



The Socio-Educational Relevance of Folklores: A Peep into Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*

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Abstract: This paper shall explore and examine the imperative of traditional folklores as social and didactic tools in the Nigerian society using two historical novels by Africa's greatest storyteller, Chinua Achebe – **Things Fall Apart** and **Arrow of God**. Essentially, the paper shall examine the relevance of folktales and proverbs as indispensable aspect of the human society; because apart from their didactic functions, folklores and proverbs also encourage oral communication skills and clearly takes the home atmosphere to the school - which is ideal for educational purposes. As educational and social tools, they lead the learning child to achieve academic, social, moral and emotional development, the acquisition of technical skills as well as becoming a productive member of the society. In this paper, we shall identify the folktales contained in the two books by Chinua Achebe and examine their functions as educational tools within the context of a society. The main method used to collect information is through a literature review. By the end of our explorations, it is the writers' hope that this paper would be able to establish that folktales would not only be useful in a classroom situation but also in other aspects of life as a tool for communication, learning, and entertainment in a rapidly changing world – especially for our young learners.

Keywords: Chinua Achebe, Socio-Educational Relevance, Folklores.

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps, this study should begin with this poignant quote by Bu-Buakei Jabb to the effect that:

The good orator calls to his aid the legends, folklore, proverbs ... of his people; they are some of the raw material with which he works. ... They are like dormant seeds lying in the dry season earth, waiting for the rain (Innes and Lindfors 1978:136)

All at once the essence of the study is displayed before us – the relevance of folklore and its sub-types to the general existence of mankind, especially the social and educational functions it performs in

different tribes, races and societies. The undying traits of folklores and their ubiquitous position in every race and culture is immediately seen including their potentials for nurturing the educational growth of not only the younger learners but also the society in general.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) declares that folktales play very important roles in unifying societies, apart from the entertainment, educational and cultural heritage preservation roles. This role becomes more important in today's world where globalization, social transformation and the internet culture have reduced the world to a global village; thus educators and artists are more motivated to protect and promote oral traditions and related cultural heritage. While many adults, especially teenagers and even children may see folktales as old-fashioned or even irrelevant in today's society, more so as its practice is beginning to wane in our more urban societies, the pervasive influence of folktales in today's modern society is alive and more sublime than ever. This paper is envisioned to revive folklores and ways of telling them not only in schools but also in everyday life as a tool for communication, learning, and entertainment in a rapidly changing world.

The home is often regarded as the first educational institution for every child; with their parents especially mothers as the first teachers. And more often than not folklores are the most used forms to teach the children communal norms and mores as well as the history of the tribe and family. This assumption is both true and correct in several cultures worldwide especially in cultures where the written word is not as well developed as the spoken words. Africa and most third world nations have seemingly thrived very well in this practice which goes as far back in antiquity as the Old

Testament biblical days and even to when the nations of Europe were mere primitive tribes. From these folklores, children learn how to speak and understand communal languages in its various forms and usages.

They also learn about the origin of several human institutions, natural and supernatural occurrences; but above all, they imbibe and inculcate the didactic lessons which are underlines in these folklores. Indeed, all folklores have behind their rendition, didactic features that engenders communal existence and it is not unusual to find particular folklores running across several cultures, even in different regions and continents of the world.

According to Boykina and Vinogradskaya, (2015) and Troitskaya, (2016), educational material folklore has a long tradition in primary education (and) is successfully used in a modern literary reading teaching and plays an important role in the educational and reading activity of young learners, as it has a close relation to children literature. Indeed, folktale telling from an early age contributes to the formation of intellectual and comprehension abilities, culture and ethical ideas as well as the concept of morality among children. The spiritual and moral development of the young ones is also guaranteed by these folklores. Folklores ensure that children not only know the history of their people, but engrain in them the ability and desire to display proper social behaviours in the society.

However, it is as an educational tool that the relevance of folklore is mostly felt both at the immediate family level and general communal level. The concepts of right and wrong as well as rewards for good and bad behaviours are displayed for the children to see in these folklores. At the formal educational level, folklores often become an indispensable tool towards introducing the children and early readers into literary reading and comprehension skills; thus enhancing their literacy level. Grakhova and Kaguy, (2018) posit that the practice of teaching folklore at literary reading lessons and the methodical organization of lessons on the children's folklore texts and folk tales study ... are the most appropriate for the characteristics of the psychological and intellectual development of younger students. No wonder Thompson (1977) in his book *The Folktale* (1977), posits that: "the teller of stories has everywhere and always found eager listeners;" as a result, folktales seem to incorporate very easily into a formal class lesson setting.

Folklore - a Definition: According to Abrams and Harpham (2009:124), "since the mid-nineteenth century, folklore has been the collective name applied to sayings, verbal compositions, and social rituals that have been handed down solely or at least primarily, by word of mouth and example rather than in written form. Folklore developed, and continues even now, in communities where few if any people can read or write. It also continues to flourish among literate populations, in the form of oral jokes, stories, and varieties of

wordplay." However, this study would define folklore as a referent to short mythical and legendary narratives in prose of unknown or communal authorship, short witty sayings that carries terse universal truths as well as communal riddles which has been transmitted orally from generation to generation; with many of these folklores eventually achieving written and even celluloid forms. Clearly, the earliest written literary forms with authors unknown: *The Gilgamesh Epic* and *Beowulf* originated as tribal folklores. The term, however, is often extended to include stories invented by known authors such as Aesop in classical literature and Chinua Achebe in modern literature. Even then, not a few folklores have been recreated in films and cartoon forms for both the enjoyment and education of the young learners.

Found among peoples and cultures everywhere in the world – no matter whether considered primitive or advanced, folklores are very popular in the African context, especially in our rural communities where people, especially children often gather in their neighbourhoods to indulge in storytelling at evening times. Misch, Margarete, (2008) in her book *Teaching Folktales* however defines folklore as a general term for the various kinds of narrative prose literature found in the oral traditions of the world. It is used for various related types of stories, which can include legends, myths, fables, parables, allegories, fairy tales, ghost stories and many others. According to her, folktales can contain religious, imaginary or mythical elements and deal with the sometimes ordinary traditions of everyday life. The telling of stories appears to be culturally universal, because the different forms of folktales often resemble one another (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folktale>).

Nnolim however offers a very robust definition when he posits that by folklore we mean the unrecorded traditions of a people as they appear in their popular fiction, custom, belief, magic, ritual, superstitions, and proverbial sayings. Folklore also includes myths, legends, stories, omens, charms, spells found among a homogeneous group of people; it is a major component in the total folk culture of such a homogeneous group of people. The most inclusive part of folklore is the folktale which is a popular tale handed down by oral tradition from a more or less remote antiquity and usually told either about animals or the common folk, to draw attention to their plight and to teach a lesson (35 – 36).

From our explorations so far, it is clear that folklores are a genre of oral literature that has gradually found its way into the prose fiction genre since it has largely transmuted from the oral to the written mode. The largely unknown or communal authorship of most

folklore forms is also established even though a few of them have traceable authorship and even though a few modern writers have translated several folklores from their vernacular forms into more modern languages. However, folklore is yet a hugely generic term that this paper has to break down before we begin exploring their pedagogical features and their application in a classroom setting as we begin to analyse our two research texts.

In reiterating their definition for folklore, Abrams and Harpharm added that: "Folklore includes legends, superstitions, songs, tales, proverbs, riddles, spells, and nursery rhymes; pseudoscientific lore about the weather, plants, and animals; customary activities at births, marriages, and deaths; and traditional dances and forms of drama performed on holidays or at communal gatherings (124). In her book *British Folk-tales and Legends*, Briggs (2002:7) however differentiates between two major categories, folk narrative or folk fiction and Folk legends or "Sagen". Alongside folk narrative, the subtypes animal tales, ordinary folktales and jokes, as well as anecdotes and formula tales, are also mentioned. Legends and myths in tale forms as well as proverbs, songs and riddles poetic forms seem to be the major line of delineation in the general concept of folklore. And as in other genres of literature the fictive and non-fictive forms come into play here too with the common thread running through them being that of antiquity. The focus of our study however is the prosaic folklore forms of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*.

Often seen as the different side of the same coin, myths and legends are however different in every sense of the word as their only common trait is their tale-like quality. Legends refer to historical stories of real human lives and situations that has attained a larger than life status due to its telling and retelling over the years and the circumstances of their origin. Myths on the other hand refer to stories of supernatural beings in supernatural settings told to explain natural instances or histories. While legends tend to be more believable than myths, myths nonetheless command faith-like attestation especially where it has to do with religious activities and tribal beliefs. According to Misch, Margarete, (2008) however, legends can be said to be stories of persons with important accomplishments and describe plausible, but extraordinary past events. These are represented for example through *Robin Hood*, *Hamlet* and *Beowulf* in English literature; as well the legendary tales of *Chaka Zulu*, *Sundiata*, and *Sango* including all the tribal heroes that litter tales from our communities and in African literature. And in a few years from now, the life and times of the redoubtable African leader Nelson Mandela would no doubt be told as a legend. Myths on the other hand, usually involve supernatural beings and explain how something came to exist, with protagonists such as *Prometheus* or *Orpheus*. Both legends and myths

often employ the agency of non-human agents such as animals, plants or inanimate objects that show human characteristics and have an obvious moral lesson - *Aesop's Fables* and African folklores have these particular features. And while suffused with a good dose of moral and psychological didactics, these folklores equally thrive on performativity with a high entertainment value, depending upon the nature of the teller of the story, his oratory prowess as well as the age grade of his audience and listeners. No wonder Emenyonu admonishes that: "the raconteur must make the story real and entertaining and the experience worthwhile. She would embellish the tales, sing interesting songs or refrains, mimic voices of animals, birds and ghosts, perform acts, improvise lavishly, add humor, induce audience participation, and vary her narrative devices and methods constantly for maximum effects (427). These and the other actions that go into the folktale telling process both attract and keep the younger learners' attention while inculcating social and educational truths into them. Thus folklores expand the role of the teacher from being only just a tutor into becoming a social engineer of these young and very impressionable minds. In all however, (Nnolim, 36) tells us that myths differ from legends in that legends are unauthenticated narratives, folk-embroidered from historical material and often mistaken for a historical account. The legend is thus distinguished from myth in that it has more of historical truth and less of the supernatural. But pure myth tries to offer explanations for the great forces found in nature. For example, myth tries to explain away the origin of creation, the origin of life and death, and tries to account for natural phenomena and the great forces found in nature.

Folklores – Features, Functions and pedagogy:

Like all literary arrangements, folklores and folktales make use of certain literary traditions and conventions. As a prosaic form, features common to prose narratives are very often employed with the more popular being characterization, setting, plot, theme, conflict and style.

Perhaps about the most important literary feature employed by a folklorist, characterization draws the reader and/or reader to a particular tale. This is quite an attractive feature to gain and sustain the attention of young readers whose minds are still very much impressionable. However, unlike the characters of fully developed tales, the characterization in folk literature is often quite simplistic and predictable. The characters are flat, one sided and straightforward - either completely good or entirely evil and with their every action known even before they are performed; they do not grow psychologically neither do they mature in any way or form. The characters are stereotypical - wicked stepmothers, weak-willed fathers, jealous siblings, faithful friends, love lost persons. The hero or heroine is often a lonely and isolated outcast with goodly intentions; while evil

is all pervading and overwhelming. As a result, the hero/heroine must be aided and guided by supernatural forces and powers or an enchanted creature to fight against evil forces.

The settings of most folktales are ethereal, except where they are trying to explain the origin of a particular people or tribe. Usually they transport us to a spatial and temporal clime where animals talk, witches and wizards roam, and magic spells are commonplace. These settings tend to be vague, shrouded in mysticism and nebulous in antiquity. These settings employ regular human systems like roads, hills, forests and mountains which are nevertheless imbued with supernatural features.

The plot or narrative structure of folklores like its characterization is usually generally shorter and simpler with certain literary formulae at work. The journey motif is very common, magical set of number like *three, seven, fourteen, twenty one* and *forty* feature regularly. The conflict and action are often short, hectic and intense. Repetition is often a well used formula employed to aid memorization on the part of the story teller. Conflicts are quickly established and events move swiftly to their conclusion. The endings are usually happy with all conflicts resolved and the antagonists obliterated.

The subject matter and themes of folk literature are often the sight; sound and world view of the immediate community, what the immediate tribe can relate with and indeed learn lessons from. While the subject matter simply tells the story to the delight of the listening/watching or reading audience, the theme carries the didactic elements by proffering different levels of meanings by way of exposing and punishing evil as well as rewarding good deeds. Indeed, the central dominating ideas of these folklores are always geared towards communicating tribal truths that govern socio-cultural behaviours.

On pedagogy, scholars and critics have consistently advocated the use of culturally relevant reading materials for the education of children in Africa (Agbasiere 420). Indeed, Abdul Rasid Jamian and Hasmah Ismail (2013) in Juni Dikul and Rosliah Kiting (2019), posit that teachers in the school are no longer relevant to using autocratic and firm set of rules by force, harassing, raising voices, or using abusive language to discipline students. Teachers should look for other alternatives by creating a more intimate relationship with students. Hence, educational entertainment is one of the ways to get their attention to getting involved and comfortable in a fun learning environment. Thus, in conducting teaching and learning activities, teachers are expected to be able to emphasize value-added elements that are considered appropriate in

pedagogical aspects. No wonder Ezeigbo admonishes us that:

The folktale is best for younger children, for their minds are not yet developed enough to comprehend the more complex forms of folklore like myths, proverbs or riddles. The folktale is simple with a simple narrative structure and pattern which a child can understand very easily. Many folktales are accompanied with melodious songs which children find enchanting and entertaining. They can be taught the songs and they can participate in the performance by singing along or by simply repeating the refrain or chorus as the narrator – probably a mother or father – tells the story. As they enjoy the story, they also imbibe the core values of their people which are embedded in the form and content of the tale. (6)

Folklores in *Things Fall Apart*: The work *Things Fall Apart* is a very cultural novel even as it is highly historic. Being cultural therefore and an African story as well, folklores in the mode of folktales and proverbs play very important roles in enhancing the conflict of the work. (Nnolim 1) reminds us that: “the folk tradition in African literature has thus become part of the essential qualities of its literary expression ... (and) judicious use of the folk tradition is at the root of the appeal of much of the literature emanating from black Africa, especially the works of Achebe. A writer with the sophistication of Achebe does not aggressively intrude the African folkways into his works but rather subtly and cunningly works them into his narrative.” According to (Ezeigbo 2) the relevance of folklore in contemporary Nigerian society cannot be denied, especially the forms known as proverb and folktale. Achebe’s skilful use of proverbs contributed a great deal to the success of *Things Fall Apart* as a great novel and a classic. He uses proverbs “to sound and reiterate themes, to sharpen characterization, to clarify conflict, and to focus on the values of the society he is portraying . . . By studying Achebe’s proverbs we are better able to interpret his novels” (77). Corroborating this (Akporobaro and Emovon 1) aver that proverbs are “a most powerful and effective instrument for the transmission of culture, social morality, manners and ideas of a people from one generation to another”; while Achebe himself magistrate rules that “proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten” (73). Indeed, according to Ezeigbo: “using folktale to inculcate core values in the youth should not be limited to the home environment... The telling of stories should be worked into the school curricula at all levels of the education sector, especially at primary and secondary levels. The mode of narration may change or vary from that used for younger children.” (8)

While Achebe made use of numerous traditional African mores and norms to tell the story of *Things Fall Apart*, Folktales and Proverbs are perhaps the most used

of the form. Five major folktales were used in the story; which includes: The Vulture and the Sky, Mosquito and the Ear, Leaves and the Snake-Lizard, How Tortoise Got His Bumpy Shell, and Mother Kite and Daughter Kite. These tales would make any collection of children stories and were used to explain certain occurrences in nature that would otherwise prove difficult to understand. It is instructive that these stories were by the older people, often women to their children. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe records that at evening times in Okonkwo's household each woman and her children told folk stories . . . Ikemefuna had an endless stock of folktales. Even those which Nwoye knew already were told with a new freshness and the local flavour of a different clan. (24-25). We observe that the story of the little bird Nza occurs both in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. It brings home the fact that a man should never provoke his fate as his life is not exactly in his hands. He should know where to draw a line of limit in his pursuit of power, lest he draws the wrath of fate and the gods. The same wisdom is evident in the story of the bird Eneke-nti-Oba (TFA, 38) and the story of the wrestler (AOG, 26).

In *Things Fall Apart*, folktales were delineated along gender lines: manly and womanly folktales. While the masculine folktales deal with the stories of tribal warfare and violence as well as the origin of the tribe, feminine folktales tend to be didactic in outlook in terms of morals and social etiquette. Men's and women's stories illustrate male and female values. Indeed, while Okonkwo's stories exemplify warfare and violence in order to inculcate courage in children, especially the male ones (TFA, 53, 37), Ekwefi's stories of the mosquito (TFA, 53), Obiageli's unending chain tale (AOG, 65) are meant for entertainment and subtle social engineering of the children. Thus, the feminine folktales tend to be sedate in rendition while the masculine folktales tend to be racy and violent. According to Rao Jayalakshmi in her essay "Proverb and Folklore in the Novels of Chinua Achebe:" men's and women's stories illustrate male and female values. While Okonkwo's stories exemplify warfare and violence in order to inculcate courage in children (TFA, 53, 37), Ekwefi's stories of the mosquito (TFA, 53), Obiageli's unending chain tale (AOG, 65) are meant for entertainment (<http://www.postcolonialweb.org/achebe/jvrao2.html>). It is indeed instructive that the folktales and proverb usage in these works come from the older and presumably wiser to the younger; the same way a teacher would hand down knowledge to pupils in his class. The folktales like the proverbs greatly enhance the language of the work while exposing the audience to deeper truths about their tribal existence that is very vital for social development.

Myths and legends are integral part of Achebe's narration in both novels as they try to explain the origin and nature of supernatural occurrences in nature as well as relate historically traceable stories of the tribal

existence. These stories contain many elements that lend fascination to both works that would undoubtedly interest the younger learners and increase their knowledge level of communal issues. Several of them concern the origin of Ulu (AOG, 157), the legend of Idemili (AOG, 41), the legends of Egwugwu (TFA, 63; AOG, 199). Others include: the appearance and proceedings of the Egwugwu (TFA, 63, 84; AOG, 199), the first coming of Ulu (AOG, 71), the Idemili festival (AOG, 39), the ceremony of Akwunro (AOG, 94) and the ceremony of Ogbazulubodo (AOG, 23). The popularity of these art forms in those days and nowadays reveals that the traditions of the clan are kept alive and their educational values are enhanced by the unending act of telling and retelling – especially to the younger generation.

To round up this section of our study, mention must be made of the point that while many of these folktales may have been made up or predicated on half truths, they are largely employed to explain things and occurrences in nature that were difficult to fathom. Also, they were equally deployed to keep errant children in line through the psychological process of fright; but more importantly, these folktales form a veritable mine field that provide education and moral lessons to the younger ones.

Proverbs: Abrams and Harpham define proverbs as short, pithy statements of widely accepted truths about everyday life; (proverbs) are allegorical in that the explicit statement is meant to have, by analogy or by extended reference, a general application (10). Proverbs are often accepted as statements of facts containing deep truths ascertained garnered through the existentialist experience of particular groups of people; whose applications can however be universal. They are known for their brevity, witticism, figurative and terse epigrammatic nature. Nnolim however extends this perception of proverbs when he adduced that: Proverbs enter into the realm of literature because of the imaginative possibilities they are capable of evoking. A proverb, of course, is a sentence or phrase which briefly and strikingly expresses some recognized truth or shrewd observation about practical life and which has been preserved by oral tradition. (2)

According to Adewole (2020), in *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe suggests that proverbs are also used as a device with specific effects: they help in defining characters, clarifying issues not overtly stated and enriching the process of conversation. It enhances conversation in a way that is beyond the strength and latitude of the regular English language while revealing the truths and world views a particular group of people hold dear to their communal existence. The use of proverbs certainly make these incidents in the novel unforgettable to the

young learners while teaching them the speech mannerisms and morals as well the way of life of their communities.

As a novel, *Things Fall Apart* literarily reeks of proverbs in all of its pages that it has been studied as a cultural and sociological text in some regions of the world. It becomes a means of Achebe linguistically demarcating his characters as well as moving the conflict of the novel forward. Their often telling didactic and expository feature helped to reveal the author's mastery of and indeed manipulation of the English language to convey the African thoughts and way of life. In this study however, rather than do a listing of these proverbs, situations that use this art form copiously would be examined. In this regard, two situations stand out: the scene where Okonkwo went to the great farmer Nwakibie to source for yam seedlings to set out on his share cropping experience and the scene in Mbanta where Okonkwo had to fete his maternal kinsmen for hosting him during his seven years of exile.

Okonkwo was an indigent citizen of Umuofia, his father died in debts and penury and he had nothing to fall back on to start his life. Consequently, he went to Nwakibie, a rich farmer and a kinsman to plead for seed yams to begin his farming enterprise through a share-cropping arrangement. He opened the discussion with Nwakibie with a proverb when he said; "I have brought you this little kola. As our people say, a man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness'. Proverb here at once reveals Nwakibie's place of honour and affluence in the land; it shows Okonkwo's deep respect for the man as well as his (Okonkwo's) desire and ambition to be as great as Nwakibie someday. Praying earlier with highly proverbial metaphors, Nwakibie had said: "We shall all live. We pray for life, children, good harvest and happiness. You will have what is good for you and I will have what is good for me. Let the kite perch and let the egret perch too. If one says no to another, let its wing break." Here too, the tribal concept of communalism, the live and let live spirit that rural Africans are known for is openly displayed. He in effect conveyed the message that there are enough opportunities available for everyone on earth no matter their status; that the sky is wide enough to accommodate all birds, both the weak and the strong as exemplified by the image of the kite and egret.

With the preambles over, Okonkwo laid down the reason for his visit to Nwakibie's homestead: I have come to you for help; he said. Perhaps you can already guess what it is. I have cleared a farm but have no yams to sow. I know what it is to ask a man to trust another with his yams, especially these days when young men are afraid of hard work. The lizard who jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise

himself if no one else did. I began to fend for myself at an age when most people suck at their mother's breast. If you give me some yam seeds, I shall not fail you." Here too, the proverb about the lizard succinctly conveys Okonkwo's message as well as hints at his strength and his character. Okonkwo was in effect saying that against all odds he has come this far and would certainly not fail Nwakibie because he has the capacity to deliver on his promise. Responding to Okonkwo's request, Nwakibie himself retorted with a proverb while acknowledging Okonkwo's competence and capacity: "Eneke the bird says that since men have learnt to shoot without missing, he has learnt to fly without perching. I have learnt to be stingy with my yams. But I can trust you. I know it as I look at you. As our fathers said, you can tell a ripe corn by its look. I shall give you twice Four hundred yams." The proverb about Eneke the bird reveals the careful and prudent trait in Nwakibie who likened himself to a bird that can only be hit by the hunter's bullets when it makes a mistake; while the hunter is symbolic of young farmers who renege on their sharecropping promises after borrowing yam seedlings. Thus, he is resolved to be selfish with his seed yams and not give younger men the opportunity to disappoint him. However, on Okonkwo's case he proffered a second proverb to the effect that: "As our fathers said, you can tell a ripe corn from its look". In other words, Okonkwo is a dependable man to lend yam seedlings to, given his record of physical achievement as a young man. This particular proverb reveals Nwakibie's full confidence in Okonkwo's ability to make good on his promises.

Okonkwo's magnanimous and grateful personality was displayed at its best and portrayed through an array of proverbs when he hosted his maternal kinsmen to a luncheon as he was preparing to return to Umuofia from Mbanta after his seven years of exile there. When his wife Ekwefi protested that two goats were enough for the feast, Okonkwo admonished her with a parable: "I am calling the feast because I have the wherewithal. I cannot live at the bank of a river and wash my hand with spittle. My mother's people have been good to me and I must show them gratitude." In essence, he was saying that he cannot be so affluent and live a very frugal life and one of ingratitude. The reference to 'living at the bank of the river' indicates his prosperity while washing hands with spittle points to penury stinginess and ingratitude. Thus, the message here is one cannot be a wealthy man and have the mentality of a poor man by doing things in half measures. Clearly, Achebe also showed the concept of African communalism and brotherhood when Okonkwo addressed his maternal kinsmen during the feast that followed with some telling proverbs: "A man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. They all have food in their own homes. When we gathered together in the Moonlight village ground, it is not because of the moon. Every man can see it in his own compound. We come together because it is good

for kinsmen to do so.” Okonkwo’s magnanimous, open-handed, grateful, communally inclined but proud self is revealed in this encounter through these well placed proverbs.

In defining proverbs as short witty statements that give a position or an opinion a sharp focus and vivid understanding and comprehension by expressing timeless truths, Lawal (2017) equally stated that in Chinua Achebe’s *Arrow of God*, there is an extensive usage of proverbs. According to him, these proverbs are not just engaged; rather, they are creatively injected into the narrative to domesticate the English language in African form, to project the African (narrative) culture and to bring to focus the thematic concerns of the novel while performing the didactic function of teaching morals and a communal way of life.

Incidentally while performing the same function as the proverbs deployed in *Things Fall Apart*, most of the proverbs here allude to the central theme of the work which simply is ‘divided we fall’ as the breakup of the African society in *Arrow of God* by the coming of the Whiteman and colonialism greatly exacerbated by the factitious internal disorder and disunity displayed by the characters in the novel through their selfish, reckless and anti-communal actions. An analysis of fifteen of these proverbs with the thematic hue of societal break up predicated upon the incursion of colonialism would be undertaken here.

When two brothers fight, a stranger reaps the harvest. (131)

If one finger brought oil, it messed up the others. (187)

He is a fool who treats his brother worse than a stranger. (94)

No man however great was greater than his people; no one ever won judgment against his clan. (230)

We often stand in the compound of a coward to point at the ruins where a brave man used to live. (11)

When a handshake goes beyond the elbow we know it has turned to another thing. (13)

When we hear a house has fallen do we ask if the ceiling fell with it? (18)

A toad does not run in the day unless something is after it. (21)

The fly that has no one to advise it follows the corpse into the grave. (27)

When we see a little bird dancing in the middle of the pathway, we must know that its drummer is in the near-by bush. (40)

A man who brings home ant-infested faggots should not complain if he is visited by lizards. (59)

The offspring of a hawk cannot fail to devour chicks. (128)

It is not our custom to show our neighbour’s creditors the way to his hut. (152)

A hostile clansman is a friend in a strange country. (162)

When brothers fight to death, a stranger inherits the father’s estate. (220)

Achebe, C. (1964). *Arrow of God*. London: Heinemann

Indeed, teachers, more than other people, are better equipped to teach youths the core values of Nigeria’s ethnic groups. Next to parents, they alone can gain the confidence of their pupils or students and prepare their minds to learn Igbo tradition and world view. They can teach the youth the nature and importance of folklore, its role in the history of their people, and its place in contemporary culture. The youth must be made to appreciate folklore as an integral part of their cultural heritage and living culture. It is not “old school” as many of them believe today; it is not outdated, either. It is the soul of their ethnic tradition and world view. The role of teachers in achieving all this is comparable to that of mothers.

CONCLUSION:

According to (Ezeigbo 6) Stories used to educate and entertain younger children must be carefully selected. They must be appropriate for their age in terms of subject matter and should be didactic. Animal stories and tales that have child-characters portrayed in different life situations such as the home and the farm are preferable. The aim is to choose stories that inculcate in children such core values as love, courage, honesty, loyalty, hard work, tolerance and forgiveness. Such stories abound in every ethnic culture in Nigeria. While folklores may date from a timeless past, their relevance in today’s society cannot be wished away. They are as valuable to our forefathers and their society as they are valuable in today’s modern society. True the effect may have reduced due to the exigencies of our age but they are nevertheless still part of our society. In literature the dexterity of modern writer from all cultures in weaving folklores into their stories (African writers are experts at this) have shown the relevance of this art form demonstrating “their versatility, simplicity and timelessness” (Ezeigbo 11). The versatility of folklores in our age is equally seen in the preponderance of tales translated into printed and celluloid cartoons as well as video games for our younger learners.

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