

Acclimatization Of Culture In *Things Fall Apart*

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ABSTRACT:

Chinua Achebe *Things Fall Apart* set in Nigeria, depicts the representation of Igbo culture. The novel gives a brilliant account of an Igbo protagonist Okonkwo, a wrestler, strong and hardworking man. *Things Fall Apart* covers a lifestyle of Igbo people both before the arrival of British colonizers and Christian missionaries and its aftermath. The villagers have a strong belief in war, customs, religion, ritual practices, racial and social norms. It plays an essential role for visual arts, music and language dialects. After the colonization, the people of Igeudo were forced to adapt the traditions and culture of white people. They struggle a lot to modify their culture and to leave them a way for new civilization.

Key Words: Igbo culture, colonization, missionaries, dialects, tradition and culture.

Chinua Achebe is a Nigerian novelist, poet and critic. He was born on November 16, 1930 in Ogidi in Eastern region of Nigeria. *Things Fall Apart*, his first novel is considered as his masterpiece. His famous novels include *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), *A Man of the People* (1966), and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). During the time of colonial era, Achebe novels mainly focus on Igbo culture, traditions, and also on Western traditional African values.

Things fall apart, a novel written by Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian author. During the late nineteenth century, Europeans arrived in the village, Igeudo. The British colonialism portrayed in this novel. The novel centres on a central character, Okonkwo, a wrestler. Okonkwo, an Igbo man, leader of Umoufia. His life dealt by showing his weakness also. In order to clear his debts which has been left by his father, Unoka.

Okonkwo, due to the legacy of paying his uncleared debts after the death of his father, strives his weakness of being a wrestler. He neglected his wife and his children as an uncared father in the society. Okonkwo, is selected by the village people as the guardian of Ikemefuna, a boy taken by the clan to bring peace between Umoufia and another clan after Ikemefuna's father killed an Umuofian woman. The boy considers Okonkwo as a second father. He is fond of Okonkwo and he loved Okonkwo's family.

The Oracle of Umoufia insists him to murder Ikemefuna. An old man Ezedu, instructs him not to kill Ikemefuna because it would be a sin of killing his own child. He was ambiguous about the boy. Okonkwo, neglects the words of Ezedu, kills Ikemefuna even as he begs his "father" for protection. Okonkwo feels sad for killing Ikemefuna with guilty consciousness. His daughter Ezinma falls ill and it is feared she may die, while

delivering a gun salute for Ezedu's funeral; a gunshot unfortunately kills Ezeudu's son by Okonkwo and his family is sent into exile for seven years.

While Okonkwo is away in Mbanta, he learns the white men have entered into the village to spread Christianity. When returning into the village he finds many changes due to the presence of White men. The District Commissioner who represent the British government announces to take Okonkwo and the native leaders as prisoners to pay fine of two hundred cowries. To avoid the District commissioner's instructions, the native 'court messengers' humiliate themselves, shave their heads and whip them .

Okonkwo as a wrestler and an adamant man decides to war against the white men. They quit the meeting by the White government messengers at that time Okonkwo decapitates one of them, the other messengers escape. "Okonkwo stood looking at the dead man. He knew that Umoufia would not go to war. He knew because they had let all other messengers escape. They had broken into tumult instead of action. He discerned fright in that tumult. He heard voices asking: Why did he do it?" (176). He realizes the people of Umoufia are not going to safeguard themselves; such a conflict is raised within his society. Gregory Irwin, the local leader of the White government went in search of Okonkwo. He hides himself in his house. The leader finds him in his house and takes him to the court. In order to avoid punishment in a colonial court he commits suicide.

Nigerians follow Igbo culture. It includes customs, traditions, and ancestral practices of people in South Eastern Nigeria. The importance of Igbo also deals with visual arts, music, dance forms and language dialects. The culture of Nigerians is unique from Western and Eastern countries. The author depicts village society and culture in *Things Fall Apart*. The novel takes place in Umoufia, consisting of nine villages. Okonkwo, a great wrestler, strong and hardworking man is well known in the village. As a leader of Umoufia clan he is respected by the village people. In a wrestling match, he has defeated Amalinze, the undefeated warrior while he was so young.

The Nigerians follow their custom to prove their pride. In such circumstances Okonkwo's braveness is spoken by the village people. Unoka, Okonkwo's father asks Okonkwo not to be prideful.

"A proud heart can survive general failure because such a failure does not prick its pride. It is more difficult and bitterer when a man fails alone" (21). According to Igbo culture if a boy is cowardice, his masculinity is disapproved. He just reflects a feminine attitude. There are many different aspects of culture portrayed in *Things Fall Apart*. Chinua Achebe describes Igbo culture, which encompasses Polytheistic religion, father-son inheritance, farming, traditions and beliefs in evil spirits. Religion plays an essential role in Igbo culture. The people in their village, worship many gods as opposed to just one like Western culture. One of the fine goddess, they worship is Ani, goddess of earth. Certain type of rituals and customs are done to pacify and worship each god. Peace is observed to honour goddess of earth, Ani, so she will bless the crops

Igbo culture represents war, customs, beliefs, religion, racial, society and its social norms. Okonkwo was notable not only as the great warrior but also shines as a farmer. He helped his father Unoka in farming, he

played his role as a hardworking man. By clearing the debts of Unoka, he served as a faithful son to him. Okonkwo had to work hard than anyone else in his farm for his pride and it is a desire for him to continue his Igbo culture relating to father-son traditions.

His desire for tradition reflected in the novel. He encourages his son Nwoye, to spend much time in the ways of farming. He was sure that his son would inherit Okonkwo's knowledge of farming and his farm one day. Nwoye ends up leaving his school and converts to Christianity, he stops to follow the traditions of Igbo culture. He hoped Nwoye customize the traditions and different aspects of culture implemented in Igbo.

Meanwhile a battle between social transformations and traditions moves on in Nigeria. The villagers of Igeudo does not accept the new religious and social order brought by the British missionaries. Most of the villagers are also caught in the struggle between the social and religious changes and the traditions which is customized in the society. The villagers are ambiguous whether to accept the new reality or still cling on to the old-fashioned way of thinking. The foreign language and culture eroded the values of Igbo people. Mr. Brown preached the new religion of Christianity. Some people supported the missionaries at first, undergo and started to follow the new religion and its customs.

European influence, however threatens the people of Igeudo, to extinguish all their traditional methods of farming, harvesting, and cooking. The Igbo language is quickly abandoned. Achebe reveals the complexity of Igbo language in translation. Achebe points out that Africa has several languages and each language is unique in its own way. Mr. Brown has difficulty in understanding the language, hence he has a translator and the villagers of Umoufia make fun of Mr. Brown's translator. Mr. Brown's language is different from their own language. The European culture and religion transforms the identity of Igbo, and the people abandon their own culture heritage; and separation between clansmen occurs while adapting the new culture.

Every clan and village had its evil belief. If a titled clansman commits suicide the village people are not allowed to touch the body of him. It is a belief that they were against their god. In the end of the novel, Okonkwo commits suicide as a cowardice so nobody touches his body. They considered it is an offence against the goddess of earth. The novel concludes with Mr. Brown and Mr. Smith following the same methods to convert the Igbo people and bring destruction on the Nigerian society.

Works Cited

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