (70). David Hoegberg focuses his comments on the changeability of the cultural belief in the Igbo community where the cultural belief and the way of life is constantly changing with the passage of time. There is one character in the novel who does not follow such change and he does not take it naturally.

Moreover, some other critics review the novel *Things Fall Apart* from the perspective of feminism and argue that women in *Things Fall Apart* are severely exploited by patriarchal society where males are all in all but females at margin in most parts of the novel. The demands of male dominated society over female to be submissive, obedient, silent, passive, and musical and patience are highlighted. The women have to locate in domestic affair and the right of judgment is solely granted to male elders. Polygamy is an obvious instance of gender discrimination. Rose Ure Mezu in her work *Women in Achebe's World* puts forth: "Achebe's women are voiceless. But where even highly visible his women are virtually inconsequential" (26).

Women are regarded as properties of men to grasp. Furthermore, Mezu continues: "As wives, women come in multiple numbers sandwiched between yam barns and titles. These three wives, yam barns social titles are the highest accolades for the successful farmer, warrior and man of worth"(27).

In this extract, she focuses on this is the most important and superior things for man. She says that who has numerous wives, crops and high social status is regarded as high level in the society for man.

Furthermore, Simond Gikandi regards *Things Fall Apart* the first book that has spoken the oral tradition and African experience through African writer Achebe. So, this book leads to real innovation of African literature from the spirit of native people rather than the period of publication. Gikandi presents in her essay "*Chinua Achebe and Invention of African Literature*":

Things Fall Apart is certainly not the first African novel but it was probably the first book in which the author represents 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 different kind of literature in English. Achebe's goal in this novel to indicate to his readers "we in Africa did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans has changed the way African readers perceive their own culture and their relationship to colonial institutions". (67)

Simond Gikandi, here, becomes more analytical and analyses the novel from the perspective of the history in which she compares it with the other writings of the time and calls it as the first African novel in terms of its narrative style and the mode of expression.

G. D Killan, another critic analyzes the novel from the historical point of view.

Linking it with the setting of the novel, G. D Killan writes in his criticism:

Things Fall Apart is about Gboland, in the eastern region of present day Nigeria, in the period between 1880-1900. That is, the period just prior to and after the arrival of white men in this part of West Africa. The setting is Umuofia and Mbanta, the two principal villages in a union called the nine village, Okonkwo, the hero of the novel, a great

wrestler in his youth is when we meet him, a renowned warrior, celebrated in songs at religious festivals and one of the most wealthy, powerful and influential people in Umuofia. (3)

In the given extract, G. D Killan exclusively clears the historical stand point of the novel. For him the time period of the story of the novel is the end of the nineteenth century. According to him, the novel includes the socio economic as well as the political situation of the Umoufia, a small village of Nigeria. It also gives space to the story of the entrance of the western colonizers in Nigeria.

New Historicism is a literary theory based on the idea that literature should be studied and interpreted within the context of both the history of the author and the history of the critic. Based on the literary criticism of Stephen Greenblatt and influenced by the philosophy of Michel Foucault, New Historicism acknowledges not only that a work of literature is influenced by its author's times and circumstances, but that the critic's response to that work is also influenced by his environment, beliefs, and prejudices. A New Historicist looks at literature in a wider historical context, examining both how the writer's times affected the work and how the work reflects the writer's times, in turn recognizing that current cultural contexts color that critic's conclusions. In this way, defining the concept of new historicism, M. H Abrams writes in the book *A Glossary of Literary Terms*:

New Historicism, since the early 1980s, has been the accepted name for a mode of literary study that its proponents oppose to the formalism they attribute both to the New Criticism and to the critical deconstruction that followed it. In place of dealing with a text in isolation from its historical context, new historicists attend primarily to the historical and cultural conditions of its production, its meanings, its effects, and also of its later critical interpretations and evaluations. (190)

According to M. H Abrams, new historicism is newly emerged term which comes against the formalism and the old concept of historicism. For him, the main ethos of the new historicism is that it analyzes the text by linking it with the contemporary socio-historicity. Its main concern is that any text cannot be separated from its historical context. Text is only the reflection of society.

New historicists remind us that it is treacherous to reconstruct the past as it really was, rather than as we have been conditioned by our own place and time to believe that it was. And they know that the job of reconstructing history is impossible for those who are unaware of that difficulty, insensitive to the bent or bias of their own historical vantage point. Thus, when new historicist critics describe a historical change, they are highly conscious of and even likely to discuss the theory of historical change that informs their account.

New Historicism is a theory in literary criticism that suggests literature must be studied and interpreted within the context of both the history of the author and the history of the critic. The theory arose in the 1980s, with Stephen Greenblatt as its main proponent, and became quite popular in the 1990s. Critics using this approach look at a work and consider other writings that may have inspired it or were inspired by it, as well as the life of the author and how it relates to the text.

Historiography can be understood as the art of writing history using multiple sources such as diary, memoir, journalism, personal encounters, anecdotes etc. It is the act of writing, because something or some event does not become history by the mere virtue of happening or being. If that were the case, there would be an objective truth, one version of history, and the question of multiple comprehension and version of history would not at all be raised. Now, any and all source can become the source of history, provided they come to a discourse making or recounting of the past as it seems from the present. Because, as Foucault says, the search for objective truth is like the search for

origin which is never going to be accomplished, the very fact that we cannot re-invent and re-live the past makes it impossible to go to the exact historic situation.

New historicism denies the existence of absolute truth in history. It argues that there is no possibility of universal meaning or truth in history and that meaning which is imputed to history reflects power relations at the time of writing as well as the time of the events' occurrence. It claims to be neutral to any historical context and sensitive to all cultures with the practice of interdisciplinary approach and gives high regards to transdisciplinary approach. It emphasizes on a reading of the text with equal footing by breaking the hierarchy of high and low, good and bad and so on. In new historicism social and cultural backgrounds, historical and even the history of the author cannot be undermined merely by emphasizing only what is written in the text. In this context, Lois Tyson in his book *Critical Theory Today* argues:

Therefore, new historical criticism has little in common with traditional historical criticism. The latter, which dominated literary studies in the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth, confined itself largely to studies of the author's life, in order to discover his or her intentions in writing the work or to studies of the historical period in which the work was written. (291)

In his book *Critical Theory Today*, Lois Tyson compares and contrasts between old and new historicism and argues that new historicism defines literature as the product of society. For him not any texts are beyond the socio historical context, rather based on the socio historicity.

In this way, this research minutely searches the historical quality in the fiction *Things Fall Apart* and tries its best to prove it as historical novel. First chapter is about the general back ground of the research and the brief biography of the writer. Second chapter will be the textual analysis of the selected text. And the last chapter will be the conclusion of the research work which contains the overall summary of the research work in general.

II Representation of the 1880s Nigerian History in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

The present research work, based on the Chinua Achebe's landmark work of art *Things Fall Apart*, represents the 1880s Nigerian history realistically. Though the novel is written at the end of the twentieth century, it is based on the socio-economic and political situation of the 1880s Nigeria. The novel reflects the contemporary scenario of the Nigeria specially the prior of colonization and its effect and reaction in the Nigerian people. Typical Nigerian culture, way of life, tradition, life style, family relation, production system and many things are represented vividly. Being a fiction, this novel reflects the real image of the 1880s Nigerian history. That is why it blurs the boundary between fact and fiction and questions the linearity of history.

The present novel is set in a small village of Nigeria named Umofia. The entire events except some are happen in Umofia and other neighboring village. The protagonist of the novel is Okonkwo, a former warier and a most successful man having the sense of self esteem. All the events and incidents happen around him. The novel ends with the end of Okonkwo. Talking about his rise and fall, the narrator of the novel says "Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond his fame rested on solid personal achievements. That was many years ago, twenty years or more, and during this time Okonkwo's fame had grown like a bush fire in the harmatta" (3).

New Historicist recognizes that this isn't a simple yes-or-no answer that can be teased out by studying the text. This work must be judged in the context in which it was written; in turn, cultural history can be revealed by studying the work especially, say New Historicists, by studying the use and dispersion of power and the marginalization of social classes within the work. Study of the history reveals more about the text; studying the text reveals more about the history. The New Historicist

also acknowledges that his examination of literature is "tainted" by his own culture and environment.

New Historicism, then, underscores the impermanence of literary criticism. Current literary criticism is affected by and reveals the beliefs of our times in the same way that literature reflects and is reflected by its own historical contexts. New Historicism acknowledges and embraces the idea that, as times changes, so will our understanding of great literature. According to the M. H Abrams new historicism is newly emerged concept in literary theory which came against the concept of new criticism which priorities more on the textuality of any text and analyzes it separating it from the socio-cultural context. New historicists argue that not any text can be analyzed by excluding it from the historical context.

Representation of way of life of the Nigerian people is most important aspect of the novel. Nigerian especially the life style of Umuofia people is unique. They have their own system of greeting, helping and concerning each other's sorrow and happiness which is other realistic feature of the Nigerian people during 1880s is vividly reflected in this novel *Things Fall Apart*. In this context, Chinua Achebe writes:

One day a neighbor called Okoye came in to see him. He was recalling on a mud bed his hut playing on the flute. He immediately rose and shook hands with Okoye, who then unrolled the goatskin which he carried under his arm, and sat down. Unoka went into an inner room and soon returned with a small wooden disc containing a kola nut, some alligator pepper and a lump of whit chalk. 'I have kola', he announced when he sat down, and passed the disc over to his guest.

'Thank you'. He who brings kola brings life. But I think you ought to break it,' replied Okoye passing back the disc. (5)

Here, the above mentioned statements from the book explain the Umuofia society very clearly. Neighbors live interchanging mutual help and understanding. The Nigeria in the 1880s is untouched by modern science and technology. People used traditional material and live happily. In this context, Achebe illustrates "Okoye, meanwhile, took the lump of chalk, drew some lines on the floor, and then painted his big toe. As he broke the kola, Unoka prayed to their ancestors for life and health, and for protection against their enemies" (5).

New Historicism denies the claim that society has entered a post-modern or post-historical phase and allegedly ignited the 'culture wars' of the 1980s. The main points of this argument are that new historicism, unlike post-modernism, acknowledges that almost all historic views, accounts, and facts they use contain biases which derive from the position of that view.

New historicism is a broad term which includes all the literary as well as social term in its spectrum. It does not believe on absolute power, authority and truth. Talking about the scope and position of new historicism, Harold Vesser writes in the introductory part of his book *The New Historicism*:

New historicism has a portmanteau quality. It brackets together literature, ethnography, anthropology, art history, and other disciplines and sciences hard and soft. It scrutinizes the barbaric acts that sometimes under write high cultural purposes and asks that we not blink away our complicity. At the same time, it encourages us to admire the sheer intricacy and unavoidability of exchanges between culture and power. Its politics, its novelty, its historicity, its

relationship to other prevailing ideologies all remain open question.

(xi)

Here, in the above mentioned abstract from the book "*The New Historicism*", Harold Vesser clarifies the nature and scope of new historicism. He argues that new historicism includes all the social sciences such as literature, ethnography, anthropology, art history and other disciplines and sciences. He further argues that new historicism studies the mutual exchanges between culture and power. That is why power politics is the subject matter of new historicism which explains the entire social subject in relation to the society and history. Not any subject matter are beyond the social context, either it is social science or natural sciences. In this way, any literary production whether it is poem or other fiction could not cross the boundary of social reality and historical fact.

Reflection of the contemporary cultural as well as traditional beliefs of Umuofia people is another feature of the novel *Things Fall Apart*. It reflects the 1880s cultural and religious customs of the Ibo community of Nigeria. The Ibo people have a great belief on their God and they believe on the oracle of the Hills and the Caves. According to the customs, they must follow every order that is made by the oracle of the Hills and the Caves. In this context, Achebe writes in his most notable novel the *Things Fall Apart*:

And so the neighboring clans who naturally knew of these things feared Umuofia, and would not go to war against it without first trying peaceful settlement. And in fairness to Umuofia it should be recorded that it never went to war unless its case was clear and just and was accepted as such by its Oracle- the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves. And there were indeed occasions when the oracle had forbidden

Umuofia to wage a war. If the clan had disobeyed the Oracle, they would surely have been beaten, because their dreaded *agadi-nwayi* would never fight what the Ibo call a fight of blame. (10)

The above mentioned extract indicates a kind of tussle between two different cultural groups. The reason was that one Umuofia daughter had been killed by the people of the Mbaino society. Ezeugo, a representative of the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves informs this information to Umuofia people. This overwhelming news made Umuofia people thirst for blood. In this sense, Achebe further writes:

When he began again, the anger on his face was gone and in its place a sort of smile hovered more terrible and more sinister than the anger. And in a clear unemotional voice he told Umofia how their daughter had gone to market at Mbaino and had been killed. That woman, said Ezeugo, was the wife of Ogbuefi Udo, and he pointed to a man who sat near him with a bowed head. The crowd then shouted with anger and thirst for blood. (9)

The given statement from the novel shows how the Umuofia people are sincere for their culture and tradition. They have the sense of love and emotional attachment for their culture and way of life. In this way by presenting such incidents in his novel, Chinua Achebe reflects the contemporary image of African life style and cultural beliefs vividly. Being a fiction, the novel *Things Fall Apart* reflects the contemporary socio-economic and cultural image of an African country Nigeria. It proves that any literary creation cannot go away from the social reality.

The assimilation and adaptation of cultural practices, the cross-fertilization of cultures, can be seen as positive, enriching, and dynamic, as well as oppressive. Hybridity is also a useful concept for helping to break down the false sense that

colonized cultures or colonizing cultures for that matter, are monolithic, or have essential, unchanging features. The representation of these uneven and often hybrid, polyglot, multivalent cultural sites (reclaimed or discovered colonized cultures searching for identity and meaning in a complex and partially alien past) may not look very much like the representations of bourgeois culture in western art, ideologically shaped as western art is to represent its own truths (that is, guiding fictions) about itself. To quote Homi K. Bhabha on the complex issue of representation and meaning from his article in Greenblatt and Gun's *Redrawing the Boundaries*:

Culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational. [. . .] The transnational dimension of cultural transformation -- migration, diaspora, displacement, relocation -- makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification the natural(ized), unifying discourse of nation , peoples , or authentic folk tradition, those embedded myths of cultures particularity, cannot be readily referenced. The great, though unsettling, advantage of this position is that it makes you increasingly aware of the construction of culture and the invention of tradition. (438)

As a people of the White heritage against the Black moved into new landscapes, established new founding national myths, and struggled to define their own nationality and literature. The force and tradition of the so called 'white' tradition, they themselves, although of British or European heritage, ultimately encountered the originating traditions as Other, a tradition and a writing to define oneself against (or, which amounts to the same thing, to equal or surpass).

[...] "They do not understand," said some of the elders. "But they will understand when they go to their plot of land tomorrow morning." And

they dispersed. Next morning the crazy men actually began to clear a part of the forest and to build their house. The inhabitants of Mbanta expected them all to be dead within four days. The first day passed and the second and third and fourth, and none of them died. Everyone was puzzled. And then it became known that the white man's fetish had unbelievable power. It was said that he wore glasses on his eyes so that he could see and talk to evil spirits. Not long after, he won his first three converts. (49)

Here, most of the common people believe that white men have unbelievable power and via glasses they can talk to hidden power but in reality it illustrates the real picture of Nigeria. Moreover, it gives the information that whites are presenting the way which is different to the elders' thoughts.

New Historicists reject the Western tendency to write history from the top down (e.g. political history) or in grand narrative strokes. They are instead more concerned with little narratives, particularly, how such little narratives participate in the consolidation and maintenance of the status quo. New Historicists argue that to recognize your own ideology is like pushing the bus you're riding on, since it is so much a part of the way you perceive the world and its workings.

Literature and history has the explicit relation and literature is the products of specific historical approach. History, therefore, is the base of any literary production. In this context, talking about relation between literature and history John Brannigan mentions in his book *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*:

New historicist and cultural materialism theories mark the return to history in literary criticism, and that the focus on the status of history in literary texts is probably the most important contribution which

these theories have made to recent work in literary studies. New historicism and cultural materialism share a common preoccupation with the relationship between literature and history, and share an understanding of text of all kinds as both products of functional components of social and political formations. (3)

Here, in the above mentioned extract from the book *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*; John Brannigan argues that new historicism like cultural materialism goes to the history for its roots and foundation. It explains any text and literary creation linking it with the society and social reality.

The 1880s Nigerian history was guided by the sense of masculinity. There is the hierarchy between male and female and all the negative images were imposed upon their female relatives. All the socio-economic rights are handed over to the male and female are only treated as if they are only the child bearing machine. In this context, the narrator of the novel says:

Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children. Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man. But his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness. (10)

Okonkwo, the protagonist of the novel is totally guided by the patriarchal ideology. So he dominates his wives very much. There was the multiple marriage system. Accordingly Okonkwo has three wives to whom he keeps in a strong discipline and they always feel fear from their husband. That is, Okonkwo always tries his best not to show his weakness. He was a very strong man and rarely felt fatigue. But his wives

and young children were not as strong and so they suffered. But they dared not complain openly.

At that time in Nigeria there is the clear cut division among the role of male and female in the society. Females are confined into the four walls of household and their role is only to serve male and satisfy their husband. It is considered that their job is already determined and the society orders them what to do and what not to do. In this sense, the narrator further says:

'Sit like a woman' Okonkwo shouted at her. Ezinma brought her two legs together and stretched them in front of her.

Father, will you go to see the wrestling?' Ezinma asked after a suitable interval.

'Yes,' he answered, 'will you go?

Yes' and after a pause she said: 'can I bring you chair for you?'

No, that is a boy's job.' Okonkwo was especially fond of Ezinma. (33)

The above mentioned expression is the dialogue between the protagonist Okonkwo himself and his daughter. Okonkwo orders his daughter to be like female and not to be like male. In this way the contemporary Umofia society is totally guided by the patriarchal norms and values and they have the negative attitudes towards female as if they are secondary human being.

New historicism denies the existence of absolute truth in history. It argues that there is no possibility of universal meaning or truth in history and that meaning which is imputed to history reflects power relations at the time of writing as well as the time of the events' occurrence. It claims to be neutral to any historical context and sensitive to all cultures with the practice of interdisciplinary approach and gives high regards to transdisciplinary approach. It emphasizes on a reading of the text with equal footing by

breaking the hierarchy of high and low, good and bad and so on. In new historicism social and cultural backgrounds, historical and even the history of the author cannot be undermined merely by emphasizing only what is written in the text.

New historicism employs the notion of discourse to projects text as a cultural artifact and writing, speaking, talking and thinking within such specific historical limit. Lois Tyson asserts the idea of discourse and its formation in any social context. In his book *Critical Theory Today* writes:

New historicism rejects both traditional historicism's marginalization of literature and new criticism's enshrinement of the text in a timeless dimension beyond history. For new historic critics, a literary text does not produce it, as traditional literary historians asserted. Nor are literary texts self sufficient art objects that transcend the time and place in which they were written, as new critics believed. (291)

For him, there is not any text that is beyond the panorama of time and place. Rather they are determined by the historicity of writer and he then existing situation. In this sense, one can generalize the fact that all the product either these are literary or historical are the reflection of the contemporary socio-economic and political scenario of the society.

The present novel *Things Fall Apart* exposes the clear images of the Nigerian society of the late 19th century. At that time, the society was guided by the traditional norms and values and there is not the influence of the present science and technology. All the daily activities of people were determined by the traditional beliefs and customs. One example from the book is the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves: "Unoka, had gone to consult the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves to find out why he always had a miserable harvest" (13). People followed its entire decision about their

future. Even the time and types of plants and time of harvest is also decided by the Oracle of the Hill and the Cave:

The Oracle was called Agbala, and people came from far and near to consult it. They came when misfortune dogged their steps or when they had a dispute with their neighbors. They came to discover what the future held for them or to consult the spirit of their departed fathers. Worshippers and those who came to seek knowledge from the god crawled on their belly through the hole and found themselves in a dark, endless space in the presence of Agbala. No one had ever beheld Agbala except his priestess. (13)

Unoka is the father of our protagonist Okonkwo who is quite lazy and believes on the blessing of god and goddess. He always fails to manage sufficient crop. In this way talking about the traditional beliefs of the Umuofian people, Achebe further writes in his novel *Things Fall Apart*:

Many years ago when Okonkwo was still a boy his father, Unoka, had gone to consult Agabala. The priestess in those days was a woman called Chika. She was full of the power of her god, and she was greatly feared. Unoka stood before her and began his story. Every year, he said sadly, before I put any crop in the earth, I sacrifice a cock to *ani*, the owner of all land. It is the law of our fathers. I also kill a cock at the shrine of *Ifejioku*, the god of yams. I clear the bush and set fire to it when it is dry. I sow the yams when the first rain has fallen, and stake them when the young tendrils appear. I weed. (14)

The above mentioned extract clears how people of that period believe on the traditional norms and values. It also exposes how the general lifestyle was determined

by the prophecies of the Oracle. The example of the Okonkwo's father proves that the local people of that period highly guided by the supernatural thought which at that time, considered as logical and truth. In this way, the present novel *Things Fall Apart* is the representation of the 1880s Nigerian history. It blurs the traditional beliefs of structuralism of text and establish the notion of contextualize of text and socio-historicity of text and literature.

John Brannigan, one of the most influential historicists argues that history and text have not any clear cut line rather both of them share their common features and characteristics. A text, for him is a production of the society and it is guided by the thoughts which the author is acquired. Similarly, history is not also expectation of socio-historicist of the contemporary period. In this sense, John Brannigan writes:

Since New Historicism expends most of its energies on identifying and exposing these different historical episteme, and the historical evaluation of conception of the state, the individual, culture and family etc. It is easy to see how it has represented for many commentators a turn to history what is most striking about its method of analyzing history, however, is its wide sprit prevailing of textuality, language and representation as the basis for historical analysis. (8-9)

Here in the above mentioned extract, Brammigan survey the history of the development of literary criticism and says how any historical artifacts addresses the textuality.

The present novel *Things Fall Apart* captures the transitional phase of Nigerian history in terms of political as well as cultural point of view. Politically, at the end of the 19th century, the western colonizers started to colonize the African

countries like Nigeria. Culturally too, that time was a point of changing of the traditional cultural beliefs and supernatural thought. The society was yet to be shift from one era to another. So there occurs the cultural conflict between two different cultural groups as well as different generation. In this sense talking about the cultural changed, Chinua Achebe writes in his historical novel *Things Fall Apart*:

It has not always been so,' he said. 'my father told me that he had been told that in the past man who have the peace was dragged on the ground through the village until he died, but after a while this custom was stopped because it spoil the peace which it was meant to preserve. 'It's indeed true,' said Ogbuefi Ezeudu. 'They have that custom in Obodoani. If a man dies at this time he is not buried but cast into the Evil Forest. It is a bad custom which these people observe because they lack understanding. (24)

Here, this statement from the novel indicates that the culture and religious beliefs of that time were gradually in changed. Okonkwo, the protagonist of the novel, remembers his father's time when if one person challenged the traditional norms and beliefs, he would have faced a cruel punishment. But according to Okonkwo, such provision of custom is changed at present.

History is not a homogeneous and stable pattern of facts and events which serve as the background to the literature of an era or which literature can be said simply to reflect the social activities and background. A literary text is said by new historicists to be thoroughly embedded in its context, and in a constant interaction and interchange with other components inside the network of institutions, beliefs and cultural power relations, practices and products that in their ensemble constitute what

we call history, in this sense M. H Abrams explains the role of historicist while producing and analyzing a literary text. He writes:

New historicist acknowledge that they themselves, like all authors, are subjective that have been shaped and informed by the circumstances and discourses specific to their era, hence that their own critical writing in great part construct, rather than discover ready-made, the textual meanings they describe and the literary and cultural historians they narrate. To mitigate the risk that they will unquestioningly appropriate texts that were written in the past, they stress that the course of history between the past and present is not coherent, but exhibits discontinuities, breaks and ruptures. (194)

Here, the given piece of extract exposes that all authors of any text bound with social practice and other social elements. So, any texts also germs from society and it expand within the four wall of society.

In the novel one can observe the typical tradition of storytelling which was existed during 1880s in Nigeria. The protagonist of the novel Okonkwo and their wives tell the ancient oral story to their children which would be about nature, environment and related with animal. In this context, the narrator of the novel *Things Fall Apart* says:

So Okonkwo encouraged the boys to sit with him in his obi, and he told them stories of the land- masculine stories of violence and bloodshed, Nwoye knew that it was right to the masculine and to be violent, but somehow he still preferred the stories that his mother used to tell and which she no doubt still told to her younger children-stories of the tortoise and his wily way, and of the bird *eneke-nti-oba* who

challenged the whole world to a wrestling contest and was finally thrown by the cat. He remembered the story she often told of the quarrel between Earth and Sky long ago, and how Sky withheld rain for seven years, until crops withered and the dead could not be buried because the hoes broke on the stony earth. (39)

Here, the present extract from the novel is best example of how the tradition of storytelling is existed in the Nigerian society during the end of the nineteenth century. Nwoye's father and mother told different supernatural story to their children. Those are related to moral lesson and help to determine the morality to their children. But later the western colonizers misinterpret such typical culture and costume as barbarism and exist. The typical culture of Nigeria becomes the barbaric activities for western colonizers. It proves the nature of truth and fact. Truth is not static and on sided. The real culture and typical way of life of the Nigerian people becomes the barbarism through the eyes of western colonizers.

The New Historicism has the belief that all the things whether these are the creation of literary text or any television show or child game, are the reflection of culture and the effect of time and place can be observed in any products in the society. Lois Tyson further argues that as argued by Michael Foucault, truth, fact, and reality are also discourse created by one who is in the power position. Power is also created by the discourse. So, the history is mostly determined by the interplay of discourse and once it will be questioned by another fact, because discourse itself is not permanent. Lois Tyson again writes:

Furthermore, no discourse is permanent. Discourses wield power for those in charge, but they also stimulate opposition to that power. This is one reason why new historicists believe that the relationship between

individual identity and society is mutually constitutive: on the whole, human beings are never merely victims of an oppressive society, for they can find various ways to oppose authority in their personal and public lives. (285)

In this way the writing of history is a matter of interpretation, not facts. Thus, all historical accounts are narratives and can be analyzed using many of the tool. Furthermore, the notion of truth, fact, and reality are measured in terms of who is in the power position and who can captures the top most position in the country's power. By acquiring knowledge, people create a kind of discourse and imposed upon the weakest group of the society. The concept of centre and margins, civilized and uncivilized, and the modern and traditional is based on the discourse which is created on the basis of power and knowledge.

The then contemporary society of the Nigerian was totally guide by the masculine ideology. The society thought that male member to be like man and behave like a masculine humanity. In that time all the authority and right of the society as well as family were in the hand of male members. It was considered that a role model of the society should be warrior and brave. In this way the society of the 1880s was totally ruled by the masculine idea and there is the clear cut division between the role of male and female and male was given upper hand. In this context, the narrator of the novel *Things Fall Apart* tells a story of our protagonist Okonkwo and his plan to make his son only like a warlike human being:

That was the kind of story that Nwoye loved. But he now knew that they were for foolish women and children, and he knew that his father wanted him to be a man. And so he feigned that he no longer cared for women's story. And when he did this he saw that his father was

pleased, and no longer rebuked him or beat him. So Nwoye and Ikemefuna would listen to Okonkwo's stories about tribal wars or how, years ago, he had stalked his victim, overpowered him and obtained his first human head. And as he told them of the past they sat in darkness or the dim glow of logs, waiting for the women to finish their cooking.

(39)

The above mentioned statement from the novel exposes a vivid image of the society at the end of the 19th century in Nigeria and clears how the contemporary society was guided by the masculine ideology. Okonkwo the protagonist of the novel *Things Fall Apart* taught his son Nwoye and Ikemefuna to be masculine. And he forbids them not listen the emotional feminine story about love rather he forces them to listen the stories about tribal wars or the story of how he overpowered the strong man and obtained his first human head. And this statement also tells a true story of women who were engaged in their kitchen when their husband and other male member were engaged with storytelling about war and masculinity. That is, at that time the society has created a kind of hierarchy between male and female and all the negatives images such as weak, emotional, inferior etc. are imposed upon female and the positive stereotypes such as strong, civilize, bold and intelligent etc are signifies to male. But in reality such hierarchy is artificial; it is created by one who is in the power position.

Similarly, in the novel *Things Fall Apart* Chinua Achebe arise the issues which are existed in the society at that time in Nigeria especially in Africa. By capturing the real images of the Nigerian society in his novel, he has blurred the so called boundary between fact and fiction and challenged the old concept of historicism. And he also helps to establish a new wave of thought by capturing the history of that time in his fictional novel.

Moreover, John Brannigan, in his book *New Historism and Cultural Materialism* argues that historical identities are always fictional and changing. Representation of history and power depends on contemporary historical situation. Furthermore, he adds:

One of the central assumptions and arguments of new historicist analysis is that identities are fictions which are formulated and adopted through narratives and performances, and that they are formulated and adopted by response to and as a way of interacting with the prevailing historical conditions. No identities are natural, unchanging or true. (58)

The representations of the history are fictions which can be share one generation to another generation through collective memory of written and oral communication.

Author, in *Things Fall Apart* presents the thought of protagonist, Okonkwo about the God which is always questioning either it is only 'One' or many more. It means history is not absolutely believable. Achebe writes:

After the singing the interpreter spoke about the Son of God whose name was Jesu Kristi. Okonkwo, who only stayed in the hope that it might come to chasing the men out of the village or whipping them, now said "You told us with your own mouth that there was only one god. Now you talk about his son. He must have a wife, then." The crowd agreed. "I did not say He had a wife," said the interpreter, somewhat lamely. "Your buttocks said he had a son," said the joker. "So he must have a wife and all of them must have buttocks." (48)

Here, the author questions to the history of God which is believed that it is only one. Okonkwo and the native villagers do not accept the past. They think that the white people are going to change the tradition of them.

The contemporary African life was untouched by modern science and technology. There is the traditional production system and curing system people believes on the super natural power and applies the traditional curing system instead modern medicine. In the novel *Things Fall Apart* too there is the reflection of the then exist healing system which the people of Nigeria ever used. Once Okonkwo's daughter named Ezinma fall sick and Okonkwo collected the local herbs and tries his best to cure his daughter with the traditional herb in his own village. It clears that the contemporary Nigerian life is mostly guided by the traditional method instead of modern one. In this context, Chinua Achebe writes: "Ezinma lay shivering on a mat beside a huge fire that her mother had kept burning all night. It is Iba', said Okonkwo as he took his Matchet and went into the bush to collect the leaves and grasses and barks of trees that went into making the medicine for iba"(56).

New Historicism has the idea that literature should be studied and interpreted within the context of both the history of the author and the history of the critic. Based on the literary criticism of Stephen Greenblatt and influenced by the philosophy of Michel Foucault, New Historicism acknowledges not only that a work of literature is influenced by its author's times and circumstances, but that the critic's response to that work is also influenced by his environment, beliefs, and prejudices. A New Historicist looks at literature in a wider historical context, examining both how the writer's times affected the work and how the work reflects the writer's times, in turn recognizing that current cultural contexts color that critic's conclusions.

In the novel *Things Fall apart*, Chinua Achebe becomes more realistic and turn his novel as an anthology of historical fact and a collection of the real image of the Nigerian people. For example in the novel he included the condition of child death and as per him, it is in high rate. He further writes:

One of them was a pathetic cry, Okonkwo - 'Death I implore you'. But death took no notice; Onwumbiko died in his fifteenth month. The next child was a girl, Ozoemena- 'may it not happen again'. She died in her eleventh month and two others after her. Ekewefi then became defiant and called her next child Onwuma- 'Death may please himself.' And he died. (56)

Here the given expression from the novel, presented a pathetic but realistic image of the contemporary Nigerian children's death rate. People at that time believe on the traditional norms and values. They were not well known about modern healing system. So the children death rate is in maximum level.

That is way we can say that Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* questions the traditional boundary between history and fiction and blurs the division amongst different genre. There is not any specific genre which only related to a specific subject matter. It mean there is not the clear cut boundary between history and fiction rather these to genre as suggested by new historicist, share each other's subject matters and tried to be become general.

Before the nineteenth century, the relation between historical writing and literary writing was not problematical. Since Aristotle, it had been thought that, although both history and imaginative writing were rhetorical arts, they dealt with different things: historical writing was about the real world while “poetry” was about the possible. During the nineteenth century, however, the concept of history was reformulated, historical consciousness was for the first time theorized, and the modern scientific method of historical inquiry was inaugurated. History was no longer simply the past or accounts of the past, but now became identified as a process, a dimension of human existence, and a force to be controlled or succumbed to. Now, literature

became history's other in a double sense: it pretended to have discovered a dimension of reality that historians would never recognize and it developed techniques of writing that undermined the authority of history's favored realistic or plain style of writing. In this sense, in his essay "Historical Discourse and Literary Writing" Hayden White mentions:

It has to be said, however, that, in general, literature – in the modern period – has regarded history not so much as its other as, rather, its complement in the work of identifying and mapping a shared object of interest, a real world which presents itself to reflection under so many different aspects that all of the resources of language – rhetorical, poetical, and symbolic – must be utilized to do it justice. (26)

Here, from his statement one can generalize that though in past there is the concept of the difference between the literature and the history, but in modern period there is not the clear cut division between history and literature rather both of these genre bears the each other's features.

The novel moves forward when Okonkwo kills his son named Ikemefuna to follow the Oracle of the Hills and the Cave. "Dazed with fear, Okonkwo drew his matchet and cut him down. He was afraid of being thought weak"(44). In this way, Okonkwo killed Ikemefuna in the name of religion and it was the order of the oracle because Ikemefuna was another clan and for the purity of their Ibo clan. The Oracle orders Umuofian people to kill him. If people totally follow the order of the Oracle of the Hills and Caves, Okonkwo's steps are valid and it was a bravery action. But his action of killing Ikemefuna is questioned by the local people and he is ordered to leave the Umuofia for seven years:

The only course open to Okonkwo was to flee from the clan. It was a crime against the earth goddess to kill a clansman, and a man who committed it must flee from the land. The crime was of two kinds, female and female. Okonkwo had committed the female, because it had been inadvertent. He could return to the after seven years"(91).

In this way Okonkwo is ordered to leave his country for seven years. Here this situation indicates the transitional situation of their culture and religious beliefs. It directly indicates the 1880s Nigerian history which was the transitional phase when the traditional cultural beliefs and rigid religious thought were gradually in change. In this way the present novel *Things fall Apart* is the actual representation of the 1880s Nigerian history in particular and the African history in general.

New Historicism does not believe one who has clear access to any fact. It has the idea that the history which we knew as truth, fact and reality is only the interpretation of fact only. It is mostly determined by the contemporary socio-economic as well as political fact. In this way, Lois Tyson writes:

Like all human beings, historians live in a particular time and place, and their views of both current and past events are influenced in innumerable conscious and unconscious ways by their own experience within their own culture. Historians may believe they are being objective but their own views of what is right and wrong, what is civilized and uncivilized, what is important and unimportant, and the like, will strongly influence the ways in which they interpret events.
(283)

Here, Lois Tyson argues that the factuality and accuracy of history is based on who is writing it and in which context it is written. It is most influenced by the time and

place. The historians own attitudes and ideology mostly affects the result of history. So, for him it is not a separate thing, it is contextual and determined by the time, place, person and situation: "History cannot be understood simply as a linear progression of events" (283). That is, history is not an orderly parade into a continually improving future, as many traditional historians have believed. It is more like an improvised dance consisting of an infinite variety of steps, following any new route at any given moment, and having no particular goal or destruction.

Talking about the actual history of Nigeria, it was colonized by the western colonized since the end of the 19th century. The typical culture, way of life and the traditional norms and values of the Nigerian people were interfered by the western colonizers. Such real incidents of the 1880s of Nigerian history are reflected in this historical novel *Things Fall part*. In this context, the narrator of the novel says:

When nearly two years later Obierika paid another visit to his friend in exile the circumstances were less happy. The missionaries had come to Umuofia. They had built their church there, won a handful of converts and were already sending evangelists to the surrounding tons and villages. That was a source of great sorrow to the leaders of the clan; but many of them believed that the strange faith and the white man's god would not last. (105)

The given extract from the novel indicates the actual condition of the Umuofian people who feel the loss of their originality and the typical way of life and cultural beliefs.

In his work, Foucault argues that power is not merely physical force but a pervasive human dynamic determining our relationships to others: "A way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of

action" (220). Although this term seems as if it should be self-explanatory, it has in fact been inflected by its re-definition in the work of an important precursor for New Historicism. Power is also not necessarily "bad," since it can also be productive. We could also say that power is essential to a just society; all people exert a certain power over us in so far as we defer to their needs and desires. However, power also refers to the (often surreptitious) ways in which a dominant group exerts its influence over others. Though this power may (at some end point) rely on the threat of punishment, it does not necessarily rely on actual physical enforcement on a day-to-day basis.

Foucault opines in his well-celebrated essay "Truth and Power" that the truth as product of discourse is changeable, neither correct nor wrong:

Now I believe that the problem does not consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which fall under the category of science or truth and that which comes under some other category but in seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourse which in themselves are neither true nor false. (1139)

Foucault views we can never possess objective knowledge of history because discourses are known as product of power struggle. In every sphere of society such as science, politics, art, and religion discourse influences power because power is achieved through discourse.

After his seven years exile life, Okonkwo goes to his mother's homeland with his three wives and eleven children. So, all the news of Umuofia was given to him by his best friend Obierika who frequently visit Okonkwo and informed about Umuofia and its people. This time the news is not positive. The western colonizers enter the Nigeria and interferes their own kind of life style and dominated the local people culturally, economically, as well as politically. Their family unity is gradually

changed and it is towards the dissolved. An example from the novel emphasizes this claim. When Okonkwo goes his motherland for seven years exile life, he left his son Nwoye in Umuofia. Nwoye now changed and apply the Christianity. In this context, talking about the changing situation of the Umuofia the narrator of the novel *Things Fall Apart* says:

What moved Obierika to visit Okonkwo was the sudden appearance of the latter's son, Nwoye, among the missionaries in Umuofia. 'What are you doing here?' Obierika had asked when after many difficulties the missionaries had allowed him to speak to the boy. 'I am one of them,' replied Nwoye. 'How is your father?' Obierika asked, not knowing what else to say. 'I do not know. He is not my father,' said Nwoye, unhappily. And so Obierika went to Mbanta to see his friend. And he found that Okonkwo did not wish to speak about Nwoye. It was only from Nwoye's mother that he heard scraps of the story. (105)

The present statement or a piece of dialogue from the novel *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe indicates the actual condition of the Umuofia society after the unwanted interference of the western colonizers in the peace loving African country Nigeria. It is example of how the family bond is dissolved after the entrance of western colonizers.

Nwoye is Okonkwo's son who changed his previous religious beliefs and adopts the Christianity. Not only that he replies to his father's friend Obierika that he did not know his father. It makes Obierika unhappy and he goes to Mbanta to narrate about it to his friend Okonkwo. Such events show how the social unity and family bonding is damage gradually after the entrance of western colonizers. Not only that the western colonizers also capture all the cultural, political, religious and economic

authority of Nigeria in their hands and start to rule over Nigerian people. In this way, Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* narrates such historical fact interesting way. That is why, it questions the traditional notion of fact and fiction and establishes the new historicist concept.

Until the arrival of western colonizers; the life of the Umofian people was in their own way. They have their own typical lifestyle and way of live mostly affected by the traditional beliefs. They have their own style of production, eating culture and behaving with people. They believe on their own religious beliefs. But such typical way of life and thought were barbaric and uncivilized to the western colonizers. So, they imposed their own system upon the Nigerian people in the name of civilization. In this context, Chinua Achebe writes:

The interpreter spoke to the white man and he immediately gave his answer. "All the gods you have named are not gods at all. They are gods of deceit who will tell you to kill your fellows and destroy innocent children. There is only one true God and he made the earth, the sky, you and me and all of us.' 'If we leave our gods and fellow your god,' asked another man, who will protect us from the anger of our neglected gods and ancestors?' yours gods are not alive ad cannot do you any harm', replied the white man. 'They are pieces of wood and stone.'(107)

The above mentioned extract from the novel indicates how the western colonizers dominated the local people and misinterpreted their culture and way of life. One white man claims that the real God is only their gods but the gods of the Nigerian people are not the god at all.

All in all, the present research deals the novel *Things Fall Apart* from the perspective of New Historicism. In the novel, author has presented the real image of the 1880s Nigerian history in the fictional form which narrates the real story of the Umofian people and their happiness as well as difficulties. That is way, it blurs the traditional boundary of fact and fiction and establishes a new thought of contextuality of text, and textuality of context.

III. Fictionalization of Nigerian History and *Things Fall Apart*

This research is a critical analysis of Chinua Achebe's historical novel *Things Fall Apart* from the perspective of new historicism in which Achebe has explored the vivid images of contemporary Nigerian history realistically. At that time the socio-economic, political as well as religious situation and their lifestyle and way of life of the Nigerian people was mostly based on the traditional system. Okonkwo the protagonist of the novel is in the centre of the novel. His attitudes and reaction towards the contemporary scenario moves the novel ahead and Achebe used him tactically and fulfilled his motive to show the realistic images of the 1880s Nigerian history.

The traditional concept of history and textuality define each term separately. There was the clear cut distinction between history and fiction. It is considered that history is nearer to fact whereas fiction is the imaginary story. But in the novel *Things Fall Apart* Chinua Achebe has blurred such traditional boundary between history and fiction and includes many realistic events in his historical novel. It reflects the 1880s Nigerian history when most of the people believe on the supernatural events and traditions. Their production system was based on traditional way. People are totally guided by the masculine ideology and behave accordingly.

The novel tells also the realistic story of the colonizers and their domination upon the local people. They have created the so called boundary between white and non white and attribute all the positive features to them and imposed the artificial images such as barbaric, uncivilized, inferior and chaotic to local people. It also proves that there is not the absolute truth rather it is judged according to the power position. The people who are in power position and collected the information and knowledge creates truth and discourse which is not absolutely rather relative.

Last but not least, this research work based to search the historicity in the novel *Things Fall Apart* which falls under the category of fiction. Being a fiction it includes the real images of contemporary Nigerian history and their way of life realistically. It questions the hierarchal relationship of fact and fiction and sees the possibility of fiction in history and history in fiction.

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