

Culture Clash in *Things Fall Apart*

Rahul Singh Sundram

Research Scholar

Department of English

Lovely Professional University, Jalandhar (Punjab India).

rahulsundram09@gmail.com

Abstract

Widely known as "the father of the African novel in English," Achebe is one of the most significant writers to emerge from Africa with a literary vision that has profoundly influenced the form and content of modern African literature. Chinua Achebe (1930- 2013) published his first novel *Things Fall Apart* in 1958. Achebe wrote in response to European novels that depicted Africans as savages who needed to be enlightened by the Europeans. Achebe presents to the reader his people's history with both strengths and imperfections by describing for example, Igbo festivals, the worship of their gods and the practices in their ritual ceremonies, their rich culture and other social practices, the colonial era that was both stopping Igbo culture and also brought in some benefits to their culture *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe explores the coming of the white man and its effect on the culture of the people of Umuofia. The white men came with culture conflict and which was not significant for religion of Umuofia. The people of Umuofia believed on so many god and goddess.

Introduction

Cultural clash is a conflict arising from the interaction of the people with different culture values. When two people of a different cultural or background meet and

do not understand each other than the conflicts arises each other. Every single culture has its own traditions, habits, religions, languages and many other common features. Crucial condition of peaceful coexistence between various cultures is a mutual respect and willingness to accept the differences. Otherwise, it elicits the cultural clashes. The purpose of this paper is to identify the cultural clashes in postcolonial Africa and demonstrate its reflection in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The main objective of the writing this novel is to acquaint the outside world about the Ibo culture tradition as well as to make his own people realize that their tradition culture contained much that was valuable which must be integrated with the new culture that was coming into existence under the powerful impact of the western complex culture.

Things Fall Apart as Post-colonial Novel

Post-Colonial Literature is a body of literary writings that react to the discourse of colonization. Post-colonial literature often involves writings that deal with issue of de-colonization or the political and culture independent of people formerly subjugated to colonial rule. Post-Colonial literature also attempts to critique the contemporary post-colonial discourse that has been over correct times. It attempts to assimilate this very emergence of post

colonialism and its literary expression itself.

After reading the novel we can know that culture conflict rose from misunderstanding between two different cultures. The white men considered themselves that they superior than black people. And they thought that it is our supreme duty to enlighten black people who believe on superstition. The white people have a notion that African people have no history and they want to make their own history of civilization. Achebe should become teacher and guide of the people and should use the novel as vehicle to disseminate ideas and beliefs among the people. He suggested the people that the social function of the novel should be different from the European concept of idea. Human beings are both acted on by culture and act back and so generate new culture forms of meaning. They undergo change alongside changes in the economic, social and political organisation of society.

With the change of their culture the people of Africa forgot the importance their tradition and values. They were following way and habits of white people which ultimately became the cause of their destruction. Okonkwo is the main protagonist, who perished his life for the sake to defend his culture.

The main theme of the novel is culture clash or culture misunderstanding. When white men came to Nigeria sowed the seeds of Christian religion and ultimately the misunderstanding started between two groups. Forster's *A Passage to India* also depicts the conflict between the Indian and British. One can see that English treat the Indian with lack of respect and the Indian seem to expect it. Culture misunderstanding is turned into a major theme of the novel. Different

cultures, ideas and expectations regarding hospitality, social and role of religion daily life responsible for the misunderstanding between English and Indians. At last this misunderstanding turned into a culture clash because the English people thought that they are superior than Indian.

Okonkwo returns after just seven years of the exile to find is village almost unrecognizable. He finds his entire village changed. The white people built churches and schools. His Son Nowye changed his religion and adopted Christian. Rushdie's novel *Midnight's children* also portrays the multicultural. At the beginning of the story, Salman Rushdie describes Adam Aziz, Salem's grandfather. He spent five years in Germany, where he was studying to be a doctor. "Now, returning, he saw through travelled eyes. "Adam Aziz is back at home but he doesn't feel comfortable at his birthplace. He suddenly realizes that "the years in Germany had returned him to a hostile environment." Rushdie portrays a character that is 'caught' between the two cultures. Having experienced different life, different European manners, culture and thinking, his doubts keep nibbling at his mind. This situation clearly illustrates the main problem of many Indians and that is a searching of individual for his identity. That searching confronts Adam with a dilemma whether to accept newly acquired experiences on the one hand or whether to stay deeply connected with the traditions of his country on the other hand.

Achebe wrote novel to highlight the social and religious life of Nigeria. *Things Fall Apart* provides readers with an insight of Igbo society right before the white missionaries' invasion on their land. He portrays the customs, habits, ritual and social life of the Igbo people. Rushdie's

novel *Satanic Verses* provoked great controversy in the Muslims community for what some Muslims believed were demonstrations in the United Kingdom. Rushdie was accused for freedom of speech. As the controversy spread, the importance of the book was banned in India and Islamic countries. This book was against the religion of Muslim and fatwa was issued to Rushdie. Following the fatwa, Rushdie was put under police protection by the British Government

The novel can be studied at three different levels:

- 1: It can be studied as the tragic and moving story of a proud clansman who perished in the attempt to defend his culture.
- 2: The novel is sociological or anthropological study of the Igbo culture.
- 3: The novel can be studied as a clash between two cultures; in fact this culture clash is the main theme of the novel.

The novel shows the life of Okonkwo a leader and the local wrestling champion in Umuofia one of the fictional group of the nine villages in Nigeria inhabited by the Igbo people. It describes his family and personal history, the customs and society of the Igbo and the influence of British colonialism and Christian missionaries on the Igbo community during the late 19th century. The Igbo culture is represented by the people of village Umuofia is primitive and traditional. They had no knowledge of the plough and so it was its social organization. They had no contact with outside the world. In spite of backwardness, people were prosperous and they lived a happy and contented life. Their way as depicted in the novel is free from daily tensions, conflict that plague

the lives of people of every modern civilized society.

In the initial the missionaries came with Bible in their hands in the Umuofia region. Their objective was to destroy the force that has kept the tribal society in existence for centuries. The real process of disintegration began when the colonial power began to impose its own laws and completely ignored the tradition ways of their lives. The colonial powers set up its own administration, courts of justice and also introduce trade and commerce. The missionaries opened schools and those who finished education got job in the administration and some of them became priests and school teachers. With the introduction of trade and commerce ordinary persons became prosperous by selling palm oil, palm wine, coca and other product of land.

Okonkwo says:

“I heard . But I have also heard that Abam People were weak and foolish. Why did they not fight back? Had they no guns and matches? We would be coward to compare ourselves with the men of Abam. Their father had never dared to stand before our ancestors. We must fight these men and drive them from our land”.

Returning from exile Okonkwo finds his village changed by presence of the white people. He and other tribal leaders try to reclaim their hold on their native land by destroying a local Christian church. In return, the leader of the white government takes them in prisoner. As a result the people of Umuofia finally gather. However, Okonkwo was one of the few and perhaps one the only one who went on believing the white man must be driven out by force. Only when he had killed the government messenger, he relied

that as for as he was concerned, his fight against the white man was over.

When the local leaders came to Okonkwo's house to take him to court they found that Okonkwo has hanged himself. He ultimately committed suicide rather than he tired in a colonial court. Okonkwo's action have ruined the reputation and status as it is against the teaching of the Igbo to commit suicide.

Conclusion

In the concluding lines we can say that Achebe wants to convey the African people the value of their customs and tradition. The value of African culture and tradition are more rich and vivid than white people so they should preserve it. Achebe encouraged the native people to

fight against the slavery and abolish the rule of white from their land.

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