“Things Fall Apart” By Chinua Achebe

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The story “Things fall apart” by Chinua Achebe is a classic piece of African literature through which she wanted to counter stereotypes that exist in the Negro culture. She plotted the story of a Negro man Okonkwo plotted as the fiercest and strongest man of the Negro clan. The transformation of the character, his fears and weaknesses, his struggle, and his tragic ending are plotted with excellence (Chinua Achebe, n.d.) Achebe designed the story and character to show the civilized lifestyle of the Igbo before European colonization. The intrusion by the European people and their impact on the culture and religion are documented in the book with precision (Shmoop, n.d.).

The story takes place in two areas. One is Umuofia, a village inhabited by the Igbo people. The second location of the story where characters are plotted, especially protagonists Okonkwo and his family, is Mbanta. The majority of the story plot is in an Igbo village where the clan people are villagers, and most of them harvest the crops in summer seasons vegetables the Igbo people harvest and get money in return for survival. The people of the Igbo village were polytheists as they believed in many gods. The other culturally distinct value was polygamy. Men were allowed to have many wives as a symbol of masculinity in society. The protagonist of the story also had three wives and eight children (Study.com, n.d.).

The novel was written in post-colonial times in 1958 by the author. The main themes in the story are cultural tradition, fear, family, and religion. The concept of family in the Igbo people is very rich. The polygamous tradition resulted in huge family statures. The protagonist of the story, Okonkwo, had multiple wives. For Okonkwo, the responsibility of being a husband and father is a priority of his life. He had the perception of his own father as the poor provider for his family. Okonkwo considered his father to be lazy and weak, which outraged him and transformed him into a powerful and fiercest wrestler. He considered aggression the only expression to be displayed by the men of the clan. His exile from the village prompted him to think about the feminine side through his ancestors. Otherwise, he had the only thing in mind: “Men are more powerful than women” (Spark Notes, n.d.) From the lines:

Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in

perpetual fear of his fiery temper [...] (2.12)

He is supposed to be aggressive and commanding with his family.

The next theme is cultural traditions, the Igbo people had the stylized tradition and particular language with which they fascinate ad welcome people. The Igbo language was more complex than English. Achebe beautifully portrays diverse cultural norms and language. She made the point that European colonization led to confusion among the Igbo people about adapting to the new cultural values. The protagonist of the story, Okonkwo, felt the loop in the traditional values adopted by his people and felt offended. The European settlers forced the tribal people to leave their old methods of agriculture and the replacement of Igbo with the English language. [4]

The next theme is religion, which is the main highlight of the post-colonization of African people. The European missionaries and settlers tried to impose the Christian religion on African people. The idea of the African religious values threatened the settlers, and they converted many Igbo people into Christians. The protagonist's son, Nwoye, was also one of the converted people who served as an act of betrayal to Okonkwo.

The theme of fear is also intertwined with the story. Okonkwo spent his life as a powerful and fearless man. But his whole journey ends tragically. All his life, he feared to be feminine or less masculine like his father. In the end, he later finds out that his people had agreed to the terms of European settlers and lost their traditions. He could not stand it and chose to hang himself with much valor and power. He gave the message of strength by choosing the most difficult way of ending his life, but the other side of his death shows that all he feared was only himself. From the lines, it is evident:'

"Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not.....o hate everything that his father Unoka had loved. One of those things was gentleness and another was idleness. (2.12)" (Spark Notes, n.d.)

Achebe used symbolism to describe the abstract concept in a story. The two main symbols are fire and locusts. The protagonist of the story is displayed in roaring flames as the sign of masculinity and power needed for the character. The other symbol used is the locust, which defines the arrival of the setters in Igbo land. The transformation that occurred in the lifestyle of the Igbo people with the settler's intrusion was depicted by the term locust that settled everywhere (Study.com, n.d.).

References

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