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Homi K. Bhabha's Postcolonial Theory to Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe

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Abstract

This essay is an academic discussion of *Things Fall Apart* (1958) by Chinua Achebe in the light of postcolonial theory formulated by Homi K. Bhabha. Based on the main ideas of Bhabha like hybridity, ambivalence, mimicry, and the Third Space, the article focuses on the disorienting effect of colonial encounter, and its creation of fragmented identities. Instead of introducing colonialism as a mere opposition between the colonizer and the colonized, the novel shows the colonial power as fragile and reliant to bargaining and sense making. By analyzing directly, the characters of Okonkwo and Nwoye, the colonial institutions of the church and the administration, the analysis shows how the story by Achebe questions colonial discourse without denying internal tensions in the Igbo society. Another element that is discussed in the article is how Achebe uses the English that is blended with the Igbo oral traditions as a kind of linguistic hybridity which defies the colonization of the British. Finally, this paper contends that *Things Fall Apart* illustrates Bhabha concept of the postcolonial theory because it describes identity as fluid, negotiated, and influence within an in-between cultural space.

Introduction

The postcolonial literature came as a critical reaction to political, cultural, and epistemological effects of the European imperialism, specifically how the colonial powers exercised their power through the systems of representation and knowledge production (Ashcroft et al., 2002). The colonial rule did not just limit itself on the economic exploitation and political conquest, but also expanded into the cultural and intellectual spheres, and the colonized societies were defined, categorized and interpreted. Using colonial discourse, natives were often depicted as inferior, backward, irrational and unable to govern themselves and their past and culture were covered up or distorted (Said, 1978). Literature was used as one of the main means of maintaining this ideological hegemony since colonial texts tended to reinforce the stereotypes and even legitimized the imperial rule by portraying the colonized subject as a silent entity. Due to this fact, literature was not only a means of oppression, but also the possible place of resistance.

To act against such misrepresentations, African writers endeavored to repossess their cultural power by telling their own stories in their own way. They contested colonial narratives, and strived to show the humanity of African cultures, through fiction, essays and poetry. Chinua Achebe is at the centre and core of the postcolonial literary literature (Gikandi, 1991). His novel *Things Fall Apart* recreates the pre-colonial Igbo society in great depth at the same time describing the drastic upheaval caused by the British colonialism and missionary work by the Christians (Achebe, 1958). In his story, Achebe prefigures the Igbo social systems, religious attitudes and social values, and in the process, the novelist provides a counter-discourse to the colonial representations of an empty or disorderly Africa. Notably, Achebe does not idolize the pre-colonial past, but on the contrary, he provides the culture of Igbo people as a multi-layered, internally-tensed, and historically-evolving subject, without any praise or criticism.

Although *Things Fall Apart* was generally read as a tale of cultural loss or opposition to colonial domination early criticism could be keenly identified, contemporary postcolonial theory can be read more theoretically informed and using a less blunt interpretation. Instead of seeing colonial encounter of being one of opposition between tradition and modernity or colonizer and colonized, subsequent theorists focus on ambiguity, negotiation, and change. This is especially important with reference to the theoretical framework of Homi K.

Bhabha who questions the existence of rigid binaries and emphasizes the notions of hybridity, ambivalence, mimicry, and the Third Space (Bhabha, 1994). The use of the theory proposed by Bhabha to the novel by Achebe allows grasping the colonial encounter as a phenomenon that generates unstable identity and disputes over meanings instead of cultural domination or total opposition. In this respect, one can read *Things Fall Apart* as the text that reflects the intricacy of the interactions between the cultures during the colonial reign and shows that identity is constantly being redefined through the prism of conflict, negotiation, and difference.

Background of the Study

The formation of postcolonial criticism has been shaped by such influential theorists as Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, and Homi K. Bhabha who did not focus on colonialism as a political or economic system but as a complex system of power that works through the medium of representation, psychology, and culture (Said, 1978; Fanon, 1963; Bhabha, 1994). The analysis of Orientalism led by Said revealed how a colonial discourse created an image of inferior and exotic colonized to legitimize the conquest by the imperialist nation whereas Fanon was concerned with the psychological outcomes of the colonial rule to the colonized individual especially the internalization of inferiority and alienation. Developing and going beyond those strategies, Bhabha has turned the postcolonial theory to the questions of cultural interaction and accentuates the ambivalence, hybridity, and the unsteadiness of the colonial power. Collectively, these theorists established a platform upon which the issue of colonialism is viewed critically and as a profoundly-seated cultural and ideological process as opposed to a historical occurrence.

The past postcolonial approaches to the African literature were frequently influenced by nationalistic and anti-colonial issues and thus focused more on the theme of resistance, cultural reclaiming, and the rediscovery of native identity. These readings emphasized the importance of literature in reclaiming the African voice and overcoming the misrepresentation of Africa by the colonial powers. Subsequently, however, theoretical methods started to challenge the belief that cultures are undifferentiated and pure. Rather, the scholars became more concerned with hybridity and ambivalence as the core characteristics of colonial engagement and suggested that the experience of the colonial encounter creates ambiguous and highly contradictory cultural products instead of distinct polarities of domination and opposition (Bhabha, 1994).

The work *Things Fall Apart* has been popularly discussed as the prime African novel that breaks the colonial stereotypes and reinstates the voice and agency of the African people by revealing the Igbo society through an inner lens (Achebe, 1975). The novel is often viewed as a tragic story that records the devastation of a consistent traditional culture in the influence of colonialism. Although such an interpretation is significant, it can be regarded as a pitfall that must not be overlooked because the novel demonstrates the intricate issue of conflict within and the culture change. This analysis develops the more contemporary critical modes by placing the novel of Achebe in the context of the postcolonial theory offered by Bhabha that emphasizes negotiations, in-betweenness, and the change of cultures instead of total loss. In such a way, the paper attempts to posit that *Things Fall Apart* is a colonial encounter as dynamic and ambivalent as it is and that it redefines identity and meaning on several different levels.

Statement of the Problem

Regardless of the amount of criticism on *Things Fall Apart*, much of the available literature still views the novel as a story of cultural disintegration or merely a head-on collision involving the African tradition and European colonialism. These readings tend to be based on binary oppositions, including but not limited to: colonizer/colonized, resistance/submission, tradition/modernity, which have the danger of simplifying the representation of colonial encounter by Achebe. This is why the problem of identity creation and cultural negotiation during the colonial times is often disregarded.

Moreover, although the postcolonial theory has been focusing more on theories of hybridity, ambivalence and in-betweenness, the concepts are not always systematically applied to the novel by Achebe. Specifically, the conceptual framework offered by Homi K. Bhabha, namely, his ideas of the Third Space, mimicry and ambivalence, has not been adequately discussed in respect of the characters, institutions and narrative techniques used in the novel. This literature gap restricts a more comprehensive understanding of the operation of a colonial power in the text not as a cohering and fixed power, but as a negotiated action that is unstable. Thus, a more specific analysis engaging the postcolonial theory by Bhabha to *Things Fall Apart* is required, to help shed some light on how the novel subtly portrays the process of cultural change and identity creation.

Purpose of the Study

This research aims at discussing *Things Fall Apart* within the peri-colonial theory that was advanced by Homi K. Bhabha to analyze how colonial encounter brings forth hybrid identities, ambiguous power relations, and cultures that are contested. This paper is an attempt to argue that although colonialism can be perceived as a process of absolute cultural annihilation, the novel by Achebe is a place of bargaining and change.

In particular, the paper will seek to find out how the major notions of Bhabha including hybridity, ambivalence, and mimicry and the Third Space are manifested through the experiences of both Okonkwo and Nwoye as well as the colonial institutions of the church and the law system. Besides this, the paper explores language and storytelling as modes of postcolonial resistance and cultural negotiation by Achebe. Using the theoretical background of Bhabha, the work of this research gives a more thorough and more complex concept within the frames of *Things Fall Apart* as the text of the strongest postcolonialism that criticizes the issues of the cultural changes during colonial rule..

Aims of the Study

The main objective of this paper is to critically examine *Things Fall Apart* through the postcolonial theory of Homi K. Bhabha so as to discuss and examine the impact of colonial encounter on creating hybrid identities and ambiguous cultural meanings. In particular, the research will seek to:

1. Consider how the ideas of hybridity and the Third Space introduced by Bhabha apply to the experiences of main characters of this novel.
2. Analyze how the ambivalence and mimicry have been used to subvert the colonial powers in the story written by Achebe.
3. Discuss the use of language as a form of culture negotiation and postcolonial resistance by Achebe.
4. Show that *Things Fall Apart* is a process of negotiation of colonialism but not the complete failure of culture.

Significance of the Study

This research is important since it adds to the body of postcolonial literary criticism as it provides a theoretically-grounded interpretation of *Things Fall Apart*. Through the application of the Bhabha postcolonial lens, the paper goes beyond the simplistic ways of understanding colonial domination and resistance and identifies the complexity of cultural interaction during the imperial rule.

The contribution of this study to the students and scholars of postcolonial literature is that it shows how African literature addresses the world theoretical arguments concerning identity, power and culture. It also helps to understand more about the Achebe novel as a dynamic text that prefigures the later postcolonial theory. Lastly, the work also offers a viable framework to use the postcolonial theory in analyzing literary works in scholarly studies, especially at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

Discussion

Colonial Discourse and Incredence.

According to Bhabha (1994), colonial discourse is ambivalent in nature since it is based on the issue of difference and familiarity. The colonizer has to show his superiority at the same time gaining approval of the colonized. This is a contradiction to the colonial power. In *Things Fall Apart*, the British colonial power is at first of fragile and uncertain quality instead of the dominant one (Achebe, 1958).

This ambivalence is manifested by the arrival of missionaries in Umuofia. The Igbo community will fail by giving them land in the Evil Forest. However, in cases where the missionaries do not die, there is instability in the traditional belief systems and this generates a sense of doubt among the people (Achebe, 1958). It points to the argument that Bhabha makes that colonial power can be exercised both symbolically and not physically (Bhabha, 1994; Loomba, 2015).

The colonial rule also shows ambivalence. The British officials have to rely on interpreters and local messengers which reveal their limited power and cultural awareness (Young, 2001). This kind of reliance indicates that colonialism is not absolute, but is a bargained and incomplete game.

Reframing Colonial Encounter beyond Binary Oppositions

Rejection of binary constructs that prevailed among early interpretations of colonialism is among the most influential contributions of the postcolonial theory. Colonial encounter was traditionally seen as a confrontation of two opposing powers: colonizer and colonized, modernity and tradition, power and resistance. Even though the latter binaries were useful to reveal the violence and unfairness of imperial rule, they did not often acknowledge the intricacy of the lived colonial life. The postcolonial theory by Bhabha pushes this idea into a falsehood by highlighting that ambivalence, contradiction and negotiation are the key to colonial interaction (Bhabha, 1994).

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe makes a clear decision not to show colonial encounter as a simple opposition between a cohesive African culture and a foreign European counterpart. Rather, the novel discloses that the Igbo society and the colonial authority are unstable within themselves. Igbo culture is presented as having a high degree of communal values, social cohesiveness, and spirituality, but it is also characterized by the exclusion, strictness, and internal animosity. Strict gender roles, unquestioning obedience to authority of ancestors and killing twins create tension even prior to arrival of the colonial power. This inner conflict is important as it proves that cultural change does not start with colonialism but is enhanced by it.

According to Bhabhaian approach, this description diminishes the concept of cultural purity. Culture does not exist as a closed system that exists and stays till the time it is broken by the intervention of the colonizers. Rather, it is a dynamic process that is informed by internal discourse, historical forces, and lack of coherence of ethics. It is therefore possible to state that Achebe resorts to a narrative strategy that is not purely aligned to the argument made by Bhabha that identity is never absolute or complete but rather is constantly created through difference and negotiation. Colonialism is not just about culture destruction; it is a process that comes to a society that is bargaining its values and hastens the transformation process.

Hybridity and the Third Space

The theory of hybridity proposed by Bhabha is the key to new forms of cultural practices created as a result of colonial engagement (Bhabha, 1994). Colonial experiences do not maintain pure identities, but instead, a Third Space is formed in which meaning is renegotiated.

Things Fall Apart is a book that is full of hybridity in the character of Nwoye, the son of Okonkwo. His fascination with Christianity comes out of discontent on some of the Igbo customs, which include slaughtering of twins and strict masculinity (Achebe, 1958). Christianity is not a substitute of culture but offers emotional solace.

According to Bhabhaian view, Nwoye exists in the Third Space creating an identity that is neither entirely Igbo nor entirely European (Bhabha, 1994; Tyson, 2006). Through his personality, he shows that colonial subjects do not passively receive the colonial culture but they are keen negotiators of the identity (McLeod, 2010).

Imitation and Colonial Trepidation

According to Bhabha, mimicry is an imitation that lacks authenticity, being almost like but not exactly the same thing (Bhabha, 1994). Colonial regimes encourage imitation so as to create disciplined ones but unfinished imitation creates anxiety as it reveals the precariousness of colonial power.

Christian converts accept European culture in Achebe novel but are reinterpreting them according to the local culture (Achebe, 1958). This partial imitation brings down the colonial pretensions to superiority and displays the boundaries of the cultural control (Ashcroft et al., 2002).

Mimicry is thereby a very mild kind of resistance. Trying to achieve conformity, colonial powers are redefined by the colonized, who are agency makers in colonial systems (Loomba, 2015).

Okonkwo and Absolutism in Culture

Okonkwo is the symbol of opposition to the change imposed by the colonial rule and the maintenance of traditional masculinity. But his identity is motivated by fear of weakness that comes with his father, which makes him show internal conflict in the Igbo culture (Achebe, 1958).

Colonialism aggravates the crisis of Okonkwo as it destroys the traditional system of authority. His inability to flex is what makes him be out of the Third Space of negotiation (Bhabha, 1994). His suicide is a symbol of the failure of the strict cultural absolutism under the pressure of colonizers (Young, 2001).

The Language and Postcolonial Resistance

Linguistic hybridity is an example of the use of English with Igbo proverbs by Achebe (Ngugiki wa Thiong, 1986; Ashcroft et al., 2002). Achebe attacks the imperial discourse at its own heart through reforming the language of the colonizer.

This approach is in agreement with the idea of cultural negotiation developed by Bhabha in which dominant discourse is not dismissed but re-articulated (Bhabha, 1994). A resisting and renewing point of cultures occurs via language (Said, 1978; Gikandi, 1991).

The Transformation of Social Order: Power, Law

The other significant element of *Things Fall Apart* that can be approached with the help of the postcolonial theory by Bhabha is the change of power and legal authority during the colonization. The colonialism in the novel is not the deposition of the local government by the foreign one; it is, however, the combination of a new structure with the old one in which the traditional authority is not entirely removed, only weakening. This

change can be said to be indicative of the fact that colonial power is not exercised through total domination but through manipulation and reinterpretation (Bhabha, 1994).

The Igbo society is a well-organized society with order before the colonial interference, which is maintained by communal decision making, ancestral traditions, and spiritual powers. Social cohesion is further enhanced by ensuring that justice is done collectively by use of elders and religious people (Achebe, 1958). The advent of the British rule, however, brings with it the new legal system which purports to be universal and rational. The justice as perceived by the European standards is redefined by the colonial courts and prisons that dismiss local systems of law (Loomba, 2015).

This change generates a grey area of the law where neither system operates. The native leaders are deprived of authority, but there is lack of cultural legitimacy with colonial authorities. This scenario, according to the theory offered by Bhabha creates a state of ambivalence because the colonial law relies on the willingness of the natives whereas it, at the same time, rejects the knowledge of the natives (Bhabha, 1994). The colonized are supposed to be aware of the colonial law authority and the authority is weak as it does not lie in the local cultural meaning. This tension is reflected in the arrest and humiliation of Igbo leaders in the novel. The colonial power is able to control people by means of punishment, but it does nothing to make them respect it, which creates hatred and resistance (Achebe, 1958). This scene shows the instability of colonial authority by imposing it by force instead of consent (Young, 2001).

Another approach to mimicry considering Bhabhaian view is the colonial law system. Indigenous subjects are also supposed to be submissive to colonial standards of law and order, although it is not done with absolute acceptance and internalization. This partial adherence to the colonial right of moral and cultural superiority is compromised (Ashcroft et al., 2002).

After all, social order transformation in *Things Fall Apart* proves that colonialism has dislocating instead of resolving effects. The traditional structures are undermined, yet the colonial systems do not offer anything meaningful. This state of doubt strengthens Bhabha in stating that colonial encounter creates in-between spaces in which authority, identity, and meaning is not yet determined but is subject to contestation (Bhabha, 1994; McLeod, 2010).

Violence, Colonial Law, and the Pretense of Order

In *Things Fall Apart*, colonial law is introduced as a system that purports to be rational, just and civilised, but works on the basis of coercion and misconception. The arrest and shame of Igbo chiefs unveils the blood-thirsty roots of the colonial power. Even though the colonial institutes claim to bring about order, their authority lies on punishment, not authority.

This dynamic can be addressed with the help of the concept of ambivalence by Bhabha. The colonial law aspires to be appreciated but is not grounded in culture. It is dependent by having indigenous middlemen to operate and this brings to light its reliance to the very individuals it wants to control. This dependency makes the claims of superiority in colonialism shaky and demonstrates authority to be not absolute but performance.

The story of colonial violence presented by Achebe challenges the forms of progress and modernization. Instead of bringing about stability, colonial law is the cause of fragmentation, resentment, and fear. This supports the argument put forward by Bhabha that resistance, reinterpretation and instability of meaning are always a threat to colonial power.

Power, Masculinity and the Crisis of Authority

The theme of masculinity in *Things Fall Apart* is one of the major themes that are important in identity and power discussion in the novel. The concept of manhood as understood by Okonkwo is based on power, violence, emotional suppression and dominance in society. Although these are qualities appreciated by the culture, Achebe reveals their destructiveness when pushed to the extremes. Fear is what creates Okonkwo, fear of weakness, failure, and similarity to his father. It is an ideology of masculinity expressed through fear and indicates that cultural ideals can be the roots of violence and instability.

The intervention of colonies would seriously break these gendered structures of power. Conventional symbols of manhood, such as titles, physical power, fighting, and respect in the society, become irrelevant with colonial authority. Colonial law, administration, and religion and their introduction weaken the social structures, which previously authenticated the identity of Okonkwo. This leads to a deep feeling of displacement and irrelevance by Okonkwo.

According to Bhabhaian view, the tragedy of Okonkwo is not in the oppression by the colonials but rather in his denial of negotiating identity in the evolving circumstances. He excludes hybridity and is dedicated to a

standard of cultural purity that is no longer operative in a changed social environment. He is powerless and alone because he is unable to occupy the Third Space. His suicide is an allegory of the failure of absolutist identity and its rigidity in the face of colonialism, and not the complete destruction of Igbo culture.

The character of Okonkwo as presented by Achebe is therefore a commentary on colonial authority as well as a rigid cultural authority. The book hints that in the colonial world, one needs to adapt, negotiate and redefine and not be rigid in opposing the ruling powers

Cultural Translation, Language and Voice

Things fall apart is one of the most important location of postcolonial negotiation via language. The decision of Achebe to write in English has been discussed severally, yet in the context of the Bhabha theory, the decision may be perceived as the strategic action of hybridity. Achebe steals language of the colonizer and turns it in a different way to convey the African experience and worldview, and oral tradition.

With the use of Igbo proverbs, narrative rhythms, and cultural allusions into the English narration, Achebe turns the language into both an imperialism instrument and a means of indigenization. The process is a perfect example of the idea of the cultural translation introduced by Bhabha where the meaning is not shared directly but is re-articulated in a new context (Bhabha, 1994). English in Things Fall Apart is not colonized or native; it exists in the lingua franca.

Such a linguistic hybridity subverts the colonialism regime as it goes to show that the language of the colonizer is not absolute or undisputed. The voice of the narration made by Achebe is not only within colonial discourse but also against it, showing its weaknesses and preconceptions. Language then becomes a place of resistance, creativity and cultural re-invention instead of submission.

Change in culture as a Continuous and Incomplete Process

Finally, Things Fall Apart does not depict culture as something that has been inherited but as a dynamic process that is developed through a collision of culture, clash, and adjustment. The postcolonial theory of Bhabha gives us the conceptual approach to this process that would not lead to loss or domination as narratives. The novel depicts the way identities are always constituted and recast in historical circumstances.

According to Achebe, colonialism enhances cultural change but not completely. Indigenous agency continues to exist by adapting, renegotiating, and surviving. With this view, a more balanced definition of postcolonial identity can be drawn, even one that would not neglect how the trauma impacts the identity but also appreciate creativity and resilience.

The intricate depiction of colonial encounter in Things Fall Apart affirms the postulation of Bhabha that culture is created in difference and negotiation as opposed to a certain tradition. The novel is a strong postcolonial work because it does not allow easy conclusions and reflects the vagueness of cultural transformation in times of colonialism.

Religion, Conversion and the Politics of Belonging

In Things Fall Apart, religion acts as one of the strongest and emotionally charged locations of colonial confrontation. The Christian religion finds its way into Igbo community as an extension of the greater colonial project, which is closely associated with the missionary work and Western education, as well as the administrative control. At the same time, Achebe does not want to present religious conversion as the process of coercive or violent conversion of a passive population. Rather, he introduces conversion as a slow and complicated process of influence through emotional plea, social rejection, and human need to belong. This portrayal echoes the argument presented by Homi K. Bhabha according to which colonial authority usually works by means of persuasion, symbolism and cultural negotiation as opposed to force and military rule (Bhabha, 1994).

The conversion as shown by Achebe is more focused on the psychological and emotional aspects of colonial experience. Christianity appeals to those people who feel marginalized in the normal Igbo society especially those who feel they have been silenced or excluded or emotionally troubled by the current social order. To these people, the new religion does not only provide them with spiritual solace; it also provides them with identity and honor. Christianity appeals to such characters as Nwoye since it addresses their inner struggles and moral fears, particularly to the killing of twins and the fixed demands of masculinity. On the same note, the osu, who hold a stigmatized and marginalized status in the Igbo society, get a chance in the church to enjoy a rare form of acceptance and equality. Their conversion shows how colonial religion becomes influential in that it deals with unresolved tensions of indigenous culture as opposed to it overtaking it.

In this sense, conversion in *Things Fall Apart* can be explained as a kind of bargaining instead of submission. Converts never leave behind their cultural identities but restructured religious concepts in such a way that they react to their experienced lives. This is the process that is in line with the concept of the Third Space by Bhabha where cultural meanings are created in being interacted and translated other than being replaced (Bhabha, 1994). The Christianity found in Umuofia is not the same as that of the Europeans. It is redefined according to the local languages, emotional needs and social realities resulting in a hybrid religious identity which does not belong solely to Europe but to the traditional Igbo faith systems.

This hybridism upsets colonial power in significant fashions. Colonial authority wants people to think alike and have evident ideological conformity but the religion that develops in Umuofia fails to conform. Converts also embrace the Christian doctrine selectively, usually mixing it with the local values and experience. These forms of hybridity, as Bhabha puts it, discredit colonial authorities to cultural superiority because they demonstrate that the colonial discourse does not possess the full authority of regulating meaning (Bhabha, 1994). Missionary activity does not create obedient colonial subjects, as opposed to what missionaries aimed to create, but rather creates subjects who engage in the interpretation and transformation of the imposed beliefs.

Importantly, Achebe does not show conversion as a moral, or spiritual triumph of the colonialism. As much as Christianity is converting people, it does so by taking advantage of divisions that already exist in the Igbo society instead of converting people through providing them with a superior worldview which can universally apply. Achebe therefore does not attempt to portray the native belief systems as inferior and outdated. Rather, he demonstrates that it is only when religion answers to local circumstances, emotional desires and social facts that it makes sense. This point of view contributes to the fact that, according to Bhabha, a colonial discourse can never enjoy the ultimate power or be consistent, but it has to negotiate with local knowledge, opposition, and remaking.

Achebe uses his subtle portrayal of religious conversion to show that encounter with colonialism has not been a cultural destruction as many people seem to believe. Religion is a place where power, identity, and belonging are negotiated, battled and redefined. In this respect, *Things Fall Apart* is a good example of Bhabha postcolonial theory as it is an example of how the colonial power is destabilized not only by direct rebellion, but also in the complex and unpredictable process of cultural translation and hybridity.

Subtle Forms of Resistance, Withdrawal and Silence

Things Fall Apart does not necessarily have resistance in the form of an open rebellion. Achebe often portrays silence, indecisiveness and withdrawal as significant reactions to colonial disturbance. These episodes comply with what Bhabha says; that resistance is not always expressed in a sign of opposition but can be represented in form of ambiguity and refusal.

Members of the community usually do not challenge the colonial power with defensive reaction but react to it with disorientation. This indecision is an attempt by a group to make sense of the rapid social change. Silence is used as a place where meaning is negotiated and not enforced. This kind of resistance is subtle, but it brings out the constraints of colonial dominance by requiring obedience and compliance.

The focus of these subtler modes of resistance points to the psychological and emotional aspects of the encounter with the colonizers and broadens the analysis of postcolonialism beyond the level of political confrontation.

Conclusion

The application of the postcolonial theory of Homi K. Bhabha to *Things Fall Apart* exposes how the novel is profoundly and intricately concerned with the problem of identity, authority, and cultural change. Achebe does not introduce colonialism as a direct clash of two conflicting cultures, but he portrays it as a two-way and unbalanced phenomenon that brings instability, bargains, and division to both the colonizing and the colonized world. By such representation, colonial power does not seem absolute, uncontested, but it is dependent on interpretation, participation, and restructuring of meaning at local contexts (Bhabha, 1994).

Bhabha theoretical concepts are also depicted through the experiences of some of the main characters in the novel. An example of such a cultural hybridity is Nwoye who is in-between due to the influence of Igbo culture as well as Christianity. His conversion to Christianity is not merely the process of reject of his indigenous culture but rather a reaction to internal struggle and emotional estrangement in the Igbo society itself. By using Nwoye, Achebe shows that colonial encounter creates hybrid identities that arise out of negotiation and not subjection as argued by Bhabha who argues that cultural identity is produced in the Third Space of interaction and difference (Bhabha, 1994; Tyson, 2006).

On the contrary, Okonkwo is a symbol of cultural rigidity in the colonial world. His devoutness to conventional masculinity and control indicates the need to maintain the culture and its purity and stability. But this rigidity eventually causes his isolation and eventual tragedy. The destiny of Okonkwo demonstrates how the unwillingness to deal with cultural transformation may lead to individual and collective destruction. In postcolonial terms, his suicide is a symbol of the breakdown of the absolute identities during the colonial change instead of the destruction of the native culture as a whole (Loomba, 2015; Young, 2001).

Besides, the insecurity of colonial power is highlighted by the instability of the colonial institutions that Achebe depicts through church and the legal system. These schools also depend on the local intermediaries and the translation of cultural matters which shows that the colonial power is a matter of negotiation rather than one-sided control. Such reliance is consistent with the idea of Bhabha that colonial discourse is ambivalent and is vitiated by the inconsistencies that it generates (Bhabha, 1994).

In conclusion, *Things Fall Apart* proves the fact that culture is not predetermined and fundamental but is constantly created in the process of interaction, difference, and reinterpretation as stated by Bhabha. Achebe continue to make his novel a classic postcolonial text because it encapsulates the difference of cultural change during the period of colonial control, which cannot be simplified into narratives about conquest or defeat. Describing colonial encounter as a place of hybridity and negotiation, Achebe provides a subtle picture of postcolonial identity that remains still echoing in the modern literary and theoretical discourses.

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