

**Research Article****Resistance and Hybridity in IGBOS, GIKUYUS and PARAJAS – A Study of Things Fall Apart, The River Between and The Ancestor****Dr. B. S. Selina<sup>1</sup>, Dr. G. Kiran Kumar Reddy<sup>2</sup>, Prof. G. Chenna Reddy<sup>3</sup>**

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**Abstract**

Things Fall Apart, The River Between, and The Ancestor, all aim to retrace the origins of their respective cultures to shed light on the myths, customs, and rituals. One of the strategies used by the three novelists to counter the colonial discourse is their exposure of the conditions and circumstances responsible for determining the outcome of the cultural and social battle. There are many things in common between the three novels as they go back to the roots of their respective societies to distinguish their past in terms of its myths, traditions and rituals. The resistance and hybridity experienced by the three tribes will be examined in the paper.

**Keywords:** Resistance, hybridity, alienation, colonialism.

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**1. Introduction:**

Cultural alienation is a complex phenomenon that occurs when individuals or communities are detached from their cultural roots, leading to a sense of estrangement and loss of identity. This paper explores the theme of cultural alienation in three seminal African and Indian literary works: Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe, The River Between by Ngugi and The Ancestor by Gopinath Mohanty. Cultural alienation and its profound consequences experienced by the Igbo, the Gikuyu, and the Paraja societies will be examined through the lens of these novels.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o is like Achebe in certain ways. Ngugi contrasts the old beliefs and practices with their immediacy and relevance with the new religion, despite his early works being ambiguous about the matter. Mohanty chooses to contrast the attitude of British and the life of Indian tribal people against a cosmic backdrop, whereas Achebe and Ngugi choose to highlight the strengths of their people and culture to reveal the assumptions of the missionary and, consequently, the weak position of the missionaries informed by such assumptions. Exposing the facts and circumstances that determine the outcome of the cultural and social war is the technique for countering the colonial discourse. The impact of many factors on the locals is made evident. After reading the novels, one gets the idea that colonialism would not have succeeded if certain circumstances and factors, particularly the political and economic ones had not been significant.

## **2. Resistance:**

The River Between clarifies the significance of love, education, and the necessity to make amends between the values and beliefs of indigenous tribes and the ideals symbolized by Christianity. Ngugi eventually retitled the book as *The River Between* from its initial title, *The Black Messiah*. The Gikuyu tribe's traditional and Christianized halves are separated by the Honia River. However, it also represents regrowth and nourishment.

*Things Fall Apart*, *The River Between*, and *The Ancestor* have a lot in common since they all aim to identify their respective societies' myths, traditions, and rituals by going back to their origins. This is demonstrated by Thenga Jani's actions and demeanor in *The Ancestor*.

Thenga Jani sat with his back to the valley, lost in contemplation. Over his lap rested an ancient lathi. His mind was wandering. He simply paid attention to his own songs (*The Ancestor* p. 31).

Ngugi, Achebe, and Mohanty reveal the truth: "Today on this solitary village path the departed souls had at least reached their final destination—they were these stones lying close to each other" (*The Ancestor* p. 31). They were speechless, yet there was no malice, anguish, or regret in their hearts. The three authors focus on the unity of hearts that exists beyond death rather than only the union of hearts among living things.

Situations that are nearly identical in *Things Fall Apart* can be found in *The River Between*. In a similar style, these authors portray the coming of the outsider and the kindness of the locals toward them. It is said in *Things Fall Apart* that "He (the missionaries' representative) came quietly and peacefully with his religion." We let him stay because we found his folly amusing. We have disintegrated because he cut through the things that kept us together (*Things Fall Apart* p. 160). The passage's reference to the advent of missionaries in Siriana, where "the men of God came peacefully," makes an intriguing parallel with its counterpart in *The River Between*. They received a location. Their brothers are welcome to come and seize the entire territory. There is an invasion of our nation. This hut-tax and this government station behind Makuyu are a scourge in our midst (*The River Between*, p.174). The white man's main goal in *Things Fall Apart* is to use his religion to incite conflict among the Native Africans. The white man's goal in *The River Between* is to drive the native people off their land.

The protagonist in both novelists' works constantly rise in popularity until they fall. As stated in *Things Fall Apart*, (p1), "Okonkwo's fame had grown like a bushfire in the harmattan in all the nine villages and beyond." In contrast, according to *The River Between* (p.105), Waiyaki's "fame grew from ridge to ridge and spread like fire in dry bush." prior to the fall, so was Thenga Jani's!

The protagonist's decisive move in both stories is the most striking comparable episode. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo kills the white man's messenger, and in *The River Between*, Muthoni makes a calculated and audacious decision to become circumcised. In the former, the protagonist, facing certain execution at the hands of the white man, comes to the realization that suicide is his last option; his hanging death suggests the disintegration of his community. Okonkwo curses his kid for being drawn to missionary culture and education because he is adamantly opposed to everything new which comes from the white man. If anything, Okonkwo is like Kabonyi and Thengi Jani, they are all the people who hate everything that has the appearance of colonial culture and consider everything tribal to be sacred. The white man's messenger is brutally killed by Okonkwo, who also disparages the white man's educational and religious establishments. But he lacks Kabonyi's organizational skills to unite the indigenous forces behind the cause of the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle.

While Achebe subtly highlights the positive aspects of native culture to demonstrate that "Africa was not a primordial void but has a history, a religion, and a civilization," Ngugi openly resents the white invasion that robs the native people of their lands and strips them of their

cultural roots. Like Ngugi, Mohanty is indignant at the settlers' seizure of the indigenous territories.

Two goals inform Achebe's composition of *Things Fall Apart*: to reimagine Africa's past and challenge the European conception of Africa. Achebe does not romanticize or exalt Africa's past like the Negritudists do. His description of the continent is impartial and accurate. Jonathan Peters notes:

Achebe is successful in defining his made-up characters with a hint of realism and impartiality. An accurate portrayal of the "crumbling past," of its history, heritage, warriors, and men of titles, is also given in this book. Additionally, it embodies the attitude of the time, which is renowned for its egalitarian and work-ethic principles.

Achebe does not hold back in pointing out the shortcomings that are also a part of the African legacy. Some examples include the ritual land sacrifices made to appease the gods, such as the abandoning of twins and the sick in the Evil Forest because they are an abomination to the earth "The Oracle of the Hills and the Caves has pronounced it," Ezeudu tells Okonkwo of Umuofia's plan to sacrifice Ikemafuna, adding that "the ill-fated lad" is to be mercilessly killed in order to placate the Oracle (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 51). As a result, Achebe reveals the negative aspects of the community without hesitation. But according to *Things Fall Apart* (p. 8), this is a culture that "reveres achievement" and "respects age." "It [Umuofia] never went to war unless its case was clear and just and accepted as such by its Oracle," the Umuofia's declare, adding that they only fight "just wars" and never "a war of blame." .... According to *Things Fall Apart*, (p 12), it "would never fight what the Igbo call a fight of blame." We thus discover that this is a culture that is characterized by an odd combination of elements—the mundane and the spiritual, the spectacular and the gory—as well as good and evil.

The British are seen by the aboriginal people as the same white guy who oversaw colonial rule and is responsible for the economic boom that has undermined the aboriginal culture. Most social, cultural, and political characteristics can be attributed to this relationship, genuine or perceived. The natives' survival instinct drives them to adopt extreme dominance to avoid being subjected to forced labor and the related persecutions. The influence of Christianity in African colonization is one significant aspect. For instance, the political motivation behind Ezeudu's sending his son to the mission school contrasts with the internal conflicts among the indigenous, which ultimately lead to their recourse to the church's harvest festival. Even if Zacharia's false pretense is driven by material or financial gain, the father nevertheless regards him as a worthy Christian until the very end.

The three novelists emphasize the significance of the school as a vehicle of conversion and transformation, while acknowledging the unavoidable role it had in sowing the seeds of self-hatred in the native population. Early on, presents are used to attract kids, and parents are pleaded with to send their boys to a school where they will be converted. But later, the aboriginal people's strong desire for knowledge is used against them as a kind of blackmail to coerce their conversion. People are instructed in *The River Between* to either break with their customs and enter the school or to continue with their traditions and leave the mission school. Oduche's conversion despite his father's cautions illustrates the enormous power of the school as a force for mass transformation.

Regarding colonialism, the novels demonstrate that the fundamental element of peoples' mental colonization is the dismantling of their social, cultural, and religious systems. Achebe reveals the colonial government's prejudice towards indigenous religions, cultures, and their adherents. Even if the bulk of the community continues to observe the natives' customs and religious ceremonies, it seems that everything about them is taken for granted and is not deserving of protection. The connection between the native people and the colonial administration is shaped by the colonial power's higher goals, as depicted by Mohanty. Since

the tribal people live in the uninhabited hills, where colonial power has no need of them, they are typically not protected.

### **3. Hybridity:**

The evolution of the indigenous people's response to the colonial circumstances produced by White people is a significant issue that one cannot overlook in the novels examined here. The indigenous people initially view education with suspicion, but they eventually come to appreciate its power—which they refer to as "the white man's magic." They strive to obtain it and put it to use for their own empowerment and self-preservation. In Achebe's *Arrow of God*, Ezeulu warns his son about the drawbacks of mission education before sending him to the mission school. Ezeulu's strategy of gaining a new power without sacrificing anything else does not work. Chege's attempt in Ngugi's *The River Between*, however, is only partially effective. Later, Waiyaki establishes separate schools that honour the customs and values of the populace while making every effort to promote their well-being. Even when many aboriginal people eventually come to accept Christianity as a new reality, they would not accept it as an instrument of subjugation. The Bible serves as a motivation for Kihika and other freedom fighters in *A Grain of Wheat* as they fight for their lands and freedom. In *The River Between* and *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi uses the characters of Joshua and Kihika to show how his people's reaction has improved over time. Kihika uses the Bible in an innovative way for the benefit of his people, in contrast to Joshua's unthinking and obedient attitude. To better the situation for the local people, the converts who were once despised for violating and dishonouring their customs are now trusted with their knowledge and skills regarding the white man. *Arrow of God's Unachukwu* is a prime illustration of this kind of progression.

Mohanty's *Balidatta* aspires to be simultaneously Hitler, Napoleon, and Alexander. It implies that there might have been a great deal less suffering for the aboriginal people and a less bloody transition if Khond's moral qualities had served as the foundation for the Paraja tribe's prosperity. On the other hand, Mohanty thinks that no one has the authority to dictate to others what kind of lifestyle they ought to lead.

Achebe has proudly discussed the dualism and tolerant spirit of Igbo society on numerous occasions, pointing out how these qualities are mirrored in many of their proverbs and daily lives. In addition to illustrating how these ideas frequently inform how Igbo society responds to missionary encounters, Achebe's two novels also demonstrate how he embraces and adheres to these ideas. Because of his inflexible mindset, Okonkwo commits suicide, which is against the teachings of the traditional faith. Therefore, Okonkwo's response does not receive Achebe's authorial approval. However, Ezeulu's adaptability in handling it is portrayed as a typical Igbo strategy. Ezeulu is praised by Achebe as a cunning politician who seeks to fit in and make use of the tools at his disposal to preserve his people and their customs.

In *The River Between*, Ngugi reveals the extreme viewpoints of both sides as well as the bloodshed and devastation these viewpoints cause. Kabonyi and Joshua both stand for two extremes that are incompatible with one another. The syncretism and moderation of Waiyaki's approach is portrayed as the most sensible course of action.

The three novelists employ various techniques and approaches in their attempts to decipher the pictures of the colonial and missionary representation and reinterpret new images of the self. When Achebe's novels are examined closely, it becomes clear that he has taken a lot of inspiration from the native Igbo culture. This helps him convey his ideas—particularly those related to cultural assertion—in a more impactful way and sheds a great deal of light on the fact that the Igbo society had a robust spiritual system and rich cultural heritage that was beneficial to them. His works, which are replete with Igbo proverbs, vocabulary, images, and stories, evoke a certain feeling in the reader. They provide a tangible illustration of how a culture, no

matter how fictitious, may establish itself by giving the stories a structure and by using its own resources to protect itself. Even with his Christian upbringing and missionary schooling, Achebe manages to fully disassociate himself from the impact of missionary education and exhibit his immersion in the local way of life. Despite having a similar upbringing, Ngugi cannot resist the impact of the missionaries. His attempts to produce works of cultural assertion are severely undermined and his cultural alienation is revealed by his use of Christian imagery, narratives, analogies, and notions.

The three novels vary in how they enter the colonial-missionary discourse, despite having comparable depictions of the missionary character and the effects of missionary work. Nonetheless, Achebe uses conventional methods to portray his traditional culture as having many virtues and some flaws, much like the cultures of all other people. Ngugi makes extensive use of his understanding of Christianity to highlight the virtues of his people and their culture while refuting the missionary narrative and the harmful actions of the missionaries.

The novels discussed here provide an alternative history written from an insider's point of view and stand out as a rich and authentic archive of African history. African history, including the history of the missionaries and their activities in Africa, is a record of "facts" and events as perceived by historians. This interpretation of history doesn't ignore the suffering; instead, it emphasizes the human aspect of the events and the actual experiences of actual individuals.

This comparative study, which pays particular attention to the three novelists, surely provides an insight into the missionary endeavours in Africa and India as a whole. It demonstrates the variety of missionary endeavours and the range of African writers' reactions. It opens new avenues for research into this complex issue in other African writers. It provides an understanding into the complex ways that Africans perceive missionaries, the positive evolution of their responses to their activities, the actual daily encounters that missionaries have with the natives, and the powerful interventions made by African writers.

Things Fall Apart, The River Between, and The Ancestor have a few aspects in common. To distinguish their past in terms of its myths, customs, and rituals, the three novels aim to retrace the historical development of their unique communities. Okonkwo, Waiyaki, and Thenga, the main characters, fit a tragic stereotype. The early missionaries' arrival and the ensuing cultural struggle are the focus of the novels.

Thenga, Okonkwo, and Waiyaki appear to support the idea that a person's religious faith must develop naturally from inside. The underlying theme of *The Ancestor*, *Things Fall Apart*, and *The River Between* is that a people's faith and way of life must coexist and develop from one another. Each one is insufficient on its own. In the end, Nyambura and Muthoni both come to the realization that the type of Christian faith they are exposed to is insufficient to support them. Nyambura completely gives up her Christian faith to attain "peace," while Muthoni tries to incorporate it into her pagan circumcision process.

The three pieces, *Things Fall Apart*, *The River Between*, and *The Ancestor*, all aim to retrace the origins of their respective cultures to shed light on the myths, customs, and rituals. These are just a few of the commonalities across the three works. This might be imagined in the way that Mohanty laments the devastation of nature, revealing the existence of a spirit that is beyond human comprehension. Soon after, a few axes struck the tree. It was trimmed to human height. Dadi Buddha has now sprung from the stem of the date palm tree (*The Ancestor*, p.6).

In a similar vein, Ngugi uses human folly in *The River Between* to emphasize the unbreakable nature of faith. "The ridges are arranged side by side, akin to two adversaries poised to engage in a combative struggle for supremacy over this venerated faith" (*The River Between* p.1).

But Achebe's wisdom is evident when he points out that any violent aspect of human nature ultimately results in death!"We have fallen apart because he cut the things that held us together" (Things Fall Apart, p. 160).

#### **4. Conclusion:**

It's interesting to observe that each of the novels' titles that are studied here have a little nugget of information about it. From Yeats' Second Coming, "Things Fall Apart," Mohanty's, Dadi Budha, or The Ancestor, is the God of the Dombs, Dumas, and Parajas. The title of Ngugi's book is the Honia river, which flows between the ridges and between the tribal habitations of the Kameno and Makuya. Mohanty and Ngugi appear to view Christianity and Marxism as routes to salvation. According to Achebe, success is ephemeral, and defeat is inevitable. All these facets of the community are vividly covered in Things Fall Apart; thus, Achebe's description serves as a reminder to the world—African and European alike—that the continent has a rich history. The African and Oriyan people were not introduced to culture for the first time by Europeans; they already knew that their cultures possessed poetry, a deep and valuable philosophy, and, most importantly, dignity.

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