



¹Plight of the Native the Mechanics of Imperialism in Achebe's things fall Apart and other approaches

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Abstract—Chinua Achebe is considered as a household name as far as African literature is concerned. He has shown his prowess in his critical essays, letters and short-stories. However it is the discipline of novels that took him to instant and everlasting fame. Particularly **THINGS FALL APART** and **NO LONGER AT EASE** are his masterpieces in which he portrayed a picture of African culture and showed his concerns on the policy of colonisation that drenched his nation into all sorts of trouble. This novel is still taught and remains as fresh as it was.

The purpose of the concerned paper was to reexplore the mechanics of imperialism on Igbo society. Alongside this, there was keen focus on the contemporary approaches to this novel. Several schools of thought were explored that led to a variety of ideas. Literary articles on all fronts by African and international scholars were helpful in widening the scope of research despite showing hints of conflict. Especially Said's work on post-colonial theory was of importance as well.

Keywords—African, Culture, Igbo, Imperialism, Post-colonial.

I. INTRODUCTION

²China³ Achebe (1938-2013) is considered as a canonical literary figure as far as African Anglophone writing is concerned. He is well known for his short stories

, poems and novels. Alongside these accomplishments, he has made huge strides in the field of literary criticism. His collection of literary essays entitled **LETTERS TO THE GREAT QUEEN** has won him great recognition among the literary circles. However, his novels have diverted more ⁴attention than other works, among which two of the novels namely **THINGS FALLAPART** (1959) and **NO**

LONGER AT EASE(1960) stand out. Particularly **THINGS FALL APART**(1958) stands out as it is well known and well read all across the globe. It has helped Achebe attain canonical status due to the brilliance and literary genius portrayed in it. Biographical records show that Mr Achebe belonged to a Christian household as his father served as a missionary in the local church. which often is depicted in his works. As far as literary style is concerned, he was greatly influenced by Joyce Cary's **MR JOHNSON** (1957) which he had read in his early adulthood. We seem to observe this dilemma with all post colonial authors as their ideas are influenced by the West

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Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, Heinmen, London, 1958.

Chinua Achebe, *No Longer At Ease*, Heinmen, New York, 1960²²

which may be the result of long years under colonial subjugation and Achebe is no exception. But it is evident that Achebe had Igbo roots embedded in his flesh and blood. Despite being influenced by Christian values, he was aggrieved to see his Igbo and Nigerian brethren suffer at the hands of Western colonial⁵ subjugation and this grievance has been displayed in his works⁶.

⁷**THINGS FALL APART(1958)** came on the literary circuit in 1958 which is actually four years prior to Nigeria's independence in 1962. The socio political and economic condition of the Nigerian people prompted Achebe to write such a masterpiece. If we take a closer look at the political scenario of the lower Niger, we observe a lot of agitation in the air as the locals finally woke up from their slumber and realized that their colonial masters were doing away with their resources and lands at the expense of their being and the Western promise of salvation was nothing but a cover on the Western imperial designs. The novel's plot is note worthy as it begins with Okonkwo's description as a gallant wrestler and revolves around the trials and tribulations of the hero. Achebe masterfully decorates his novel with the depiction and symbolism which are central to a comon rural setting. However, there is debate upon his style as mentioned earlier and scholars seem to find similarities between Cary's **MISTER JOHNSON(1956)** and **THINGS FALL APART(1958)**

The story and tragic chain of events seems identical as Achebe was influenced by Cary. However, Achebe maintains his distinct stature even in the midst of all this debate. This distinction and unique flavour incites attention and paves way for literary debates on all fronts in which the post colonial narrative stands out.

⁸As pointed out earlier, the novel sheds light upon the socio cultural and political fabric of a common rural society such as Umuofia. There is great emphasis on rituals and tradition which shall be elaborated later. The religious ontology is also one of the major points of focus as Mr Achebe prods out the religious faiths and beliefs of his community. Alongside these points the text also lays emphasis upon the role of fate, hereby discovering the pros and cons of tragedy If we compare Cary's **MASTER JOHNSON(1957)** to Achebe's **THINGS FALL APART(1958)**, two distinct things would pop up Infront of our eyes. The protagonists in both novels are designed upon the exact same principles and even the plot construction and conflict is developed upon the exact same principles. After seeing this unanimity, scholars do ponder upon the traits that make these two texts different from each. other, herein

comes the angle of post colonialism. One is to wear his post colonial glasses on and then see rhe texts. He soon detects the rival nature of the other and will tip the scales in favour of the African novel and would definitely sympathies with Achebe's protagonist and would condemn the other which is to be Cary's protagonist in this case. Similarly, the culture and tradition of a subjugated would also gain affection in comparison to the narrative of supremacy summing up this entire scheme of action and thought, one would have to ponder that even though the African Anglophone writing is deeply imprinted by the fabric of Western imperialism, it has its own distinct persona and raw texture and is filled with its free wild spirit which signals life. Now that we have mentioned the keyword **imperialism**, we shall now proceed to the real purpose of the research. The claim which we are making is of high steaks here and it shall require a great bit of effort to prove it and tilt the balance of power in our favor. This research claims to prod upon the working and mechanics of imperialism on a native community in Achebe's **THINGS FALL APART(1958)**. It also intends to focus its attention upon the plight of any subjugated community which in this case happens to be Umuofia. Along-with these concerns, it also shall shed light upon some other contemporary literary approaches and angles from which this text could be viewed. Before starting our discussion, there are some basic questions that storm the mind of our readers. One burning question which bothers the most is that does Achebe actually portray a just representation of his people through his work, does imperialism really eats up an entire community inside out, does imperialism serve any good to a native society, what are the mechanics on which it works and how can other literary approaches help in widening the scope of research and are they useful in any possible way? These and such other questions require prodding and excavation and a compiled answer would be given covering all these aspects of the research. In the next portion of the paper, we shall discuss the pros and cons of imperialism, its background, working and consequences of this philosophy withheld by the Western powers. Also the paper would focus at other concepts which prevail among the literary circles.

II. MAIN ARGUMENT

2.1. An Introduction to the Concept of Imperialism and its Development

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⁷Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, Heinmen, London, 1958.

Cary, *Master Johnson*, 1957

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Before moving towards our discussion, we must brief our readers about the concept of imperialism and its historical development. Imperialism is a modern concept in international circles. A general definition of imperialism could be referred to as the formation of imperial dominion that spreads across international borders. In other words, it is a sophisticated form of colonization which involves the exploitation of an occupied state at the hands of the occupant state. It can be of various types such as cultural, political and economic. In cultural imperialism, the domineering states exploit the occupied state by tampering with the culture of the occupied state.

They can also enforce their culture over the exploited state too. This is done through the mechanisms of propaganda and education. Propagating the domineering state's culture superior and reducing the traditions and values of the dominated state. This is done so meticulously that the unsuspecting masses cannot unmask the conspiracy behind it. Another form of implementing this kind of imperialism is through education.

Education can be a deadly weapon if used with dexterity. Western powers have enforced their mode of education, thus defaming their opposition and molding the colonized masses in their way. This is why education is a deadly cork in the arsenal of the colonial powers. Let us now turn our attention towards the remaining two forms of imperialism i.e political and economic.

Political imperialism works upon the same principles which could be observed in economic imperialism. Colonial powers may either mould the political views of the colonized through speech, media and propaganda or they can invade the land directly and use the political representation of that territory in their favor. The ideology behind this is really simple which involves splitting the masses into factions and solidifying their interests and agendas associated with the territory. This implementation is modified when we shed light on economic imperialism.

Economic imperialism is the most lethal form of imperialism as it completely drains out the colony of its resources which is a common practice even in this age of globalization.

Historical records can help us to understand the concept in depth and the audience can grasp the development of imperialism in depth. The European Renaissance towards the middle of the fifteenth century could be termed as the starting point of imperial doctrine. It was the Spanish who initiated these dirty tactics in the 1450s and towards the end of the century, they established their foothold in Latin America as they took the local market by the scruff of its

neck. They started to annihilate local identity and culture and crushed all opposition via brute force. They used all kinds of foulplay which could be associated with imperial powers. Exploitation and slavery were brought in the game as the Spanish made hay with the spoils.

These tactics were later adopted by Italy, France, Britain and other European powers.

The breaking point of imperialism could be jotted down with the development of the **nation state** in 1648. The national fervour promoted the feeling of superiority and xenophobia which led to the propagation of the colonial doctrine.

It⁹ is in the middle of the eighteenth and towards the close of the nineteenth century that the race for new markets escalated and went into overdrive. Britain under Queen Victoria took the lead as she swept away each and every territory in sight. Seeing this move, European powers in general and Germany in particular also decided to wash their hands in the Ganges. The colonial doctrine engulfed the nations in slavery as it devastated them on all fronts. The African context came on the scene in the 1880s as Europe set its eyes on the valuables of the continent. This struggle is touched upon in the African novel and writers like Achebe utilize this to full potential. Achebe in his **THINGS FALL APART (1958)** sheds light upon the mechanism of imperialism and its impact upon the African setting. We shall now turn the focus

of discussion to the heart and soul of the paper as we now observe the working of this theory on various sections of society in the novel.

It seems though that Achebe was deeply influenced by the historical background of African politics. In the 1880s, the Western scholars were intrigued in the myth of the **Dark Continent**. Africa had always been the focus of attention even before the European Renaissance in the mid fifteenth century.

Muslim historians and cartographers portrayed a soft image of the continent in their records. It was this immense wealth of natural resources dominated by oil, gold, diamonds and uranium which caught the eye of the European block. The nineteenth century saw a sudden **rush** for Africa which resulted in the occupation of the continent and the exploitation of the resources thus enforcing the imperial doctrine and this was the main reason behind Achebe's writing of the novel. As mentioned earlier, imperialism is that virus which engulfs a community silently.

⁹ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, Heinmen, London, 1958

¹⁰ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, Heinmen, London, 1958.

What initially seems to be development and prosperity turns out to be the exact opposite as the occupying force deletes the occupied state through sophisticated mechanism

In the next section, this mechanics of imperialism on the Igbo society in **THINGS FALL APART(1958)** shall be thoroughly examined with references to articles by some renowned African scholars.

2.2. The Mechanics of Imperialism

A¹¹scrutinized observation of Achebe's text reveals the makings of a traditional Igbo society whose foundations are laid on complex strands. Its customs and traditions are similar to what could be expected of any common rural society. The political and socioeconomic status quo is built upon respect and reverence which are common in our sub continental rural settings. The central character Okonkwo is portrayed as **the greatest wrestler(1958,1,1)** who had brought honour and glory by throwing Amalinze **The Cat** in the greatest of wrestling contests in history. Achebe educates his readers about the tradition of strength and valour by starting with such a description. His portrayal of the Igbo society and Umuofia as glorious and war loving nation is an indication towards the past and Okonkwo had represented his clan in war and had brought honour to his tribe. The drive for honour and titles is one common trait of such rural societies and for Achebe obtaining honour and glory for nations is a good thing which is iluded to throughout the text. The social fabric of such African tribes was based on these golden values which were diminished with the arrival of the **white**.

As mentioned earlier, the latter half of the nineteenth century was a defining moment.in history as the imperial powers realised the true potential which the African markets offered. This new found optimism led to what we know as **Rush For Africa**. It is really obvious that territories that are rich in natural resources often attract foreign interest and Africa was no different as the lands were split between the major players like Britain, France, Belgiumetc who ignited this fowl game of slave trade and master manipulation. Now these imperial powers were bent upon establishing an iron grip upon the native people and were exploiting the land under the cover of education and salvation which shall be examined later. The history of imperialism is the same whether in the sub-continental context or in the African context whichis under observation in Achebe's novel. We shall now examine the mechanism

and function of imperialism on three major sections of the Igbo society. eculture, trade/economy and political structure along with the social fabric and shall prod its impact upon an enslaved and colonised society.

2.2.1. The Working Of Imperialism On Igbo Culture

Culture is considered as one of the stepping stones that leads towards representing a nation state or a society in the world politics. It comprises of language, values and tradition

This amalgamation of components makes a society to stand out among fellow societies. However in the world of structuralist and post structure list thinking and criticism, culture is a loosely bound structure of signs and signifiers that represents a society in (Baumaned Bloom,2010). To understand this question of representation and identity, we must refer to an article by a scholar Nyame(ed Bloom,2010)entitled **ACHEBE WRITING CULTURE** in which this fact is highlighted. The article prods upon the structurality of Foucault while discussing culture. A close reading of the articles finds out references to Clifford and such like minded scholars who advocate this idea of representation and identity. Nyame continues the article by stating that Achebe's Igbo society holds masculine values and is a masculine society. This is further enforced by the starting of the novel which states that

“Okonkwo was the greatest wrestler in the clan

He had brought glory for his tribe by winning the greatest wrestling contest in history when he threw Amalinze the Cat.:(Achebe 1958 1,1-4).

¹²The description of this opening line highlights the values of valour and strength, qualities which represent this culture as male dominant or masculine. Such examples of representation could be seen throughout the initial chapters and the feminine side has very little or no representation in the story at all. Amin (2018) also highlights this question of representation and cultural attitudes in his article entitled **REPRESENTING PRE COLONIAL AND POST COLONIAL IGBO SOCIETY**. There are references to Booker and such scholars who are stressing the working of representation and cultural views against the native society. Mr Rashid is of the opinion that like traditions and values that represent the native spositively,there are attitudes that represent western

¹¹Chinua Achebe,*Things Fall Apart*,ch-1,(1-3),Heinmen,London,1958

KwuadwowOsiNyiamne,Achebe Writing Culture,Modern Critical Interpretations,Bloom,Yale University,2010.

¹²Amin-ur-Rashid,Reading Achebe'

s Things Fall Apart A Post-Colonial Perspective,International Journal Of Literature,Linguistics And Translation,vol6,March 2018,
Edward Said,*Culture And Imperialism*,Chatto And Vindus,First Edition,1991.
Chinua Achebe,*Things Fall Apart*,Heinmen?London,1958,Ch-16.

lines and thoughts which hints at the Initial stages of working of imperialism on native culture.

To understand this domination of ideology over native culture, we will have to go towards the root of the problem. Western culture and attitudes work upon the basis of superiority complex and national xenophobia. Said(1991) highlights this troubled symbiotic between the two narratives in his famous book **CULTURE AND IMPERIALISM**. The first section of the book that discusses **OVERLAPPING HISTORIES**(1-3) gives us a fair idea about this conceptual development. There are references to Beckky Sharp and Eric Hosbo wthat informs the reader about this feeling of superiority among the West. Said (1991,1.3)quotes thatwith the passage of time, this feeling of supremacy continued to grow and Western scholars represented and shaped such xenophobes and imperial narratives through literature, thus promoting that sense of loss which was generated when Western powers gave up their prized possessions in the shape of Oriental colonies and pilling damages to their interests and democracies and the rise of revolutionaries forced the West to rethink their strategy of supporting decolonization.

Now lets turn our focus to how cultural imperialism works against a native culture. Here we see a traditional rural society who lives by tribal values of valour and strength and is united like a family

The initial strategies of the colonizer is based upon cracking this hierarchal foundation. They employ various tactics for this purpose among which rhetoric and religion are the most lethal of combinations. They send missionaries like **Mr Brown(13,1958)** which is alluded to in the text. Achebe highlights the fact that the arrival of the missionaries was the stepping stone in the process of colonization. It is in the second section that the preaching's of the English Christian mission start to take effect as members of the Umuofia clan start joining the new faith and the family structure is jolted as a result.

“The clan can no longer function like oneas many of our brothers have left us and have joined the religion of the white man.” Said Obierika.(Achebe 1958 16).

The preaching's of the sweet tongued missionary is an act of representation and ideology that lays a vicious assault on the Igbo society. The whites knew very well that a fragmented tribe cannot resist against their might and they pounced upon these faults. This was also used in the Indian subcontinent as the British were able to rupture the binding forces of native religion by their preaching.

¹³ Another effective mechanism of cultural imperialism is education and representation of ideas. The Commissioner's thinking of writing a full chapter on Okonkwo symbolizes that

embedded conceptions of Western supremacy. Also the title of his book *THE PASSIFICATION OF THE PRIMITIVE TRIBES OF LOWER NIGER*((Achebe 1958 21) highlights that basic educational regime which was used to rewamp the natives' thinking to eliminate resistance and establish a feeling of obedience. The introduction of western education and schooling was a tool that paid dividends in the colonies as the natives accepted western education easily. It derailed their values and social structure and they jumped in the realm of enslavement unknowingly. Okonkwo as a true patriot realises this but is weak and cannot do anything as his own son Nuoyiye has joined the flank of Christianity and has willingly given away his identity(Achebe,1958,17)

This process of cultural destruction is highlighted in the book **THE INVENTION OF TRADITION** by Eric(ed,Terrance 1983) in which he sheds light upon the parasitic nature of Western ideology and narrative on traditional culture. The combination of religious work and educational reforming breaks a society in a sophisticated manner and complete control is attained over the Igbo society in this case as a result of intellectual enslavement. Now we shall turn our attention towards the working of imperialism on the political status quo of the Igbo society.

2.2.2. The Mechanics Of Imperialism On Igbo Politics

Like culture, a political setup of amative society has its own distinction in the circles of hierarchy. Like each primitive society, the Igbo people follow a standard order of norms and Achebe points out the presence of a counsel of elders that were the kingmakers in the Umuofia tribe and across the nine villages. It could be said easily that the counsel functioned like a panchayat of the Indo Pak where politics and legislation was run by a group of experienced heads. It seems though that the knowledge of this hierarchy was prevalent among the villagers. Achebe highlights in the closing sections of chapter 8 that how a crime was dealt with and how justice prevailed among the clan.

Upon a close inspection of this mechanism of political imperialism upon a primitive society,one can easily see that there is a relation between both cultural and political imperialism. Perhaps an article byPatrick(ed Bloom,2010) entitled **PLIGHT OF A HERO**, could explain this cohesive nature of both ideologies. He is of the opinion that when a native society is culturally enslaved, its political will

¹³Eric Hosborne, *The Invention Of Tradition*,ed Terrence Ranger,Cambridge University Press,1983Patrick C Noromele,

Plight Of A Hero,Modern Critical Interpretations, Harold Bloom,Yale University,2010.

flames out and it falls victims to the colonizers. He analysed that although Okonkwo stood for his tribe and wanted to continue the fight, he found no ally and perhaps he broke down after seeing his comrades aligning with the white and took his life. Therefore the cultural death of a society leads to a political one and all last ditch efforts go in vain.

It ¹⁴is essential to understand how the imperial ideology eats away a strong unit like Ummofia. As mentioned earlier, the preaching of Christianity paved way for the creation of a new sociopolitical order on native territory. Among the prevalent tools, the use of force is a common tactic for narrative building. We can see how William (1983) in his **THE PURSUIT OF POWER**, explains this functioning. He excavates the fact that the British were able to establish dominance over its colonies through military supremacy and force. The European imperialists followed this regime and as a result got hold over 85 percent of the covered land as colonies, protectorates and dominions by 1910.

Now let us see how Achebe highlights the working of imperialism over Igbo political order. Towards the close of Part two, we are introduced to reports of the first British settlement near the banks of the Niger River. The native leaders report that

“The white man has brought a strange religion and has brought a government.”(Achebe 1958 14)

This description shows that the British are finally staking a claim over native territory and have established their political structure for the very purpose. They gradually cut the Umuofia tribe by using rhetoric and propaganda and numb their fighting spirit to the point where they are forced to accept the humiliation of Okonkwo and other tribal chiefs. They try to set themselves free and plot against the messengers of the Court but are met by stern reprimand which states

“Who wants to kill the white man?”(Achebe 1958,19)

This is a clear indication that the imperial might has taken over and is not relenting at the moment. Perhaps this tactic was visible in the acquisition of India where the British mastered the art of force and dictation which strengthened their grip in the region by the end of 1850s.

Another tool which the imperialist regime utilizes is law and legal legislation. It is evident after observing chapters 20 to 24 that the law of the imperialist lawmaker is

manipulating conditions in its favour and is now breaking the Ummofia tribe into bits as far as legal order is concerned. It continues to diminish the influence of the counsel and is now deciding matters according to the Victorian law and this is the height of political control over off shore colonies. We can understand this phenomenon in an article by Reichmait (ed,Bloom,2010)entitled **UNDIGNIFIED DETAILS,THE COLONIAL SUBJECT**, which points to a historical dispute which was set aside under Victorian law and the counsel's decision was overruled. This is an indication to a similar event in the novel where a land dispute was decided on similar terms. These dark realities hint at the grim working of political imperialism which is lethal for the survival of a primitive native society like Ummofia.

2.2.3. The Mechanics Of Imperialism On Igbo Economy

¹⁵This kind of imperialism is considered dangerous as it deprives a native society of its very last breathe. Like cultural and political imperialism, economic imperialism is interlinked with the two forms of imperialism discussed earlier. To describe its aggressive nature,one may safely say that the economic imperialism is at the centre of cultural and political imperialism. To further excavate its mechanics we would have to refer to historical record and literary documents.

It is towards the back end of the sixteenth century that the British managed to defeat its rival European imperialists like Spain,Netherlands,France etc. They took over colonies and established new markets in Latin America and India where they dominated the local market that provided spices,silk,cotton etc. Towards the eighteenth century, other European powers who although had been driven out of the game by the might of Britain tried their hand to regain lost markets but their efforts were foiled after both sides threw haymakers at each other. Towards the middle of the nineteenth century, it is observed that the British East India Company takes over India and establish their monopoly over native soil. It is in the 1880s when the quest for new markets and Britain's colonial drive turned attention towards African markets that had too much to offer. In 1884, after the publication of a pamphlet entitled **THE RUSH FOR AFRICA**, the entire European imperial doctrine shifted its focus towards the so-called **Dark Continent**. The imperial white came in Africa like sheep and engulfed the continent like wolves. All mighty players clung on to

¹⁴William Mcneil, *The Pursuit Of Power*, University Of Chicago,1982.
Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, Heinmen,London,1958,ch15-16.
Revit Rechment, *Undignified Details The Colonial Subject,Modern Critical Interpretations*, Harold Blm, Yale University,2010.

¹⁵Edward Said, *Culture And Imperialism*, First Edition, Chatto and Windus,1991,ch1.3.
Chinua Achebe,*Things Fall Apart*, Heinmen,London,1958,ch18.
Thomas Carlyle,*The Nigger Question*, ed Henry Duff,Cambridge University Press,1899,pp342-389

their share of the continent. The native land was colonised and a bloody game of exploitation started.

We again turn to Edward Said's (1991,1,5) documentation of Conrad's **Heart Of Darkness** in which Kurtz ivory enterprise flourishes at the cost of exploiting native soil which is a religious and cultural obligation of the white man known as **the white man's burden**. It is this literary representation of native Africans as **noble savages** which is a bone of contention among scholars. To be fair scholars like Carlyle and Ruskin were under the sway of popular narrative and they preferred working for the Victorian regime and it was their passion of patriotism for their motherland which gave way to such ideology. The basis of the economic imperial enterprise could be detected in Carlyle's (ed, Duff 1899) **Nigger Question** which states the prohibition to the native Caribbean people to own their land is clearly visible and there is a tendency that their right to rule is Divine and thus cannot be challenged. Therefore it is Carlyle who encourages slave trade which plagued the entire African continent towards the end of the nineteenth century.

So the phrase that raises eyebrows in Achebe's novel encircles throughout parts two and three

“the white man has brought a market and a government.:(Achebe,1958,18)

Such business enterprises also include the establishment of plantations that ensured Western control of the land

The native slaves worked under terrible conditions which is a heinous aspect of the colonial period. These imperial roots are encouraged by novelists like Dickens and Foster who glorify a cruel English business tycoon as a gentleman who performs the duty assigned by the state. Economic imperialism spread in Africa as the imperial powers took control of the mineral ores and gold and diamond reserves, creating an atmosphere of highway robbery. This sophisticated imperial doctrine is lethal because it hampers any resistance which may pose threat to Western interests in the region.

In this section, we discussed the mechanics of imperialism on Igbo society in detail and found satisfactory results that Achebe tried his best to educate his people about the great game which had been played in the name of salvation and religious, socio-cultural harmony. However, his efforts may seem futile as his Nigerian brethrens continue to suffer at the hands of Western players and we still observe the remains of past calamities in the region.

2.3. Other Contemporary Approaches to *Things Fall Apart*

It is real disconcerting to find out that the literary traditions in African Anglophone writing are limited to questions of nationalism and post colonial doctrine. The same could be established about Achebe's **THINGS FALL APART** (1958) which came towards the end of the 1950s which is also known as the era of decolonization. The Second World War tolled innumerable damages in Europe as far as life and property is concerned. Perhaps this devastation provided an opportunity as the colonies began to embrace independence. Perhaps this tragic experience of subjugation could be the reason that prompted this flooding of nationalist and post colonial response. As a result, a sort of humanity surrounds such texts and they lose their unique flavor and texture. Over a period of time, **THINGS FALL APART** has continued to gain attention among literary circles and has initiated several responses. In this section of the paper, we shall prod upon the prevalent literary approaches to the novel. Among these approaches, the nationalist, universal and feminist approaches would be crucial for our discussion. The Marxist approach will not be touched upon as the text does not implied to the approach and very little or no work has been done in this regard. Let us begin by discussing the nationalist approach as it is the popular mode of expression to this kind of genre.

2.3.1 The Nationalist Approach

¹⁶One of the most popular and much talked about approaches to Achebe's novel is the **Nationalist Approach**. It is understood that Achebe's text is post colonial as far as the question of its nature is concerned. One can simply say that nationalist movements and literary approaches are a bi-product of the post colonial era. As the colonial era ended and new states started emerging, the literary circles out of pure national fervour wished to recover native literature in its original form with all its purity and nationality intact and this question of recovering the pure could also be observed in the African context. Herein, we shall see how the nationalist approach reacts to an author with a colonial past and is writing in the language of the coloniser which happens to be English in Achebe's case. Along with these debates the voice of the other side and particularly Achebe would also be the focus of our discussion

If excavated carefully, the African nationalist movements on a literary context, the wave of Marxism was sweeping the continent in the 1960s and therefore these authors and critics wished to recover a true African literature, thus not attending Achebe's **THINGS FALL APART** with the kind of response the author would had

¹⁶Obiajunwa Wali, *The Dead End Of African Literature*, Transition, vol13, 1963.

Chinua Achebe, *On African Writer And The English Language*, Morning Yet, Cantan Duo, vol55, 1975

hoped for. They took a typical hardliners' position and criticised Achebe for his use of the English language. Among these hard-lined critics were Obenseileu(1962) and ObiajunwaWali are cordial figures. It wasWali(1963)in particular who in his essay, THE DEAD END OF AFRICAN LITERATURE raised this question of lack of representation of the African languages as far as literary master pieces are concerned. He was of the opinion that the modern African writers have modelled themselves on European methods and tradition and called this practice a mere parroting of the clutches of Western criticism. He also complained that despite the introduction of native languages like Yoruba in universities,the practice of using the English language is denting all such practices and such programmes would not have any future as the African authors do not consider their languages fit for any substantial work rather than a few proverbs and short stories.

Towards the middle of the 1969s,this question of pure and authentic African literature enticed heated debate as Wali and his nationalist school was responded by fellow critics in the continent. One such name is South African critic and writer Richard Rive (1964)who explicitly dismisses the idea of an authentic and pure African literature displaying uniqueness in its essence and experience. He asserts that such an endeavor is denying the varied social and cultural differences in the African experience. According to him the search for a pure African literature which shows uniqueness in its essence is impossible given the cultural hybridity through which the continent has gone through. Here Achebe (1975)also steps in the debate and in his essay **ENGLISH AND THE AFRICAN AUTHOR** stresses upon the achievements of the Mackerere Confrence stating that the conference failed to reach to a consensus upon the question of a truly African literature and in his later works, he stresses upon the need to mould the English language according to the needs of African expression or else the African community would lose any sort of representation it is claiming to

Perhaps the rigidity and hard-line attitude might be the reason why this approach fails to express itself openly and limits the scope of research on this novel.

2.3.2 . The Universalist Approach

Perhaps a close minded approach is not ideal to understand Achebe's work in its full capacity,therefore scholars suggest a universal or humanist approach to read the great African novel. It covers all aspects such as native culture,society and human individualism and provides a

comprehensive analysis regarding the characterization and events in the story. For the sake of ease, we have divided it into three sections which shall be touched upon briefly in our discussion. These are as follow;

2.3.2.1. Anthropologist Approach

¹⁷This approach deals with the cultural analysis of Achebe's work. There is a concern among critics that Achebe, in his writing has taken a hard-line nationalist response and sometimes lean towards racism. Shelton(,1964) in his essay **THE OFFENDED CHI** highlights this problem complaining that Achebe is being racist and makes a vainglorious attempt in his work but at some places hints at the truth that the demise of his characters is a result of his own individualistic flaws and exonerates the white man of his crimes.

However, Shelton's claim lacks substance as there are observations that cultural influences also shape the course of history and Okonkwo's demise is not totally a result of individualism but influenced by outside events.

We must consider Margrette(1968)s observation here who brings the question of cultural invasion and states that Okonkwo is destroyed by a combination of extreme individualism and outside factors

His inability to accept gentleness was a result of cultural and social environment and the Igbo traditional structure in all its close-structuredness and rigidity was responsible for the demise of the hero and the Igbo tribe of Ummofia. There might be a disagreement with Laurence's idea but her approach in someway rescues Achebe and removes the charges of racism and nationalism laid by the Western critics like Shelton. The cultural analysis has its lacking therefore we shift our focus towards the humanistic aspects of Universalism.

2.3.2.2. Universalism As Humanism

One important aspect of this approach is the angle of humanism which opens up different avenues of argument. The central character Okonkwo is the centre of attention as all assessment is based on the individualistic properties but there are people like John Povey who stress upon methods of close reading and by referring toLewis'(1948)s **THE GREAT TRADITION**. This emphasis on the Leva site method is clely visible as Povey(1955)and other like-minded critics emphasize upon organic unity and other concepts that lead towards universalizing humanism. Also,critics like Larson (1971)complain about the lack of dialogue in the novel that weakens Achebe's characterization but to Achebe's

¹⁷Austin Shelton,The Offended Chi In Ache's Novels,Transition,vol13,1964p333
MargretteLauren,Long Drums And Canons,African Dramatists And Novelists,Macmilan,1968pp105-106
Fr Lewis,The Great Tradition,Chatto and Vindus,1948.

John Povey,How Do You Make A Course In African Literature,Transition,vol18,p43,1955
Charles Larson,The Emergence Of The African Novel,Blopjinton,Indiana University Press,1971

defense, it must be understood that his work is a result of situational fiction. Achebe does not take kindly to this universalizing of his work by such scholars and demands the banning of the term universalism in one of his essays. Therefore there are limitations with this school of thought as well.

2.3.3 Universalism And Neo-Aristotelianism

This is another concept that incites call for developing an effective African literary tradition that makes allowance for linguistic constructs and adapts a flexible approach to literature. Among the prominent figures were Irele (1971) and ¹⁸Izenbve [1975] who point out the dilemma of discouraging second-rate works and excavating a mode of criticism which is able to carry the weight of the African tradition on its shoulders. The adoption of a sympathetic approach has also been deemed essential in this regard. This leads to a post structuralist reading but the national character must be kept intact.

¹⁹ Then there is another group of scholars that belong to the Aristotelian School Of Tragedy that maintains their argument upon the rules of Aristotelian tragedy. Critics like Echereu (1975) and Emenyumo (1971) consider Okonkwo a fit subject for tragedy whose actions are directed by a tragic flaw of failure to accept gentleness and Irele (1973) also sides with this idea in his essay **THE TRAGIC CONFLICT IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S NOVELS**. He highlights the fact that fate also plays its role as Okonkwo is exiled after accidentally shooting his kinsman. The play of irony is at its prime as the hero falls due to opposition by his son Nuwoyie upon whom Okonkwo placed his hopes. Thus we can say that this approach covers all questions of concerned comprehensively analyses the dimensions of characterization and structure of the novel.

III. FEMINIST APPROACH

The question of gender and its politics has always been a core issue in African literature. We have discussed earlier that the Igbo culture is masculine in nature but the role of feminine characters cannot be ignored and thus lead to the study of the novel on feminist grounds. Particularly, the characters of Ekwefi and Ezinma require appreciation

and the role of Chielo, the priestess is influential in shaping the religion of Umuofia. However these characters are not represented to their true potential. This lack of representation is raised by Florence (1981) who points out at these feminine characters and states that the author has not done justice with these characters but one may say that the traditional outlook of the Igbo society could be held responsible as depicted by Dr Linda (2011) in her essay entitled **READING AS A WOMAN, A STUDY OF THINGS FALL APART**. Generally speaking, things don't fall apart for the Umuofian women as their state remains the same. This is a genuine concern upon which the entire feminist approach stands. The women were in a state of minority and weakness before the colonial invasion and their state remains constant even after the colonial invasion. This approach is commendable thus for raising the concern on the weakness and lack of representation which surrounds the feminine gender and provides an avenue of discussion.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is evident that Achebe's work has remained under European influence from the beginning. The stylistic attributes of Yeats, Joyce Cary and Conrad are visible in all his work and **THINGS FALL APART** is no exception on this regard. In this paper, we tried to understand the mechanics of western imperialism on a native African society and tried to excavate the deadly nature and lethal weapons of imperial powers. The socio-cultural, political and economic subjugation of an African society depicted in this novel was the centre of discussion. We also shed light upon the popular approaches to the novel. To *Abijola Irele* sum it up Achebe enjoys a canonical status in African and World literature. Despite various concerns and Western influences, it could be established that Achebe tried to educate his people about the atrocities of the colonial past and had justly represented his community on the literary map. Denying these efforts on any grounds would be injustice to his potential and contributions made in literature

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