

Cultural Clash, Shibboleths, and Imperial Invasion in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart***Dr.Kakasaheb D. Dhaygude**

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Abstract

The Nigerian literature is one of the most popular and well-read literature not only in Africa but also all over the world. It presents the country's rich cultural diversity, complicated history, and the crude communal realities which are rooted in a variety of indigenous shibboleths. They are shaped by imperial and vanquished experiences. The body of Nigerian literature presents a vibrant exploration of identity, communal life, politics, and human experiences. The well-known writers like Chinua Achebe, Buchi Emecheta, Wole Soyinka, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie have played a major role in giving voices to Nigerians a global platform. They make their nation a strong force in world literature. The origin of Nigerian literature is found in its rich traditions which are largely oral. This literature predates the written works. Before the arrival of Western education, Nigerians preserved their culture, beliefs, and values through the form of storytelling, proverbs, folks, legends, lyrics, and oral poetry. The oral tradition was not only for amusement but also served as significant means for moral and ethical instructions, cultural transmissions, and societal bonding. Each communal groups like Igbos, Yoruba, and Hausa had their own distinct oral traditions that showcased their unique bent of mind and mental attributes. The storytelling is always regarded as the repository of their primitive culture which played a significant role in preserving the much needed continuity of these traditions. The arrival and intrusion of imperialism in the early nineteenth century marked a major turning point in the development of Nigerian literature. The British imperial rule besides its demerits successfully introduced their modern education, Christianity, and their language, which later on becomes the important medium of instruction as well as literary expression. While western domination havoeked indigenous traditions and cultures. It also provided much needed literary avenues for the indigenous artists to express themselves. They also used it to question the imperial colonial narratives. They make ample use of English language to showcase the African realities and amalgamate it with their national linguistic and communal elements which

ultimately result into a unique literary works. This research paper make an in-depth study of the major themes, characterization, symbolism, and historical significance of the fiction while foregrounding Achebe's role in rewriting the Nigerian history from the native's viewpoint. The present work states that the chosen text is still germane as it focuses the clash between the tradition and the modernity which present the devastating effect of the colonial contact on the African culture.

Key Words: Community, colonialism, culture, development, language, tradition and woman etc,

Introduction

Chinua Achebe is one of the most significant literary personalities of the rich modern Nigerian literature. His well-known work like *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is widely considered as a major text. This work marked a pivotal point in Nigerian literary traditions; it presents the dwarfed sketch of ancient African traditions. This work exposes the devastating effects of imperialism. It successfully rectifies the African history from the indigenous viewpoint. Chinua Achebe questions the faulty portrayal of Nigerian culture which is stereotyped by Western literature, which can be seen in the novelists like Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* by. Chinua Achebe provides much needed inspiration to his Nigerian writers and urges them to present their own experiences and assert their cultural identity. Wole Soyinka is also one of the well-known literary giants not only in Nigerian literature but also the literature of the subalterns. He is the first African who wins the coveted Nobel Prize in Literature in 1986. He wrote dramas, essays, and poems, his works mirror the issues like political vendetta, corruption, and the crude complexities of human life. His works always showcase the Yoruba myths and shibboleths. He always addresses the relevant issues which make his writing relevant and culturally connected. His works also mirror the Nigerian disturbed politics as well as the history. Wole Soyinka's major focus is on the struggle for Nigerian independence and the conditions after the end of imperial rule. Nigeria got independence from England in 1960, but there is more political chaos after independence and the there was much political instability, malpractice and civil strife across the Nigerian nation. The Nigerians experienced the civil war and the nation was torn by the Biafran War. This dissension had a major impact on the indigenous Nigerian writers; they used writing to presents the current issues like war, trauma, migration, and national identity. Writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie expressed

this disturbed historical events in the works like *Half of a Yellow Sun*. This work explores the various viewpoints regarding the war and its brutal aftershocks. Adichie's works portrays the modern generation of Nigerian litterateurs who mirrors the burning issues such as urbanisation, globalization, emigration, gender, and identity. Her works primarily focus the relevance of Nigerian works in presenting both local and global issues. The most significant aspect of Nigerian literature is its use of the colonial language. Most of the Nigerian writers make use of the imperial language i.e. English. They also mix the indigenous tongues, idioms, and traditional references into their writing. This amalgamation of indigenous and foreign languages is a testimony of the unique linguistic landscape of Nigeria which makes room for the writers to strengthen the bond between their culture and the global audience. They make ample use of primitive proverbs, which is a unique aspect of Nigerian works. It not only adds depth but also provides authenticity to their literary expressions. Besides the prose and novels, the Nigerian works present a much wider range of literary genres which include poems, plays, and essays. The poets like Christopher Okigbo and J. P. Clark have made major contribution in the development of modern African poetry. Their works primarily present the well-known themes like identity, religion, and political strife. Nigerian works have received much greater global acclaim because of the modern digital media and various international literary awards. The indigenous Nigerian writers circumvent the boundaries and follow the new forms of storytelling. They focus on the burning issues like feminism, migration and displaced experiences and changes brought by technology. The worldwide recognition of Nigerian literature is the testimony of the ability of Nigerian writers to showcase with multifarious people while maintain the roots in their national realities. The Nigerian literature is a vibrant and developing arena that presents the complexities of Nigerian communal life and its cultural experiences.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is one of the most important works of Nigerian literature and it is an epoch making work in postcolonial literature. This work is published in the year 1958. This novel presents the crude complexities of pre-imperial Igbo society. Besides presenting the devastating effects of Western imperialism in Nigeria, it focuses on the tragic life of the tribal chief Okonkwo, who is a tribal warlord and a protector of the Umuofia clan. Chinua Achebe mirrors the distorted picture of African culture and also questions the imperial stereotypical portrayals of natives as uncultured and primitive. The work analyses the issues like masculinity, discrimination, cultural identity, gender, tradition,

imperialism, religion, and communal transformation. African literature gained international recognition in the twentieth century because of the works of writers like Chinua Achebe. His writing questioned the colonial narratives about Africa. Before the publication of *Things Fall Apart* in 1958, much of African representation in Western literature was shaped by colonial writers who depicted Africans as primitive, voiceless, and culturally inferior. A notable example is *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, which portrayed Africa as a dark and savage continent. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is an answer to the imperial misrepresentations. This work presents a thorough and humanized analysis of Igbo people before and during the imperial invasion. The work is set in late nineteenth-century Nigeria. The story presents the Okonkwo, a warlord and leader of Umuofia. It is because of the imperial invasion his life disturbs completely, the whole Umuofia society experiences dramatic consequences because of the Western missionaries and imperial administrators. The title of this work is taken from W. B. Yeats' poem *The Second Coming*. The opening lines "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold." Has the title of this work, which presents the devastation of the leader Okonkwo, his life and the Igbo culture.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* investigates the historical contexts in which the work was written. In the nineteenth century, Westerners gained mastery over Africa and Asian continents through imperialism. This struggle at last resulted in to the political, pecuniary, and cultural mastery of the Asian and African territories and societies. Nigeria came under the English control in this period. The western missionaries introduced Christianity in Africa and Asia and the imperial masters imposed their much claimed legal systems and the forms of government in African land. The natives and traditions were always side-lined and considered as brute. Chinua Achebe started his writing in this period when his country was taking arms to end the colonial rule and it finally attained it in the year 1960. This work is an attempt to maintain the African esteem by presenting Igbo society as compound and composite. It manifests that pre-colonial Nigerians have their own political, legal, communal, cultural systems and it is as effective as that of the Europeans. Chinua Achebe's work is a paramount text in the postcolonial literature as it questions the imperial parleys and allow the indigenous people to express and share their own stories. This work presents the varied and rich portrayal of Igbo culture. Chinua Achebe showcases a society which is governed by its own time tested traditions, rituals, and moral principles.

The religion and spiritual belief system plays major role in Igbo society. The Igbo people worship many deities, and spirits. They respect their priests and oracles and always consult them for their guidance. The Oracle of the Hills and Caves are significant entities which have a key role in the societal and individual decision-making. They never defy their orders as we found in the Oracle's orders. The oracle's order in giving death penalty to Ikemefuna is thoroughly followed by all the people as they firmly believe that the divine authority must be obeyed else the community will face devastating consequences. The Igbo pays more respect to their own efforts and the inheritance is largely undercooked. The social system is as such that it gives the freedom to every individual so that he can attain respect through hard work, rewards, and bravery. The example of Okonkwo's success is a testimony to this fact as his father is totally opposite to him and there is nothing good left by his father to Okonkwo . Even before the advent of western democracy the Nigerian society was democratic as the elders play important roles like the elected representatives. They have their annual festivals, rituals and ceremonies like, the Week of Peace in which there is no war and violence, The Feast of the New Yam, nuptial negotiations, and funeral ceremonies. These Igbo traditions are the evidences of the rich of Igbo traditional life.

Conclusion

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is one of the prominent and major literary works in African literature as it presents a vibrant analysis of imperialism. Besides eulogising the native culture it also presents the pathetic downfall of the hero Okonkwo's and the disintegration of the Igbo society. The novelist exposes the bitter consequences of cultural disintegration. The present work questions stereotypes perspectives of Westerners regarding the Nigerian shibboleths, values and culture. This work presents the composite culture of Igbos, their struggle for identity and change. The major contribution of this work significance in its efforts to showcase the indigenous struggle against western acts of subversion.

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