

## Chapter II

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## 2.0. Introduction

Chinua Achebe's first novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958), as the title suggests the identity issues of Igbo society, which has a great cultural past to boast of, like any other ancient civilization in the world. Structured on a limited frame of 152 pages, the book, which is no more than a novella, successfully reflects the issues of identity and the values of unspoken and unheard of phases and facets of African life. It is set in the 1890s and portrays the clash between Nigeria's white colonial government and the traditional culture of the indigenous Igbo people. It shatters the stereotypical European portraits of native Africans. Achebe effectively counters the persistent and self-serving European stereotypes of African identity, particularly the notion that traditional African identity of the Igbo clan. It is however, a society that cannot survive and unaltered in the modern world. Like W. B. Yeats 'The Second Coming' (1919) from which the novel takes its title, *Things Fall Apart* as an ironic and apocalyptic vision of the failure to maintain order and balance.

“Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world” (Yeats, 1919: verses 1-4).

The title of the novel is sarcastic resting on the distortion of Igbo identity by the invasion of missionaries and resulted into the pacification of Igbo tribe. It represents the complex, advanced social institutions and artistic traditions of Igbo identity prior to its contact with Europeans. Achebe rightly says that the novel “*Things Fall Apart* was an act of atonement (or rather, “at-one-ment”) with my past, the ritual return and homage of a Prodigal Son” (Achebe, 1965:38). The sentiment expressed by Achebe retrospectively about the novel. It focuses the Igbo rituals and identity with allusions to the Bible, especially to Jesus Christ's parable of the prodigal son in St. Luke's Gospel, (Navarre, 1999-2005: verses 18-32).

Kwame Anthony Appiah declares that “*Things Fall Apart* as Africa's best-loved novel”. He further adds that it is “archetypal modern African novel in English”. (Appiah, 1994: ix) His focus upon the late nineteenth-century portrayal of Igbo culture by Achebe in the novel is commendable and can serve as an appropriate starting point for full-fledged investigations into the issues of the portrayal of African

culture, the process of colonization and the resultant issues of identity and hybridity, in the light of postcolonial critical theories. The columnist, Fafa, Foofo says;

“Achebe introduces the various aspects of any civilization in “Things Fall Apart”: an economy, family, a system of justice, language, socio-cultural relations, foreign relations, warfare, sports etc. He also introduces the many values of traditional and modern African society: honesty, self-determination, hard work and humility” (Foofo: 2013).

In this chapter, the major presumption is that Achebe has elucidated the native pre-colonial issues of identity and culture with the suggestion that they existed for reform and change, introduced by the missionaries, because of the inherent flaws and weaknesses of Igbo clan. The study means to point out that Achebe has penetrated the native African identity and culture in his narrative, along with the portrayal of the weaknesses of that culture and society. Further, the novel is a fine manifestation of the instance of reflecting issues of identity and culture in every sense of the word.

*Things Fall Apart* (1958) is divided into three parts. The first part of it relates to the pre-colonial Igbo Clan in Nigeria. The second part reveals the social identity, judicial system, and customs of the clan, banishment of Okonkwo to Mbanta village and the arrival of missionaries in Nigerian villages. The third part distinguishes the disruption of Igbo culture, the clash between new faith i.e. Christianity and traditional Igbo social patterns, pacification of Igbo clan and the things fall apart at the end by the tragic end of the protagonist Okonkwo. Achebe reveals the friction within the individual and the friction between the individual and Igbo society and the way both account for the transformation of identity and culture throughout the novel.

### **2.1. Issues of Identity in the Novel ‘*Things Fall Apart*’**

The Igbo people historically called as Ibo are an ethnic group of south-eastern Nigeria. They are known as one of the largest ethnic groups of Africa. In rural Nigeria, Igbo people are mostly craftsmen, farmers and traders. Before colonialism, the Igbo people were living in politically fragmented groups. The first part of *Things Fall Apart* (1958) deals the pre-colonial identity of the Igbo people in the nine villages of Nigeria. Achebe mirrors the pre-colonial aspects of the Igbo people in the

novel by featuring the beliefs and social patterns of the society which are deeply rooted in the primitive culture. Don C. Ohadike points out;

“The Igbo myths point to the origins of agriculture, the antiquity of the family, and "Above all, since this myth makes no mention of migrations from distant places - as opposed to the majority of African traditions of origin - it suggests that the Igbo people have occupied their present locale for a very long time, a suggestion that is confirmed by archaeology” (Ohadike, 1978: ii).

The pre-colonial Igbo communities were known as extremely democratic, yet they had no centralized governments. The five most important cross-cutting institutions were the councils of the elders, age-groups, and councils of chiefs, women’s associations and secret societies. They used to believe in the God ‘*Chukwu*’ at the centre of their religion and the ancestral spirits and the wooden gods names ‘*chi*’ are the messengers of it. There were the four titles in the clan. They were known as the ‘honours’. The elder people of the society were the members of the judicial system, who were known as the *Egwugwu*. The people used to come to the temple of the *God of Hills and Caves* to ask about their failures or the different aspects of the health and farming. The celebrations of the *New Yam Festival*, the arrangement of the wrestling matches, were the social patterns of the Igbo people before colonies.

Achebe explains the urge of the Igbo people to develop and progress, it deals with the prosperity of Okonkwo;

“During the planting season Okonkwo worked daily on his farms from cockcrow until the chickens went to roost’. Okonkwo’s prosperity was visible in his household. Apart from his own hut or ‘obi’ he had three more huts built for his three wives, near the barn, he had a ‘medicine house’ or a Shrine where Okonkwo kept the wooden symbols of his personal god-Chi, and his ancestral spirits. He worshipped them with sacrifices of kola nut, food and palm wine and offered prayers to them on behalf of himself, his three wives, and eight children” (TFA: 11).

The Igbo people consider ‘*Yam*’ crop as the tribe’s respect for the physical vigour. Among Igbo people, a person was not known by his father’s identity but by

his own. 'In Umuofia, Age was respected among his people, but his achievement was revered' (TFA: 6).

Achebe reflects pre-colonial Igbo people, which refer the traditional ethics, religion, democratic way of justice and beliefs on their strength. The Igbos have been depicted as simple and innocent beings in the nine villages such as Umuofia, Aninta, Aneto, Umuru, Isike, Abame, Mbanta, Ire and Mbaino as the autonomous communities, where people lived peacefully with one another. The Igbo respect and honor achieved status more than ascribed status. The individual achievements determine a person's social position in the community. They are very assertive and proud of their achievements, and they raise their children not to fail in life. In effect, the Igbo material culture is engulfed in ingenuity and creativity. All of these characteristics of the Igbo make the impact in the nature of their laws, judiciary, crime prevention methods, and offender disposal mechanisms.

### **2.1.1. Social Identity**

*Things Fall Apart* (1958) relates the social identity of the Igbo people in Nigeria. The first part of it focuses on the pre-colonial structure of Igbo society. They had no centralized political structure. They lived in autonomous villages and towns ruled by their elders. Don Ohadike points out the Igbo social structure as:

“There were the lineage groups and on the basis of the lineages formed a compact village or a town named as ‘obodo’. Relationships were based on the blood ties, and each person traced his or her descent to three groups. First, a person belongs to the smallest social unit known as uno, or house. This was a natural family, consisting of a man, his wife, or wives, and their children. The second group was a umunna, or lineage, composed of a number of related houses. Finally, a group of lineages formed a concept of village or town, Obodo” (Ohadike, 2009: xix).

Though, the Igbo communities had no centralized government they were known as democratic by social and political structures revolved around the idea of ‘cross-cutting ties’. The most significant social markers of Igbo society are the unique system of honorific titles. The titles are not conferred by higher authorities, but they are acquired by individuals. The critic Stuart Hall points out that identity can be

invented. It is constructed within the 'play of power and exclusion' (Hall 1996:5). The story of the wrestling match between Amalize, the cat and Okonkwo is an instance of the identity of the village that used to be decided through the wrestling contests. Achebe puts in,

“Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on his solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was a great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino” (TFA: 1).

Okonkwo distinguished himself and got the honour to his village, he impressed all the villagers by his reputation as a wrestler throughout the nine villages of Umuofia. The wrestling match is to honour the concept of identity of the Igbo people in and around the nine villages of Nigeria. The value of physical power is considered not only in the wrestling matches but also in farming and rural activities. Achebe writes 'Okonkwo's prosperity was visible in his household. He had a large compound enclosed by a thick wall of red earth' (TFA: 11). As a prosperous farmer Okonkwo entitles the repute and “the elders, or *ndichie*, met to hear report of Okonkwo's mission.....Okonkwo was, therefore, asked on behalf of the clan to look after.....for three years Ikemefuna lived in Okonkwo's household”(TFA: 10).

In Igbo clan, the man, who fails to progress beyond the most junior titles was a man without status in the eyes of his people. Unoka, father of Okonkwo died without a title as he didn't work hard. subsequently, he lost his reputation in the clan. Achebe reveals that the man having more wives can be called a reputed man in the society. He points out the reputation of Okonkwo as:

“There was a wealthy man in Okonkwo's village that had three huge barns, nine wives and thirty children. His name was Nwakibie and he had taken the highest but one title which a man could take in the clan. It was for this man that Okonkwo worked to earn his first seed yams” (TFA: 15).

The identity of a wealthy person in the clan is considered by the number of wives, children and, more important, yams. Yam is the main crop in Igbo villages as it is considered as the ‘king of the crops’ (TFA: 18).

The Igbo clan in Nigeria has a patriarchal social identity. The women are supposed to be the followers of the men. There are the rigorous beatings of the women. The violence is prohibited during the sacred *Week of Peace*. It makes to note that the violence is accepted if there is no celebration of the sacred *Week of Peace*.

### **2.1.2. Masculine Identity and Igbo Ethnicity.**

The masculine identity of the Igbo people in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is reflected by order and hierarchy. Both concepts are related to their change and the issues of chaos in society. The arrival of the missionaries is regarded as the main cause of the chaos resulting from their encroachment in Igbo culture and tradition. The blend of the traditional cultural patterns and ethical power is attributed mainly to men by the patriarchal society. The pride of male power is affected with the various aspects of order and hierarchy, particularly honour and the sense of duty, which are the attributes of men. Moreover, those attributes constitute the repute, respect, honour in the name of prestigious titles in Igboland. Williams Raymond relates about the masculine identity differ with the certain projection of reality. He puts in:

“Dominant traditions often aspire to ‘an active and continuous selection and reselection’ and ‘a projected reality’, with which we have to come to terms on its terms, even though those terms are always and must be the valuations, the sections and the omissions of men”(Raymond, 1980:16).

The Igbo patriarchal society afflicts with the male power as an important aspect to construct their identities. The male power is not only associated with the physical value, but it appears in the mode of social identity also. The masculine identity is heralded by Okonkwo. His “fame is rested on his solid personal achievements, as a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat” (TFA: 1).

Derek Wright points out;

“Okonkwo’s cult of virility, by mistaking the nature of courage and confusing gentleness with weakness, upsets the sexual equilibrium that maintains a delicate between male values and female and maternal ones”(Wright, 1990:78).

The obsession with masculinity is an essential shield marked by excessive indulgences expressed in Okonkwo’s assertiveness. But there is no any place for a man who is improvident. “When Unoka died he had taken no tile at all and he was heavily in debt” (TFA: 6). the person, who appears to be lazy is looked upon as *agbala*, meaning a womanish in the Igbo clan.

The novel threads the pre-colonial and colonial masculine identities of Igbo people in Nigeria by featuring significant moments of the ‘socially structured’ issues of Umuofia and Mbanta. The masculine traditions operate as forms of consciousness that act particularly the power of village with specific powers and values of Umuofia. It is ‘not only ‘feared by its neighbours. It was powerful in magic’ (TFA: 8). Achebe predominantly explains the powerful men of magic, war and medicine and other dominant figures are mainly men.

At the social level, the certain amount of commitment of a person is evaluated by the clan. As the greatest warrior of Umuofia Ogbuefi Ezeudu was known as ‘a great and fearless warrior in his time, and was now accorded a great respect in all the clan’ (TFA: 41). It penetrates the kind of ‘honour’ in the organised Umuofian system is attributed to the people, who are likely to play a great role in the leadership. The man, who fails to achieve power, loses the identity as a member of the clan. The researcher, Azado observes that “In the Umuofia community of *Things Fall Apart*, Igbo men are constrained to achieve and flaunt (male superiority), in order to be seen and respected”(Azado, 2004:50). The masculine identity manifests itself at all levels in the novel. The females are marginalised and treated as merely the commodities of men. In the trial of Uzowulu, a large crowd gathered and “It was clear from the way the crowd stood or sat that the ceremony was for men. There were many women, but they looked on from the fringe like outsiders” (TFA: 64). Judith Butler asserts:

“Limits are always set with the terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse predicated on the binary structures that distort what is assumed to be true

about the formation of identity and subjectivity and restricts the imaginable and realizable gender configurations within culture”(Butler, 1990:9).

The dilemma between individual and society leads Okonkwo to believe firmly in the necessity to recapture his lost identity. For the purpose, he imposes himself some poignant principles to which he tries to stick. Okonkwo becomes an individual fighter in Umuofia. His success and failure repose on his ability to make an appropriate synthesis of the three values that make up his personality: male power, honour, and sense of duty. At the end of the story, Okonkwo realises that ‘the greatest obstacle in Umuofia,’ is that coward, Egonwanne....Tomorrow he will tell them that our fathers never fought a war of blame” (TFA: 151). It resulted into his suicide, which represents the physical aspect of his own violence. In return, the novel ends tragically with the death of both the white man and masculinity of the Igbo clan with certain ‘honour’ to the duty-boundless action. Okonkwo prefers to hang himself rather than fall into captivity. Rather than assuming his actions, he tries to save a little honour that remains for him. But in doing so, he casts off that honour he tries to keep all by cost.

Okonkwo is rejected even as a dead man simply because, as one of the clansmen said, “It is against our custom.’ said one of the men. “It is an abomination for a man to take his own life. It is an offence against the Earth, and a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen” (TFA; 151). However, the narrator expresses some compassion through the character Obierika:

“Obierika, who had been gazing steadily at his friend’s dangling body, turned suddenly to the District Commissioner and said ferociously: “That man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself; and now he will be buried like a dog...” He could not say any more. His voice trembled and choked his words” (TFA: 151).

It gives an insight that the Igbo people continued their beliefs till the arrival of the missionaries in Igboland. The tragic end of the protagonist is a result of the masculine issue of the identity as Okonkwo realises that the people of his clan are failed to resist the rules of the missionaries, and they had started to behave as women loosing the power of war or resistance with missionaries.

### 2.1.3. Feminine Identity and Igbo Ethnicity

The identity of women in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) reveals the patriarchal society. Gender identity of Igbo people is 'concretised', structured in terms of the spatial organisation: Men, and especially men with social status, live in their own obi or huts, where women come to them as and when they required while women live in smaller huts or cook out. Achebe puts in, 'Okonkwo's prosperity was visible.....each of his three wives had her own hut' (TFA:11). There is also a kind of hierarchy among the women and they either give respect to each other or follow the married or elders meekly.

The identity of the women in Igbo society is considered as the 'lower' or the 'second rate'. There are certain titles (honours) in the name of men. There is a distinction between masculine and feminine actions and responsibilities. Respect and success in the clan are based on the manly activities and accomplishments. On the other hand, women are supposed to be the head of household duties by taking care of the children and hens, scrubbing the walls and growing the crops like coco-yams, beans, maize, melons and cassava which are inferior and the crop Yam, 'the king of yams' is grown by men. The instance of the hierarchy in women is dealt by Achebe in the novel. A man can have many wives, as many as nine. The elder wife of Nwakibie has the right to drink the palm wine at first as she holds the position as the head of the family being the first wife of Nwakibie. Achebe writes;

"Anasi was the first wife and others could not drink before her, and so they stood waiting.....she went back to her hut. The other wives drank in the same way, in their proper order, and went away" (TFA: 15-16).

It is noted that there is a proper seniority of the women in the Igbo society. The gender inequality in the Igboland is further reinforced by the economics of marriage, the rites of exchange and circulation of women in the society. The murdered wife of the Ogbuefi Udo is replaced by a virgin from the Mbaino village. She was brought by Okonkwo as a compensation for the Ogbuefi Udo's murdered wife to avert the war and bloodshed. Achebe points out; 'The elders, or *ndichie*, met to hear a report.....At the end they decided .....the girl should go to Ogbuefi Udo to replace his murdered wife' (TFA: 10). The virgin brought by Okonkwo is forcibly

separated from her family and she is made the wife of Udo without her consent. A woman bought and sold for a bride price: so many cowries cells for her, They are treated as commodities of the husband and she may obediently do her man's bidding for the rest of her life, When the Igbo woman dies, after many years of service to her man, her corpse is sent back to her ancestral village and her kinsmen. It is decided the duty of her kinsmen to give a dead woman a decent burial. The decent burial was given to Okonkwo's mother in his motherland by Mbanta villagers. The instance of such a burial ceremony of the woman is traced in the novel. "Uchendu, and it was he who had received Okonkwo's mother twenty and ten years before when she had been brought home from Umuofia to be buried with her people"(TFA:95).

If a man grumbles at the women in Igbo society, he is known as a good ruler of the household duties. The control of the men over women is a significant part of the Igbo society. It means that the women had been given the subordinate place in the society. When Nwoye, the son of Okonkwo began to grumble at the women Okonkwo was pleased with his actions and believed that his son shows the sign of manhood. Achebe describes;

"Nwoye would feign annoyance and grumble aloud about women and their troubles. Okonkwo was inwardly pleased at his son's development....He wanted Nwoye to grow into a tough young man capable of ruling his father's household" (TFA: 38).

The manly changes are understood among people of Igbo clan if they are good at controlling the women. It stamps a question of the identity of the women in the clan. The pre-marriage ceremony in the Igbo clan penetrates the contrast between the women as they are set against each other i.e. married woman versus virgin. The virgin is expected to confess her chastity and charity before her marriage and this has been done in the presence of the whole kinsmen. The elder sister of the bridegroom ceremoniously and ritually enquires in the full view and audience of the male kin, the embarrassing question: 'How many men have you lain with since my brother first expressed the desire to marry you?'(TFA: 97). Before this shaming question to the bride, she is warned, 'Remember that if you do not answer truthfully, you will suffer or even die at childbirth' (TFA: 97).The kind of contrast between a married and a virgin is the example that the questioner here, Amikwu's elder sister must have been

exposed, in a similar fashion in the same ceremony and she merely grills her youngest brother's 'New wife'. It means that the ritual of moral confessions continues among the Igbo people generation to generation.

The Igbo custom regarding the identity and status of the women is complex as there is a question on the virginity of the women being tested before marriages by asking the embarrassing questions to the bride. Ekwefi, the village beauty and the second favoured wife of Okonkwo leaves her husband and shacks up with Okonkwo, as his second wife. Achebe writes;

“Okonkwo’s second wife Ekwefi.....Okonkwo had won her heart by throwing the cat in the greatest contest within living memory. She didn’t marry him because he was poor to pay her bride price. But a few years later she ran away from her husband Anene and came to live with Okonkwo” (TFA: 29).

It is interesting to note that this relationship is accepted without any murmur by Igbo people. It seems that the Okonkwo’s heroic deeds among Igbo have got the relaxation in the matters of man-woman relationships, within and according to rules, and by community acceptance at large.

There are the differences regarding the ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ crimes in the Igbo society. When he killed the son of the greatest warrior Ogbuefi Ezeudu inadvertently is known as the ‘female’ crime. So far that the crime is considered as the ‘Feminine’ (unintentional) and, therefore, it deserves the ‘lesser’ punishment of a seven years exile from the village. In the same way when the Mbaino villagers killed the Ogbuefi Udo’s wife on the market day, it was considered that the ‘Masculine’ crime and the Mbaino village was punished for the replacement of the murdered woman with a virgin along with the murder of Ikemefuna by Umuofian people including Okonkwo whom the lad Ikemefuna used to call ‘father’. But the son of Okonkwo joins Christianity and converted himself as ‘Issac’ it was known as an ‘intentional’ crime against the Igbo society, and there was a kind of doubt on the morality of Nwoye’s mother. Achebe writes;

“Okonkwo was popularly called the ‘roaring flame’.....How then could he have begotten a son like Nwoye, degenerate and effeminate? Perhaps he was

not his son. No! He could not be. His wife had played him false. He would teach her!”(TFA: 112).

It means that if the son is not obedient and the follower of the ancestral spirits the moral identity of his mother is doubtful.

#### **2.1.4. Beliefs and Judicial System**

‘The beliefs are the core of who we are, what we do, and the success that we acquire’ (Online Dictionary). Claude M. Bristol writes;

“There is one common strand woven throughout the many cultures and religions, all people, whether primitive or civilized, have shared a particular philosophy that is central to their culture”(Bristol,1991).

In all the ages and the social patterns, human beings have laid down certain judicial system along with their beliefs. The beliefs regulate the actions of the society. The beliefs make human beings to find the causes of the social norms and either support or uplift the certain rules of the society. The beliefs are the parts of the judiciary system of the society. The society set certain rules to justify the law and order for the survival of the social norms to monitor the day to day life. For harmonious living of the society, the rules laid down by the society are expected to be followed by all the people of the clan.

The judicial system plays a significant role in ‘resolution’ or ‘redressal’ of the society to set the social order in the form of justice. Ikenga K. E. Oraegbunam points out in the research paper;

“In order to discover the primordial sense of justice among the traditional Igbo, it may be necessary to first and foremost, analyze the Igbo words for justice: “akankwumoto” and “ikpenkwumoto”. While “akankwumoto” denotes justice as a virtue of a particular person, “ikpenkwumoto” or “ikpeziriezi” refers to the expression of this virtue in practical judgment at the event of dispute. The latter can also be described as truthfulness in making judicial decisions” (Oraegbunam, 2011:56).

The beliefs and the judicial system are the cardinal pillars of any society, group or ethnicity. But the judicial system mainly follows the acclaimed reasons for imposing penalties include: Retribution -Punishment imposed as a response that satisfies the aggrieved party, their loved ones, and society. The researcher from Nigeria, Columbus Ogbujah explains:

“Deterrence-To the individual (through fear of further punishment), and to the general public (potential offenders warned as to likely consequence of offense).

Rehabilitation - To reform the offender's behaviour Incapacitation - Offender is made incapable of committing further crime to protect the general society from crime.

Reparation - Repayment to victim(s) or to community

Denunciation- Society expressing its disapproval to crimes, reinforcing moral boundaries” (Columbus Ogbuja, 2014: 44).

*Things Fall Apart* (1958) explores the beliefs and the judicial system of the Igbo clan even before the arrival of missionaries. It also reveals the high sense of respect for authorities and the elders. “Everyone, who wanted to progress in life should follow the ancestral and elder people for the beliefs on justice” (Ogbujah, 2014: 45).As noted, an elder was respected not only because he was an embodiment of wisdom due to his vast experiences, but because his white hairs depicted his closeness with the ancestors – the custodians of the land. This moral sense was epitomized in the central character Okonkwo, who capped his deeds with this unmistakable apothegm: “Okonkwo had clearly washed his hands and so he ate with kings and elders’ (TFA: 7).

Igbo clan represents polygamy of the justice by the description of a wealthy Nwakibie when Okonkwo goes to the house of him to fetch the yam seeds. An instance of hierarchical order is explored by Achebe that the elders are respected in the Igbo society in such a way even in the women;

“Anasi was the first wife and others could not drink before her, and so they stood waiting.....she went back to her hut. The other wives drank in the same way, in their proper order, and went away” (TFA: 15-16).

Okonkwo was punished by the Igbo elders when he had violated the *Week of Peace*. The belief of the Igbo people doesn't permit to speak the harsh word to another person during the week of peace, but Okonkwo beats his wife Ojiugo for delaying his meal. His violence during the sacred *Week of Peace* casts him a punishment of the one she-goat, one hen, a length of a cloth and a hundred cowries. He questions that 'If you came to your obi and found her lover on top of her, you would still have committed a great evil to beat her' (TFA: 23). The wife beatings during the sacred week are prohibited and it makes to think that the wife-beatings are allowed if there is no sacred *Week of Peace*.

The general sense of purity among Igbo is penetrated by the kind of crime committed by clansmen inadvertently. It is treated as the destruction to the society.

"It was a crime again the earth of goddess to kill a clansman, and a man who committed it must flee from the land....the crime was of two kinds, male and female. Okonkwo had committed the female because it has been inadvertent. He could return to the clan after seven years" (TFA: 91).

The belief behind the punishment is if the clansmen would not punish him for inadvertently killing the sixteen year old son of Ezeudu. The wrath of the earth goddess would be let loosed on all. Hence, the punishment for Okonkwo was forced to flee from the land for seven years. "A large crowd of men from Ezeudu's quarter stormed Okonkwo's compound, dressed in grabs of war. They set fire to his houses, demolished his red walls, killed his animals and destroyed his barn"(TFA: 91). In such a way, people were effectively deterred from acts that could lead to the murder of their kinsman.

The murder of Ogbuefi Udo's wife, the 'daughter of Umuofia' is one of the instances of the judicial system of the Igbo people who redressed in an open market place. Everyone was informed by the town-crier by beating the drum (hallow metal). The mutually acceptable "resolution" or "redressal" to the dispute was found on the advice of the community. The punishment was directed by the elders of the Igbo people by believing that the 'Oracle of the Hills and Caves had forbidden Umuofia to wage a war'. (TFA: 10) It was decided that the Mbaino villagers should compensate the crime by giving them a virgin, a 15 years lad to avoid the bloodshed. The narrator says;

“Umuofia sent Okonkwo as an imperious emissary of war to Mbaino, asking them to choose war or to offer a young man and a virgin as compensation, on the other. The people of Mbaino choose to offer them a lad of fifteen called Ikemefuna, and a young virginto avert the war. The virgin was given to Ogbuefi Udo to replace his murdered wife” (TFA: 10).

The Goddess of Earth ‘*Supreme Mother*’ is at the centre to justify the crime and the related punishments to the Igbo people as per rules laid down by the community. In the judicial system of the Igbo people believe in ‘*Chukwu*’, who is supposed to be the creator all things and expect obedience. The council of the elders discusses the affecting lineage members at the meetings and passes the judgments.

The novel depicts *Egwugwu* trial for the settlement of the dispute between Uzowulu and his wife’s family. The Igbo people had the judicial system, where the disputes were brought and the jury system constituted by the nine *Egwugwu*, who are supposed to be the masked ancestral sprits and respectable community leaders. Okonkwo is one of the ancestral spirits of Umuofia village, whereas the other eight men represent the other eight of the nine villages. The briefs were taken, testimonies of witnesses were received and the judges evaluated the matters before pronouncing judgments. After Uzowulu’s complaints and Odukwe’s response were taken, two other witnesses were brought into give their testimonies.

“The egwugwu retreated in consultation for a moment, and when they emerged, the Evil Forest delivered their judgment, asking Uzowulu to go beg his wife with a pot of wine” (TFA: 67).

Mgbafo, the wife of Uzowulu is not permitted to speak for herself at the trial. The trial comes to an end with a solution among those who involved in the case to cement the social bonds without imprisonment or violent punishment. The judicial system of the Igbo people is sophisticated and perhaps more merciful than that of the white man.

The Igbo people especially elders simply choked in a system with high ethical standards of the white men exemplified in the character of their District Commissioner. In his absence, one of the overzealous converts – Enoch stoked

conflict with the people by unmasking one of the *Egwugwu*. The people went to destruct the church, where Enoch took refuge. When the District Commissioner returned, he invited the elders of the clan for a peace meeting with these words:

“I have asked you to come, ‘began the commissioner,’ because what happened in my absence. I have told the few things, but I cannot believe them until I have heard your side. Let us talk about it like friends and find a way of ensuring that it doesn’t happen again” (TFA: 141).

These soothing words made the elders lose their guard and settle for a reconciliatory meeting without knowing it was a ploy to disarm and arrest them. Before they could realize it, they were arrested and thrown into the guardroom and were given neither the opportunity to explain what happened nor to defend themselves. It resulted in a demand of a fine of two hundred bags of cowries to release them from the custody of the missionaries. The Igbo judicial system was on the toe of disruption from the missionaries.

### **2.1.5. Religious Identity**

Religion is the main arena and an influential part of any society. It shapes the moral and ethical boundaries to regulate the act and actions of human beings into a particular mode of existence. The religious identity among Igbo people plays a pivotal role in day to day activities. The Igbo people lived in the villages surrounded by their farms till mid-twentieth century. They focused on their religious beliefs on three types of supernatural beings: God, spirits and ancestors. *Things Fall Apart* (1958) deals with the supreme God ‘*Chukwu*’ among the people. ‘Chukwu is seen as a powerful, munificent God, the one who holds the knife and the yam and provides people with wealth, rain, and children, and who is merciful toward rich and poor, male and female, child and aged. Every morning the father of the family offers prayers to the Supreme Being. “Chukwu does not intervene in the minor details of human existence, however; such matters he leaves to the spirits and ancestors, who are often described as his messengers” (Encyclopedia of Religion: 2005).

The supreme God ‘*Chukwu*’ does not intervene in the minor problems of human existence in the Igbo families, however; such matters are left to the spirits and ancestors, who are often described as messengers of ‘*Chukwu*’. There are the personal

Gods of the Igbo families named as '*Chi*' these are the personal wooden gods and the Igbo people worship their wooden gods which are known as the ancestors for the well beings. The spirits are powerful in three dimensions such as space (sky) earth (land) and ancestral world. The space spirits exist through thunder, lightening, sun, and moon. The earth spirits exist through nature spirits, rocks, hills, cave tress and farms. The guardian spirit of the earth is '*Ani*'. The ancestral spirits serve as a guardian of hunters, farmers, fishermen, medicine men and other professional guilds.

It is also believed that the ancestral spirits called '*chi*' evaluate the fate of an individual. During festivals, they visit the human world as guests in the form of masquerades or incarnation. But the spirits of evil people roam as the '*ogbanje*' or the ghost. '*Ogbanje*' spirits are normally the possession of the female bodies. Michael Mozia asserts;

“The earth-spirit sanctions the prohibitions or moral norms and the ancestors communicate same to the living...The living makes sure that these prohibitions are not broken” (Mozia, 1982:222).

It seems customary for the Igbo people to pray God "*Chukwu*" when there is a kind of danger or rejoice among the people. The Igbo clan believes that the time is cyclical and the rites of the naming ceremony, marriage ceremony, membership in secret and open societies and funeral with honesty to the communal values are judged by supreme God. The 'ill-fated' lad Ikemefuna was killed mercilessly by the Umuofian villagers including Okonkwo. The villagers believed that it is an order of their God of Earth. Ogbuefi Ezeudu, the oldest man of Umuofia comes to Okonkwo and instructed him about an order of the Oracle of Hills and Caves. Achebe puts in;

“That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death.....yes, Umuofia has decided to kill him. The Oracle of the Hills and caves has pronounced it. They will take him outside Umuofia as is the custom, and kill him there” (TFA: 41).

Okonkwo didn't go against the religion and custom of his clan though the child was calling him father.

According to Michael Mozia;

“The relationship between earth-spirit and the ancestors with God is that the ancestors are the custodians of public morality and the laws of the land. In this regard, they serve as the intermediaries between God and the living members of the community, whereas the earth-spirits, “act as the indirect mediator to whom the ancestors are directly responsible” (Mozia, 1982:182).

Okonkwo was punished for his violation of the custom during Week of Peace. he was told by the clan, “the evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. The earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall all perish” (TFA: 23). The arrival of missionaries in Nigeria destroyed the religious identity of the people by convincing them that there is only one god in the world i.e. Jesus Christ further remarked that “All the Gods you have named are not gods at all. They are gods of deceit.....Your gods are not alive.....they are pieces of wood and stone” (TFA: 107). The conflict between New faith i.e. Christianity and traditional religion of Igbo went on and ended with the conversion of the people into new faith.

#### **2.1.6. Cultural Identity**

Cultural identity is one of the aspects that go to change to suit the changing needs and conditions. However, in all the societies there are certain basic values that constitute the culture and these need to be perpetuated because the loss of culture would mean a loss of identity for that society. *Things Fall Apart* (1958) mirrors the cultural identity of the people through the multidimensional panorama of the Igbo society. However, ‘culture can be transmitted or acquired through information or symbol. ‘Cultural identity is those attributes, behavioural patterns, lifestyles, social structures and norms that distinguish a people from other peoples’ (Omekwu, 2003). The harmonious existence of Igbo in the nine villages of Nigeria perpetuates the cultural aspects of their own. The arrangement of wrestling matches is one of the parts of it that used to be decided the identity of the village. The columnist, Michael Dirda says that ‘*Things Fall Apart* has long been revered for its imaginative recreation of Ibo culture just before it collided with British colonialism’ (Dirda: 2008). The arrangement of the New Yam Festivals makes a sense of the unified kinsmen in the Igbo society and their beliefs towards rejoice. The fellow feeling of brotherhood is

a typical one when Okonkwo invites his kinsmen to a moonlight dinner to offer his 'Kola nut' for their kindness.

The changes in the social patterns and the ethics make the drastic changes in the identity of the people. Nwoye, the son of Okonkwo works hard to help his father during the planting season is an instance of pride for Okonkwo. But when the 'ill-fated' Ikemefuna killed mercilessly by the villagers. Nwoye shifted his focus from the Igbo ethics to Christianity. The arrival of the missionaries in the Abame village is another example of the change in the social pattern. When the missionary entered the Abame village, the Igbo people 'killed him and tied up his iron horse to the silk cotton tree' (TFA: 102).

The protagonist Okonkwo is treated respectfully by the elders because of his affinity towards the culture and heritage of Igbo people, therefore Okonkwo's identity rests upon the cultural ethics of the society. David Carroll suggests:

"It would be quite wrong, however, to give the impression that the tribal society of Things Fall Apart is formidably monolithic. This is far from Achebe's intention. He is anxious to display the flexibility of the social structure; for only by understanding this can we understand the life and death of the central character, Okonkwo. What at first sight appear to be rigid conventions invariably turn out to be the ritual framework within which debate and questioning can be carried on" (Carroll, 2009:389).

The cultural identity is reflected as per the flexibility of the social structure of Igbo people. The protagonist of the novel Okonkwo signifies his attribute towards the cultural patterns of the Igbo tribe right from the beginning of the novel. But his doom at the end of the story is remarkably related to the patterns of the culture of the Igbo which he wanted to preserve though there is a disruption of the ethics caused by the missionaries. The sort of relations of the human being with tradition and the farming activities are displayed in the novel through the culture of Igbo.

The priestess Chielo sums up the symbolic relationship between the Man, the Yam and tradition. 'And when a man is at peace with his gods and his ancestors, his harvest will be good or bad according to the strength of his arm' (TFA: 14). It is referred with the sort of culture the person follows the same will decide the cultural identity of the man. The respect to the god and the ancestors can make a difference in

the life of Igbo people. The cultural identity of the Igbo people was known for their integrity, morality and the commitment to the prosperity. These, however, were the characteristics of the cultural glory. The arrival of the missionaries caused the changes and the innocence regarding worldly matters replaced by the downfall of the Igbo through their disintegration.

The change in the cultural identity of the Igbo people is described at the end of the story when Okika, a great man and the Orator of Umuofia addresses to the assembly of the clan.

“All our gods are weeping, Idemili is weeping. Ogwugwu is weeping. Agbala is weeping, and all the others. Our dead fathers are weeping because of the shameful sacrilege they are suffering and the abomination we all seen with the eyes” (TFA: 148).

The change in the cultural aspects drives the Igbo clansmen in the pacification and disruption.

#### **2.1.7. Pacification and Change after colonialism**

The identity issues of the Igbo people pacified after colonialism in Nigeria. The arrival of the missionaries and the new faith in Christianity weakens the identity of Igbo clan. Ancestral worship, customs, elderly advice regarding justice and religion fostered the pre-colonial identity of Igbo people but the conversion of the Igbo people to Christianity involves a partial rejection of the Igbo structure and social identity of the Igbo people. The response of Nwoye to join the missionary school is an instance of losing Okonkwo's control over him ultimately he loses his identity as 'a roaring flame' Mr. Kiaga reacts that 'blessed is he who forsakes his father and his mother for my sake' (TFA: 112). It denotes an idea that the Igbo people are pacified their identity in order to accept the Christianity.

Achebe does not present a clear-cut dichotomy of the white religion as evil and the Igbo religion as good. The belief about of 'Evil Forest' made downfall of the Igbo identity when the missionaries succeeded to build the church and the court in the villages to destroy the Igbo beliefs. Consequently, the villagers come to believe that the Christian god of the missionaries is more powerful than their '*Chukwu*' and '*Ani*' who were at the religious power of the Igbo people. The identity of any society is

grounded on the culture and beliefs and the well-established identity tolerates the changes, unfortunately, the Igbo people didn't follow the change in the social patterns and it resulted into their pacification.

The psychologist Eric Erikson points out the issues of identity in the chapter '*Identity and Uprootedness*' of the book *Insight and Responsibility* (1964);

"The key problem of identity, then, is (as the term connotes) the capacity of the ego to sustain sameness and continuity in the face of changing fate. But fate always combines changes in inner conditions, which are the result of ongoing life stages, and changes in the milieu, the historical situation. Identity connotes the resiliency of maintaining essential patterns in the process of change. Thus, as strange as it may seem, it takes a well-established identity to tolerate radical change, for the well-established identity has arranged itself around basic values which cultures have in common"(Erikson,1964:95-96).

Mr. Brown respected the Igbo clan and tried to understand the Igbo beliefs. His reactions with Igbo people regarding the harmonious relations, he debates with Ogbuefi Akunna without insults or violence. It made him to bring the necessary changes in the attitudes of the Igbo people. He convinced them that if Igbo people accept the colonial government, they won't lose their autonomy. The colonial government punishes individuals according to European cultural and religious values. The government pronounces the abandonment of newborn twins a punishable crime. It was a setback to the Igbo customs and the religious identity of the Igbo people was destroyed by missionaries in the name of 'outdated superstitious beliefs' of the Igbo people.

The social identity doesn't make the 'honoured' man/woman of the society to accept the changes and it always carry a certain amount of pride to identify him/her to preserve the ethics of the society. Okonkwo's desire to respond violently to the Christian church is not completely motivated by a desire to preserve his clan's cultural traditions. He has been fantasizing for many years about making a big splash with his return to his village, but the church has changed things so much that his return fails to incite the interest that he has anticipated.

On the other hand, the protagonist Okonkwo acts violently, and his slaying of the court messenger constitutes an instinctive act of self-preservation of his identity

and the identity of the clan as it is noted in the beginning of the novel ‘Umuofia was feared by all its neighbours. It was powerful in war and magic’ (TFA: 9). At the end of the novel, the same power of war is in the doubt when all the clansmen gathered to decide about the ill-treatment given by the missionaries to the ‘titled’ men of Umuofia. They lost the power to resist the missionaries and when Okonkwo killed a court messenger the people of Umuofia. ‘He (Okonkwo) heard voices asking: “Why did he do it?”’ (TFA: 149). The Igbo clan is viewed as cowardly.

There is certainly an element of self-destructiveness in a way of the pacification of the Igbo clan by the colonial power. The unwillingness of the leaders of Umuofia to convince the villagers about resistance to the missionaries is related with the loss of identity as an integrated clan. As a result, Okonkwo willingly embraces because the alternative is to submit to the world, law, and new order with which he finds himself inexorably at odds. The suicide of Okonkwo is not merely the tragic end of the protagonist, but it is the example of the lost identity of the Igbo clan. The disintegration among them caused to ‘fall apart’.

In other words, ‘things fall apart’ of the Igbo society due to the white man’s failure to understand African customs or the language. The missionaries didn’t understand that ‘Okonkwo is ‘one of the greatest men in Umuofia’. When his body was dangling to the tree. Obierika says that ‘he will be buried like a dog’ (TFA: 151). The District Commissioner reacts that ‘the story of this man who killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading, one could almost write a whole chapter on him. ‘Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph at any rate’ (TFA: 151-512). It makes a point to note that the issues of identity in the novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) resulted into a failure of two systems to understand each other.

## **2.2. Issues of Culture in the Novel ‘*Things Fall Apart*’**

Culture is an integral part of the society to shape certain ethical values; it is being transmitted from one generation to another either in changing patterns or static. But the general assumption is that the culture is fluid and it changes time to time. The critic Schaefer comments;

“Culture is the totality of learned, socially transmitted customs, knowledge, material objects and behaviour. It includes the ideas, value, customs and artefacts of a group of people” (Schaefer, 2002).

The first part of the novel reveals the pre-colonial events in *Things Fall Apart* (1958). It takes place in the late 1800s and early 1900s, just before the arrival of missionaries in Nigeria. The details are furnished about the pre-colonial African culture much different from western culture. Achebe reveals the aspects of Igbo culture such tradition, symbols of honour (titles), indicators of wealth (yams and cowries), marriage rituals, social rituals, music, entertainment, food and drink.

The social patterns of the pre-colonial Igbo culture lay on the unity and togetherness on various occasions. The Igbo believe in the social patterns of their culture such as festivals, religious ceremonies and practices. The people live in relation to their livelihood-farming and therefore their celebrations are animalistic rituals, which they celebrate contain the amusement and commitment to their ethics. They have their personal gods, they worship them wholeheartedly. Moreover, the people consult an oracle- the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves, which is also known as 'Agbala'. There religious festivals named as *Week of Peace*, *New Yam Festival*, *Isa-Ifi ceremony* and *Funeral Ceremony* exhibit the harmonious co-existence among them.

The family group or clan is made of many members, where the husband is the patriarch of the family and he has several wives who bear many children. Each family has their own farm, separate huts or *obi* and the compound where they live and work. The head of the clan does work and he works hard and so do the women, but they each have differing roles in the social activities as women are treated as the marginalized groups. There are the instances in the novel about the 'masculine' and 'feminine' works, stories, crime and behaviours, Where women are always treated inferior. Anyone, who is described as cowardly also has the description of being 'womanly' (TFA: 148).

In this novel, place has importance only as a defining structure of one village in respect to another. Their village is seen as one which is better than another but due to their lack of outside influence; their village is the only place they know. It is the place where they were born, where their parents died, but there is no semblance of real nationalism. Achebe describes the village in these comparative terms with other villages: "Umuofia was feared by all its neighbours. It was powerful in war and magic, and its priests and medicine men were feared in all the surrounding country" (TFA: 9-10). The idea of "place" is not as important in this novel as is the concept of

culture and the Igbo people of Nigeria are primarily centred on the culture and social patterns of the society.

### **2.2.1. Oral Tradition**

Achebe explores the issues of culture in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) which are associated with the Igbo culture and society. Moreover, it presents a good sense of African language and its euphemisms in the form of oral tradition and proverbs, which are enjoyable as well as giving insights about the great cultural heritage of Igbo people. Therefore, he uses the cultural twists in the novel to illustrate the oral culture of Nigerian villages. Harold Scheub, points out;

“Vital to African literature is the relationship between the oral and written word’. Oral culture is a cultural component that ‘distills the essences of human experiences, shaping them into rememberable, readily retrievable images of broad applicability with an extraordinary potential for eliciting emotional response” (Scheub, 2011:1).

The epigrams, poems, songs, and folk tales are all spoken and recited by Achebe to mirror the exactness of the Igbo wits through the language. The oral tradition projects the various facets of the culture of the Igbo clan through proverbs, songs and folk tales. The proverb is used by Okoye when he visits Unoka “He who brings kola brings life” (TFA: 5). It asserts that the kola nut is used for many things by Igbo people as a part of their tradition to keep the friendship survived.

The culture is cumulative and it is passed from one generation to the next generation in the form of cults and proverbs. Its pertinent knowledge gradually changes, but it is useful to the society. The proverbs are significant to the Igbo people because they explain the advice passed down through the years by their elders. It is reflected in such form in the narration that occurs “as the elders said” before the most of proverbs. The proverbs state the customs, social structure, family structure and basic information about the religion of the Igbo people. The proverb “when the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk” (TFA: 8). It denotes the idea in the text about someone is doing shameful during the night when no one finds him out in such act according to the Igbo people.

Nwakibie, a very wealthy man in the clan, who convinces Okonkwo about the humanity and cooperation among each other, while giving the yam seeds to Okonkwo with the proverb;

“We shall all live. We pray for life, children, a good harvest and happiness. You will have what is good for you and I will have what is good for me. Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break” (TFA: 15).

He uses the proverb to describe his attitude towards those who would borrow yam seeds from him. He says, “Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching” (TFA: 17). He believes on the abilities of Okonkwo and encourages him for being a prosperous farmer by saying that the man who works hard never forgets his duties towards the clan.

Okonkwo is described by an old man with the proverb “looking at a king’s mouth one would think he never sucked at his mother’s breast” (TFA: 20). Such a proverbial descriptor defines Okonkwo’s quickness in prosperity from poverty and he is known as one of the respected men of the clan. The proverb makes his character so much more vivid and alive than any other literary device. Okonkwo praises the victory of Obierika’s son Maduka “When the mother cow is chewing the grass its young ones watch its mouth” (TFA: 51). When he contested the wrestling match, Okonkwo says that the young lad Maduka has imitated the culture from his father.

When Okonkwo was in Mbanta village, Uchendu says that the ‘Mother is Supreme’ (TFA: 98). It means that the child belongs to its father and when the father beats his child, it seeks sympathy in its mother’s hut, so the mother is called supreme. Okonkwo takes a refuge in Mbanta during his banishment from Umuofia for seven years. He also asserts the proverb of Igbo “Never kill a man who says nothing” (TFA: 103). It denotes the idea that the Abame people should not have killed the missionary. As a result, the village is wiped out by them. When there was a farewell event for Okonkwo from Mbanta village, he says remorsefully about the act of his son Nwoye that the ‘hunter’s dog that suddenly goes mad and turns on his master’ (TFA: 122). There was a saying in Umuofia that as ‘a man danced so the drums were beaten for him’ (TFA: 135). It mentions the furious steps of Mr. Smith when Enoch unmasked

one of the egwugwu, the drums were beaten for the same; it means that the people destroyed the church for the guilty of Enoch.

The use of traditional songs as the oral tradition of the Igbo people elicits the sense of culture and affinity of the Igbo people with nature. The song is sung by the children:

“The rain is falling, the sun is shining,  
Alone Nnadi is cooking and eating” (TFA: 26).

The song expresses cultural and traditional imagery. The overjoyed children thank the rain for having stopped and allowed them to play freely as they do not stay indoors for a long. The song is sung by people in the village during the wrestling matches:

“Who will wrestle for our village?  
Okafo will wrestle for our village.  
Has he thrown a hundred men?  
He has thrown four hundred men.  
Has he thrown a hundred Cats?  
He has thrown four hundred Cats  
The send him the word to fight for us” (TFA: 37).

The following songs uttered by Iekemefuna, when he was taken to the forest by Umuofian elders, which is only one left un-translated in the novel.

“ Eze elina, elina!  
Sala  
Eze ilikwa ya  
Ikwaba akwa oligholi  
Ebe Danda nechi eze  
Ebe Uzuzu nete egwu  
Sala” (TFA: 44).

In the marriage ceremonies, the certain songs are sung by the dancers in the *Uri function* of the Igbo people. When the bride joins the dancers, comes from the

inner compound to dance holding a cock in her right hand and presents the cock to the musicians.

“If I hold her hand  
 She says, “Don’t touch!”  
 “If I hold her foot  
 She says, “Don’t touch!”  
 But when I hold her waist beads  
 She pretends not to know” (TFA: 87).

Uchendu narrates the bad time of his past life, he had six wives and his twenty- two children died at the time of birth. There is a song that is sung when the woman dies.

“For whom is it well, for whom is it well?  
 There is no one for whom it is well” (TFA: 99).

The habit of singing songs and investing lyrics with soulful tunes remain the same with the people of Umuofia even after the appearance of the white man in the midst. When titled men are imprisoned and made to work, the younger men sing songs of rebuke and ridicule addressed to the court messengers nonchalantly, in tune with the strokes of their matchets cutting grass.

“Kotma of the ash buttocks,  
 He is fit to be slave  
 The white man has no sense,  
 He is fit to be slave” (TFA: 128).

The folk tales describe the culture related issues to give depth to certain characters’ inner working and psyche. Okonkwo narrates the masculine stories such as war, violence and bloodshed. Nwoye is interested to know the masculine stories but he loves the stories told by his mother too. “The stories of the tortoise and his wily ways and of the bird *eneke-nti-oba*, it challenged the whole world to a wrestling contest and was finally thrown by the cat and story of the vulture and the sky” (TFA:

39). Nwoye prefers stories like the Vulture and the Sky which are much more interesting and less violent.

The folk tale used in the novel is one that is a mother's tale; the story of tortoise. The folk tale within the story of the novel shows the behaviour of certain characters, especially their knowledge and interest in the story, but also how African people use the stories to explain certain natural phenomena like why 'the tortoise's shell is not smooth' (TFA:76-77). It denotes the idea the greediness of someone may cause the crisis and the price has to be paid in the form of its return.

On the whole, Achebe illustrates the different dimensions of Igbo culture through the proverbs, songs and folk tales.

### **2.2.2. Festivals and Ceremonies**

Achebe mirrors the ceremonies, social gatherings, and rituals of Igbo people that help them to connect culturally, spiritually and socially, with each other. Tiffin says that Chinua Achebe's *Things fall Apart* (1958) exposes the festivals and ceremonies as the communal culture.

"The complexity and communal density of the people's culture were exposed through festivals, rite and rituals are established ... his novel focuses on the Ibo society and his use of style rely on the Ibo traditions and reputation of rituals and festivals" (Tiffin, 1988: 60).

The *Feast of New Yam* is one of the events that Igbo people celebrate every year before the harvest to thank the goddess, 'Ani', who is the source of all fertility. The celebration symbolizes the upcoming of the new yam of the year. According to the Igbo people the goddess 'Ani' has a close communion with the departed forefathers of the clan. It's a festive mood for all the clansmen and the preparation of it goes for three-four days. Achebe puts in, 'the Feast of the New Yam was held every year before the harvest began, to honour the earth goddess and the ancestral spirits of the clan' (TFA: 27). The Igbo show the symbolic rebirth of the year by throwing out old food, washing everything and celebrating with fresh new yams.

The Bride Price ritual in which a price is decided for which the bride's family must pay to the groom's family in regards to the bride's hand in marriage. The bride's family presents a bundle of sticks to the groom's family, which represents the number

of bags of cowries paid to the groom's family. In return, the groom's and the bride's family exchange the bundle back and forth, without uttering a word in a very respectable manner until the decision is finalized. An instance of the ritual is described in the bride price ritual of the Obierika's daughter, "Obierika then presented to him a small bundle of short broomsticks. Ukegbu counted them. 'they are thirty? He asked.....bride price was settled at twenty bags of cowries'" (TFA: 52-53). The king of bargaining is made in a friendly manner to respect each other.

The *Isa-ifi* ceremony is the final rite of the marriage. That evaluates the charity and chastity of the bride in a form of confession as per the tradition of the Igbo people. In the ceremony all the kinsmen surround the bride in a circle and it proceeds with the questions of her faithfulness to her husband, in which the bride answers and swears on the staff of her father. The bride is threatened by saying that 'Remember that if you do not answer truthfully you will suffer or die at child-birth' (TFA: 97).

The funeral ceremony among Igbo people is to pay honour to the respectable members of the clan. It's a kind of lamentation by beating the drums violently in a frenzy mood and dancing unsteadily the funeral steps of the tribe. Many of the attendees wear smoked raffia skirts and have their bodies painted with chalk in charcoal. The Egwugwu pay a visit to honour the deceased. When the greatest warrior Ogbuefi Ezeudu died the people of Umuofia paid a great honour to the person during his funeral ceremony.

"It was a great funeral so befitted as a noble warrior. As the evening drew near, the shouting and the firing of the guns, the beating of the drums and the brandishing and the clanging of the matchets increased" (TFA: 90).

### **2.2.3. Superstitions**

The Igbo people believe in the superstitions. They warn their children not to whistle at night because they are afraid that the evil spirits come out. They even think that the dangerous animals become more sinister during the night. 'A snake was never called by its name at night because it would hear. It was called a string' (TFA: 8). There is a belief that the *ogbanje*, which are wicked children who usually die at an early age, and then re-enter their mother's womb to be born again. They believe that it is the evil spirit of the same child that just comes in the form of many different infants. Then there is special kind of a stone called '*iyi-uwa*' that is buried near the

*ogbanje* infants buried. If the child's '*iyi-uwa*' were found again and destroyed the *ogbanje* spirits do not come again as the evil spirits. Achebe describes, 'where did you bury your '*iyi-uwa*'? She asked in return.....Where they bury children', she replied' (TFA: 99).

The silk-cotton tree is believed as a sacred tree because they believe that the good spirits of the children waited to be born from the silk- cotton tree. 'On the ordinary days young women who desired children came to sit under its shade' (TFA: 34). The Week of Peace is celebrated by Igbo people. No work is done during the Week of Peace. People call on their neighbours and drink palm wine. By doing so, 'it brings a good luck for a good crop season' (TFA: 24). However, someone breaks the *Week of Peace*, and then there are the chances of a bad crop season subsequently the most of the crops die.

The royal python is supposed to be the most revered animal to the Igbo clan. It is addressed as 'our father' and is allowed whenever it goes even into the beds of the people. "If a clansman kills a python accidentally, he made sacrifices of atonement and performed an expensive burial ceremony such as was done for a great man" (TFA: 116). Agbala, The Oracle of Hills and Caves when gets possessed by the spirit. The people come to consult the oracle about their fortune and misfortune. Sometimes a man came to consult the spirits of his dead father or relative. It was said that when such spirit appeared, the man saw it vaguely in the darkness, but never heard its voice. 'Some people even said that they had heard the spirits flying and flapping their wings against the roof of the cave' (TFA: 13).

Every clan and village had its 'evil forest'. In it were buried all those who died of the really evil diseases, like leprosy and smallpox. It was also the dumping ground for the potent fetishes of great medicine-men when they died. 'An 'evil forest' was, therefore, alive with the sinister forces and powers of darkness' (TFA: 109)' The Igbo people believe that the evil forest is a kind of place where the sinister forces live. If someone challenges the sinister forces that person dies suddenly within four days. The reason is that they gave such a battle to the missionaries to build the church and nothing happened as they built the churches and the court in the 'evil forest' if a titled clansman commits a suicide they do not touch the body of him. They believe that it is an abomination against their god. At the end of the story, Okonkwo commits a suicide but nobody touches his body by thinking that it is an offence against the goddess of earth.

#### 2.2.4. Customs

The customs of Igbo people thrive from the indigenous beliefs and general attitudes in the society. They transmit and store the values of their experiences by following the customs as a part of their identities. Ngugi says;

“Culture embodies moral, ethical and aesthetic values through which they come to view themselves and their place in the universe.' This set of values is 'the basis of a people's identity', on which our individual identity is built” (Ngugi, 1994: 441).

Therefore, besides personal factors, our culture and history play an important role in shaping our individual identity. One of the customs of Igbo people is to present a ‘Kola nut’ to welcome the guest and to respect the person in a polite manner. Achebe writes;

“One day a neighbor called Okoye came into see him...He immediately rose and shook hands with Okoye, who then unrolled the goatskin which he carried under his arm, and sat down. Unoka went into an inner room and soon returned with a small wooden disc containing a kola nut, some alligator pepper and a lump of white chalk. “I have kola,” he announced when he sat down, and passed the disc over to his guest. “Thank you. He who brings kola brings life. But I think you ought to break it,” replied Okoye, passing back the disc.....’No, it is for you, I think,” and they argued like this for a few moments before Unoka accepted the honor of breaking the kola. Okoye, meanwhile, took the lump of chalk, drew some lines on the floor, and then painted his big toe” (TFA: 5).

Unoka prayed to their ancestors for life and health, and for protection against their enemies. The second custom of the Igbo people is that when there is something to inform to the villagers, the crier beats hallow metal instrument ‘*ogene*’. It rhythms as; *gome, gome, gome, gome*, then the town-crier passes the message to all regarding an emergency. The villagers are informed to gather in the market place to discuss the issue of the ‘murdered wife of Ogubefi Udo by the Mbaino villagers in the market.

The other events like the death of Ogbuefi Ezeudu and the decision regarding react to the actions of the missionaries are informed in a similar ways. Achebe puts in, 'Okonkwo had just blown out the palm-oil lamp and stretched himself on his bamboo bed when he heard the *ogene* of the town crier piercing the still night air. 'Gome, gome, gome, gome, boomed the hollow metal. Then the crier gave his message, and at the end of it beat his instrument again' (TFA: 8).

It is customary to make animal sacrifices to the earth goddess, when planting crops, yet again; ritual is used to respect the earth goddess, who is at the centre of the success of yams crops. The narrator says;

"Every year," he (Unoka) said sadly, "before I put any crop in the earth, I sacrifice a cock to Ani, the owner of all land. It is the law of our fathers. I also kill a cock at the shrine of Ifejioku, the god of yams. I clear the bush and set fire to it when it is dry. I sow the yams when the first rain has fallen, and stake them when the young tendrils appear..." (TFA: 14).

The respected elder people, who help others in the difficult condition, are called 'our father' 'After the kola nut had been eaten Okonkwo brought his palm-wine from the corner of the hut where it had been placed and stood it in the center of the group'. He addressed Nwakibie, calling him "Our father." Achebe describes;

"Nna ayi," he (Okonkwo) said. "I have brought you this little kola. As our people say, a man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness. I have come to pay you my respects and also to ask a favor. But let us drink the wine first" (TFA: 15).

The celebration of the '*Feast of New Yam*' is a festive mood among Igbo people. It's an occasion to giving thanks to the goddess 'Ani' who is known as the source of the fertility and prosperity. The goddess '*Ani*' is considered at the centre to judge the morality and conduct of the Igbo people. It's the custom of them to worship the goddess '*Ani*' by celebrating the *Feast of New Yam*.

The Igbo people respect each other and even the Egwugwu respect the people at the time of the trial and they refer the people as 'bodies'. It makes a sense that the '*Egwugwu*' are more spiritual and less fleshy than the men so they refer human beings

as 'bodies' an instance is given in the novel during the Uzowulu's case. 'Uzowulu's body, I salute you.' he said. Spirits always addressed humans as "bodies" (TFA: 66).

The bridegroom's prosperity is evaluated by the ability to tap the palm-wine and the hard work in the farming. The bridegroom brings the pots of palm-wine to the bride's house. The bride price is sent through the pots of palm-wine. Providing many pots of palm-wine is the kind of value the bridegroom's family pays towards the bride. When the bride price of Obierika's daughter settled the bridegroom brought forty-five pots of palm-wine.

"They dare not bring fewer than thirty pots," said Okonkwo. 'I shall tell them my mind of they do.'... Obierika's relatives counted the pots as they came. Twenty, twenty-five. There was a long break, and the hosts looked at each other as if to say, "I told you." Then more pots came. Thirty, thirty-five, forty, forty-five. The hosts nodded in approval and seemed to say, "Now they are behaving like men" (TFA: 85).

Achebe explores Africa an undifferentiated wasteland by the use of customs as a part of shaping the identity of the Igbo people and the rituals of the ethical values of them. The columnist, Howard W. French comments that

"In passage after passage he (Achebe) remarks on differences both subtle and dramatic between the customs and laws of various clans in his Igbo ethnic group, and less frequently with references to the world beyond"(French,2009).

### **2.2.5. Worship and Trials**

The Igbo people are the great worshippers to worship their gods, deities and the ancestral spirits. The supreme god of them is known as the '*Chukwu*' who is at the centre of their worship and the ancestral spirits and the wooden gods names '*chi*' are the messengers of it. The people used to come to the temple of the God of Hills and Caves to ask about their failures or the different aspects of the health and farming. Every activity of the clan starts by worshipping the gods. Even the regular Kola nut is provided by their clansmen as a part of respect that is offered to the ancestral spirits. The Igbo people worship their god with 'yam' crop, palm-wine and the goats and hen or cocks.

The ‘trial’ among Igbo people is known as a part of justice given by the jury through ‘*Egwugwu*’. The *Egwugwu* are known as the jury which are formed on the basis of the secret agencies of the Igbo people to settle the disputes between two families or parties on an open place of the village. They appear from the “evil forest” the underworld land of the Igbo having masks on their faces representing the nine founders of each village so no one recognizes the identity of them. Everyone is allowed to attend the event. The elders of the village sit in the front rows of stools with a row of nine seats in front of them. The leader of the *egwugwu* is known as the ‘Evil Forest, addresses both groups and receives their sides of the conflict. Then, the nine *egwugwu* spirits consult in the hut and then come out and give the verdict. Achebe depicts the Igbo as a people with great social institutions; the culture is heavy in traditions and laws that focus on justice and fairness.

In one of the verdicts passed by the *Egwugwu* in the Uzowulu’s case, ‘Go to your in-laws with a pot of wine and beg your wife to return to you’ (TFA: 68). In a very sophisticated way, the trial goes on and the judgments are passed keeping in a view to foster the social bond and harmony among the people as compared to the justice of the missionaries.

#### **2.2.6. Sacrifices**

The sacrifices among Igbo people are known as the remedies of their destitute or to get a favour of their deities, gods and ancestral spirits. The Igbo people are advised by the priestess of the ‘*Agbala*’ for doing the sacrifices. Unoka goes to the temple to consult ‘*Agbala*’ about his failure as a farmer. He told that ‘I also kill a cock at the shrine of *ifejioku*’ (TFA: 14) and he was given an instruction to do the regular sacrifices to the goddess ‘*Ani*’. Achebe writes that Chika, the priestess of *Agbala* told Unoka that offering sacrifices to the reluctant soil is not enough but the hard work is also required. It makes a point to argue that the sacrifices are not the solutions of prosperity.

The sacrifice of Ikemefuna, an ill-fated lad from the Mbaino village to avert the war between the two villages is also a kind of the custom Igbo people followed by the order of the god of Hills and Caves. The protagonist, Okonkwo violates the Peace of Week and he was asked by the elders of the village ‘You will bring to the shrine of *Ani* tomorrow one she-goat, one hen, a length of a cloth and a hundred cowries’ (TFA:23). The sacrifices of the she-goat and a hen are suggested the remedies of peace

for his crime. During the exile of Okonkwo in the Mbanta village, he gives a farewell feast to all the kinsmen of the Mbanta village, at the time slaughtering the goats for a farewell party is assumed as the sacrifice to the personal gods like *'chi'*. A number of instances have been referred by Achebe about the sacrifices of the Igbo people. Some of them are about the cruelty such as throwing the twins into the 'evil forest' is an act of superstition. However, the sacrifice rituals are resonated with indigenous thoughts, values and the part of their cultural identity.

### **2.2.7. Dislocation of culture after colonialism**

The dislocation of the Igbo culture after the arrival of the missionaries is an important aspect to focus on the disintegration of Igbo society in Nigeria. The white men challenged the established myths when nothing happens to the white men despite their stay in the 'Evil Forest' even after the prescribed period. It was the beginning of their pacification by misjudging the situation. As a result, the missionaries attracted the three converts, who believed that there is no reality in the wrong beliefs. Nwoye, a son of well-reputed man Okonkwo, Nneka, the wife of Amadi, who was a prosperous farmer and Ogbuefi Ugonna, who had taken two titles, by cutting the anklet of his titles joined the missionaries.

The cultural aspect by considering python as the most revered animal was killed and eaten by the Enoch, the son of snake priest. The villagers didn't tolerate the act of Enoch. Achebe writes that 'It was Enoch who touched off the great conflict between church and clan in Umuofia' (TFA: 135). Moreover, during the annual ceremony, he unmasked one of the Egwugwu in the public when someone stroked him with a cane.' Enoch fell on him and tore off his mask. The other egwuwgu immediately surrounded their desecrated companion, to shield him from the profane gaze of women and children and led him away' (TFA: 136). As a result, the church of the missionary was destroyed by the clan, where the Enoch had taken refuge. The missionaries treated the titled men of Umuofia harshly and the villagers paid a fine of two hundred and fifty bags of cowries for the destruction of the church to release the six titled men of the clan from the custody.

Ezinma, the daughter of Okonkwo broke 'her twenty eight day visit to her family of her future husband, and returned home when she heard that her father had been imprisoned, and was going to be hanged' (TFA:143). It is also against the culture of the Igbo people to break the visit to the future husband. Such instances as

the above encompass the dislocation of culture and cultural identity of the Igbo people after encroachment of the missionaries to distort the peaceful culture.

Toynbee Arnold points out that ‘cultures once born do not continue to evolve automatically but have to be rejuvenated periodically’ (Arnold,1972: 83).The Igbo people didn’t accept the continued change in the culture; subsequently they were at the centre of the issues of culture and identity. Achebe writes that Okonkwo's friend Obierika explains;

“The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart” (TFA: 129).

Achebe shows not only the beauty but also the cruelty of Igbo life, which included the physical abuse of women and ritual murder. He also presents Christianity as a refuge for the isolated, the oppressed and the outcast, even while describing how the church and the British government gradually dislocated the entire culture.

### **2.3. Summary**

*Things Fall Apart* (1958) is indeed a classic study of the issues of identity and culture because it focuses on the conflicts between the Igbo people and missionaries pertaining to a great transition in Nigeria after colonialism. Achebe intensifies to mirror a sense of identity of the Igbo people with their past and pride in it. It is also intended to make the rest of the world to know about Africa’s rich culture and heritage. The novel puts across, in convincing and authentic fictional terms, that the African societies had a great culture of their own. The issues of identity and culture are successfully portrayed to uphold the systematic process of destruction wrought upon the Igbo identity by the colonial power and alien culture of them.

Finally, it is an evident from the close exploration of the issues of identity and culture in the novel *Things fall Apart* (1958), the study assumes that identity can be invented because it is not fixed, but fluid as well as the culture of any society has its own changing social patterns and it changes as per the changing need and conditions. If any society or person does not accept the changes the issues of identity and culture cause the disintegration, disruption and pacification.

**Major Findings:**

1. Chinua Achebe mirrors the issues of identity and culture in the novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958)
2. Identity formation of any society or a person is not static it is fluid.
3. Culture changes as per the changing social patterns and helps to identify the people or society with differences.

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