

Things Fall Apart: Post-Colonialism & Culture of Igbo People

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About Author:

The novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) written by Chinua Achebe, Christened Albert Chinua Lomugu Achebe by his Igbo parents, Isaiah Okafor Achebe, a Christian churchman, and Janet N. Achebe, was born on November 16, 1930 in Ogidi, Eastern Nigeria. Albert C. Achebe attended a primary school in Ogidi run by the church Missionary Society before he was chosen to attend Government College at Umoufia, where he studied from 1944 to 1947. The school was said to be one of the very best in West Africa and the boy Achebe went there on the merit. He entered University in 1953. He had studied literature, history and theology at the university. While at University College, Albert Chinua Lomugu Achebe dropped the “Tribute to Victorian England”, as Achebe says in his 1987 book of essays *Hopes and Impediments*, and shortened his first name to its present form “Chinua”. In 1966 the massacre of Igbo’s Northern Nigeria forced Achebe to leave Lagos and take his family back to eastern Nigeria. When the eastern Nigeria seceded from the federation and declared itself as Biafra, a separate republic, Achebe become an official spokesman for the Biafra cause and was sent to several political missions to Europe and North America. He returns to Nigeria in 1977. In 1985, he was made emeritus professor at Nsukka and frequently went abroad to teach at institution like the University of Massachusetts and the University of Connecticut in the U.S. He has been the recipient of various honors from all over the world --- this includes over twenty five honorary doctorates from universities in intellectual achievement, the Nigerian National Merit Award. Chinua Achebe began writing early probably 1950 onwards after he had entered University College, Ibadan. The teaching in Africa missionary school and college was excellent and the teachers spotted and selflessly encourage talent early. Chinua Achebe training in college, in literature, history and theology might have furthered high ambitions to write ‘humanities’ subjects would have served as an additional impetus. Chinua Achebe began, in the first place, to write his First novel, *Things Fall Apart* because he, a modern Anglophone Igbo Nigerian, had felt insulted by the representation of his own people in English Literature. Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (which he set along the Congo River, mostly, circa 1890’s) Joyce Cary’s *Mister Johnson* (1953) had to correct, through an authentic novel about Nigeria (especially for Igbo land).

In an interview with Lewis Nkosi, Chinua Achebe said:

“I know around 51, 52 I was quite certain that I was going to try my hand at writing, and one of the things that set me thinking was Joyce Cary’s novel set in Nigeria, *Mister Johnson*, which was praised so much, and it was clear to me that it was a most superficial picture of –not only the country – but even of Nigerian character, and so I thought if this was famous, then someone ought to try and look at this is from the inside.”

One of the most famous novel of Chinua Achebe *Things Fall Apart* has been translated into many languages and has sold over 10 million copies. Achebe was appointed the original editor of Heinemann’s African Writers Series (launched in 1958) and *Things Fall Apart* was the first novel published in this series.

1.0 Introduction of *Things Fall Apart*:

Things Fall Apart is both a “historical” and “political” novel that eschews nostalgia or any self-deceiving sentimentality about the break-up of the old way of life in Igbo land, beginning in the 1880s. As Chinua Achebe he puts it in a lecture delivered in 1964 to the Nigeria Literary Association:

The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self respect. The writer’s duty to help them regains it by showing the human terms what happened to them, what they lost. There is a saying in Igbo that man who can’t tell Where the rains begin to beat him cannot know where he dried his body. The writer can tell the people where the rain began to beat them...in Africa he cannot perform this task unless he has a proper sense of history.