
Things Fall Apart: Themes Raised In A Novel

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, published in 1958, has caught the eye of such a wide variety of Africans and non-Africans. It is the most fantastic work in modern times.

It portrays the African culture through the Igbo society, their superstitions and non-secular rituals. This novel is both a response to and a record of the devastating effects of western imperialist colonialism on the African people's traditional values and institutes. 'Post-colonial' in literature signifies "all the experience affected by the colonial process from the beginning of the colonization to the present day." Postcolonial work looks critically at the relation between the colonizers and colonized, which is based on two things – know-how and power.

The *Things Fall Apart*, by Chinua Achebe, is a postcolonial text. This novel is postcolonial in the sense that there is a clear line between the colonizer and the colonized. Broadly speaking, this novel is both a reaction to, and a record of, the devastating effects of western imperialist colonization on the African people's traditional values and religious institutions. The postcolonial writers bring to light the exploitation under the weight of imperial power of a large wealth of indigenous cultures. Postcolonial literature knocks at the colonized gates, hoping to interact with them. It aims at entering their inner sanctum and bringing into picture their cries of loss and their proclamations of birth. It is not a literature to show the colonized as the victims, but it shows their confused sense of belonging.

The first section deals with the portrayal of the white man's tactics to forcibly impose a new system of government, education and religion. The novel also depicts the fictional character as leader of the hassle against colonial powers. Here, Okonkwo- the novel's hero, is depicted as a king. Okonkwo was a pure nationalist. He felt profoundly hurt to see his village and its people turning from their ideals and beliefs and breaking apart. He killed one of the District Commissioner Court's messengers, who came to stop the villagers meeting, in a fit of rage and fury. He knew however that no one was going to protest against the white man. In his loneliness and despair, he committed suicide. He preferred to die, than to accept defeat in the battle of religion.

As a postcolonial text, *Things Fall Apart* successfully unfolds cultural and religious convictions. During the late 1800s Achebe's novel was set inside the Umuofia's Nigerian Ibo village. The first half of *Things Fall Apart* depicts local traditions and village life before colonization.

Nevertheless, in generating some doubts in the minds of the village people, the advent of new religion has been successful. Specifically the young generation felt drawn to Christianity. The Churches have started to turn the village people into Christianity. The novel focuses on the Igbo people within the years leading up to the appearance of the first Christian missionaries. We get to see the ins and outs of pre-colonized Africa and get a hint of what's to come when the missionaries show up.

The natives refused to accept the white man's authority as far as decision making was concerned. Before the arrival of the colonial powers, they lived in a patriarchal- collective political system. Decisions were made by the elder males in the village and by the husband in

the house.

In spite of all the shortcomings and irrationalities in the beliefs of the African people and their society, Achebe implores them to live with self-respect and dignity, without feeling any shame for their past.

The preference to triumph over land that was previously unexplored has existed throughout history. This preferred pressured many indigenous societies, which were traditionally technologically controlled, to adapt with destruction as the only alternative to the teachings and overall structure of the 'superior' conqueror nation. The indigenous people's psychological condition worsens owing to the colonizers' forced ideas conflicting with their own, which can create a rift in their thought. Usually the colonizer tries his best to prevent them from making what he considers to be the 'wrong' decision. The colonizers had an advantage over the indigenous people because of their technical limitations, leading them to feel threatened by the preceding native people. Long after the colonizers have left, the colonized people preserve to endure the scars left behind by the colonizers.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is a seminal text of twentieth century postcolonial writing and is often deemed the forefather of African literature as a force on the world stage.

After the arrival of the Christian culture, the first collision that takes place is the division at the individual, and then at the societal levels. When a number of the Igbo people, including Okonkwo's son, change their religion, it creates chaos and confusions throughout the community. Although the Igbo people have a well-established way of life, the Europeans do not understand. That is why they show no respect to the cultural practices of the Igbo people.

The feelings that the whites give the blacks about the Christianity simply recapture in the past the slave treatment that the blacks used to get from the whites. Achebe demonstrates that the picture of the Africans portrayed in literature and history is not actual, but the picture has been seen through the eyes of the Europeans. Consequently, when Okonkwo finds his established rules and orders totally rejected by his own men, and when he sees Igbo losing his reputation by falling apart, he hangs himself.

The ancient rites of the Ibo are portrayed as parts of a stable, well-ordered society that the arrival of missionaries ruins. The Missionaries' patience, art, music, and literature broke the foundations of the Native's faith and religion.

Achebe's Ibo society emphasis shows how the African culture's internal conquest ends with the alien control introduced by the whites. The dominance of the new community shakes the Igbo society's daily frame and the pillars of its belief. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe has identified a serious kind of dispute with regard to the effects of Christianity introduced by the Whites, which primarily opposes the agreed values of the Igbo tribe's people.

Christianity's new belief system is beginning to demolish this belief especially in the younger generation. Umuofia village is gravely filled with fear of Western Christianity's lurking danger. The values Okonkwo keeps in their hearts together with his people may not suit the new belief. Okonkwo says, "The white man has indeed brought a lunatic religion". Although the District Commissioner claims the new religious culture they bring would establish a prosperous village administration.

According to the Europeans, they saw this conquest as their spiritual obligation to civilize the barbarian peoples, but in reality they destroyed the native people's culture.

Achebe has made a praiseworthy effort, through the novel *Things Fall Apart*, to prove that European attitudes against Africans are mistaken. It seems that the most significant achievement of this novel is that it has changed the mindset of the people and even of the novelists towards Africa, and has set the foreground for numerous African novelists. European novelists before this novel depicted African society as a place of savages