



POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S THINGS FALL APART

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Abstract

Chinua Achebe is one of the greatest writers in the literary field. He has won so many awards for his noteworthy literary pieces. In his novel "Things Fall Apart", he reveals the tragic end of the protagonist who searches for identity in the society. It also speaks about other postcolonial elements such as alienation, cultural conflict and colonialism.

Key Words: Identity Crisis, Alienation, Nostalgia, Cultural Conflict, Colonialism.

Postcolonial theory is one of the prominent theories in academic surroundings from the mid twentieth century. Most of the critics and writers give their contribution to the development of postcolonial theory in literature. Many of the works produced by the postcolonial writers essentially deal with colonialism and imperialism. They not only give attention to colonial effects but also how far it is degraded the culture and life of individual in the colonized society. Postcolonial Literature usually speaks about the issues like quest for identity, oppression and suppression, alienation, nostalgia and forceful migration from one place to another place.

Albert Chinualumogo Achebe was raised by Christian evangelical parents in the large village Ogidi, in Igboland, Eastern Nigeria. He was born on 16 November 1930. Things Fall Apart (1958) was his first novel, and it is the well-known work of him. It has been translated into at least forty-five languages, and has sold eight million copies worldwide. Some of his prominent works are No Longer At Ease (1960), Arrow of God (1964), and A Man of the People (1966). He had received so many awards specifically the Nigerian National Merit Award, in 1987. He was the winner of the Man Booker International Prize in 2007. His novel Anthills of the Savannah was shortlisted for the Booker McConnell Prize in 1987. He was died at the age of 82 on 21 March 2013.

Things Fall Apart is highly focused on Igbo culture and how it is affected by the colonizer. It vividly shows the reality during the period of colonization in Nigeria. It presents the people's struggle to protect their culture and native land from the outsiders. It reveals the incidents where the native people are feeling alienated in their own territory. They are always worried about their happy and successful life in past. It also conveys the message that the native people themselves powerless in the rule of colonizers.

Okonkwo, a yam farmer is the protagonist of the novel Things Fall Apart. He is always searching for an identity but he is unable to obtain it. In this novel, he is affected by the behavior of his father Unoka during his childhood period. His father is considered as agbala which means a woman among the villagers because he does not work as a man. Even he has died in the evil forest alone and no one touched his body. He died without any title or specific identity. Therefore, he hates his father and decides to get an ideal position in the society. So that he works hard to create an authoritative position for himself in the society. He is longing for an identity for a long time in the novel. He does not want to be like his father. Instead he brings himself as a courageous and hard working man in the society at first. He also strives to get an identity as a successful and powerful man. At one pointing time, he proves that he is not like his father by helping his family get away from starvation. He tries a lot to overcome the hardships in his life. Even though, he elevates himself as one of the powerful men of the Umuofia clan, he could not possess it forever.

Okonkwo meets a crucial situation in his life where no one is ready to save him from the danger including his intimate friends and reputable personalities in his clan. One day there is a funeral ceremony of Ogbuefi Ezeudu who is a well known village elder and also received three of the clan's four titles. In this ceremony, Okonkwo's gun accidentally goes off and kills Ezeudu's sixteen-year-old son. This situation brings misfortune and bad luck in his life. He is forcefully moved to his motherland from the fatherland with his family. According to the custom of Umuofia clans, he spends seven years in exile. He has lost his powerful identity and wealthy life in his own land.

Okonkwo is haunted by the past experiences in his life. Every time he is thinking about his past life especially how he has defeated Amalinze the Cat and how he is gained respectable name among his as well as other neighboring clans. Then slowly he thinks about his wealth in Umuofia where his three wives lived in three huts separately. These kinds of thoughts make him think about his past life again and again. He could not come out from his past experiences to live his present life. Hence, he feels nostalgia over the past incidents of his life.



The author explains that Okonkwo does not feel happy to live in Mbanta. According to him, it is not his native land but it is his motherland. He despises to stay in his new land. He even does not get recognition in Mbanta as in Umuofia. He feels alienated from his fatherland. He is unsatisfied with the things which are surrounded him in his motherland. He frequently finds himself aloof in the new land. Hence, he is often longing for the past identity and expecting the final day to move his fatherland. He says to his uncle that he cannot regain his past identity in his fatherland. He insists that his identity is entirely broken. So that he says to him, he wants “to become one of the lords of the clan,” but now that possibility is gone. His identity is fully vanished when he is committed suicide at the end of the novel. In this way, he faces identity crisis in his life.

In another side, the other clans are facing the impact of colonization in their native land. The clans are oppressed by the newly arrived people in their native land. The author reveals the arrival and dominance of white people in the village of Abame through the character Obierika. He informs to Okonkwo that the entire village has been destroyed due to the murder of a white man. It seems that a white man arrived in Abame on an “iron horse” during the planting season. The village elders consulted their oracle, which prophesied that the white man would be followed by others, who would bring destruction to Abame. The villagers killed the white man and tied his bicycle to their sacred tree to prevent it from getting away and telling the white man’s friends. After some days, a group of white men are discovered the bicycle and identified their comrade’s fate. Weeks later, a group of men surrounded Abame’s market and destroyed everybody in the village.

Through this incident the author says in Umuofia as well as Mbanta, so many people have lost their culture due to the arrival of white people. The white people are known as the colonizers in this novel. Some of the people have been converted to Christianity and turned against their own native people. The converted Christian people start to give troubles to other native people. Even one of the converted Christians is killed the royal python which is considered as sacred by Mbanta Clans. Thus the people become the puppet in the hands of colonizers. The colonizers also start to interfere into the life of ordinary native people. They jump to punish the native people for minor mistakes. Those who speak against the white people are tortured by the law of them. Moreover, men of high status like Okonkwo view the church as a threat because it undermines the cultural value of their accomplishments.

The colonizers are getting more power in their new land through church. They are begun to dominate native people day by day. The native people become quite weak under the influence of colonizers. They scare to oppose the activity of the colonizers. It is shown by the conversation between Obierika and Okonkwo. Obierika explains that the church has weakened the ties of kinship and that it is too late to drive the white men out. Okonkwo detects that the white man is very shrewd because he came in peace and appeared to have only compassionate interests in the Africans, who thus permitted him to stay.

Thus the native people are convincingly tied into the new culture and go away from their own culture. Hence, lot of village elders tries to protect their culture through young generation even Okonkwo is also one among them. But it is too tough for them to reunite the clans. Once the village elders revolt against the white people but they are handcuffed and thrown in jail for several days, where they suffer insults and physical abuse. This leads Okonkwo to take revenge against white people and ended into violent action. He has killed the leader of court messengers because he could not tolerate the colonizers atrocities against the Igbo culture. He thought his people are losing their identity and colonized by the colonizers.

When the people are lost their real identity and valuable culture, they feel alienated at first. Then they feel nostalgia over the past things. Finally it motivates them to do action against the colonizers those who are suppressed them. Sometimes it gives good results but sometimes it ends straight opposite to the previous one. But in this novel, everything is shattered at the end due to the colonial power. Therefore the author gives suitable title to his novel Things Fall Apart.

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