


**VOICE AND PARADIGM SHIFT IN THINGS FALL APART**

*Mr. Sambhaji M Sirsath*

*Assistant Professor, Terna Engineering College, Navi Mumbai, Ph.D Researcher, Dept of English, University of Mumbai.*

**Abstract :**

*Change is unavoidable in the world, whether it is scientific or sociocultural in nature. Chinua Achebe, in his work Things Fall Apart, is one of the famous writers who has studied voice and paradigm change in the socio-cultural sphere. The emphasis is on critical analysis and how Chinua Achebe examined topics of cultural identity, conflict, and the voice of African indigenous peoples throughout the colonial period. It examines the African-Igbo culture, including its customs, rituals, local oral culture, and colonisation process, and the novel depicts the confusion and contradictory circumstances generated by the entrance of Europeans, who brought with them a new religion, a new way of life, and new ways of thinking.*

**Key words:** *Cultural identity, Ethnicity, Colonization, Post colonialism*

**Copyright © 2022 The Author(s):** This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

**Introduction :**

Colonization and globalisation have encroached, developed, and dominated arguments in several sectors of identity building, whether cultural, ethnic, personal, or national. Identity is the most pressing issue in today's world. Identity is a multidimensional phrase that indicates meanings in a variety of disciplines. Identity is a straightforward concept. Every one of us has an individual identity that is formed by our beliefs, values, styles, manners, characteristics, ways of acting, and so on, and that is formed by the ways we express ourselves.

People recognise individuals with whom they have a common culture, tradition, and history, which form the foundation of our shared identity. Stuart Hall defines collective identity in terms of one shared culture, a type of collective "one genuine self" hidden within the many other, more surface or artificially imposed identities that individuals with a similar history and genealogy share. 'In this manner, our collective identity reflects the shared historical experiences and cultural codes that equip us, as "one people," with the "stable divides and vicissitudes of our actual past.' Hall (1994:394)

**Voice and paradigm shifts in Things Fall Apart :**

Things Fall Apart was written in 1958 by Chinua Achebe in response to European books that portrayed Africans as savages who needed to be enlightened by Europeans. According to Achebe, Heart of Darkness depicts Africa as



“the other world,” the polar opposite of Europe and so of civilization, a place where man’s vaunted wisdom and refinement are eventually ridiculed by triumphant bestiality (Achebe, 1-15). Tradition is extremely important in Ibo culture. In their daily lives, the Ibo people would follow out the numerous customs passed down from their ancestors centuries ago. Achebe’s focus is on his people’s history, Igbo festivals, deity worship, and ceremonial rites, which demonstrate their rich culture and other social customs. The colonial invasion that destroyed Igbo culture also provided certain benefits to their culture. T. Vijay Kumar claims that

*Things Fall Apart* is a classical portrayal of colonial encounter. It offers a sympathetic, yet critical insider’s view of the African society. Through this novel, Achebe seeks to counter the myth of Africa manufactured and perpetuated in colonial discourse. In particular, by treating as a subject rather than an object, Achebe presents an alternative to the image of Africa found in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. (Kumar)

*Things Fall Apart* is set in Nigeria’s Igbo Village towards the end of the nineteenth century, right before the entrance of the white man. It is set in the Ibo (or Igbo) tribe and follows the life of the novel’s protagonist, Okonkwo. Okonkwo accidentally murders a guy as the narrative progresses. Okonkwo and his family have been forced to flee Umuofia. White missionaries arrive in Umuofia during his banishment and alter the hamlet. When Okonkwo returns to his village, he notices the significant changes Umuofia has suffered during his exile. This novel focuses on the Igbo community’s history between 1875 and 1904. This is the narrative of Okonkwo, the primary protagonist, who is unable to deal with the problems and changes that have occurred in Igbo society after the British invasion. In his tale, Achebe has depicted native African customs, traditions, ethnic identity, and culture, as well as the faults of that culture and civilization. Furthermore, the novel is the best example of a reflection on themes of local identity and culture. In general, being a native means having a strong attachment to a specific location. “Nativism,” or the recognition of one’s right to exist as one is, Nativism, according to Bhalchandra Nemade, is a people’s reaction to both the past and the future.

Nativism is a way of life shared by a large number of people. Nativism expresses the collective force of reflection and emotion in past and future communities. In general, nativism favours maintaining the status quo over gaining momentum. (237,251) Nemade The Igbo community, sometimes known as the Ibo historically, is an ethnic group in south-eastern Nigeria. They are recognised as one of Africa’s biggest ethnic groupings. In his narrative, Achebe has penetrated the indigenous ethnic African identity and culture. The basic identity is ethnic identity, which is made up of primal affinities and attachments. “It is the identity with which a person is born and is separate from any numerous or secondary identities acquired later in life,” writes Nilufer Bharucha. It is an identity that may be abandoned but never lost. It has tremendous strength as a result, and it manifests itself most tenaciously when challenged with the homogenising ideologies of dominating groups. When one group’s identity conflicts with that of another, ethnic clash politics and history are formed. (Nilufer n.p.)

According to Lame Maatla Kenalemang, Achebe’s main motivation for creating the novel is to teach his readers about the importance of his African culture. *Things Fall Apart* gives readers a peek into Igbo civilization prior to the invasion of their nation by European missionaries. The invading force’s assault threatens to transform nearly every



element of Igbo culture, from religion to traditional gender roles and relationships, family structure, and trade (Kenalemang 3). Prior to Achebe's work *Things Fall Apart*, all novels about Africa and Africans had been written by Europeans. Generally, Africans were portrayed in European publications as uncivilised and illiterate people. Because Europeans considered themselves to be more sophisticated than Africans, they were motivated to assist Africans in transitioning from the old age of civilisation and education to the new era of civilisation and education. (Kunapipi, p. 12) Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* analyses literary nativism in African literature in its totality. Nativism, as a philosophy, holds that the mind does not require external sources for the development of ideas. As such, Achebe's depiction of cultural nativism speaks volumes about the search for and confirmation of one's own identity in the face of external pressures. Written in response to the colonialists' preconceived notion that their culture is "superior" and that Africans lack the capacity to govern themselves, Achebe says of the colonialists:

You construct a very elaborate excuse for your action.  
You say, for instance, that the man in question is worthless  
And quite unfit to manage himself or his affairs...if the worse  
the comes to the worst, you may even be prepared to question  
whether such as he can be, like you, fully human. 'Celebration'<sup>4</sup>

Africans are portrayed in a light that lacks complexity and does not reflect the genuine condition of affairs by European writers such as Joseph Conrad and Joyce Cary, whose literary works flesh out this concept. Reading Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and Cary's *Mister Johnson* (1939) inspired Achebe to put African culture into right perspective and establish her genuine identity in the face of colonial change. The author demonstrates throughout the novel that Africa had robust political, social, and religious systems prior to the introduction of Western civilization, demonstrating unequivocally that the Africans can think for themselves and are in no way "inferior" to Europeans. According to Kunapipi, Achebe depicts the truth that Africans are really creative in their intellectual framework through his extensive use of storytelling, myths, legends, and folktales. Furthermore, the Ogwugwu cult, which acts as a court of law, resolving conflicts according to established conventions, adds weight to this fact. *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is primarily broken into three sections. The first section delves into the pre-colonial history of Igbo land in Nigeria. The clan's social, cultural, judicial, and practises are revealed in the second half, as well as Okonkwo's banishment to Mbanta village and the entrance of Christian missionaries in Igbo territory.

The clash between new faith, Christianity, and traditional Igbo societal norms is shown in the third half of the book. At the conclusion of *Things Fall Apart*, the major focus is on the terrible end of the protagonist, Okonkwo, as well as the division and reconciliation of the Igbo tribe. Throughout the work, Achebe exposes the internal battle of the individual as well as the clash between the person and Igbo society, and how both account for the transformation of identity and culture. The novel's principal preoccupation, in addition to the issue of Igbo cultural diversity, is also Nativism. Achebe describes the many characteristics of the Igbo people. Before the arrival of Christianity in Nigeria, the narrative focuses on a vivid picture of life in pre-colonial customs and traditions associated with Umuofian society. Okonkwo, the protagonist, is introduced at the start of the storey. Achebe contributes:



“Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on his solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was a great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino” (Achebe 3)

*Things Fall Apart* by Achebe depicts the history of the Igbo people by portraying both the perfections and defects of their culture and customs that set them apart from Western cultures. (Kenalemang number 5) “Achebe devotes much narrative space in portraying a realistic picture of life in pre-colonial Umuofian society before the arrival of Christianity in Nigeria,” according to Mala Pandurang (Mala 32). In *Things Fall Apart*, the introduction of the white man and his civilization signals the end of the Ibo culture. The white guy disregards the tribe’s traditions and tries to persuade the tribesmen that his ways are superior. When a white man achieves some success, he invites tribesmen to join him, so growing the white man’s ranks. As a result, the tribe is divided, with brothers fighting against brothers and fathers fighting against sons. Tribal customs weaken when the tribesmen’s relationship deteriorates.

The weaker of the conflicting cultures will finally die. The impact of Western practises and ideals on traditional African society are the subject of Chinua Achebe’s work. His books explore the fundamental issues of identity and culture. The storey is divided into several themes: Igbo society’s cohesiveness, colonial contacts, and the identities of subaltern tribes. The second section covers the entrance of the first Christian missionaries in Igboland, the British administration’s colonisation strategy, and conflicts with and within the Igbo people. The formation of a church, as well as other measures to suppress the growth of Christianity and missionary instruction in English, resulted in the division of the Igbo community in Umuofia. *Things Fall Apart* is defined by the intertwining of several themes, including masculine dominance, honour, and a feeling of duty, exile and cultural clashes, and order and hierarchy. The fight with white people is the focus of the novel’s second half. Okonkwo’s close buddy Obierika tells him of the advent of white men in Igboland in the second year of his exile in Mbanta. According to the narrator,

The missionaries had come to Umuofia. They had built their church there; won a handful of converts and were already sending evangelists to the surrounding towns and villages. That was a source of great sorrow to the leaders of the clan, but many of them believed that the strange faith and the white man’s god would not last. None of his converts was a man whose word was heeded in the assembly of the people. None of them was a man of title. They were mostly the kind of people that were called *efulefu*, worthless, empty men (Achebe 103).

The story explores numerous aspects of Igbo society, including missionaries’ entrance, clashes with the colonial government, and Igbo identity. The second section covers the entrance of the first Christian missionaries in Igboland, the British administration’s colonisation strategy, and conflict with and within the Igbo population. The creation of the



Church, as well as various programmes to administer the Christian faith and missionary education in English, has resulted in the division of the Igbo community.

Things Fall Apart does not convey these issues directly, but rather portrays precolonial Igbo life as a prototype of traditional African civilizations, complete with all of its attractive and lovable characteristics as well as their less desirable aspects, with profound evocative force. Unlike many previous colonial novels, which have a negative and patronising attitude toward Africans and African institutions, Achebe's storey opens with an African writer imagining his culture for us. He describes the life of his major hero, whose "famous spread like a bush-fire in the harmattan" but who, in the end, when the point of view turns to that of the new colonial authority, would be buried like a dog because he struggled in vain to resist the acquisition of his inheritance.

Things Fall Apart does not succeed alone or even primarily as a result of Achebe's endeavour to rectify African society. The book's primary reasons for success are its insight into Igbo culture as seen through the eyes of a "inside outsider" (a role he played as an Igbo whose missionary upbringing prevented him from participating in traditional rituals), a thorough understanding of narrative organisation and style, and a keen observation of and absorption with day-to-day happenings, not through the lenses of an anthropologist, but through the clear sight of one who was involuntary (Peters 17-18).

### **Bibliography :**

- Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. England: Penguin Books, 1958,2001
- Achebe, Chinua. "An Images of Africa." *Research in African Literatures, Vol. 9, No. 1, Special Issue on Literary Criticism*. (Spring, 1978 ): 1-15.
- Bharucha, Nilufer. "Inhabiting Enclosures and Creating Spaces: The Worlds of Women in Indian Literature in English,," *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature, 29:1*, (January 1998): 93-107.
- Hall, Stuart. *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Delhi.: Sage Publications, 1996/ 2003. pdf.
- Lame ,Maatla Kenalemang. *Things Fall Apart: An Analysis of Pre and Post-Colonial Igbo Society*. Karlstads Universitet, pdf.
- Mala, Pandurang. *Reading Things Fall Apart A student's Companion*. New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2015.

### **Cite This Article:**

**Mr. Sambhaji M Sirsath.** *Voice and paradigm Shift in Things Fall Apart. Aarhat Multidisciplinary International Education Research Journal, XI (II),168-172*