

## **Conflict Between White Colonial Power and the Nigerians in Things Fall Apart by**

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The present paper is an attempt to present the conflict between the changes that take place among the Ibo people. After the arrival of Christian missionaries are profound. Things fall apart' is a novel about cultural resistance in the colonial backdrop in which the natives belonging to Igbo tribe strive for the identity of their selves and culture by sticking to their own customs and traditions. Though there is no direct violent encounter between the two cultures, but the intrusion of the alien culture seems to be an encroachment on the natives' freedom and space. Its most striking feature isto create a complex and sympathetic portrait of a traditional village culture in Africa.

It is an attempt to present accurately Ibggo society and what its people endured in the clash of their culture with that of the British. Okonkwo can be seen as psychologically determined by his weak father to avoid the appearance of weaknesses at all costs. Yet his own tribesmen have exonerated him from having to take a hand in people commonly see 'Things Fall Apart' as a story about the disintegration on an African culture as a result of European intervention. Although the People in Okonkwo's society had a common culture, they did not always agree on its various aspects. One of the most troublesome questions concerns the nature of heroism and Okonkwo heroism in particular. Achebe makes the following remark about Okonkwo's society :-

“Age was respected among his pepole, but achievement was revered. As the elders said, if a child washed his hands he could eat with kings. Okonkwo had clearly washed his hands and so he ate with kings and elders”.

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There are many people who think that pre-colonial African

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societies were static with everybody following the tradition without any opposition. That is a false view. As we see in *Things Fall Apart* those societies had internal tensions any dynamism such, which made them change and develop. The Christians arrive and bring division to the Igbo. One of their first victims in Okonkwo's family. The new faith divides father from son, and the Christians seek to attack the very heart of Igbo belief, such an attack also attacks the core of Igbo culture, as the tribes religious beliefs are absolutely integral to all other aspects of life. Not coincidentally, the first converts are people who stand to profit from a change in the social order. They are people who have no title in the tribe, and thus have nothing to lose. Ngugi Wa Thiong in his work "Decolonising the Mind" has observed that treating the native religion as inferior in comparison to Christianity was the first step towards cultural colonialism. He says,

"Colonialism's..... most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonized, the control through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world.... To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self definition in relationship to others. For colonialism this involved two aspects of the main process: the destruction of the deliberate undervaluing of a people's culture, their art, dances, religions, history, geography, education, orator and literature and the conscious elevation of the language of the colonizer". (Decolonizing the Mind 16)

The arrival of the white colonists and their religion weakness the Kinship bonds so central to Igbo culture. Ancestral worship plays an important role in Igbo religion and conversion to Christianity it involves a partial rejection of the Igbo structure of kinship. The Christians tells the Igbo that they are all brothers and sons of God, replacing the literal ties of kinship with a metaphorical kinship structure through God.

Okonkwo resists the new political and religious orders because he feels that they are not manly and that he himself will not be manly if he consists to join or even tolerate them. To some extent, Okonkwo's

resistance of cultural change is also due to his fear of losing societal status. The villagers in general are caught between resisting and embracing change and they face the dilemma of trying to determine how best to adapt to the reality of change. Many of the villagers are excited about the new opportunities and techniques that the missionaries bring. In Igbo community where the claim of an individual clashes with those of the community in fighting against the foreign powers, the individual must gladly forfeit his claim.

But the alien rulers were not merely content to rule over these people. Infact they wanted to destroy the very culture of these people. In completing this task the Christian missionaries used various devices of propaganda and destroyed their religion, the binding force of Igbo society. The survivors have to seek refuge in Umuofia. It is a warning of the imperial powers to the natives that they would be destroyed if they dare to harm any white man or prevent the white man from spreading his faith and establishing his hegemony in their land.

“Go and burn your mothers genitals, said one of the priests. The men were sized and beaten until they steamed with blood. After that nothing happened for a long time between the church and the clam.” (TFA,141)

Achebe's shows that the Igbo language is not easy to understand for direct transaction into English. Similarly, Igbo Culture can't be understood within the framework of European colonialist values. Achebe dispassionately presents how things are beginning 'to fall apart' in the Igbo society even before the white man arrives. He has taken pains to point out through his novel that the Igbo culture is quite flexible and presumably would have resolved its own contradictions in its own way without the interventions of Europeans. The novel envelopes twin tragedies-one occurs in the life of the protagonist Okonkwo and the other takes place on a broader plane at the level of the society of Okonkwo.

Okonkwo is unable to make a big splash in Umuofia as things have changed in Umuofia by the influence of the missionaries and the white colonialist. His desire to respond violently to the Christian church is not completely motivated by a desire to preserve his clan's cultural

traditions. Okonkwo's physical strength, integrity and courage give him heroic stature but his pride and individualism contradict the essentially communal nature of Umuofia. He does not understand that Umuofia is a living culture that has always adapted in order to meet new challenges. Now as the white man's god comes to insult their age-long ways of life insult their gods and seek to impose them with their exited notions of themselves their comes the rub;

“The Negro world disqualified, mighty voice stilled forever: all this wreckage, all this waste, humanity reduced to a monologue, and you think that all do not have its price.....What else is that bourgeois Europe has done? It has undermined civilizations, destroyed countries, ruined nationalities, extirpated the roots of diversity.” (Cesaire, 57)

Several times in “Things Fall Apart” we are told about how social customs and values had been falling apart as a result of developments within the society itself. There are many people who think that pre-colonial African societies were static with everybody following the tradition without any opposition. Those societies had internal tensions and dynamism such, which made them change and develop. We are given a picture of Umuofia which was powerful in war and in magic with its priests and medicine men were driving terror in all the surrounding country;

“Umuofia was feared by all its neighbours. It was powerful in war and in magic and its priests and its medicine men feared in all the surrounding country. Its more potent war-medicine was old as the clan itself. Nobody knew how old. But on one point there was general agreement-the active principle in that medicine had been an old woman with one leg. Infact the medicine its was called or old woman.”

And so the neighbouring clans who naturally knew of these things feared Umuofia, and would not go to war against it without first trying peaceful settlements. Although traditional Ibo culture is fairly democratic in nature, it is also profoundly patriarchal wife bearing is an accepted

practice. Moreover, feminity is associated with weakness while masculinity is associated with strength. It is no coincidence that the word that refers to a titleless man also means “Woman’ A man is not believed to be manly if he can’t control his women. Okonkwo frequently beats his wives and the only emotion he allows himself to display is anger. He does not particularly likes feasts because the idleness that they involve make him feel emasculated. Okonkwo’s - frustration at his idleness causes him to act violently breaking the spirit of the celebration.

The final clash between his primitive community and white man comes when Okonkwo returns to Umuofia after his exile. By that time not only the Christians have become a strong community but the white man has established a government conducted by a District Commissioner, a court of Justice and administrative machinery to maintain law and enforce it which is formulated by white man and these laws have nothing in common with the traditional customs and practices of this primitive society. Okonkwo’s- friend explains it to him,-

“It is already too late, our own men and our sons have joined the ranks of the stranger, and they help him to uphold his government. If we should try to drive them out, the white man is Umuofia, we should find it easy.”

Achebe is anxious to show how Ibgos are compelled to accept Christianity by the western religious intruders. The Igbo choose Christianity, as Nwaye does or rejects it, as Okonkwo does because they are aware of themselves making their own world in time.

Achebe depicts the Igbo as a people with great institutions. Their culture is rich and impressively civilized, with traditions and laws that place great emphasis on justice and fairness. The people are ruled not by a king or chief but by a kind of simple democracy, in which all male gather and make decisions by consensus. Achebe does not shy from depicting the injustice of Igbo society.

All resistance to the imperial power ends with death of Okonkwo and it is also the death of the Igbo culture. Okonkwo find himself unable to adapt to changing times as the white man comes to live among the Umuofians. These happy and prosperous and contented people are

destroyed by the white invaders who claim to be superior to these people economically, politically, morally and technologically.

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