

**ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF FORCED CONVERSION DURING
POSTCOLONIALISM THROUGH THE NOVEL 'THINGS FALL APART' BY
CHINUA ACHEBE**

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Abstract:

Colonialism is a major part of world history. People who were under the control of Britain had faced a lot of problems. Many writers raised their voices against this oppression. One such post-colonial writer who marked many things through his writing and aroused people against colonialism was Chinua Achebe. In his novel 'Things fall apart' he puts forward many things that were faced by the people during colonialism. During the post-colonial era, people were deprived of the 'Right to religion', and were forced to follow Christianity, this was the major concern of the people during the era. This paper focuses on the difficulties faced by the people of the Igbo community in the novel 'Things fall apart'. Being a Nigerian himself, the writer emphasizes the cruelty that the people had witnessed during colonialism, through this novel. In *Things Fall Apart*, which is set in Nigeria in the early 1900s, Chinua Achebe describes Igbo culture which encompasses many religious beliefs such as father-son inheritance, superstitious beliefs, evil spirits, severe punishments irrespective of people's status. They preach to the natives, the concepts of Christianity, and also how they can become civilized people by embracing this religion. The objective of this paper is to analyze the change of religion in the Igbo community during the post-colonial period.

Keywords: post colonialism, religion, forced conversion, missionaries

Introduction

Things fall apart are written by Chinua Achebe, a novelist, poet, and writer. He was born in an Igbo family and grew up listening to a lot of stories in his childhood. Storytelling was an integral part of their community. Chinua's works are always based on religious ideas. The title has been inspired by the poem second coming by W. B Beats. The writer with his beautiful writing skill brings the entire picture of the communities practices, their culture, and

tradition. The interruption by the missionaries in the Igbo community causes a lot of troublesome consequences.

Igbo communities religion and its interruption.

Igbo community also called as Ibo community always followed strict rules and regulations when it came to following customs and traditions. If that person died in a certain amount of time, he was guilty.

Effects of forced conversions

The British felt that the Igbo were following unwanted customs which irritated them a lot and hence they began forcing Christianity on people. The entire novel, 'Things fall apart' revolves around the fact that everyone in the Unofia tribe stands for each other at difficult times. In the novel, the protagonist Okonkwo always defends being like his father. With great efforts, he became the leader of the Igbo community. He owns land and farms yam. Ikeukwana was given to Okonkwo to avoid war against them. Though he raised him as his own son, later he slaughtered him as per the directions given by the Oracles. This showed how superstitious they were.

“And in fairness to Umuofia, it should be recorded that it never went to war unless its case was clear and just and was accepted as such by its Oracle – the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves. And there were indeed occasions when the Oracle had forbidden Umuofia to wage a war. If the clan had disobeyed the Oracle they would surely have been beaten, because their dreaded *agadi-nwayi* would never fight what the Ibo call *a fight of blame*.” (2.9)

The writer makes it clear that they were very superstitious and would never go against the words of the Oracle. The orders from Oracle meant everything to them. Okonkwo was exiled from the Umofia after he accidentally shot a leader's son at his funeral. He goes along with his family to his mother's village. Days later he found out that whites had invaded his village. When the whited invaded them, they felt terrific and everyone was startled. Okonkwo while conversing with his friend says

"How can he when he does not even speak our tongue? But he says that our customs are bad, and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs bad." (Chapter 20)

Six missionaries, including one white man, arrive in Manta. The missionaries start a school; they built a prison and also a government court for trial purposes for people who break white men's law. All this was not acceptable to the Igbo community. When Okonkwo returns after his exile he sees a lot of changes in his village and thinks why none had revenged them. Many people started getting converted to Christians and others started becoming intolerant. When Igbo people try to talk to the missionaries they are put behind the bar. The

other people collect money and relieve them. At the end of the novel, Okonkwo hangs himself after killing one of the whites court messengers. This shows how intolerant the people of Igbo were and they highly respected their culture and traditions.

Conclusion

The people of the Igbo community were religious people who followed their own customs and traditions. The writer carefully details their culture in the novel, 'Things Fall Apart'. They believed that there was only one creator and worshipped him wholeheartedly. They always punished people whose actions were against their practices. When whites entered such a community and disturbed their lifestyle they rebelled and fought for their freedom. Most of the post-colonial writers wanted to show to the world their struggle and the disturbances in their culture. One such novel is ' Things Fall Apart' by Chinua Achebe.

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