

# Shattered Culture of IGBO in Chinua Achebe's 'Things Fall Apart' and Joseph Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness'

<sup>1</sup>P. PRASEEBA, R.C. SHEILA ROYAPPA

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of English and Research Centre, Seethalakshmi Achi College for Women, Pallathur, Sivagangai

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of English and Research Centre, Seethalakshmi Achi College for Women, Pallathur, Sivagangai

## Abstract

Historical fiction explores and uncovers paradigm, and helps readers to connect past and present in psychological and physical aspects. In straightforward and evocative prose, Chinua Achebe's 'Things Fall Apart' portrays how Igbo—a community known for its cultural richness is destabilised by the advent of British colonialists and European Christian missionaries. The focus is on the loss of customs, rituals and cultural pride of the indigenous people, replaced by European value systems, ideas and traditions. Achebe tried to convey the complex societal structures and bountiful culture of African people as a reply to Joseph Conrad in his novel 'Heart of Darkness' where he dehumanizes people of Africa. For quite some time western mindset has represented Africa as a land of hunger and undernourishment; while on the contrary the people of Africa encompass their country as a vast continent in terms of geographic variation and immense cultural diversity and comprises numerous ethnic groups with unique customs, languages and beliefs. In this paper, we critically analyze the downfall of Nigerian Igbo culture using both the novels to assess the hypothesis that postcolonialism erodes the local culture of native Nigerians.

**Keywords:** Femininity, Homogeneous, Racism, Monotheistic, Exterminated, Structuralism..

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The foundation of humanity's cultures, traditions and beliefs is all strata of Literature. It caters as a reflection of reality, characterizes a window to an ideology and prevails as a product of art. All the happenings of a society can be narrated, learned and restored from a piece of literature (Widdowson, H. G. (2014). Good fiction runs deep into the realms of psychology and philosophy. Writers do tons of research before crafting a novel of historic nature, by accessing that specific period setting by journals, letters, and newspaper articles. They intend to understand the prominent players, dialects, costumes, style of living, the political status, and the accoutrements of life of that particular period. The Culture of Africa is a continuum of mixed and varied tribes with its

own unique characteristics. Over the past hundred years African writers have written describing their life experiences, cultural history and myth descended in diverse forms and styles brought out in different languages (Kaur, 2017). Africa had many contemporary writers until date to deal with various social issues during the post-war and post-colonial period.

One of the world's renowned writers, the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe wrote the most exceptional novelhood of the 20th century. Things Fall Apart (1958), his popular novel encapsulates the clash that existed among traditional tribal ethics and colonial rule's impact, also the impounding pressure in highly patriarchal societies between masculinity and femininity. Achebe, a literary critic, specifically known for his intense critique of Joseph Conrad

in his novel *Heart of Darkness* (1899), where he condemns a renowned novel of racialism referring to African continent people. Cultural anthropologists pay central attention to the loss of culture as it represents the irreversible loss of humanity's heritage and diversity of indigenous groups, but it has been hard to get convincing evidence given the selection bias, lack of long-term data and the endogeneity of culture.

(Lame MaatlaKenalemeng, 2013) made an analysis on *Things Fall Apart* on Pre- and Post-Colonial Igbo Society to describe pre and post period with argumentative interaction of whites and the Igbo people in both positive and negative consequences. (Suhaib Majeed Kadhem, 2018) suggests that the traditional African society has taken drastic drift from liberty to bondage, simplicity to complexity and from a united upfront to the downfall. He proclaimed that the missionary's intent was to wipe out religion, cultural traditions, originality and identity of their community and incorporate racialism and invade their place ultimately. The prevalence of colonization was to discourage the growth of the Africans. These intentions were unaware to the Igbo people and eventually could not resist their power. (K. Jayapriya, & D. Sangeetha, 2018) in their study in ode to critical and theoretical perspectives of post-colonial literature in English, they explored the unequal economic relations perpetuated with race, religion, invasion and pacification in the form of the issues of identity and culture.

Dr. Mohamed Fawzy El-Dessouky 2010 argued that in *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo's hounding existence constitutes the African culture in its endeavour for survival amidst domineering British. Despite the death of Okonkwo, it's apparent that the African people continue to fight for its cultural existence deep among the hearts of the current generation. Abdalhadi Nimer A. Abu Jweid, 2016, presented a scrutiny of text style of Achebe in his novel puts in postcolonialism in natives, exterminated in the novel in facilitation of a smouldering conceptualisation of national identity. The destruction of national identity correlates to the irresolute experience of the protagonist physically powerful at first but spiritually weak at the end. Umami Kalthum Aminu 2019 carries overtones of the themes and style used by the author in his novel to bring out cultural riches and traditions of the Igbo society versus the

clash of British imperialism as brought out by Chinua Achebe in the novel. Avisek Pattnaik<sup>1</sup>, Prasanta Kumar Padhi<sup>2</sup>, 2020 in their paper, attempted to critically examine in both the novels, two different projections of Africa with respect to Conrad, an outsider and Achebe, an insider. Another paper (Sonia Sharmin, 2018) deals with the racism concept, a dark chapter in the history of the world. Racist ideology widespread throughout the world mostly between blacks and white. A bitter irony implies the people with a civilized look in the novel are in reality the most savage of all. The authors argue that Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* has European colonialism biasness, covertly and allusively maintained throughout. Dr. Khalil Hassan Nofal, 2013 intends to talk about in Joseph Conrad's novel, the notion of "darkness", in accordance with setting, grammatical and lexical choices that indicates mystery, murkiness and darkness incorporating linguistic analysis of the novel. Ambiguity between these poles is commented on in the novel.

According to Dr Tanmay Chatterjee (2020), the novel *Heart of Darkness* authored by Joseph Conrad is a corroboration of the exploitations and brutalities of Europe towards native African populations during the colonial encounter in Africa. At the same time, it is bringing out the gap between the brutal reality of the colonial process and its discourse within the metropolis presenting this event as a civilising enterprise. One can follow this gap between the colonial discourse and the colonial process in the novel by focussing on the title *Heart of Darkness*. The author further explored that *Things Fall Apart* cautions against any such simplistic desire to revert back to the past by revealing the many fault lines and internal contradictions that plagued African society even before it came under the corrupting influence of European colonialism.

Although there were numerous existing literatures intent on critical comparison, analysis, interpretation, and/or evaluation of both Chinua Achebe and Joseph Conrad's novel. Among these, Chinua Achebe's response to Joseph Conrad is a prime article to be considered. Chinua Achebe in the article titled 'An Image of Africa: Racism' in Joseph Conrad's novel "*Heart of Darkness*" states "Conrad saw and condemned the evil of imperial

exploitation but was strangely unaware of the racism on which it sharpened its iron tooth”.

Overall, two types of research in the past pursued to Igbo culture and its downfall. The first is using the traditional literature genre, with the use of proverbs, fairy tales, folklore, fables, animal tales, myths and legends, etc as evidence to support their arguments. Second type depicts historical and cultural genre, and seeks to determine the dynamic relationship among genres, socio-culture and literary texts. In this paper, we use a new hybrid genre model combines both Neoclassical and Structuralism based approach, by analyzing both literary texts and historically recognized social practices and immense structures of the both novels *Things Fall Apart* penned by Chinua Achebe and *Heart of Darkness* drafted by Joseph Conrad to examine the rendition of Igbo cultural vanquishment.

## 2. THE DOWNFALL OF IGBO IN THINGS FALL APART:

### 2.1 IGBO - A STABLE SOCIETY BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF EUROPEANS:

Igbo culture is the undercurrent of the plot in Chinua Achebe's novel. The story is written from the perspective of a third-person omniscient. That is how the narrator conveys both the mindset of all the characters. It is interspersed with commentary to introduce any specific element of the Igbo culture. Achebe uses a straightforward diction throughout. The narrator presents a clear and straight forward story, without any bias or judgement.

'Things Fall Apart' opens with a brief description of the protagonist, Okonkwo. He is a strong, young man who is wealthy and respected by the villagers for his achievements. A contrast drawn against his deceased father, Unoka, shows how a man devoid of strength and wealth was not respected, even though he was good at music, language, and such things. The story moves ahead, displaying the lives of people who have their own beliefs, rich culture, and a defined way of living, along with many rules governing them. Though the story opens with the greatness of the protagonist, Okonkwo, it ends with his death. The very reason why he was praised in the beginning, becomes the reason for his end too at the end. He was a

symbol of masculinity and strength, but that became his weakness too. When the messenger comes to him, in a haste to preserve himself, he attacks the messenger, and then goes ahead to commit suicide, as he felt for someone as strong as him, it would be a shameful thing to submit to the law. His fame fell with this act, as people of the tribe consider his body to be evil and refuse to touch it. Strangers from another village finally buried him. The story ends with the commissioner feeling happy about learning this bit about the Igbo culture, as he can use it in his book which he is writing about the African tribes.

There are several traditions to be mentioned in Ibo is illustrated in the novel like the Peace Week, where no work should be done (Achebe, 31), the next one is New York's festival, honouring earth as deity and the tribe's spirits of ancestor (Achebe, 36). The Ibo's myth such as stories of Tortoise and birds (Achebe, 97) and the tale of Mosquito and Ear (Achebe, 75). Such facets of Ibo culture impose a profound sense of intricate and functional society, not just a bunch of savages in a jungle.

### 2.2. ACHEBE'S GLORIFICATION OF IGBO CULTURE

*Things Fall Apart* is set in the Nigeria of the early 1900s, and displays deeply interwoven culture of the daily lives of the characters throughout. The Igbo religion is a foundation of people's moral, interpersonal, and political lives (Pala, 2017, p.1895). The language is unique, and the proverbs used depict its untouched way of living. This was a major part of the culture. "Among the Igbo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten" (Achebe, 15). These lines from chapter 1, spoken by the narrator, throw light on the sophistication involved in the art of speaking. For every occasion, there is a set pattern of speech in line with their cultural traditions. The natives had a staunch belief in the worship of public deities and ancestors. The festivities and celebrations incorporated these aspects as a main part.

The Feast of the New Yam was approaching and Umuofia was in a festival mood. It was an occasion for giving thanks to Ani, the earth goddess and the source of all fertility. Ani played a greater part in the life of the people than any other deity. (Achebe, 38)

### 2.3. THE DOWNFALL OF IGBO RELIGION AND BELIEFS

These lines from chapter 5 make it evident how the people were bonded to the forces of nature and the universe, to their ancestors, and fellowmen. Each of the Igbo gods is associated with either an element of nature, or with nature itself. A look at the larger picture of the Igbo makes it quite clear why the elements of nature are so revered (Sandler, p.156). They are a tribe dependent on agriculture for their living. The seasonal changes and the proper cycle of nature are of utmost importance for their sustenance. And to make sure it happens, they believed they should please the nature Gods. They also consider their ancestors to be divine and hence would invoke their blessings, offerings to them and things like that as a major part of their beliefs (Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, 2010, p.51). The Igbo name for God was Chukwu or Chineke. There is also a mention of two types of Gods. The Supreme God being addressed as Chukwu, and the personal God as Chi.

It is mandatory for each individual to be equally devoted to the Gods and ancestors without an iota of doubt or differences in society. The divine wish was announced to people through the Oracles and Diviners. These served as a ladder to reach God. The religion kept the people of Igbo tightly knit on the same page. Adhering to the religion was of the utmost importance (Molaiy et al., 2016). Hence, no one ever questioned the gods' wishes which came through the high priests. It could be a serious commitment as the sacrificing of one's own child, or throwing away twins, as they are considered as the work of evil. "If you think you are the greatest sufferer in the world ask my daughter, Akueni, how many twins she has borne and thrown away." (Achebe, 147). They were so thickly bound with their religion that any attempt to disrupt it was equivalent to waging a war. Later in the book, when the Christian missionaries came with an idea that the Igbo culture was backward and inferior in nature, and wanted to reform the people by converting them to Christianity, it resulted in combat. Because it threatened their cultural identity, created two separate groups; Igbo followers, and white missionary followers. The collapse follows, due to the confusion of people to choose the group. There were a lot of differences between the ways of the Igbo and the

missionaries. In Igbo culture, a man was considered strong and authoritative if he possesses more than one wife, but when the missionaries threatened the basic identity of the man by opposing polygamy.

The missionaries also propagated a monotheistic religion of Christianity, completely different from the Igbo religion. They tried to show the natives how their existing religion was not appropriate, as, "Your Gods are not alive and cannot do you any harm. They are pieces of wood and stone." (Achebe, 158)

### 2.4. THE COLLAPSE IN BELIEFS OF THE IGBO LAND

The book is set in Nigeria's Igboland, during the last decade of the 19th century. Igboland consists of a cluster of 9 villages that go together to protect each other. The action commences in the fictional village of Umuofia. Geographical recognition is based on gender and place of birth. For instance, Umuofia is Okonkwo's father's village, so it is called his fatherland. Mbanta is the place where his mother was born, so it became Okonkwo's motherland. The gender attribution prevails in the novel. When Okonkwo had to stay in his motherland for seven years in exile, he felt it was an emasculating threat to his reputation. The timeline of the novel also becomes a chief part of the plot. As it was the time when Europeans set foot on Igboland. With them came a lot of new things; ideologies, religion, thought process, conflict and chaos (Alimi, 121). The European Missionaries tried to convert people, which shook their foundation. As religion was their way of living, a change or disturbance in it meant chaos (Ogude, 116). Though the people were God-fearing, and revered their nature and ancestors as Gods, they also had their own unique ways of marking their strength. The more manly the person, the better he was considered. The protagonist, Okonkwo believed only in being wealthy, brave, and strong, and considered anything like conversation, music, or emotion as unmanly (Innes, 1979: 92). He married multiple women and had children with them.

They believed that human beings are the children of the earth as it nourishes them. They also had a profound fear that humans would be punished by the fury of the earth for their wrong doings. So, Igbo people were hard-working and connected closely to nature for their living. The

following lines give a glimpse of the protagonists' life. "During the planting season Okonkwo worked daily on his farms from cock-crow until the chickens went to roost." (Achebe, 23). Their religion stimulates mandatory adherence to the basic laws. The social ranking and the amount of wealth had a significant role in determining a person's destiny. The social placement of an individual was made known in the form of the bracelets worn on their ankles. The different ankles denoted different levels. In Umuofia, the basis was mainly on personal merit and hard work.

## 2.5. THE DECLINE IN IGBO VILLAGE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

The Umuofia village at the end of the 90s, was a powerful village guarded by its own laws and rules. They had no knowledge about the outside world. It's important that a man make his own place in society through his hard work, wealth, and strength. Three things that stood as a symbol of authority such as being strong, producing a lot of yams, and possessing many wives. Failing in these would make the man not manly described as *agbala*, which means womanlike. Though the men of the village could beat their wives, the wives could take them in front of court for the same. Justice and fairness prevailed in Igbo (Syed Fagrutheen, 2014, p.22)

They constituted certain laws accordingly and had to sacrifice their children, and twins born were thrown away, as per the law, twins were a result of the devil at work (Ojaide, 1992: 48). The laws followed by the Igbo were strict without exception. This led to a rise in the number of outcasts readily converted by Christian missionaries to get out of the suffering faced for following the Igbo laws, made by the ancestors, and carried forward for many generations. There are no reforms made in it as they fear the wrath of the Gods and their ancestors. The missionaries came in with a preconceived notion that the Africans lacked any such system of law or justice. They tried to impose their ways of ruling and law on them even without trying to understand their existing system. They had established their own court of law to present the law breakers. They had also made prisons for punishing the wrong doers. Worst of all, they wanted to use the native people who had converted against their own people. They made the converts into court messengers, and sent them to arrest the tribes.

"But apart from the church, the white men had also brought a government. They had built a court where the District Commissioner judged cases in ignorance."

## 2.6. THE CHANGE IN MAJOR OCCUPATIONS OF IGBO PEOPLE

In the Igbo culture, people were predominantly dependent on agriculture for their living. Other occupations apart from these would be craftsmen and traders.

" Like all good farmers, Okonkwo had begun to sow with the first rains. He had sown four hundred seeds when the rains dried up and the heat returned. He watched the sky all day for signs of rain clouds and lay awake all night. In the morning he went back to his farm and saw the writhing tendrils. He had tried to protect them from the smoldering earth by making rings of thick sisal leaves around them. But by the end of the day the sisal rings were burned dry and gray. (Achebe, 32)

These lines from the book portrays the farmer's dependency on nature and its elements. The villagers waited for the rain with a lot of hope. They were very hard-working by nature. The amount of work involved in planting the seeds did not deter them from trying to protect their seeds or young plants from any unforeseen conditions. They were persistent in their efforts to save the crop from the harsh weather. A tedious job like creating multiple protective rings with leaves is done every day to cultivate on their fields propagating agriculture.

"The yams put on luxuriant green leaves, but every farmer knew that without sunshine the tubers would not grow. That year the harvest was sad, like a funeral, and many farmers wept as they dug up the miserable and rotting yams. One man tied his cloth to a tree branch and hanged himself." (Achebe, 33)

These Lines Illustrate the persuasive nature of the Igbo farmers. After enduring the hardships of drought, they are up on their feet at the first sight of rain, and sowing the yams again. Unfortunately, the rain came down equally harsher, washed away the yams, or to rot. Hence, it is difficult for the natives dependent on the rain. Absence of crops meant no food and no money.

The people of Umuofia were extremely good at ceasing any opportunity that came their way. An adversity of the locust attack was cashed in by the native people by turning them into a sumptuous meal which was a rare occurrence. "Everyone was now about, talking excitedly and praying that the locusts should camp in Umuofia for the night. For although locusts had not visited Umuofia for many years, everybody knew by instinct that they were very good to eat." (Achebe, 66)

Such folks were honoured for their self-worth, got carried away by the shimmer of the English. Few of them who were given the greed of little gifts for joining school, further saw the benefit in working for the white men. These lines below clearly show how the English slowly seeped into the Igbo making it hollow from within.

"More people came to learn in his school, and he encouraged them with gifts of singlets and towels. They were not all young, these people who came to learn. Some of them were thirty years old or more. They worked on their farms in the morning and went to school in the afternoon." (Achebe, 196)

## 2.7 THE CLOSELY KNIT FAMILY SYSTEM IN THE IGBO LAND WHICH WAS SCATTERED POST COLONISATION

Family in Igbo is the basic unit of great significance. Some aspects that are unavoidable by any family are respecting the ancestors, nature Gods, and the rules of the community. Children are taught the values of older generations in a way that they can take them forward for further generations. The father of the family acted as a teacher and protector, and the mother should give birth and raise children in line with the Igbo culture and beliefs. The only privilege bestowed on mothers was motherhood. Though gentle and caring by nature, they were strong for their children. The family was always witness to their father's dictatorship. The main purpose of marriage was to bear children and keep the succession of the family going. The women in the family were child educators, and taught them about the culture, folk stories, and songs. Children learn the ways of man and society through these stories. Mothers pass on the values innate in their culture from generation to generation. It is also the duty of the mother to teach the children gender-based chores and prepare them for life (Egar, 36). The brides were

bought by the men by paying for them. So, the rich man could marry more women. This also meant he had more hands to take care of his agricultural fields, hence more prosperity. The members of the family also take part actively in farming practices for their economic needs. The ancestors are an important part of the family too. The way of life is taught by them.

The missionaries caused turbulence in the family unit too by converting people, luring them towards them, and creating their own followers. This created differences in the families. As Okonkwo's son Nwoye got converted into Christianity creating a ridge between him and his father. Okonkwo rightly sums up the effect of colonisation as, "How can he when he doesn't 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 are bad. How do you think we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us? The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion." (Achebe, 191)

## 2.8 SYMBOLISM IN IGBOLAND THROUGH ACHEBE'S EYES

There are numerous symbolic things presented in an artistic manner throughout the novel. The arrival of the locusts is compared with the way the missionaries had arrived uninvited. The damage caused by it is like a pre notion of the forthcoming destruction which is going to happen due to the forceful ways of the missionaries.

"They settled on every tree and on every blade of grass; they settled on the roofs and covered the bare ground. Mighty tree branches broke away under them, and the whole country became the brown-earth color of the vast, hungry swarm." (Achebe, 66)

Folktales were considered a feminine thing, as it was mostly mothers who transferred ancestral knowledge to their children through the narration of the stories. The protagonist, Okonkwo, feared his son's liking for folk tales in comparison to war stories. The customary passing on of the yams from a father to a son marks the passing on of authority and responsibility as the provider of the family. Fire is attributed to many properties, like potency, full of life, and masculinity. It is for this reason that the protagonist, Okonkwo was identified as

the "roaring flame". On the contrary, the word 'ash' is used to address his son as he has different interests which are meant only for females of the tribe.

"Living fire begets cold, impotent ash."  
(Achebe, 167)

The Mother of the Spirits, and her mourning of the unmasking of one of the egwugwu is also symbolic of the missionaries unmasking the tribe of their culture, or killing their culture. The mourning can be said to be the same as the mourning the Igbo people went through due to colonization.

"It seemed as if the very soul of the clan wept for the great evil that was coming – its own death." (Achebe, 193)

The tribe of Igbo was a closely knit tribe with its own set of rules and beliefs. They had a great reverence for the nature gods and ancestors, whom they believed took care of the rain or shine. They had a great fear of annoying them and inviting their wrath. The people were hard-working and depended a lot on nature (Levine, 1999, p. 136). With a polytheistic belief system, they had different rituals which included sacrifices and out casting people. The tribe believed in magical powers and evil powers. Their language was of utmost importance to them. It was their identity, and the connecting link to the culture religion (Innes, 1979: 24). They had a very sophisticated way of conveying their thoughts, even while talking to a person who owes something to them.

"The night was very quiet. It was always quiet except on moonlight nights. Darkness held a vague terror for these people, even the bravest among them." (Achebe, 19)

On a moonlit night, children would be playing in open fields filled with happy voices. Those who are not as young as one used to be seen in pairs, and elderly people recall their youthful years.

"When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk." (Achebe, 19).

The lines above throw light on the superstitious beliefs of the Igbo tribe. Some of them were like whistling in the night could invite evil spirits, replacing the word snake with string after sunset with a belief that it might come on hearing its mention. They would also never respond when

someone calls from outside, fearing the evil at play. Overall, their culture and beliefs were their strength.

## 2.9 THE FORGOTTEN HISTORY OF WEDDING TRADITIONS IN ACHEBE'S SOCIETY

The marriage system in Igbo land was that of polygamy. The number of wives indicated the prosperity of the person, as a man had to pay to get a wife. The stronger he was, or the more he could pay, the greater the number of wives he would have. The payment made in cowry shells was called the bride price. The following lines make it clear that it was not really easy for the wives. "His wives, especially the youngest, lived-in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children." (Achebe, 22). Each wife possesses a separate hut/shelter within the compound of the husband. Each one has the responsibility of working in the fields to support their family. Apart from this, it was her primary duty to raise children and educate them about the culture, its traditions and beliefs through stories and folk songs. The Christian missionary on the other believed in monogamy, and the marriage was to be performed in the presence of God in church.

## 3. IGBO CULTURE IN THE 'HEART OF DARKNESS'

Heart of Darkness, authored by Joseph Conrad, commences in Congo Free State, during the late 19th century, which is under Belgian control. Reaching London. Most of the story unfolds in the heart of Africa, while it ends on a boat sailing on the river Thames.

### 3.1 AFRICA AS SEEN BY MARLOW

"When I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say: When I grow up, I will go there." (Conrad, 21)

These lines by Marlow show his impression of the places in Africa. They seemed like dark places to him. Belgian authorities used to treat natives very brutally. They used to use them as slaves in the extraction of ivory. The main character, Marlow, was an employee of a Belgian enterprise. This was the time when the Europeans were ruling most places globally. There was a lot of exploitation and violence

committed in the name of civilization teaching culture. The exploitation and violence the Europeans were doing in the name of colonization, thinking that the natives were savage and required refinement. But the reality was far from it. Though not educated, they had a fixed set of rules and a way of living systematically in a community. The doom is a result of the greed and ruthlessness displayed by the African tribes (Majumder, 2007, p. 137).

"An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy, sluggish. There was no joy in the brilliance of sunshine. The long stretches of the waterway ran on, deserted, into the gloom of overshadowed distances. On silvery sandbanks hippos and alligators sunned themselves side by side." (Conrad, 82)

In these lines, Marlow describes the land of Congo as he sails in on a boat. The place gave him the feeling of going back to history where man had not yet evolved. It was nature intact at its best, but there was no happiness in the air around us. No chatter of happy people dwelling there. It was silent, yet not peaceful. The reason for it was the evil, inhuman rule. The African tribes were completely overpowered by the Europeans and Belgian rule. They were turned into slaves, and had cruel atrocities done to them by the greedy Europeans. The 'Company' established by the Europeans was the sovereign power. Everything was done as per their commands. The natives were turned into slaves and exploited for ivory extraction and other chores. They were punished severely for any failure on their side to follow the instructions. Often they were left to die if they got any disease.

### 3.2 THE METAPHORIC USE OF IGBO WOMEN IN "HEART OF DARKNESS"

There is not much light on the existing family pattern, but it seems that the men were either slaves, or had to fight for their safe keeping. The women were regarded as individuals existing in their own world, not knowing the truth. The woman that Marlow meets outside the company office is completely oblivious to the true picture out there, and wishes the savage Africans would benefit from the European teachings. Krutz's mistress is like a figure laden with the riches of the man. The religious beliefs of the natives were no longer in the picture. There was chaos

and confusion when it came to religion, as the people were stripped of their original religion, which was their identity, and were forced to live the lives of slavery. There are many artistic and literary images used by the writer to convey the soul of the story. The imagery of fog used when the ship was surrounded by fog points to the uncertainty that lies ahead, or the mind of the person unable to conceive anything. Similarly, the darkness implies a lot of things in the plot. It is the evil intentions and inhuman treatment of the Europeans. It is the intentions of the greedy exploiters, the ignorance of people about Africa, when they look at it on a map. In the ruthlessness of Krutz, and in the lie told by Marlow to Krutz's fiancé. The natives of Africa were not left with many options to consider as occupation. They either worked for the colonists, or were slaves under them, bearing all the atrocities and working under inhuman circumstances.

Heart of Darkness lowers women to a tool. Encounter of Marlow with females was elucidated as an archetype literature and concludes women is reduced to a prop-like state. As such, Marlow deteriorates women and does the same to Africa (Chinua Achebe, 2016). Chinua Achebe's claims that "he 'sets [women] up as a foil to [men]'"

### 3.3 THE POLITICS OF CULTURAL DESPAIR

Overall, it was a dark age for the people of Congo under imperial rule. There was nothing of their culture, religion, beliefs, and customs left. They were stripped of their self-respect, land, homes, and everything that belonged to them. They were slaves in their own land, and lived a life devoid of dignity. Their family systems were shattered too. It was all dominated by the officials of the company and the people under them, always plotting against each other to get into a powerful position. A painting by Krutz shows the person he was when he came to the land. He drew a blindfolded person holding a torch in hand, which was symbolic of the light which would be brought by rulers into the dark world of African savages. Later, the same person became ruthless in his greed to export the maximum amount of ivory from the land by exploiting the locals.

There is no significant appearance of the Igbo tribe in Heart of Darkness. It was destroyed under the oppression and exploitation of



imperialism and colonisation. The culture and traditions were replaced by slavery and inhumane treatment.

"It was unearthly, and the men were—No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it—the suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar" (Conrad, 87)

Marlow became surprised when he realised the people here were as human as the people on his land, just that they were not as civilised and educated as them.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

- Things Fall Apart shows a glimpse of the Igbo culture from the standpoint of an African native, (Gikandi, 1987). While Heart of Darkness is an outsider's view of the African people. Both depict the effects of imperialism at different times. They are both set in Africa. 'Things Fall Apart' is more of a detailed insider's view. That is how there is a lot of information about the way of Igbo society, their religion, customs, traditions, and all. 'Heart of Darkness', on the other hand, is a third person's narrative after witnessing the cruelty of imperialism in Congo.
- The 'Things Fall Apart' have their own laws and judicial system consisting of for this reason, they were polytheists, as they worshipped the nature Gods. The ancestors, too, were given the status of God. They were all closely bound as a community which flourished with its beliefs and customs. The unit of family was a one with fixed duties for each member. People were valued for their hard work and achievements. The 'Heart of Darkness', on the other hand, had an ominous air to it. There was only colonial rule and exploitation, coupled with slavery. The culture and traditions were erased by the torture and cruelty of the imperial rule.
- In 'Things Fall Apart', the natives allot the place to the missionaries, showing that they did not want them to be on their land. From there, it shows how the missionaries started converting people, resulting in chaos and

confusion. Interference in their way of living caused the downfall of the tribe. Heart of Darkness, on the contrary, shows the viewpoint of a European sailor who observed the cruelty of Belgian rule, and the exploitation of the company whom they came to rule. He felt the natives lived with more rules and traditions governing their existence. The Africans portrayed in the book are primitive and overpowered. They are living the life of slavery under their colonial rulers.

- Things Fall Apart enables the readers to see the Igbo tribe in its full glory, followed by the confused stage, and the downfall of the tribe. Heart of Darkness portrays African natives deeply under the oppression of imperial rule. It shows the dark period of colonial rule where the Igbo culture could hardly strive. People were so oppressed under the rule that they were barely left with any life left. The culture and its beliefs were far left behind. Things Fall Apart shows women holding certain positions in the family and society. They take up responsibilities like cooking, farming, and bringing up children with cultural education, whereas the women in Heart of Darkness are considered to be too meek to be aware of the present scenario around them. They were living in their own world. In the words of Marlow,

- Things Fall Apart shows the entry of imperial rule and the changes happening, while Heart of Darkness shows the pinnacle of Imperial rule where natives were slaves in their own land without any identity of their culture or self. In 1899, Heart of Darkness was published by the author Joseph Conrad. It shows an external view of the exploitation that was taking place in Congo. The story is set in the post-colonial era. He depicted Africa as a not so important place, devoid of values, and culture of any sort. The people of Africa were considered as uncivilised and barbaric. It kind of gives an opinion that the Imperial rule brought order and system for the Africans. The truth was far away from this. In reply to all such literature that showed Africa in poor light, lacking all civilization and law, Chinua Achebe decided to write in his novel, Things Fall Apart. It was published in 1958. Achebe portrays the rich and varied culture, beliefs, traditions, rules, and laws prevalent in Africa. He shows Africa before colonisation, the close bound families, and tribes. Their ways of justice, and trial, and much

more in detail. He also shows the disturbances caused by the entry of the missionaries. He gives a total insider's view of the situation.

## 5. CONCLUSION:

Things Fall Apart narrates the rich existence of Igbo history. Achebe brings out a detailed portrait of pre-colonial Igbo customs. Written back in years before Nigerian independence, Achebe's historical vision brought out political weight. European historical accounts often tend to be destroyed. With his ironic but tragic tone, Achebe makes the reader feel for the characters and their fates struggling between tradition and change. Heart of Darkness fails as a critique of imperialism and slavery and racism. A clear misrepresentation of Africa. 'The Heart of Darkness' leaves Conrad as captain retired with quietness while on the contrary, 'Things Fall Apart' authored by Chinua Achebe with his figurative death of Okwonko representing the death of its customs and traditions. A section of people of the Igbo land noticed how colonization meant freedom from the strict rules and punishments of their ancient culture. Another thing that lured some of them towards the church was the education, which they thought would give them a better life. For these reasons some of the native's broke connections with Igbo culture, and joined the church and school. This further aided in the downfall of the Igbo culture.

Although, there was increasing internal disunity within Igbo society as stated in both novels, the vanquishment of Ibo society is finally a consequence of white man's external influence only. European imperialism is premised on the racist idea of Africans being black, homogeneous and did not possess social, cultural, political, historical and economic differences. It exaggerates the extent of the imperialist achievement by creating a standing wall of blackness overwhelmed by superior European strategic interventions. Africans became consciously black after the incursions of imperialism, woke up to the fact that an intruding people treated them badly on the mere basis of skin color. But Africans prior to this, did not exist as a black people as Blackness is not our creation: it is a label which was ascribed to mark difference and to orchestrate a human hierarchy by European imperialism. The Europeans saw themselves as a white race, were

more uniform and homogeneous in their ambitions, enabled them to further divide a supposed uniform people in west Africa, spoke over 600 languages and had just as many gods and traditions across the continent which spoke over 3000 languages.

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