



**A RESEARCH ON THE “BRITISH DOMINATION OVER THE WORLD” FROM
THE PERSPECTIVE OF CHINUA ACHEBE’S WRITING “THINGS FALL APART”**

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Abstract

How the colonization and the civilized mission of the western world helped them to get the control over entire world. Such massive task was not possible for them to accomplish by means of force alone. Christianity, a faith to love God through Jesus, was used as a double-edged sword. Teaching the word of Lord from one side and conquering the lands of local people on the other. The writer presents a clear and unbiased view of how the westerners came into their homeland with Holy Bible only. “When the missionaries came to Africa, they had the Bible and we had the land. They said ‘Let us pray.’ We closed our eyes. When we opened them, we had the Bible and they had the land.” ~ Desmond Tutu_(activist)

Key Words: British, Famine, Christian, Missionaries

Introduction:

Medieval Europe, to start with, was a relatively poorer section of world with diseased and shrinking population and concentrating wealth. Their society was very much like feudal system, having churches at top of the hierarchy. Famines were common and mortality rates were quite low comparatively. The kingdoms of this continent were constantly at war with each other for territorial issues. The situation was really bad.

In the starting of 15th century, Portuguese started trade relations with far off countries and started capturing small kingdoms, which was taken as example by fellow nations and the conquest started. But a question may arise in minds that how small and shrinking population was able to conquer great lands like continent of Americas and Africa so easily? To which a simple explanation would be that Europeans cleverly took in the local people in by luring them with different things like power, position or what else, faith.

Taking our attention to Africa, which was completely alien to rest of the world was started to be colonized in sixteenth century. The Europeans had their eyes on Africa’s natural resources for long time. They came as traders and just did serious business. Then they introduced Christianity to tribal people and started setting up churches. Just in the matter of time, there were hundreds of Christian converts whose numbers rose to thousands in few months. This civilization mission was started by the white people as part of their “service” to god.

It was not like that tribal Africans were primitives at all. The society of Africans was very advanced and was comparable to Europeans. There were equal rights for men and women (opposite to west), there was respect for everyone, all the villages were peaceful, and there was an established judicial system. The society was no less than European model. But there were certain evil practices like social boycott of twins, killing of fetus if considered evil, head hunting etc.



The writer depicts in his novel, how these ill practices were prevailing there. These were the things which were used by missionaries to get their first converts. The message of Gospel about equality was spread among the locals. Slowly, the missionaries got their hands on the prominent people of the clans and got backup by the newly formed government. The things were getting really messed up and is being brought into light by Okonkwo, main character of Achebe's novel. The tribal people were never able to fight back the government or the missionaries due to their custom of not fighting to their own kind. The frustration and harassments were intolerable by some individuals, but useless. The people, instead of taking action, left it on their "Gods" which led them to their defeat against white people. Okonkwo himself wanted to take on the foreign people, but was lacking the support from his community. He was already plagued by the treatment of white people at the local police lockup. In the end, he chose to commit suicide. His death gives a big hidden message which reader has to unscramble. By this ends a great tale of Okonkwo, a mighty man feared by all lands around.

Analysis:

The world has always been in a chaos since mankind has evolved from sapiens to a more conscious being. We, being more advanced being, began to consider this mother earth as a mine of resources. From food to taking shelter, taking minerals or for any other activity, we as human race claimed earth and divided it in territories. The greed for power and ranks led to the formation of great civilizations around the globe further emerging into great powers such as Mayans or Indus. The knowledge and technology flourished but this came to end all of a sudden. As the world stepped into its middle age from ancient era, the world was divided into Kingdoms in each corner of world. There were always wars going on among powers. Only to conquer more land, humans killed humans.

One such collection of kingdoms was the continent of Europe where there was a constant battle among the kingdoms of Monarchs. There was poverty and diseases everywhere, Kings and higher Clergymen were enjoying sitting on top of everyone. There was social inequality, gender discrimination and evil practices going on in the society. Mortality rate were less and age expectancy were very low. There was less farming and the population depended hugely on bread and meat. Such was the conditions of the society at that time.

So, these kingdoms wanted prosperity, so they had their eyes on east where there were ample of resources and workforce. But the real problem was that how to make the people of east to give them resources for free. There were two solutions to this problem, either use force or else convince them with some other thing. The African continent was particularly difficult to win by force. So, they tried winning them by faith. And it was really a tragic thing to happen with, that over 99 percent of African today are Christians or Muslims. Islam has always been there in the northern Africa due to its nearness to middle east, where religion originated. But for Christianity to have that much deep penetration in Africa is really a thing to research about. Let us uncover the mystery.



To start with, Africa was already a well flourished society, even though very alien from the rest of world. The whites started coming here since 15th century for trade of gold, ivory, and slaves. Soon as trade flourished, the Europeans started setting up churches for their own worshipping. The locals would not mind that developments, hence neglected. Soon the ministries of missionaries and evangelists came with the agenda of spreading the “word of lord²”. Implicitly, Christians has a believe that there is on God, Lord Jesus. Anyways, so the missionaries started their preaching in those pre-build churches. And like a sales executive job is to sell the product no matter how they do it, the missionaries started the propaganda. This was the point which was like starting a civil war by their own people.

First thing was to have some committed followers, who would be completely believing. The targeted the outcast people first as the are the most vulnerable section of any society. Converting them was easy and soon the churches were having first battalion of worshippers. And truly, conversion to Christianity uplifted their life for good. They were now having equal status as others. As there are good and bad elements in every faith, some churches father really worked for the upliftment of these people. This was not welcomed by locals and left the punishment to their gods. But nothing happened, and, so other locals believing their god was supreme, converted considering the white people god more powerful. Another wave of converts flooded the newly formed part of Africansociety.

There were signs of tensions among the leaders of big clans about the new religion, and their brothers and sisters are now no longer theirs. There were conflicts between the two groups. Till now, the whites had made their Government there. So, their justice system was imposed on the Africans, keeping them at disadvantage. This was the real situation of a check mate for the locals. Christians were more privileged and locals were harassed. There was a serious death penalty for killing a converted Christians or jail for physically injuring them. From all sides, they were losing.

They were not able to protect their unique identity and culture which their ancestors have passed down from generations. It was a biased game to play with for the local people and they were in a situation they were not able to decide what to do. They were lacking a leadership, even having well experienced old aged wise people. It is well said that, “God helps those who helps themselves”. The fear of their gods led them to do nothing and wait for the destiny to come by itself. It seemed like God himself had no personal interest in helping these people out.

Like the title of the novel “Things Fall Apart” mean, it really did for the locals. Their religion, traditions, customs and ‘gods’, all were nowhere to be seen after 50-60 years. Their house of glasses was shattered down by some ‘other’ people without so much effort was a real deal.

Things which their ancestors have taken care and nourished like a growing bud of sapling, now, after becoming a huge tree was uprooted by some men who can be counted in numbers, was the ‘fall apart’ concept of the writer. Its impact is still visible in African continent, where the local religion is today nowhere to found. With such a vast destruction, comparable to ethnic cleansing, only 0.5% of population is following the old tradition, but still struggling for



their identity lost under the influence of Christianity.

We can see such examples from the contemporary world, which was the result of past history of nation. Like for example, Mughals and then British annexation of Indian sub-continent, European colonisation of African continent, Japan capturing Korea and some parts of china. The influence of new people from other lands was different everywhere. For India, there was mixed reaction for Mughals. Africa suffered, same goes with Korea. The lesson learned from such history is that all should know how to co-exist with each other. And day by day people are forgetting this thing and communal harmony is difficult to maintain.

If Europeans had given a thought about co-existence and harmonizing with the local people, then the local community's losses would have been significantly reduced. Still, the world is not taking the examples and continuing to do the same thing. The hate among communities is ever growing. While some individuals and organisations have taken initiative for world peace, there is still lot more to do.

Conclusion:

For the conclusion, we can take some wisdom from the novel's end where the author has given a subtle message to his readers sending chills down to bottom. There, he is trying to convey that an unexpected and inflicted change on anyone which is forcible in nature can lead to an instability and failure of the new system. There is always resentment and long-term psychological effect among the sufferers which can be seen even today.

The lesson to learn from here is a message of universal peace by accepting each other as the way they are and not trying to convert to 'their' way is an evil practice and a shame on face of humanity. Respect every being. Another thing that is noteworthy is that people should express their inner thoughts with each other, otherwise can lead to depression. As our main character had met his fate with suicide, one should always ease their load of tensions with their trusted ones. If a balloon is inflated beyond limits tends to burst. Lastly, fear of anything leads to frustration and wrong decisions. People, in fear, deceives themselves for their whole life and never confrontit.

The feeling of helplessness gets accumulated over time and converts into anger. A person who can't do anything tends to show anger to justify the actions. There is lot more things to learn from this novel. A great piece of work without any hate.

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