

Representation of Colonial Encounter in Chinua *Achebe's Things Fall Apart*

HITESH D. RAVIYA

Department of English, Faculty of Arts
The M. S. University of Baroda
Vadodara, Gujarat
India

Abstract:

In this research paper, the researcher has critically analyzed how the colonial encounter is represented and how it deals with colonial suppression and suppression in Things Fall Apart. It has also been observed in this research paper that Chinua Achebe has rightly reconstructed historical and political events regarding the recent past of the Igbo people who were suppressed and oppressed by the Europeans. An attempt is also made to show how Igbo community life is represented and how the arrival of white missionaries and colonial administrative gradually started to question and destroyed that traditional life of Igbo people from within by eroding its value system, firstly through piece-meal religious conversions and then by involving political system in the place of traditional Igbo one. In this way the novel deals with social, political, religious, cultural, economical, as well as educational suppression of Igbo tribe. They not only suppressed them but also oppressed them with British colonial administration.

Key words: colonial, colonial suppression, Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*

Chinua Achebe has rightly reconstructed historical and political events concerning the recent past of the Igbo people who were suppressed and oppressed by the Europeans. His novel *Things Fall Apart* is located in specific socio-cultural changes which were taking place in the 1880s and 1890s in Eastern Nigeria, in

a region known as lower Niger Delta, which presents Igbo proverbs, Igbo words, Igbo social intercourse, Igbo planting, and Igbo community rituals, all these bestow a specific Nigerian reality to the novel. Chinua has represented Igbo community life as well as also shown how the arrival of white missionaries and colonial administrative gradually started to question and destroyed that traditional life of Igbo people from within by grinding down its value system, firstly through piece-meal religious conversions and then by involving political system in the place of traditional Igbo one.

Things Fall Apart contains three parts; the first one divulges the lifestyle of Igbo people; how they were happy with their religious customs and beliefs, socio-political system and with their Igbo conventional culture. The second one is about the exile of protagonist, Okonkwo from Umofia to Mbanta due to Igbo religious custom, as well as it discusses about the arrival of the white missionaries and colonial administrative. The third one is about return of Okonkwo at Umofia where he found missionaries and colonial administrative who had come with the idea of 'civilization' of primitive Igbo Nigerian tribe but their hidden intention was to extend the boundaries of British Empire and to rule over the Igbo tribe with new British regime, which had created great disaster in the Igbo lifestyle, brought social disorder, cultural destructions and religious collapse. In this way the novel deals with social, political, religious, cultural, economical, as well as educational suppression of Igbo tribe. They not only suppressed them but also oppressed them with British colonial administration.

European white missionaries first arrived at Umuru on the bank of the great river where they had built the center of religion, trade and government then they began to explore the dark Nigerian parts, found 'uncivilized' and 'immoral' Igbo Nigerian tribe. They had a mission to civilize lower Nigerian tribe and to enlighten the tribe with the help of a new Christian religion. Igbo people who had their own religious customs and

beliefs which were drown out by the Christian missionaries. The white missionaries suppressed Ancient Igbo religion and oppressed the Igbo tribe through their new religion. Even Benedict Njoku in a dissertation about Achebe's writing style clarifies why Achebe devotes a large portion of his novel to cultural background, if his thesis concentrates on the harms of colonialism which proves that Igbo people had grate religion before the arrival of Britishers. "*Things Fall Apart* expresses the author's nostalgia for the traditions and beliefs of Igbos before European colonialism. It points out that Africans in general had a high level of value system before the advent of Christianity." (Njoku 1984, 23) The arrival of the Europeans changed everything and the Europeans created enemies within the tribes by converting village members into Christians. As Achebe says in *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, these converted people were considered as "the people of the church" or "the association of God" (p.65) and unconverted called as "the people of nothing." (Achebe 1975, 65) The new converts openly rejected old traditions and the Igbo way of life. The Igbos did not know how to deal with this situation. Christianity, a monotheistic religion, had values that so opposed Igbo ideals: they almost seemed to mock the Igbo religion. The doctrines of justice as interpreted by the church were forcibly imposed upon the Igbos, even those that did not choose to convert.

Igbo people had their own ethics regarding their heathen religion, believed in various Gods and Goddesses, among them a God; Chukwu, who was the supreme God who had made the heaven, the earth, the whole world and other Gods. Igbo people were believed in not to disturb chief god Chukwu, so they used to make sacrifice to other Gods in order to please them. And when none of them came to help them, Igbo people went to Chukwu.

They were happy with their religious beliefs and customs, had 'medicine house' or Shrine; Obi in their compound where they kept the heathen symbols of their personal God and

of their ancestral spirits, worshipped them with the sacrifice of Kola nut, food and palm vine. They obeyed the ritual of their religion and without the permission their God they didn't take any decision. The God, who used to grant them permission was the oracle of the hills and caves; Agbala. Igbo people, from far and near, consulted Agbala to discover what the future held for them or to consult the spirit of their departed fathers. Even they were praying Goddess, Ani, the owner of the land and were observing Week of Peace; a sacred week before the planting season. If there were any quarrel in the clan during the 'Week of Peace' it would have great offence against the Goddess Ani, who might refuse to give them her increase and would bring all perish. Moreover, if the man, who died during the 'Week of Peace', people would have to cast dead man to the evil forest because they also believed that the Goddess Ani played a great part in the lives of the people than any other deity due to the ultimate judge of morality and conduct. Moreover, she was in a close communion with the departed fathers of the clan, whose bodies had been committed to the earth. It was believed if they committed any immorality, it would not please their God and Goddesses, and they had to offer sacrifice for compensation.

Achebe has depicted all these rituals and beliefs of Heathen Igbo tribe which were suppressed by the white missionaries, who had built the churches to spread Christianity in *Things Fall Apart*. The white missionaries consider them as bad custom and rituals, and wanted to drown out them by oppressing the Igbo tribe, forced tribe to follow their new religion. Achebe introduced the white man for the first time through the mouth of Oberika as he informed Okonkwo during his second visit to him at Mbanta: The missionaries had come to Umuofia. They had built their church, won a handful of converts and were already sending evangelists to the surrounding towards and villages. That was a source of a great sorrow to the leader of the clan; but many of them believed that the strange faith and white man's god would not last. None of

his converts was a man whose word was heeded in the assembly of the people. None of them was a man of title. They were mostly the kind of people that were called efulefu, worthless, empty men. The imagery of an efulefu in the language of clan was a man, who sold his machet and wore the sheath to battle. (Achebe 1958, 130)

The church missionaries had allowed those people who had not got any title in their lives, were also known as agbala; another name for women; a worthless person in Igbo society, particularly in Umuofia. They had also taken advantages of some of the customs of Igbo people, which were considered as a bad custom for them.

One of the Igbo women, Nneka, the wife of Amadi, was pregnant. She had had four previous pregnancies and childbirths. Unfortunately each time she gave birth to twins, who had been immediately thrown away to the evil forest, as part of their customs. She suffered a lot from her husband and his family, decided to join the church to get rid from such social insult. And it was for the first time that the church had a woman in Mbanta.

Hearing the acceptance of twin children in a new arrived religion, Osu; outcasts, who were not even accepted by the people of Igbo tribe, went to the church with a view to be accepted there in the new religion. Though they were not accepted by the converts at first, they were accepted by the church at last giving the sacrifice of their hair, which considered a bad omen for them. Shaving the hair of Osu would bring death to them, it was the belief prevailed in the village and Osu also believed in that. It was the oppression at both the parts: on the part of the converted Igbo people, as they have to be with Osu, which was against according to their custom, and for Osu: they had to sacrifice their hair. "Unless you shave off the mark your heathen belief I will not admit you into the church... the heathen speak nothing but a falsehood. Only the word of our God is true." (Achebe 1958, 143-144)

One of the Osu; Okoli killed scared Royal python which was great abomination of the god Idemili. The royal python was the most revered animal in Mbanta and throughout the all clans, was address as 'Our Father' and was allowed to go anywhere. Nobody had ever dare to kill the python, Albeit a person who killed the python inadvertently, he made to sacrifice of compensation and performed an exclusive entombment ceremony as it was done during the grand man. That was done by overzealous Okoli which brought serious conflict between the church and Mbanta.

The church missionaries had started to explore in different clans, exercised Christian religion, spoke against the religion of Igbo tribe, and tried to prove their Gods and Goddesses were false, made of stones and woods. When the six missionaries arrived at Mbanta to preach them regarding Christianity, Mbanta people had never seen the white before, came out to see a white man, who was among the six missionaries rest of them were early converted. One of them was Mr. Kiaga, was an interpreter of the white missionaries earlier and then he became in-charge of the infant congregation at Mbanta. He addressed the people of Mbanta. In Chinua Achebe's words:

... The white man was also their brother because they were all son of God. And he told them about this new God; the creator of all the world and all the men and women. He told them that they worshipped false gods, gods of wood and stone. A deep murmur went through the crowd when he said this. He told them that the true God lived on high and that all men when they died went before Him for judgment. Evil men and all the heathen who in their blindness bowed to wood and stone were thrown into a fire that burned like palm-oil. But good man who worshipped the true God lived forever in His happy kingdom. 'We have been sent by this great God to ask you to leave your wicked ways and false god and turn to Him so that you may be saved when you die...' (Achebe 1958, 131-132)

During the gathering at Mbanta, Igbo people asked them many

questions regarding their 'true god', as they believed in natural gods and goddesses; Ani, the goddess of earth, Amadiora of the thunderbolt, Idemili, a god of water and owner of scared royal python, Chukwu, a creator of universe, Agbala, the oracle of hills and caves. One of the old man of Mbanta asked the question to missionaries. "Which is this god of yours", he asked "the goddess of earth, the god of sky, Amadiora of the thunderbolt, or what?" (Achebe 1958, 132)

But the white man who did injustice exercise of Christianity replied them: "All the gods who have named are not god at all. They are gods of deceit who tell you to kill your fellows and destroy innocent children. There is only one true God and he has the earth, the sky, you, and me and all of us." (Achebe 1958, 132-33)

Slowly and gradually church missionaries got more and more converts as they converted Osu and Efulufu in Mbanta, even they accepted the 'Evil Forest' to build their church and to convince indigenious that they would not die. It had happened so; some of the people began to believe in church missionaries. Some of the converts of Mbanta boasted openly to the people that all the gods were dead and impotent, even planned to defy by burning all their worship places. However, people of Mbanta sized them and beaten them.

Moreover in Umuofia not only the low born and the outcast but also some worthy men had joined the church, rejecting his titles of the clan. Mr. Brown's successor was the reverend James Smith, a white missionary in Umuofian church, who encouraged the converts to act out against the pagan tribe, was believed that such pagans had to be destroyed under his support, a great conflict between the church and Umuofia was being aroused. Achebe draws his character with Igbo proverb, "... as a man danced so the drums were beaten for him. Mr. Smith danced a furious step and so the drums went mad..." (Achebe 1958, 167)

Mr. Smith was cruel toward the Igbo people who

condemned openly the theory of Mr. Brown 'compromise and accommodation'. For him Igbo people, as an idolatrous crowd, wanted a few converts having strong belief in the church.

"He saw things as black and white. And black was evil. He saw the world as a battlefield in which the children of light were locked in mortal conflict with the sons of darkness. He spoke in his sermons about sheep and goats and about wheat and tares. He believed in slaying the prophets of Baal." (Achebe 1958, 166)

One of his overzealous convert, Encho, the son of the snake priest who was believed to have killed Royal Python, committed another offence against Egwugwu; ancestral spirit, unmasked him in public, tore off his mask which meant he killed an ancestral spirit that caused for demolition of the church. Although they had not killed the missionaries, they did somewhat substantial. This is how the white missionaries had suppressed the Igbo religion and its values and customs oppressed them to pursue Christian religion directly or indirectly and implied injustice exercises of authority to change the fundamental belief of Igbo tribe so that they can control the inhabitants more straightforwardly.

European had brought not only New Religion but also New Government, had established church as well as court with intention to extend the boundary of British Empire. British colonial administrative had applied their new political system in the place of Igbo people's traditional one. Because the Igbo people had not realized the idea of colonization was to quietly gained a foothold through the new religion in the Igbo country and then moved in and took over when the country had been destabilized enough to be ruled by them. Igbo people their own traditional political and administrative system deal with clan's affairs. Having possessed high titles, priests and elders people were making decision regarding domestic and social affairs. Achebe, initially in the novel, describes how the elders of the clan had taken decision regarding the daughter of Umuofia,

who was killed by the man of Mbaino, had settled their dispatch to Mbaino, asking them either to war or offer a young man and a virgin as compensation.

Even the Igbo tribe had Egwugwu; a masked ancestral spirits, who were respected and respectable community leaders from various villages to settle the social dispute between two families and other social matters during the New Yam Festival at Oli; a ground of a village where people gather to festive, which was a traditional system of justice in Igbo country land. The reason for its prompt and fair justice might be in the fact that it was based on local customs and values, and face to face interaction in which everyone had given an opportunity to be heard. Achebe has represented Egwugwu who had settled the domestic problem between the woman called Mgbafo, who came with her three brothers, and her husband, Uzowulu, who came with his relatives. Uzowulu stepped forward and presented his case in front of Egwugwu,

“That woman standing there is my wife, Mgbafo. I married her with my money and my yams. I do not owe my in-laws anything. I owe them no yams. I owe them no coco-yams. One morning three of them came to my house, beat me up and took my wife and children away. These happened in the rainy season. I have waited in vain for my wife to return. At last I went to my in-laws and said to them, ‘You have taken back your sister. I did not send her away. You yourselves took her. The law of the clan is that you should return her bride-price.’ But my wife’s brothers said they had nothing to tell me. So, I have brought the matter to the fathers of clans. My case is finished. I salute you.” (Achebe 1958, 82)

Then Oduke, one of the brothers of Mgbafo and eldest of the all ancestral spirit, disagreeing with Uzowulu presented their case in front of Egwugwu; Evil Forest. He represented Uzowulu as a wicked person who used to beat his wife frequently. In his words:

Last year when my sister was recovering from an illness, he beat her again so that if the neighbours had not gone in to

save her she would have been killed. We heard of it, and did as you have been told. The law of Umuofia is that if a woman runs away from her husband her bride-price is return. But in this case she ran away to save her life. (Achebe 1958, 83)

Egwugwu heard both the sides and their witnesses. At last they decided to settle the dispute, told Uzowulu to go to his in-laws with a pot of wine and beg him to return his wife that was how they were maintaining law and order of their clan. Frantz Fanon's comments to sum up event like socio-legal "ceremony" performed by Egwugwu which is described in the novel: Self-criticism has been much talked about of late, but few people realize that it is an African institution. Whether it is the *djemmas* ("village assemblies") of Northern Africa or in the meeting of Western African tradition demands that the quarrels which occur in a village should be settled in public. It is communal selfcriticism, of course, and with a note of humour, because everybody is relaxed, and because in the resort we all want the same things. (Fanon 1967, 37) Achebe has described through this event legal system or political system of Igbo tribe.

Later on, Okonkwo, a protagonist of the novel, had committed a crime inadvertently in his village, Umuofia. During the funeral of a warrior when he was performing the funeral ceremony by giving the salutation to the warrior by the rounds of firing of guns, unfortunately a bullet of his gun killed an innocent child. As a result it was decided by the elders of the village to put him on exile at Mbanta, a village of his mother's kinsmen for seven years. Igbo people had their own well set and established judicial system, according to their culture, system and customs, which was suppressed by the British government court without the awareness of their values and customs.

In the second meeting of Okonkwo and Oberika in Mbanta Oberika told him about the mass killing; which happened at Abeme, one of the villages of Igbo tribe; by an army of white men. When the people of Abeme saw a white man for the first time, as they were innocent and ignorant about the

white men, they were afraid and ran away from him. And following the orders of their ancestral spirits, as they said the white men would bring disaster to their village, they killed him and hanged him on the sacred cotton tree in ignorance and fear. As a reaction the white people did the mass killing to oppress them.

“...They have a big market in Abeme on every other Afo day and, as you know, the whole clan gathers there. That was the day it happened. The three white men and a very large number of other men surrounded the market. They must have used a powerful medicine to make themselves invisible until the market was full. And they began to shoot. Everybody was killed except the old and the sick who were at home and handful of men and women whose chi were wide awake and brought them out of that market.” (Achebe 1958, 126)

Some of the fugitives came to Umuofia where their kinsmen and friends were living and other who could think of no other place to escape came to Umuofia with their woeful story.

The main motive of British government was not only to practice their religion. Along with it, it was their hidden intension to expand reign of their government all over the world. It has been clearly indicated in when they politically overrule the traditional judiciary of Igbo tribe and established their own, which was based and formed to exploit tribal people. And in their court Igbo people were brought to get oppressed. In their court, judges would never bother about the cases, and it may happen in many of the cases that judges are totally unaware about the actual case and would not listen to the arguments of both the sides and will give the decision, not bothering about the truth and the false, but depending upon their own benefit. “...they had built a court where the district commissioner judged cases in ignorance...” (Achebe 1958, 158)

“We shall not do you any harm’ said district commissioner to them later, ‘if only you agree to co-operate with us. We have brought a peaceful administration to you and your people so that you may be happy. If any man ill-treats you we shall

come to your rescue. But we will not allow you to ill-treat others. We have a court of law where we judge cases and administer justice as it is done in my own country under a great queen...” (Achebe 1958, 175)

From this encounter of district commissioner with the six elders of the clan, it is comprehensible that the commissioner has now established their own court at the place of the court of Igbo tribe. Moreover, here, he tries to convince them that their court is far better than the traditional court of Igbo tribe. Going further in the same dialogue of district commissioner, the essence of oppression of tribal people reflects as he fined them as they ill-treated the one, a Christian, who actually mocked at Ekwugwu by tearing his mask in public. European colonizers had established their government which was only means of exploitation of Igbo tribe, had also developed court and prison for those who offended against the white man's law and to protect the followers of their religion. They had killed and hanged many Igbo people, who were against their religion and authority.

“...These court messengers were greatly hated in Umuofia because they were foreigners and also arrogant and highhanded. They were called Kotma. And because of their ashcoloured shorts, they earned the additional name of ‘Ashy-Buttocks’. They guarded the prison which was full of men who had offended against the white man's law. Some of these prisoners had thrown away their twins and some had molested the Christians. They were beaten in the prison by the Kotma and made to work every morning clearing the government compound and fetching wood for the white commissioner and the court messenger. Some of these prisoners were men of title who should be above such mean occupation...” (Achebe 1958, 158)

Further the oppression of colonial administrative reflected in the novel, District Commissioner, a colonial administrator, returned from his tour who sent his sweet tongue messenger to

summon six elders of the clan along with Okonkwo to meet at head quarter. He discuss regarding the destruction of church and ordered his messenger to handcuff them and lead into guard room where the head messenger, prisoners' barber, took down his razor and shaved off their hair as District Commissioner directed them to 'treat with respect' because they were the leader of Umuofia while they were in a prison.

"The six men ate nothing throughout that day and the next day. They were not even given any water to drink, and they could not go out to urinate or go into the bush when they were pressed. At night the messenger's came into taunt them and to knock shaven heads together."(Achebe 1958, 175-176)

They were thoroughly ill-treated by the messenger. Okonkwo furiously talked about killing of white men and one messenger heard that he started to hit each man, a few blows on the head and back and were bitterly beaten by the messenger.

Achebe has depicted a real picture of the Igbo society and its culture which are represented through their rituals, customs, traditional art, Igbo language, religion and way of life. However, the white missionaries and British colonial administrator had broken their social harmony and emasculated the entire Igbo culture. Emanuel Egar, in a critical analysis of *Things Fall Apart*, highlights the root of the decline of African culture.

"By allowing the white man to land on African shores, Africans allowed the white man to impose Christianity...with its craving for right and wrong, its love of truth and beauty - on the African social system." (Egar 2000, 8)

The key word in this phrase is impose. The word choice does not have the pleasant connotations attached to it that one would expect for such a marvelous gift. Obviously, for a westerner to understand how such modern ideas can harm rather than help, there requires a lot of explaining.

Igbo tribe had social hierarchy in which social status

was considered by worthiness of men. Priest and elders along with the person who had achieved various titles of the clan were considered as greatest men and in the eyes of Igbo people. There were only four titles in the clan and only one or two men in any generation ever achieved the forth and the highest title in the clan. These titles were given to them according to their worth and deeds. Those, who had not achieved any titles, were called Agbala. One of the features of Igbo society and culture was that a man was known by his worth, masculinity, wealth and wives. Those, who had more barns of yam and wives, had special place in Igbo society.

As the society without culture is not possible, Igbo society had their culture. The ritual of the Kola nut was one of the hospitalities and manner among the Igbo tribe. They presented it for greeting in which Kola nut was passed between host and guest, each insisting that other should be the one to crack the nut, but generally host did the honours. They believed that offering Kola nut to god brought the life and happiness to them and their family. They also kept with them a piece of chalk to paint their toe and draw a few lines on the floor in a ritualistic fashion. That sort of rituals and customs kept them in bondage of social harmony.

They were also celebrating the feast of new yam, an occasion to show the gratitude towards Ani, which was held every year before the harvest began and new yams could not be eaten until some had been first offered to god and ancestral spirits. They celebrated the festival together and used to invite their kinsmen from the neighbouring villages. Especially women used to scrub the walls and the huts with the red earth until they reflected light then drew pattern on them in white, yellow and dark green. Women also were painting themselves with the cam wood and drawing beautiful black patterns on their stomach and back. Children also used to beautify their hair by shaving them. On the first day there was a great feasting and fellowship and on the second day of the New Year

was the day of great wrestling match.

Igbo people used to celebrate social rituals like marriage functions and *Uri*; a part of betrothal ceremony when the dowry was paid. There was a feasting, drinking, dancing and singing during the celebration and they were happy as they used to marry their daughters to the neighbour clan and vice versa. Moreover, the celebration of the funeral ceremony would depend according to the social status of the person, whose funeral was being held. All these celebration was sustaining Igbo people's social harmony. They were emotionally attached with each other. No doubt they had a problem and quarrel between two clans, even though they believed in social harmony. Uchendu; Okonkwo's maternal uncle advised their children,

“We do not ask for wealth because he that has health and children will also have wealth. We do not pray to have more money but to have more kinsmen. We are better than animals because we have kinsmen. An animal rubs its itching flank against a tree, a man asks his kinsmen to scratch him.”
(Achebe 1958, 151)

Old Igbo tribe believed in togetherness, wanted to protect their culture, desired to have an invisible link between their kinsmen. However they were worried about the young generation who were highly influenced by church missionaries and had already left their social and religious custom and ancestral god. Oldest member of the *Umunna*; a group of kinsmen, arrived to meet Okonkwo when he was leaving *Mbanta*. In his farewell speech to Okonkwo he reflected the fear he had for the culture and the tradition of Igbo tribe as well as the fear for the younger generation, as they do not follow the footsteps of their ancestors. In his words,

“...A man who call his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. They all have food in their homes. When we gather together in the moonlit village ground it is not because of the moon. Everymen can see it in his own

compound. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so. You may ask why I am saying all this. I say it because I fear for the young generation, for you people...As for me, I have only a short while to live, and so have Uchendu and Unachukwu and Emefo. But I fear for you young people because you do not understand how strong is the bond of kinship. You do not know what it is to speak with one voice. And what is the result? An abominable religion has settled among you. A man can now leave his father and his brothers. He can curse the gods of his fathers and ancestors, like a hunter's dog that suddenly goes mad and turns on his master. I fear for you; I fear for the clan.”(Achebe 1958, 152)

Old Igbo people were right in their thinking because whatever they feared for was happening actually. The missionaries had brainwashed many of the tribes, divided clan into two parts either by their religious mission or through colonial power. Obierika; a friend of Okonkwo; outbursts furiously,

“How can he when does not even speak our tongue? But he says 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 can quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were assumed at his foolishness and allow him to stay. Now he has warned our brothers and our clan no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.” (Achebe 1958, 160)

British educational system was one of the means to be civilized Igbo people who were not having particular pattern and place for educating their children. They had traditional oral system of education which was suppressed by the white missionaries through establishing schools in various clans. “Orature” (a word coined by Pio Zirimu, as Opposed to “literature”), is deployed to connote “a system of aesthetics, an oral narrative system, for instance, which could be differentiated from the system of

visual narratives.” (Thiong’o 1998, 111) Before reading and writing came to central, Western, Eastern and Southern Africa via Muslim state of Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia as late as the fifteenth or sixteenth century, the traditional narrative mode in Africa was related to “Orature” or an “Oral narrative system” in keeping with the needs of society. Even for the sake of culture continuity, the oral education system, followed by the Igbo tribe, was basically formed to teach their children their social customs, religious rituals, unique cultural activities and agriculture. They were teaching them by telling various stories of their culture, legend, fairy tales, folk tales, fables, and mythology. Generally father taught their children stories of the land-masculine stories of violence and bloodshed to make them masculine, violent, great wrestler and warrior, while mother used to tell their younger children fables and folk tales. i.e. the stories of tortoise and his wily ways, the bird eneke-nti-oba, who challenged the whole world to wrestling contest and was finally thrown by the cat, the quarrel between earth and sky, etc. As it was patriarchal society, father’s stories were considered important in building the character of their child, while mother’s stories were to be considered as silly stories.

White missionaries realized that it would not be possible to get more converts by telling them directly that Igbo people’s god were false and their belief were based on falsehood. So they planned to divert the mind of Igbo people, establishing schools and hospitals. In the novel Mr. Brown learnt a good deal about the Igbo religion of the clan, Umuofia from his friend, Akunna, who had sent his son to be taught the white men’s knowledge. As a part of their plan they started establishing schools and hospital from where they can, from the very beginning of the life, teach the customs and culture of Christianity and get more learned diverts. That is also one of the integral parts of oppression by education as the minds of the people of Igbo tribe got diverted. In Achebe’s expressions,

“...[Mr. Brown] came to conclusion that a frontal attack on it would not succeed. And so he built a school and a little hospital in Umuofia. He went from family to family to begging people to send their children to his school but at first they only sent their slaves or sometimes their lazy children. Mr. Brown begged and argued and prophesied. He said that the leader of the land in the future would be men and women who had learnt to read and write.”(Achebe 1958, 163-164)

Mr. Brown told people of Umuofia, if they didn't send their children in the school, their own people from Umuru or some other places would rule over them because white people were only few but they wanted to establish their government with the help of those Igbo people who were converted and educated under their school and learnt their language and law. He made them convince through his arguments, got more people to learn in his school and encourage them with the gifts of singlet and towel. His development could be seen here in the novel:

Mr. Brown's school produced quick results. A few months in it were enough to make one a court messenger or even a court clerk. Those who stayed longer became teachers; and from Umuofia labourers went forth into the Lord's vineyard. New churches were established in the surrounding villages and a few schools with them from the very beginning religion and education went hand in hand. (Achebe 1958, 164)

The very statement of Achebe, here, indicates clearly the development of the schools in different areas. Along with it, it suggests that the oppression and the conversion of Igbo people, which was thought before establishing schools, now increasing as he says that in many areas now new schools are established. By the means of educational system British government again got more converts, who were now educated under their premises. It shows the oppression of educational system as well as the people via the new system.

Economy of Igbo people was based on agriculture and for the exchange of agriculture crops and merchandise, they had

cowries; a shell which was used as money. In agriculture a yam was the king of crops for them, even the wealth of the people was seen through the barns of yam. However white man had disturbed the economical system of Igbo tribe through their trading center,

“...the white man had indeed brought a lunatic religion, but he had also built a trading store and for the first time palm-oil and kernel become things of great price, and much money flowed in to Umuofia.” (Achebe 1958, 161)

European had built trading center at Lower Niger Delta, which was known as Umuru that was region of the palm-oil rivers in which British were carrying out a roaring trade because of that commodity was in great demand in Europe for its industrial use. Consequently, many trading port had been established along both banks of river Niger, where trade was carried out. With the help of all these business, they suppressed economical system of Igbo tribe.

The colonial administrator had also exploited the Igbo tribe by taking fine from those who were against the religion and the authority. As District commissioner had taken decision regarding six representative of Umuofia. He asked for two hundred cowries from the village as a penalty, his messenger were corruptive and oppressive. They asked two hundred and fifty cowries as fifty cowries for their own pocket. That court messengers had spoilt the administrative system of the colonizer, were oppressed innocent Igbo people through exploiting them economically as well as were doing injustice to the people by means of taking bribe from the wealthy men. For instance Achebe explains, “...the white man’s court has decided that it should belong to Nama’s family, who had given much money to the white man’s messenger and interpreter.” (Achebe 1958, 159)

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Achebe, Chinua. 1975. *Morning Yet on Creation Day: Essays*. London: Heinemann.
- Achebe, Chinua. 1958. *Things Fall Apart*. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.
- Egar, Emanuel. 2000. *The Rhetorical Implications of Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1967. *The Wretched of the Earth*, Trans. Constance Farrington, Britain: Penguin Books.
- Njoku, Benedict. 1984. *Four Novels of Chinua Achebe*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Thiong'o, Ngugi Wa. 1998. *Penpoints, Gunpoints and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of Arts and the State in Africa*. Oxford: Clarendon University Press.