

## ‘The hero’s fall indicates the cultural fall’.

Do you agree the above statement with reference to Achebe’s Things fall Apart?

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We are caged by

Our cultural programming

Culture is a mass

Hallucination, and when

You step outside the mass

Hallucination you see it

What its worth

(Anonymous)

Things fall apart is a short novel written by Chinua Achebe. It is a story about a group of tribal people who live in Nigeria in around the 19<sup>th</sup> century. When we go through the whole story it’s all revolves around a man called Okonkwo, a warrior of umoufia clan. In a settlement with a neighboring village Umoufia clan gets a boy called Ikemefuna and a virgin and the boy has to live with Okonkwo. According to the warning of the village elders and the oracle Okonkwo kills that boy and goes into a deep depression. Due to the depression and guilty Okonkwo kills the village elders’ son accidentally and has to leave the village for seven years because they think that killing a clan is a great sin. After his departure missionaries come to their village and numerous clan converts to Christianity. Okonkwo tries his level best to safeguard the clan. But he fails. Finally due to these missionaries Okonkwo becomes a rebellion and at the end he commits suicide. It portrays history and the life of the African tribal people and shows how the British government imposed its religion and trappings on the cultures of Africa, which they believed was uncivilized. When the new customs and traditions

and culture introduced there the native traditions gradually disappeared and in time the whole local social structure within which the indigenous people had lived successfully for centuries was completely changed and destroyed.

Achebe spends the first half of the novel depicting the Ibo culture, by itself, in both a complicated and primitive light describing and discussing its grandeur, showing its strengths and weaknesses, etiquettes and incivilities, and even the beginning of cultural breakdown before the introduction of the missionaries. The collapse of the old culture is evident soon after the missionaries arrived, and here Achebe utilizes two of the primary missionary figures, Mr. Brown and Mr. Smith, to once again depict both sides of the Ibo culture between them, with Mr. Brown depicting the sophisticated and Mr. Smith depicting the primitive aspects.

According to the story it illustrates the clash between colonialism and the tradition. Many times in the past when two different cultures meet, there is often a clash of cultures. Sometimes these cultures are near each other, and sometimes one culture invades another. Either way, there are great consequences that come with both. Consequences usually involve one culture being taken advantage of by the opposing dominant one. In Chinua Achebe’s fictional novel, Things Fall Apart, this cultural invasion does take place, igniting a clash of cultures between the Igbo tribe of Nigeria and the Christian British that are seeking to colonize this primitive land. The constant forcing of new ideas upon the tribal people slowly begins to erode at the Igbo tribe’s culture, while also causing things to fall apart within the society. First of all the title itself talk about the hero’s fall and destruction of

the culture. Things Fall Apart, the life of the protagonist, their traditional culture the life of the clan, customs, social norms all are forcefully pushed apart forever from them. They steal their tradition from their souls and hide them forever, like the Americans steal the land from the Red Indians.

This Umoufia clan belongs to the Igbo community. Usually those people are live in villages that have anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand people comprised of numerous extended families. In Igbo's culture a sense of tradition is highly significant. People would carry out the various traditions that had been passed down from their ancestors' centuries ago in their everyday lives. The Umoufia clans are strictly followed the traditions and culture in their life.

The protagonist Okonkwo here mentioned as a conservative person. He respected his tradition and culture more than his life. At the same time he is a person rarely shows the emotions softness towards the others. As mentioned in the story The Week of Peace is a sacred time for the Umoufia clans. Before any one is allowed to plant their crops they must live in peace with their neighbors for a week to honor the great goddess of the earth which they worship. It is ordained that if this peace is broken than they will not receive a blessing from their Goddess and their crops will not grow. Achebe demonstrates how important this week is to the Umoufia through Okonkwo's beating of his wife, Ojiugo. "The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan," says the priest of the earth goddess. It was a shocking moment for Umoufia people when they heard of Okonkwo's actions because "it was the first time for many years that a man had broken the sacred peace. This shows how those people follow the rules strictly. They are not satisfied with the repentance because he is a leader he cannot do any mistake.

The other point is that Ikemefuna's death. Ikemefuna is a boy whom the Umoufia clan wins by a settlement. In this case there is a system in that village the boy should be killed and it should be done by the village leader. Though Okonkwo is a leader he cannot kill the boy because the boy addressed him as a father. Okonkwo always tries to follow the laws of the clan. Whenever he breaks

them – either deliberately through a loss of temper or inadvertently as in shooting the boy – he never questions the punishments brought upon him. Okonkwo abides by his punishment whether or not he thinks they are fair. This is one way of maintaining his honor and reputation. He reads the laws literally, unlike his father who bent the rules and tried to circumvent certain aspects of the law. Everything went smoothly until Ikemefuna was killed. But unfortunately everything went wrong, everything started to fall down. Okonkwo mistakenly killed the village elder's son and he has to leave the village for seven years.

This time the disaster came to the Umoufia village in the form Christianity. A major aspect of one's society is religion. Without it, the way people hold themselves accountable would be nonexistent. In addition, many moral standards that exist today are values taken directly from religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Currently, there exists a feud between people who believe in a god, and of those who do not. Eventually those who believe in a higher power will fight against each other. In "Things Fall Apart", Chinua Achebe brings to light the differences and similarities of Christianity and Umoufia tradition in order to demonstrate the effects of religion upon one's society, which is exemplified by Okonkwo and his people. This is noticed in the lives of the Ibo, the missionaries, and Okonkwo himself.

The missionaries slowly poisoned the minds of the clans and then people started to convert to Christianity. At the very first of the story the clans think that breaking a single rule or breaking the tradition is a very great sin. They send the people away from their community for a long time. But the same people are now breaking their culture, collapsing their tradition, killing their ancestral spirit by the name of new culture new trend. Umoufia is the only man who tries his level best to preserve his culture but not his people. But he severely fails. Even he couldn't protect his one and only son from converting to Christianity. There is a proverb in African tribal community.

*Listen to the ground and hear the footsteps of ants.*

(African Proverb)

Whatever the hard ship comes they always follow their tradition. But now they fail to hear the footsteps of the disaster in the form of religion.

His final act of suicide is the central conflict of things falling apart because it is the important factor on this time that Okonkwo purposefully breaks the clan laws. As a character, Okonkwo remains pretty consistent throughout the book. We see no sudden changes in behavior or mindset; in fact, that may be Okonkwo's problem – his inability to adapt or compromise his ethics to changing situations that call for more tolerance or compassion. Okonkwo, whose sense of pride and dignity continues until the end, chooses to live and die on his own terms rather than submit to the white man. Exactly at the final part of the story Okonkwo has hanged himself. He is a tragic hero. His tragic flaw, rage and violence bring about his own destruction.

He resists the new political and because he feels that they are not manly and that he himself will not be manly if he consents to join or even tolerate them. The villagers in general are caught between resisting and embracing change and they face the dilemma of trying to determine how best to adapt to the reality of change. Many clans are excited about the new opportunities and techniques that the missionaries bring. They are attracted by their foreign language. The language plays a major role in the cultural clash. So Okonkwo fails to save his people. He is the representation of the Umoufia culture. Now he is dead. all the things are now fallen apart like when a person throw a stone to a tree stone never fall again horizontally . it will fall apart like **things fall apart**. Symbolically the writer says that the Umoufia's culture and tradition also dead.

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