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Cultural Values and Disagreements in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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Abstract

Every culture or community is the culmination of all of its members. An individual's view points, ideas, and religion are reflected in society. Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" is a striking illustration of how a society's great and terrible aspects can coexist and how a conflict between them can cause a civilisation to fall apart. Igbo society has been depicted by Achebe in a very realistic way. Through a compelling portrayal of the beauty, strength, and legitimacy of traditional life and values as well as the disruptiveness of change, Achebe expands on the issue of traditional versus change. The arrival of the missionaries causes a shift in this book, as their meddling in Umuofia's primitive civilisation causes the good and the wicked, the black and the white, to clash. The Ibo, an ethnic group that lives in South-East Nigeria, have a culture that is described in this paper along with the difficulties and conflicts they encounter when Europeans try to colonise their way of life. This paper aims to analyse the cultural conflicts encountered by the tribes. The study aims to analyse by applying cultural literary theory.

Keywords: Culture, Society, Disintegration, Traditional, Missionaries, Umuofia, Ibo, Nigeria.

Introduction

Literature has always acted as a reflection of society, reflecting its values, customs, and disagreements. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is one such landmark work that graphically represents the cultural richness and inner turmoil of the Igbo society at the time of colonial intrusion. In the life of Okonkwo, a traditional warrior in Umuofia, Achebe shows how colonialism shatters the equilibrium of native existence and creates tensions between tradition and innovation. The novel does not merely describe the clash between the colonisers and the colonised, but also delves into the entrenched customs, rituals, and social organisation of the Igbo, showing both their beauty and contradictions. Achebe introduces the Igbo society with extraordinary realism, showcasing its spiritual richness, communal values, and hierarchical structure. But as the European missionaries and colonial administrators arrive, this equilibrium starts to disintegrate. Cultural misunderstandings, religious imposition, and political domination result in fragmentation within society, ultimately causing disintegration. This essay seeks to analyze the cultural tensions and changes depicted in *Things Fall Apart* from the perspective of cultural literary theory, examining how the clash of

civilisations results in individual and societal breakdown. It will explore the cultural values of the Igbo, the forces that threaten them, and the tragic outcome of cultural dislocation.

Ibo Values and Culture

Things Fall Apart follows the life of Okonkwo, an Iboman. Despite being well regarded and revered by his people, Okonkwo is a fierce warrior who frequently gets into difficulty due to his fiery temper. Despite his best efforts, Okonkwo is not always successful in upholding cultural norms. Okonkwo is a well-off man who can easily support his family. Okonkwo began with nothing since his father was unmotivated and unprepared. Disgraced by his father's failure to provide for his family, Okonkwo tries to succeed by rejecting all of the qualities his father possessed, including the positive ones like acceptance, kindness, gentleness, and compromise, as well as the negative ones like lethargy and humiliation. By overcoming poverty and supporting his family, Okonkwo exemplifies one of the culture's core ideals and rise prominence as an upper class man who is well-respected. Men in Ibo society are not born into a specific class; rather, they acquire titles according on how well they preserve tribal values via their deeds and accomplishments. Among these values are: the capacity to provide for oneself and one's family, revere holy objects and customs, and adjust to changing conditions.

Cultural Values

Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart offers an unsparing picture of Igbo society, laying bare its intricately woven cultural fabric that is noble and also faulty. Achebe neither glorifies nor demonises the Igbo existence; rather, he presents a balanced picture challenging colonial stereotypes and promoting understanding nuances. Of the more contentious aspects of Igbo culture are the twin killing practice, the domination of women, polygamy, dependence upon oracles, and superstitious beliefs. From a Western point of view, these were frequently condemned as barbaric and primitive proof, as colonizers asserted, of an uncivilised people needing moral redemption. But this underestimates the cultural consistency and underlying values behind these practices within their native framework.

The killing of twins, for example, was based on profound spiritual anxieties and cosmological assumptions regarding unnatural births as an omen or a curse. Abhorrent as they are by today's ethical standards, the practice has to be contextualized within the belief system of the day, where such births were unnatural and dangerous to communal harmony. Likewise, the role of women in society in Igbo culture seems restrictive by today's standards. Women were generally considered inferior to men, their roles being limited to the home and childbearing. But Achebe also suggests the respect given to women through their religious connections like the veneration of Ani, the goddess of the earth, who symbolizes fertility and moral order. This dualism is a more complex dynamic than the two-dimensional characterization forced by colonial discourses.

Polygamy was not just a symbol of male domination but also a badge of social responsibility and status. A man with multiple wives and children to support proved economic stability as well as leadership. Polygamous women developed co-operative relationships, worked together, and formed extended family ties that doubled as social safety nets. Achebe satirically criticizes patriarchal overlordship in the form of his hero, Okonkwo, whose hyper-masculinity and assertiveness regularly create domestic and personal strife. His abusive behavior toward wives, especially during the Week of Peace, a sacred period, is a sign of his inability to reconcile toughness with empathy, a trait highly prized by the Igbo culture.

Dependence on oracles and superstition is another aspect of Igbo cultural reason. These beliefs, although apparently nonsensical to the outside observer, played fundamental roles in securing social order, meting out justice, and linking the world to the religious sphere. The Hills and Caves Oracle,

for example, made decisions involving the whole clan, giving religious legitimacy to sentences that could have otherwise caused disagreements. Achebe never denies the faults of such traditions but urges the reader to take them with a cultural relativistic eye, and not imperialist judgment.

With all these offensive traditions, however, Achebe also calls attention to the rich and humane side of Igbo culture. The Igbos are shown as highly communalistic, placing value on generosity, compassion, and communal experiences. Their celebrations, such as the New Yam Festival, highlight their connection with land, fertility, and tradition. This festival is greater than a feast it is a religious ceremony which reaffirms the bonds of society and honors the spiritual powers supposed to nourish life. Song, dance, and oral narration are part of their cultural fabric, providing entertainment as well as a vehicle for the recording of history, transmission of values, and cultivation of collective memory.

Achebe's characterization of Okonkwo is most revealing in this sense. Even though he's a character of strength and traditional masculinity, his inner turmoil reveals the emotional and psychological price paid for rigid adherence to cultural ideals. Okonkwo's involvement in the killing of Ikemefuna a boy whom he addresses as "father" and has become like a son is a heart-wrenching scene which bares the agonizing conflict between personal affection and social expectation. His failure to find accommodation between these forces results in self-hatred and regret, summarized in his bitter aside: "When did you become a shivering old woman? Okonkwo, you have become a woman indeed." Not only does this line comment on the gender expectations of Igbo society but also reveal the emotional repression imposed on men.

In the end, Achebe's portrayal of Igbo culture is a powerful subversion of colonial discourse, which tended to depict African societies as monolithic and inferior. In portraying a culture with its own internal tensions, contradictions, beauty, and logic, Achebe challenges readers to view the Igbo people as fully human, capable of both cruelty and compassion, and held together by tradition but also in search of meaning and identity. Instead of portraying Igbo society as noble or savage, Achebe permits it to exist on its own terms, reflecting the complicated moral and social issues that every society must grapple with.

By this balanced representation, *Things Fall Apart* urges us to problematize the moral superiority assumptions that tended to follow colonial occupation. It encourages readers to see that any culture, however strange it may seem, has a structure of meaning and values worth learning about. Achebe's work becomes therefore a prime location of cultural resistance and retrieval, insisting upon the dignity and richness of African tradition in the face of historical erasure.

Cultural Conflict

The representation of many cultural tensions and conflicts resulting from a collision between tradition and modernity, the real and the occult, and other such conflicts is a hallmark of African novels in general. However, what appears to give the African novelists distinctively African character and set it apart from its European counterpart is the conflict between the individual and society and how it is resolved. The missionaries instruct the "black people" in education and morals and urge them to adapt to the times. The fact that the missionaries cause social and mental unrest in Igbo society is not surprising. There is a cultural conflict as a result of their coming. In the name of morality and religion, they have the power to drive even fathers and sons apart. And when a brother begins murdering his brother while under the influence of the invaders, the civilisation will inevitably fall apart. "While deploring the imperialists' brutality and condescension, Achebe seems to suggest that change is inevitable and wise men reconcile themselves to accommodating change. It can be said that the people of the Igbo society end themselves up in a conflagration, which had been ignited by the missionaries. The story's tragic hero, Okonkwo, is a guy who stands for his culture and is unwilling to give it up, even if it means facing death. Finding his son Nwoye, among

others, adopting Christianity drives him insane. They eventually come to the realisation that “the white man came quietly and peacefully with the religion. We were amused at this foolishness and allowed him to stay. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.” The tragedy of Okonkwo is the best illustration of the catastrophe that results from the union of the east and the west. “He cannot tolerate being ruled by foreigners who are not familiar with his language or habits. He hangs himself instead of enduring the burden of colonisation. allowed that suicide is viewed as a sin in Igbo culture, it is ironic that he is not even allowed a dignified funeral.

Conclusion

In *Things Fall Apart*, the tribes men’s existence ultimately depends on their capacity for change adaptation. Okonkwo, however, becomes hopeless due to his incapacity to adjust, and he ends his own life: “...they came to the tree from which Okonkwo’s body was dangling, and they stopped dead” . On the other hand, Obierika’s analytical disposition enables him to see how the white Christians were able to penetrate and take control of their society: “The white man... came quietly and peace ably with his religion. We were amused at this foolishness and allowed him to stay. The white man has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.”. Although Obierikaregrets the loss of all the tribe considered sacred, he manages to survive by resigning himself to those changes.

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Cinematic Exposure: How *Aruvam* Reveals The Hidden Dangers of Food Adulteration

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Introduction

Environmental Humanities has evolved as a critical interdisciplinary methodology for understanding the interface between culture, society, and the environment. It examines how literature, cinema, and other narrative forms construct public awareness regarding ecological and ethical concerns. Tamil cinema, usually a reflection of societal issues, has been at the forefront in raising awareness regarding environmental injustices, industrial abuses, and their effects on human health. Within this context, *Aruvam* (2019) is a valuable cinematic text that reveals the undercover risks of food adulteration a crisis not only affecting public health but also posing important environmental issues, such as pollution, unsustainable industrial activity, and failure of regulations. From the perspective of Environmental Humanities, this research explores how *Aruvam* critiques the natural resource exploitation, food system contamination, and the moral obligations of businesses and governments towards ensuring food safety.

Research Aim and Theoretical Framework

This study attempts to examine the way *Aruvam* creates awareness regarding food adulteration and uses Ulrich Beck's Risk Society Theory to understand how modern industrial hazards particularly affect marginalized sections of society. According to Beck's theory, hazards generated through modernization like pollution, industrial waste, and food adulteration tend to hit the weaker sections of society. These are hardly dealt with because capitalist motives prioritize profit over consumer well-being.

Background on Food Safety Issues

Food safety is a growing concern in contemporary society, especially with industrial malpractice, unethical business practices, and regulatory complacency fuelling rampant food adulteration. The ingestion of contaminated or chemically treated food has been associated with serious health hazards, such as food poisoning, organ damage, and chronic long-term diseases. The absence of effective enforcement of food safety laws makes the situation worse, exposing consumers to hazardous and unethical industrial practices.