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**Cultural Crisis in Postcolonial Novel: Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe**

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**Abstract:**

The present paper attempts to explore the cultural crisis that has been created in postcolonial era in the novel, Things Fall Apart, by Chinua Achebe in 1958. It also investigates the impacts of European colonialism on culture from Chinua Achebe's perspective. African culture is greatly affected by European colonization in the mid-1900s. Some Africans have thought that the European reforms would help them, while others believe that they just destruct their culture. Europeans have ruled African people for long time without resistance because of Africans' inability to stop them. Were taking over the Africans, who could do nothing to stop them. The present paper aims at exposing the cultural differences in the society. The African people have varying beliefs, manners; behaviors; way of interaction and thought patterns, and all of these differences formed their culture and imparted their way of life. However, with the coming of Europeans to Africa came Europeans culture. This research paper analyses Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart (1958) from the angle of cultural clash as brought about by Westernization.

**Keywords:** Cultural Crisis in Postcolonial Novel, Africa etc

**Introduction**

**1. Post colonialism:**

Chinua Achebe, born in Nov, 16, 1930. He is novelist. He published his novel "Things Fall apart "in 1958.He brought honor to his native Nigeria by writing "Things Fall Apart". He wrote TFA in response to European novel, which portrayed African people as savages who needed to be enlightened by the Europeans.

Post-colonialism can be found in sciences concerning history, literature, politics, culture and identity of both the countries that were colonized. Post-colonialism is an intellectual direction that developed to the time after colonialism. Post-colonialism marks the end of colonialism by granting the indigenous people the cultural freedom, necessary authority and political in order to take their place and gain independence by overcoming political and cultural imperialism. The post-colonial theory and literature studies what happens when two cultures clash and one of them with

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accompanying ideology empowers and deems itself superior to other. Some of empire writers use the term „post-colonial“ to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” ( Ohadike , iii – iv ).

The concept of Post-colonialism (or often post colonialism) deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies. The term as originally used by historians after the Second World War such as „post-colonial state“, where „post-colonial “had a clearly chronological meaning, designating the post-independence period. However, from the late 1970s the term has been used by literary critics to discuss the various cultural effects of colonization. Although the study of the controlling power of representation in the colonized societies had begun in the late 1970s with the text such as Said’s Orientalism, and led to the development of what came to be called „Colonialist Discourse Theory“ in the work of critics such as Spivak and Bhabha, the actual term „post-colonial“ was not employed in these early studies of the power of colonialist discourse to shape the form and opinion and policies in the colony and metropolis.

“Post colonialism”, in the words of Charles E. Bressler , “is an approach to literary analysis that concerns itself particularly

with literature written in English in formerly colonized countries”( Ohadike, v ) . It usually excludes literature that represents either British or American viewpoints, and concentrates on Writings from colonized cultures in Australia, New Zealand, Africa, South America, and other places and societies that were once dominated by European cultural, political and philosophical tradition.

Although there is little consensus regarding the proper content, scope and relevance of postcolonial studies, as a critical ideology it has acquired various interpretations. Like deconstruction and other various postmodern approaches to textual analysis, postcolonialism is a heterogeneous field of today where even its spelling provides several alternatives. The critics are not in agreement whether the term should be used with or without hyphen: i. e. „Post-colonial“ and „postcolonial“ have different meanings. The hyphenated term „Post-colonialism“ marks a historical period as is suggested by phrases like „after colonialism“, „after independence“, “after the end of empire“ whereas the term „post colonialism“ referring to all the characteristics of a society or culture from the time of the colonization to the present. As a historical period, post-colonialism stands for the post - Second World War decolonizing phase. Although the colonial country achieved political freedom, the colonial values do not disappear with the

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independence of a country. According to Bill Ashcroft, Griffith & Tiffin, “The semantic basis of the term “post-colonialism” might seem to suggest a concern only with the national culture after the departure of the imperial power”(Ashcroft, et al,1.)

It seems that Postcolonial theory emerged from the colonized peoples’ frustrations, their direct and personal cultural clashes with the conquering culture, and their fears, hopes and dreams about their future and their own identities. How the colonized respond to changes in the language, curricular matters in education, race differences, and a host of other discourses, including the act of writing become the context and the theories of post colonialism. The project of post colonialism is not only applicable to the students of literature alone, indeed, it seeks to emancipate the oppressed, the deprived and the down-trodden all over the world.

Thus, the term „Post–colonialism“ marks the end of colonialism by giving the indigenous people the necessary authority and political and cultural freedom to take their place and gain independence by overcoming political and cultural imperialism

The novel ‘ Things Fall apart’ is one of famous novels written by Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) .Achinua Achebe is a Nigerian author. The setting of the novel is in the outskirts of Nigeria in a small fictional village, Umuofia Due to the unexpected arrival of white missionaries in Umuofia, the villagers do not know how to react to the sudden cultural changes that the missionaries threaten to change with their new political structure and institutions. Hence, there are effects of European colonization on Igbo culture.

Most European states migrated to Africa and other parts of the world towards the end of the nineteenth century where they established colonies. Nigeria was amongst other African nations that received visitors who were on a colonizing mission; introducing their religion and culture that is later imposed on Igbo. The culture of the people of Umuofia (Igbo culture) is immensely threatened by this change.

Achebe’s primary purpose of writing the novel “Things Fall Apart” to educate his readers about the value of his culture as an African. Things Fall Apart provides readers with an insight of Igbo society right before the white missionaries’ invasion on their land. The invasion of the colonizing force threatens to change almost every aspect of Igbo society; from religion,

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traditional gender roles and relations, family structure to trade. Achebe along with many other writers like Wole Soyinka and others had used literature as a medium to express their desires for a reawakening of a society that has lost its values and even its own identity.

Achebe describes the history of Igbo In the writing of *Things Fall Apart*; he does so by describing both the perfections and imperfections of their culture and traditions that made them different from Western cultures. For example, their beliefs in the power of ancestral gods, the sacrifice of young boys, the killing of twins and the oppression of women to name a few. In the novel, the reader is also made aware of the arrival of white missionaries in Umuofia as well as the reactions of Igbo to their arrival. During the arrival of the missionaries to Igbo, there was a number of challenges that faced the future Igbo and missionaries had some benefits to Igbo. Obierika and Okonkwo discuss how the white man successfully brought down the tribal civilization. "...The white men are very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We are amused at the foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won brothers and like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (Achebe 160). Things were not the same, as the old way has been outdated and required to be updated. When threatened by the new ways

of the colonizer, the tribe succumbed to their threat. They emphasized their power due to the strong white government in the background. They punished the natives severely for any offense levelled against the white man. They attacked the natives emotionally by building schools and hospitals, to make them unwilling to go for war against the ones who have brought these much-needed benefits for them for the first time. Not only were the natives colonized but was their minds that were colonized too. This is evident when Okonkwo receives no response for lone cry of war against the colonizers.

**2. The Cultural clash**

Clash of culture can be seen as a conflict of interests in the novel is the fundamental of the colonizing people's is to undermine the integrity of local and tradition and cultures that they can be replaced by European and christian institutions of government and of faith.

The culture clash is a conflict arising from the interaction of the people with different culture values. When two people of a different cultural or background meet and do not understand each other then the conflicts arises each other. The main aim of this novel is to acquaint the outside world about cultural tradition of Igbo and to acquaint his own people to realize that their tradition culture contained much that was valuable must be integrated with new

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culture that was coming into existence under the powerful impact of the western complex culture.

3-Things Fall Apart as Post-colonial Novel Post-Colonial Literature reacts as the response of the discourse of colonization. Post-Colonial Literature regards as a body of literary writings. It deals with the issue of de-colonization or the political and culture independent of people who are subjugated to colonial rule.

In the initial the missionaries came with Bible in their hands in the Umoufia region. Their objective was to destroy the force that has kept the tribal society in existence for centuries. The real process of disintegration began when the colonial power began to impose its own laws and completely ignored the tradition ways of their lives. The colonial powers set up its own administration, courts of justice and also introduce trade and commerce. The missionaries opened schools and those who finished education got job in the administration and some of them became priests and school teachers. With the introduction of trade and commerce ordinary persons became prosperous by selling palm oil , palm wine , coca and other product of land, culture and act back and so generate new culture forms of meaning. They undergo change alongside changes in the economic, social and political organization of society.

After reading the novel things fall apart,we can find that confect rose as a result of misunderstanding between two different cultures such as white people and black people .the white people considered themselves more superior than black people .the white people thought that their supreme duty to enlighten black people who believe in superstition .white people considered that black people have no history. He suggested that the social function of the novel should be different from the European concept of idea. Human beings are both acted on by culture and act back and so generate new culture forms of meaning. They undergo change alongside changes in the economic, social and political organization of society.

With the change of their culture the people of Africa forgot the importance their tradition and values. They were following way and habits of white people which ultimately became the cause of their destruction. Okonkwo is the main protagonist, who perished his life for the sake to defend his culture.

The main theme of the novel is culture clash or culture misunderstanding. When white men came to Nigeria sowed the seeds of Christian religion and ultimately the misunderstanding started between two groups. Forster`s A Passage to India also depicts the conflict between the Indian and British. One can see that English treat the

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Indian with lack of respect and the Indian seem to expect it. Culture misunderstanding is turned into a major theme of the novel. Different cultures, ideas and expectations regarding hospitality, social and role of religion daily life responsible for the misunderstanding between English and Indians. At last this misunderstanding turned into a culture clash because the English people thought that they are superior than Indian.

Okonkwo stayed seven years in the exile .After Okonkwo returned to his village ,he had found that the people in his village had changed .He found that the missionaries built churches and schools. His son Nowye changed his religion and adopted Christianity.

Achebe wrote novel to highlight the social and religious life of Nigeria. Things Fall Apart provides readers with an insight of Igbo society right before the white missionaries' invasion on their land. He portrays the customs, habits, ritual and social life of the Igbo people.

The novel can be studied at three different levels: 1: It can be studied as the tragic and moving story of a proud clansman who perished in the attempt to defend his culture. 2: The novel is sociological or anthropological study of the Igbo culture. 3: The novel can be studied as a clash between two cultures; in fact this culture clash is the main theme of the novel.

The Igbo culture is represented by the people of village Umuofia is primitive and traditional. They had no contact with outside the world. The novel shows the life of Okonkwo is one of popular leaders and the local wrestling champion in Umoufia one of the fictional group of the nine villages in Nigeria inhabited by the Igbo people. It describes his family and personal history, the customs and society of the Igbo. the customs and society of the Igbo and the influence of British colonialism and Christian missionaries on the Igbo community during the late 19th century.

Okonkwo says:

"I heard .But I have also heard that Abam People were weak and foolish. Why did they not fight back? Had they no guns and matches? We would be coward to compare ourselves with the men of Abam. Their father had never dared to stand before our ancestors. We must fight these men and drive them from our land".

Returning from exile Okonkwo finds his village changed by presence of the white people. He and other tribal leaders try to reclaim their hold on their native land by destroying a local Christian church. In return, the leader of the white government takes them in prisoner. As a result the people of Umuofia finally gather. However, Okonkwo was one of the few and perhaps one the only one who went on believing the



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white man must be driven out by force. Only when he had killed the government messenger, he relied that as for as he was concerned, his fight against the white man was over.

When the local leaders came to Okonkwo's house to take him to court they found that Okonkwo has hanged himself. He ultimately committed suicide rather than he tired in a colonial court. Okonkwo's action have ruined the reputation and status as it is against the teaching of the Igbo to commit suicide.

**Conclusion**

In final consideration, post-colonialism examines the cultural identity in colonized societies and in which ways writers and critics put that identity into words. Chinua Achebe's novel Things Fall Apart is a text that issues the life of an African tribe at a time when the European colonialism dominated all over Africa. It shows how a society can cope with change and how change affects the individuals and institutions of that society. In terms of postcolonial criticism we get into a cultural and political intercourse between the Igbo people and the Europeans. Achebe's style is direct and his messages are clearly understood. Oral tradition and verbal literature hold an extensive place in Achebe's Thus, the impact of colonization and cultural change receive the main focus of Achebe in his novels in general and in Things Fall Apart in particular. In the study

it is found that the Igbo people endeavor to protect their religion and way of life but could not do so under the pressure and impact of colonization. If the themes as depicted in Achebe's novel Things Fall Apart are put to the honest conclusion, they purely show that Igbo people could not able to live their life freely and peacefully in the society. In the novel Things Fall Apart Achebe's portrayal of the Igbos is not only the attack on the Christian colonizers for their thoughtless destruction of the so called "primitive" culture and the religion; but it is also thyself-criticism of the drawbacks of Igbo society. The colonizers used Christianity for their own profit and employed barbaric force to pacify the Igbos. But in the study it is found that the Igbo culture and religion inspire of their drawbacks and superstitions, proved to be wiser in much of its direct clashes with the Christian faith. The Igbo thought to protect their religion and way of life but could not do so mostly for the pacification of the colonizers, but their inner drawbacks also contribute to their falling apart. The main character Okonkwo in Things Fall Apart is not the self-ruled person in the Gandhian model but the idea of the swaraj comes much near to the self-sufficient Igbo culture and especially in the democratic and peaceful egwugwu. The so called "modern" cultures are seen mostly in terms of material progress and so the slow runners are out of the game. If they can change themselves in time, then only they can

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survive against the other enforcing religions. In case of the Igbos, the missionaries entered Christianity with the

European culture which shattered the whole setup of the clan or the whole structure of the effective society.