

Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart as A Critique of British Colonialism

Dr. Umaji Ananda Patil

Assistant Professor and Head of Department of English
Smt. Gangabai Khivraj Ghodawat Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Jaysingpur
Dist. Kolhapur Maharashtra - 416101

Abstract-

Chinua Achebe is Nigerian writer who contributed to African literature. 'Things Fall Apart' is his first novel which deals with moral degradation and racial problems of Nigeria. African literature is the creation of African nationals living on African soil reflecting African native sensibility and atmosphere. This novel tells the story of Igbo warrior Okonkwo who single handedly fought with the obstacles of white rule in the native life. 'Things Fall Apart' is an exploration of colonial imperialism and its impact on the native life. It discusses the encounter between colonizers and colonized. Achebe pictures the traditional village society of Africa before the colonial era. The study focuses on the life of the village hero Okonkwo and the sprouting of the Christian missionaries in Nigeria and its impact on traditional Igbo society during the late 1800s. Things Fall Apart deals with the tussle between cultures and violent change in the life and values brought about by the British Administration in Nigeria. It discusses the complicated truth of African existence which is basically depending on the principles of religiosity and humanism. It discusses the issue of Colonizer and Colonized. The study sarcastically pinpoints the discourse which is accepted by the colonizers to represent Africans as primitive savages wrongly. Achebe discusses the issue of colonized and decolonized. It focuses on the issue of identity for Africans because of colonialism.

Keywords: - Colonialism, Colonizer, Colonized, Identity, etc.

Introduction

Chinua Achebe was Nigerian born African writer who wrote an epoch-making novel "Things Fall Apart" in the history of African literature. He was known by his name as Albert Chinua Achebe. 'Things Fall Apart' is considered the first novel which discusses the issue of colonialism and African racial problems. Achebe has taken the title of the novel from W. B. Yeats's well-known poem entitled "The Second Coming". The title page of the novel contains very grand truth through which we come to know the deplorable condition of man in the aftermath of the Second World War. "Turning and turning in the widening gyre the falcon cannot hear the falconer; Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world." This novel is landmark in the history of Anglophone literature from black Africa. The novel sets at the turn of the 19th century when the whites have just made their entry into Africa. The plot of the novel is woven round the character of Igbo soldier known as Okonkwo in pre-colonial Nigeria.

Okonkwo hard works and accumulates wealth because of his father's lazy nature. He gains

status by his own efforts at Umuofia. Okonkwo becomes brave but he has inferiority complex that he would not get lazy similar to his father. He kills Ikemefuna, a boy who killed a woman of Umuofia for the settlement of the dispute of murder of the woman. He proves manliness by the act of killing. This act creates rift between Okonkwo and his son Nwoye who was close friend of Ikemefuna. Nwoye becomes upset with his father and he gets converted to Christianity. Colonizers tempt to Igbo people by giving them jobs, gifts to convert them into Christianity.

The British Missionary converts the whole village, Abame. Due to the issue of conversion the murders of white men took place. Tussle between Okonkwo and British administration and missionaries occurs on aggressive mode. Igbo tribes burnt the church. For that vandalism, they were arrested, starved and whipped by the white people. Okonkwo kills one of the messengers of colonizers and no Igbo members support his decision, he takes his own life by suicide. Igbo tribes consider the act of suicide as contamination of the earth. They consider him as freedom fighter who sacrificed his life for his brothers to free them from the yoke of colonizers. Okonkwo accepts the death by suicide rather than to

be hanged by the trials of the colonizers. The death of Okonkwo stands symbolic. It signifies the downfall of the Igbo. He becomes warrior against the colonizers. The novel end by the plan of District commissioner who plans to write the novel on the African society, culture, tradition, language, literature and law.

Colonialism in the Context of Things Fall Apart :

Colonial literature is an offshoot of an active participation of any nation in the imperialistic exploitation of any other geographic area. Frantz Fanon's "The Wretched of the Earth (1961) is known as foundational text which discusses the impact of colonial power over their culture. He talks about decolonization or replacement of certain species of men by another species of men. Fanon insists that people could rebel and make downfall of the imperialistic power and they can free their land from the colonizer. Fanon points put that Europe is supposed to be the creator of Third World. Fanon focuses on Eurocentric imperialistic power. It discusses the rule of white people for the imperialistic expansion through which they tried to discriminate on the basis of racism and apartheidnedd racial color and social elements.

According to (research scholar Rita Gurung" colonizers not only colonize the history of the colonized but they subjugate their imagination as well. The commonwealth writers deal with the lives of people whose selves have been altered by colonialism and the subsequent multi-national capitalism (Gurung, Rita. p-99). Things Fall Apart is an epoch making novel which deals with colonial encounter. The arrival of Christian missionary in the second part of the novel signifies the sprouting of the colonial rule. Encounter between native people with white missionary signifies the protest against the imperialistic rule of the whites. The people from the Umuofia society consider the white man as albino and criticize on his complexion. The visit between Obierika and Okonkwo in the exile shows critical discussion on white man. Obierika expresses how the village Abame is fully converted into Christianity by showing material temptation. It was nothing but a kind of colonial power which ruled the village Abame. Achebe pointouts that colonized people are not primitive or rudimentary. The protest of the

masses of the Abame village represents the emerging African democratic society. The meeting of the native on the killing of the woman implies that law and order of the Igbo society is not partial as well as corrupted but they are gathered to resolve their issues by protesting colonial power.

Achebe also focuses on the unbridgeable gap between European and African culture. He portrays disparity between two cultures. Igbo tribes' term to the white man as an Albino. The Christian missionary does its best to convert Igbo tribes of the Abame village though there was cultural gap between them. When Obierika pays his next visit to his friend Okonkwo, he gives concrete picture of the initiatives taken by Christian missionary to spread colonial power.

"The white men had come to Umuofia. They had built their church there to won a handful of converts and were already sending evangelists to the surrounding town and villages" (TFA, P-101).

Achebe focuses on the temptation of the people those who were people of nothing by the clan and how fall become victims of Christian Missionary. The natives laugh at them and make fun of the white peoples. After the clash between Okonkwo Nwoye, Nwoye gets separate from his father, Okonkwo and Nwoye accepts the Christian religion. Nwoye doesn't likes his father's aggressive nature and the killing of his close friend. Nwoye was captivated by the song of the new God. Nwoye's defection to Christianity has double significance. It signifies the Nwoye's revolt against his father and a rejection of the society. The missionaries were placed in given patch which is known as evil forest by the native Igbo tribes. They consider in the evil forest all the white people will get died.

Research scholar Mahabuba Shama comments that "Things Fall Apart" deals with Eurocentric gaze who makes ferocious unlawful Europeans without the entire village Abame on the pretext that the Igbo inhabitants have killed one of their members. More and more, they were tempted with bicycles, singles, towels along with the jobs of clerks if black become Christians"(Shama,Mahabuba,p-80). The Christian

missionary deploys the way of Christian conversion which is backed by the colonial government and brings a court of law and trade facilities. Europeans establishes the new religion to rule the African native through the colonial power. Finally the government of the Whiteman arrives in Umuofia and other native societies. Achebe depict in the following words -

"It was said that the Whiteman had not only brought a religion

but also a government. It is said that they had built a place

of judgment in Umuofia to protect the followers of their

religion, it was even said that they had hanged one man who killed a missionary" (TFA, p-110).

The district commissioner uses very deceitful strategy to suppress and suffocate the strength and voice of Igbo native tribes. Okonkwo and other leaders of Igbo community were summoned by the D.C. who exchanges his sweet tongued messages, those who never imagined the subsequent turn of the events. The novel ends with the plan of district commissioner's to write book on the Igbo community which is not familiar with him.

Conclusions:

A novel Thing Fall Apart discusses different issues related to African society. Issues like racism, apartheid, Cultural Disparity are discussed in this novel. It also focuses on the issue of degeneration of the Nigerian Society. Because of the colonialism and ill treatment given to the Igbo Tribes. This vowel encompasses the impact of the colonial rule over the Nigerian people.

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