



PRE-COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL MYTHS IN THINGS FALL APART

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ABSTRACT: -

Chinua Achebe was born in (1930-2013) in Ogidi, Nigeria, the son of a teacher in a missionary School. His first novel Things fall apart is published in 1958. He has written the novel in reaction to British Empire who was colonizer in Africa. Chinua Achebe challenges to the oppressor through different parameters. Myths are one of them. Africa was colonized by the British for a period of fifty years. Achebe presents the strengths and weaknesses of his people through pre and post colonial myths and he teaches how to subvert to the British through traditions, myths, legends and beliefs. The natives in Africa stand against colonizer and their dominance on the foundation of their culture and tradition especially myths. Being African as savages into a new focus with its reference of the myths and observe the effect the natives stick to their myths from African perspectives. So, the paper is an attempt to show the power of myths in pre- and post colonialism era against British. It is also said that Europeans appreciated myths.

KEYWORDS: *myths, colonizer, tradition, empire, culture.*

INTRODUCTION:

Things fall Apart by Chinua Achebe fictionalize the events in Eastern Nigeria of 1890s. The life of Igbo community is shown in the novel. The Igbo's are a pluralistic society. The novel is set in the outskirts of Nigeria in small fictional village, Umuofia just before arrival of white missionaries of their land. Natives do not know how to react to cultural changes due to sudden arrival of missionaries and their modern culture. Decision making power or authority normally rest with the community itself. A group of elders takes the important decisions. The community has common shrines, myths, Goddess and oracles. Men of titles are respected much in society. The novel deals with all aspects of the community life. Thus, Achebe's delineation reminds the world that Africa had rich past and legacy.

Things fall apart has three parts. The first part attempts to celebrate the ceremony of innocence symbolized by the Umofians. This part shows the political, cultural and sociological aspects Igbo's life. Second part is a sort of formless darkness due to intrusion of the European missionaries in the land of innocence. It deals with the depressed life of the protagonist Okonkwo as an exile at his mother's place Mbanta. Third part assumes the shape of anarchy let loose on the Umuofian world to destroy the native institutions and traditions. At this stage the missionaries collaborate with the colonizer. The final section of the novel accounts for the tragic end of the protagonist following his return from exile after a period of seven years.

According to Europeans, Africa was a wild continent as Joseph Conrad describes Africa "wild, dark and uncivilized continent" in Heart of Darkness. Africa had no history, no arts, and indeed no organized life of any kind. It was a dark continent by all accounts. And the rest world



concluded.

Achebe writes about Africa and the society, tells the story from an African point of view of the colonization and its dominance, and tends to extinguish the misconception that African culture had been savage and primitive. In *Things fall Apart* European culture is portrayed as being “arrogant and ethnocentric”, insisting that the African culture needed a leader, it has no king or chiefs, culture was vulnerable to invasion by western culture. Africa the unknown continent possesses a several thousands of years old culture. Expressed particularly in myths, legends, fables in songs and proverbs. Traditional African stories woven around a pantheon of gods and mythical figures, legends, fables and more general subjects that played a part in African Mythology and African life.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The novel *Things fall apart* uses the methodology primary sources and secondary sources.

The book is about colonialism and how to subvert to the colonialist that thing Chinua Achebe is given in the book. The British library of Pune and Tilak library of Wai using the analysis of data and Marathi Vishwakosh of Wai. This is the methodology used for the above mentioned research paper.

The names of the African myths in *Things fall apart*:

- i) earth and the sky
- ii) the mosquito and the ear
- iii) the tortoise and the birds
- iv) Chielo

Analyses of Myths in *Things fall apart*:

Chinua Achebe uses myths in the novel to shows how natives are love their tradition and culture. The above mentioned myths tell the morality of life and each man lives his life according to myths. In Indian culture Mahabharata, Ramayana and Bhagwatgita different myths are mentioned and teach the moral lesson and man lives and follow it.

The analysis of myths, religion, totems, superstitions, rituals, festivals and icons. In the novel the mask, the earth, the legends and the rituals all have significance in the story as well as in the history of the Igbo culture. According to Gordon Baldwin: “*Religion looms in the large in the life of primitive man. It is not a one-a-day-a-week affair as it generally is with us. Seven days a week, 365 days a year, primitive people eat and work and play and sleep with religion. Nearly everything in primitive society- hunting, fishing, planting crops, harvesting, head hunting, war, marriage, birth, coming of age, illness, death, building a house, making a canoe or an axe is associated with ritual or magic or ceremony or some other form of religious activity*”.

In the novel several myths and legends told in *Things fall apart*: earth and the sky, the mosquito and the ear, the tortoise and the birds. According to Rosenberg, “*myths symbolize human experience and embody the spiritual values of a culture*”. The values and views of the world spread through mythology are important to the survival of every society’s culture. Myths are instructional as well as entertaining. Myths “*explain the nature of the universe (creations and fertility myths) or instruct members of the community in the attitudes and behaviour necessary to function successfully in that particular culture (hero myths and epics)*”. (www.shampoo.com) In the novel the use of language shares the functions of myths; Among the Igbo the art of conversation is regarded very highly and proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten. Proverbs and myths are both ways of conveying meaning without directly force-feeding the words to the listener. Achebe is showing the importance of stories even within the story he is telling.

In Greek Tragedy myths teach various things to human being. Here *Things fall apart* is Modern Greek tragedy. The hero Okonkwo is a tragic hero falls victim for the sake of society’s tradition and culture. When new value system arrives, his position is at risk and commits suicide. In Greek tragedy many heroes sacrifice their life for the sake society. In Indian epics Arjun and Ram sacrifices their lives for the sake of society. The difference is time has been changed but men are the same.

Myths are the part and parcel of Igbo life. Without myths, legends ceremonies, spirits, customs, use of proverbs, gods, goddess, spirits African novels would not complete. These parameters are the mirror of Igbo life. *Things fall apart* depicts religious beliefs of the Igbo society in detail. The belief in the Supremacy of god

is regarded higher form of religion and the faith in the existence of other and goddesses is regarded as lower form. The novel seen as the archetypal modern African novel. He writing about African society, myths are taken African point of view the story of colonization of the Igbo tends to extinguish the misconception that African culture had been savage and primitive. Myths are taken to challenge western culture is portrayed as being "arrogant and ethnocentric". We take the reference one of the myths. Four myths are mentioned in the novel. We see one of the examples of the myth.

The myth of chielo:

Chielo was the priestess of Agbala, the oracle of the Hills and the caves. In ordinary life chielo was a widow with two children. She was very friendly with everybody. In the novel she called Ezinma "my daughter". Quite often she bought beancakes and gave her. Anyone seeing chielo in ordinary life would hardly believe she was the same person who prophesied when the spirit of Agbala was upon her.

The mosquito and the ear

This myth is about love between mosquito and ear. When Okonkwo was child, his mother tells the story. It is mentioned in chapter nine of the book. Mosquito wish to marry Ear but she declines the proposal, insulting his fragile body and short life. Mosquito decides to avenge ear. When Okonkwo murders Ikemefuna that time he wanted to sleep and mosquito goes near his ear and remembers him it is still alive. Okonkwo states "*stories are as silly as women stories*" (in Things fall apart P.75)

Earth and Sky

The story tells Nwoye's mother to convey clan's life is depend upon on earth and sky. Sky is not ready to fall rain because dispute between earth and sky. As a result, earth become dry, plant died even dead people are not buried because of the toughness. So vulture goes and request for forgiveness. Earth forgives and ready to give rain wrapped in tree leaves.

Tortoise and Birds

Tortoise has sweet tongue. One day birds received invitation for feast in the sky. So tortoise requests them to lend feathers so that he can fly with them in the sky. Birds make him their spokesman. Tortoise tells as a spokesman he eats will first according to custom. He eats all foods so birds frustrates and demand back their feathers. Parrot, one of the birds decides to give message to his wife. The message is that all hard objects keep before the door. Tortoise comes and can see the height and break his shell. Medicine man cannot repair hiss shell. In the novel Ekewfi told this story her daughter Ezinma.

Allegorical Interpretation

These myths show the existence of the African culture in pre and post colonial world. According to Slaughter the story of tortoise and birds as an anti colonialist allegory. Tortoise is colonizer and birds are colonized and victimized. Through these myths people myths emphasizes their revolt against the missionaries. Achebe shows how the oppressor pressurized to the oppressed. The myths are allegorical and relevant to the colonizer and colonized. In Things fall apart people believed myths and show their devotion to myths. According to Harlow, this is the one way to subvert against the colonizers. Achebe twists and turns mythical history, adapting myths to explain his reversal of gender roles, eradicating colonization. In order to dismiss dominance of the missionaries, patriarchy and male superiority, he evolves a new system of power through series of myths.

According to Dr.D.N.Sinha and Dr. B.S.Roy natives are childish and do not know what is good for them. It is the aim of colonialism to help the childish 'native grow towards adulthood and maturity, a condition which Europe has already achieved. Ashis Nandy points out that the constructions of the colonized as children is an important aspect of colonial ideology and ties in with the overall colonial myth of the civilizing mission which allowed colonizers to see themselves as the 'flawed instrument of history.'

Colonialism dehumanizes the native as Fanon states "*To speak plainly it turn him into animal. In fact, the terms used to describe him are* ' zoological terms.

CONCLUSION

In this way, Myths are the weapons for the natives to fight against the missionaries, to eliminate their empire in pre and post colonial world. The function of myths give power to the people of Umofia especially Okonkwo to fight against the missionaries. Myths are the ways conveying a meaning without directly force feeding the words to the listener. Achebe showing the importance of stories even within the story he is telling. So, myths are the milestone of African literature.

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