

Colonialism and Social Fragmentation in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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Abstract—This study examines inequality, exclusion, and social fragmentation in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. While the novel is widely recognized for portraying the impact of British colonialism on Igbo society, this research argues that Achebe also reveals internal inequalities that existed before colonial rule. Through the experiences of Okonkwo, women, the *osu*, and younger generations, the novel demonstrates how unequal power, exclusion, and the absence of dialogue gradually weaken social unity.

The study aims to explore the relationship between colonialism and internal social divisions by examining how leadership, gender inequality, generational conflict, and the marginalization of certain groups contribute to the fragmentation of Umuofia. It also investigates how these issues relate to Sustainable Development Goal-16 (SDG -16), which promotes peace, justice, strong institutions, and inclusive societies.

This research adopts a qualitative literary approach based on close textual analysis. The novel is examined through postcolonial and feminist perspectives, supported by relevant literary criticism and scholarly sources.

The findings reveal that Achebe presents colonialism not as the sole cause of Umuofia's collapse but as a force that becomes more effective because of existing social divisions within the community. The study concludes that *Things Fall Apart* highlights the importance of justice, inclusion, mutual respect, and equal participation in building strong and peaceful societies. In doing so, the novel continues to offer valuable insights into contemporary discussions of social justice, leadership, and sustainable development.

I. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Literature does more than tell stories. It helps readers understand societies, cultures, and human experiences. Through literature, writers can reveal social problems, question injustice, and encourage readers to think critically about the world around them. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is one of the most important African novels because it presents a detailed picture of Igbo society before and during the arrival of British colonialism.

Many studies have focused on the destructive impact of colonialism in the novel. However, *Things Fall Apart* is not only a story about the conflict between the colonisers and the colonised. The novel also reveals internal inequalities and divisions that already existed within the community. Achebe portrays a society that values traditions and social order, yet some members of the community experience exclusion, limited participation, and unequal treatment.

Through the character of Okonkwo, the novel explores ideas of power, authority, masculinity, and identity. While Okonkwo resists colonial domination, he often exercises domination within his own family. His relationships with his wives, children, and other members of the community reveal how power can operate at different levels of society. The novel also highlights the experiences of women, who play an essential role in preserving family life and cultural traditions but often have limited opportunities to express their views.

Achebe introduces this aspect of Okonkwo's character early in the novel, describing him as a man who "ruled his household with a heavy hand." This description reflects not only his authority as the head of the family but also the fear and domination that shape his relationships with his wives and children. Although Okonkwo strongly opposes colonial oppression, he reproduces similar patterns of control within his own home. This contradiction becomes one of the central concerns of the present study.

The character of Nwoye represents another important aspect of the novel. His conversion to Christianity reflects not only a religious change but also a conflict between generations. Through Nwoye's experiences, Achebe demonstrates how dissatisfaction with certain traditions can create divisions within a community and make individuals more receptive to new beliefs and ideas.

This study argues that colonialism succeeds partly because it enters through existing social divisions. Issues related to gender, power, exclusion, and social inequality weaken the unity of the community and create opportunities for colonial influence to expand. Therefore, the collapse of Umuofia cannot be explained solely by the arrival of the British. Internal tensions also contribute to the fragmentation of the society.

Achebe expresses this idea powerfully through Obierika's words: "He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart." This statement suggests that colonial rule succeeds not only because of its external power but also because the unity of the community has already been weakened by internal divisions. It reflects the central argument of this study that colonialism becomes more effective when it enters a society affected by inequality and social fragmentation.

The study further connects these themes to Sustainable Development Goal-16 (SDG-16), which promotes justice, inclusion, and peaceful societies. By examining the relationship between colonialism, inequality, and social fragmentation, this research highlights the importance of giving all members of society a voice and creating communities based on mutual respect rather than fear and exclusion.

Ultimately, this study seeks to show that *Things Fall Apart* remains relevant today because it raises important questions about justice, identity, social participation, and the consequences of inequality. Achebe's novel reminds readers that societies become stronger when they promote inclusion and respect for all members of the community.

1.2 Background of the Study

Throughout history, societies have developed different systems to organise power, authority, and social relations. While these systems often aim to maintain order and stability, they can also create inequalities that affect people's lives in different ways. Some groups enjoy greater influence and participation, while others experience exclusion, limited opportunities, or restricted voices. Such inequalities are not always created by external forces; they can exist within societies for generations and gradually become accepted as part of everyday life.

One of the most significant consequences of inequality is social fragmentation. When certain groups are marginalised or denied meaningful participation, divisions begin to emerge within the community. These divisions may be based on gender, social status, age, religion, or other forms of identity. Over time, exclusion weakens social cohesion and creates tensions that affect both individuals and society as a whole.

Colonialism often enters societies that are already experiencing internal divisions. While colonial rule introduces new systems of power and control, it can also take advantage of existing inequalities. Communities that appear strong and united on the surface may contain hidden tensions that make them more vulnerable to external influence. For this reason, the study of colonialism requires attention not only to external domination but also to the internal conditions that allow such domination to expand.

Literature provides an important way to explore these issues. Through characters, events, and social relationships, literary texts reveal how power operates in everyday life and how inequality affects individuals and communities. Literature also allows readers to examine the consequences of exclusion, injustice, and social conflict from a human perspective.

This study focuses on Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, a novel that portrays Igbo society before and during the arrival of British colonialism. While the novel is widely known for its depiction of colonial disruption, it also presents internal tensions related to gender, power, tradition, and social participation. Through the experiences of Okonkwo, Nwoye, women, and other members of the community, Achebe demonstrates how social divisions can contribute to the fragmentation of society.

Achebe also illustrates that not every member of the community enjoys the same social position. For example, the *osu* are described as "a thing set apart, a taboo for ever." This brief description reveals that exclusion already existed within Igbo society before the arrival of colonial rule. It suggests that social divisions were part of the community's structure, supporting the argument that colonial influence expanded within a society that was not completely united.

The study therefore examines the relationship between colonialism and internal inequality. It explores how exclusion, unequal power relations, and the silencing of certain voices weaken social unity and create opportunities for colonial influence. By connecting these themes to Sustainable Development Goal-16

(SDG-16), the study highlights the importance of justice, inclusion, and social participation in building strong and peaceful societies.

1.3 Introduction to the Novel

In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe presents Igbo society before and during the arrival of British colonialism. The novel is set in Umuofia, a community that values tradition, social order, and collective identity. Through its customs, beliefs, and institutions, the society appears strong and stable. However, beneath this appearance of unity, Achebe reveals internal tensions related to power, gender, social status, and belonging. These tensions become increasingly important as colonial influence begins to spread throughout the community.

The novel follows the life of Okonkwo, a respected warrior who builds his identity around strength, hard work, and authority. Having grown up ashamed of his father's weakness and poverty, he becomes determined to embody the qualities that his society admires. Yet his fear of weakness gradually shapes his relationships with others. His desire for control affects his wives, children, and those around him, creating conflicts that extend beyond his personal life. Through Okonkwo, Achebe explores how power can be used not only to protect but also to dominate.

Achebe describes Okonkwo as a man who "ruled his household with a heavy hand." This brief description reveals that his authority is based more on fear than understanding. Although he becomes a respected leader within the community, his relationships at home reflect patterns of domination that later become central to this study.

While the novel is often read as a story about colonialism, it also examines the inequalities that already exist within the community. Women play a central role in preserving family life and cultural traditions, yet their voices are often limited by patriarchal expectations. Certain groups experience exclusion and unequal treatment, while younger generations begin to question traditions accepted by their elders. These divisions do not destroy the society on their own, but they create conditions that make social fragmentation possible.

The character of Nwoye illustrates this growing tension. His dissatisfaction with some traditional practices and his eventual conversion to Christianity reflect a deeper conflict between generations. Through Nwoye's experiences, Achebe shows how individuals who feel disconnected from existing social structures may seek belonging elsewhere. His story demonstrates that colonial influence becomes more effective when internal conflicts remain unresolved.

Achebe notes that Nwoye "was happy to leave his father." This moment suggests that his conversion is not simply a rejection of traditional religion but also a search for acceptance, peace, and personal identity. His

decision reflects how unresolved conflicts within the community can make alternative beliefs more attractive.

The arrival of the British introduces new forms of political, cultural, and religious power. However, the novel suggests that colonialism does not succeed through force alone. It expands by taking advantage of divisions that already exist within the community. Achebe therefore presents colonialism not simply as an external attack but as a process that interacts with existing inequalities and tensions.

This idea is captured in Obierika's reflection: "He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart." The statement summarises the central argument of this study. Colonialism succeeds not only because of external power but also because existing divisions weaken the unity of the community from within.

For this reason, *Things Fall Apart* is more than a historical novel about colonial Africa. It is a study of power, identity, exclusion, and social change. Through the experiences of Okonkwo, Nwoye, women, and other members of the community, Achebe invites readers to consider how societies respond to difference, how inequalities affect social unity, and how the silencing of certain voices can contribute to fragmentation. These concerns form the foundation of the present study and connect closely to contemporary discussions of justice, inclusion, and social participation.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it examines *Things Fall Apart* not only as a novel about colonialism but also as a novel about internal inequalities and social fragmentation. Many studies focus on the destructive impact of British colonial rule on Igbo society. While colonialism is an important part of the novel, this study argues that Achebe also draws attention to the divisions that already existed within the community before the arrival of the British.

The study highlights how issues related to gender, power, social exclusion, and generational conflict affect the unity of society. Women play an important role in preserving family life and cultural traditions, yet they often have limited opportunities to participate in decision-making. Similarly, younger generations such as Nwoye struggle to find their place within a system that does not always respond to their concerns. These experiences suggest that social cohesion becomes difficult when certain groups are denied a meaningful voice.

The study is also important because it examines the character of Okonkwo from a broader perspective. Although he opposes colonial domination and fights to protect his culture, he often reproduces forms of domination within his own family. His treatment of his wives and children demonstrates that oppression can exist both outside and inside a society. Through Okonkwo, Achebe encourages readers to think critically about the relationship between power, authority, and justice.

Another important aspect of the study is its connection to Sustainable Development Goal-16 (SDG-16), which promotes justice, inclusion, and peaceful societies. The novel suggests that communities become stronger when all members have opportunities to participate and when relationships are based on mutual respect rather than fear and exclusion. By linking Achebe's novel to SDG-16, the study demonstrates the continued relevance of literary texts in discussions of social justice and community development.

Ultimately, this study contributes to literary scholarship by exploring how colonialism interacts with existing inequalities within society. It emphasises that social fragmentation is often the result of both external pressures and internal divisions. Through the analysis of *Things Fall Apart*, the study encourages a deeper understanding of justice, inclusion, and the importance of giving all members of society a voice. In doing so, it also demonstrates that literature remains a powerful means of understanding social realities and encouraging critical reflection on the challenges faced by contemporary societies.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Literature Review

A literature review is an important part of any research study because it helps the researcher understand how a topic has been discussed by previous scholars. It identifies the main arguments, critical approaches, and areas that require further exploration. By examining existing scholarship, the researcher can position the current study within a broader academic discussion and identify gaps that deserve attention.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* has attracted significant critical attention since its publication in 1958. Scholars have examined the novel from different perspectives, including postcolonialism, culture, tradition, gender, identity, and social change. Most studies focus on Achebe's response to colonial representations of Africa and his portrayal of Igbo society before and during British colonial rule. However, the novel continues to generate new interpretations because of its complex treatment of power, inequality, and social transformation.

General Studies on *Things Fall Apart*

Many scholars view *Things Fall Apart* as a response to colonial narratives that portrayed Africa as uncivilized and without history. Achebe presents Igbo society as a structured community with its own customs, values, laws, and belief systems. Through this representation, the novel challenges stereotypes and offers a more balanced picture of precolonial African life.

Abiola Irele argues that Achebe restores dignity to African cultures by presenting African experiences from an African perspective. According to Irele, the novel allows readers to understand the richness and complexity of Igbo society rather than viewing it through colonial assumptions.

Similarly, Simon Gikandi notes that Achebe portrays a society facing a difficult transition between tradition and change. He argues that the novel explores the tensions created when colonial institutions disrupt existing social and cultural structures.

Critical Studies on Colonialism

Postcolonial critics frequently examine the impact of colonialism in *Things Fall Apart*. Many studies focus on the arrival of British missionaries and administrators and the changes they introduce to Igbo society. These scholars often argue that colonialism undermines traditional institutions and weakens social cohesion.

Ania Loomba explains that colonial power often expands by reshaping cultural and social relationships rather than relying solely on military force. This perspective helps explain how Christianity and colonial institutions gain influence within Umuofia.

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin also emphasize that colonialism affects identity, culture, and social structures. Their work highlights the ways colonial authority transforms the lives of colonized communities and challenges existing systems of belonging.

Critical Studies on Gender and Women

The representation of women in *Things Fall Apart* has generated considerable scholarly debate. Although women play important roles within the family and community, many critics argue that they occupy secondary positions within the patriarchal structure of Igbo society.

Florence Stratton argues that women contribute significantly to the preservation of family life and cultural traditions, yet they are often excluded from positions of authority. Her study draws attention to the unequal distribution of power between men and women in the novel.

Recent feminist studies emphasize that women experience multiple forms of marginalization. While they are expected to support families and maintain traditions, they often have limited opportunities to influence social and political decisions. These studies encourage readers to reconsider the role of women within both traditional and colonial contexts.

Critical Studies on Okonkwo and Power

Many scholars focus on Okonkwo as a tragic hero whose downfall reflects the larger collapse of his society. Critics frequently examine his fear of weakness, his rigid understanding of masculinity, and his resistance to change.

Several studies suggest that Okonkwo's fear of becoming like his father influences many of his actions. His desire for strength and authority shapes his relationships with his wives, children, and community. Scholars often interpret his tragedy as the result of both personal flaws and historical circumstances.

Other critics, particularly Biodun Jeyifo, argue that Okonkwo embodies important contradictions. Although he resists colonial domination, his exercise of authority within his own household reflects unequal power relations and internal oppression.

Review of Related Research Studies

Several research studies have examined gender inequality and the position of women in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The study *Language and Gender Representation in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart* (2019) investigates how language reflects gender relations in Igbo society. The researcher argues that language contributes to the marginalization of women and reinforces unequal power relations within the community.

Another important study, *Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart: A Study from a Feminist Perspective* (2024), analyses the novel through a feminist lens. The study focuses on patriarchy, masculinity, and the limitations imposed on women. It argues that female characters play significant roles in society despite their restricted participation in decision-making and positions of authority.

Similarly, *Woes of Women in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart: A Feminist Analysis* (2025) examines the challenges faced by women in the novel. The study highlights different forms of oppression experienced by female characters and emphasizes how patriarchal traditions contribute to their marginalization and limited social power.

These studies demonstrate considerable scholarly interest in gender and women's representation in *Things Fall Apart*. However, they mainly focus on patriarchy and the oppression of women. Less attention has been given to the relationship between gender inequality, social exclusion, generational conflict, and the ways these internal divisions contribute to the fragmentation of Igbo society before and during colonial rule. This gap forms the foundation of the present study, which examines how these interconnected inequalities create conditions that make colonial influence more effective.

2.2 Problem Statement

Things Fall Apart has been widely studied as a postcolonial novel that portrays the destructive impact of British colonialism on Igbo society. Many scholars have examined themes such as colonial domination, cultural conflict, tradition, and social change. Other studies have focused on gender inequality, the position of women, and the tragic character of Okonkwo. While these studies provide valuable insights into the novel, they often examine these issues separately.

As a result, limited attention has been given to the relationship between colonialism and the internal inequalities that already existed within Igbo society. Issues such as gender inequality, social exclusion, unequal power relations, and generational conflict are often discussed independently rather than as

interconnected factors that contribute to social fragmentation. Consequently, the role of these internal divisions in facilitating colonial influence remains insufficiently explored.

This study addresses this problem by examining how colonialism interacts with existing inequalities within the community. It investigates the experiences of women, marginalized groups, and younger generations, as well as the character of Okonkwo as both a victim of colonial domination and a source of oppression within his own family. Through this approach, the study seeks to demonstrate that the collapse of Umuofia results not only from external colonial pressure but also from internal inequalities and divisions that weaken social cohesion and create conditions in which colonial influence becomes more effective.

2.3 Research Objectives

- To examine how colonialism and internal inequalities are portrayed in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.
- To analyse how gender inequality, social exclusion, and unequal power relations contribute to the fragmentation of Igbo society.
- To explore the representation of women and their role in preserving family life and cultural traditions despite their limited participation in decision-making.
- To examine the character of Okonkwo as both a victim of colonial domination and a source of oppression within his family and community.
- To investigate Nwoye's conversion as a reflection of generational conflict, social dissatisfaction, and the search for belonging.
- To analyse how existing social divisions create opportunities for colonial influence and weaken community cohesion.
- To connect the themes of the novel to Sustainable Development Goal-16 (SDG-16) and its emphasis on justice, inclusion, participation, and peaceful societies.

2.4 Research Methodology

2.4.1 Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory examines the effects of colonial rule on societies, cultures, and identities. Rather than viewing colonialism only as political domination, it explores how colonial power influences social structures, cultural values, and relationships within communities. Colonial authority often extends beyond military control by reshaping beliefs, institutions, and ways of understanding the world.

One of the central concerns of postcolonial theory is the relationship between external domination and internal divisions. Colonial powers frequently take advantage of existing social tensions in order to

strengthen their influence. As a result, colonialism does not operate in isolation; it interacts with inequalities and conflicts that already exist within society. This perspective is particularly useful for understanding how colonial influence develops in communities that appear united but contain hidden forms of exclusion and division.

These ideas are relevant to *Things Fall Apart*. The arrival of British missionaries and colonial administrators transforms many aspects of Igbo society. New religious, political, and legal systems challenge existing traditions and create tensions within the community. However, the novel suggests that colonialism succeeds not only because of external power but also because of internal weaknesses. Social divisions, dissatisfaction, and unequal treatment create opportunities for colonial institutions to gain support among certain members of society.

The experiences of Nwoye, the osu, and other marginalized individuals demonstrate how people who feel excluded from existing structures may become more receptive to alternative systems of belonging. Colonial influence therefore expands through both external intervention and internal fragmentation. This interaction between colonial power and social division forms an important focus of the present study.

Using postcolonial theory allows the study to examine how colonialism interacts with existing inequalities and how these relationships contribute to the fragmentation of Igbo society. It also helps explain why the collapse of Umuofia cannot be understood solely as the result of colonial force but must also be viewed in relation to internal social conditions.

2.4.2 Feminist Theory

Feminist theory examines the position of women within society and explores how power, gender roles, and social expectations influence their lives. As discussed by Lois Tyson, Florence Stratton, and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, feminist criticism draws attention to the ways women contribute to families and communities while often receiving limited recognition, authority, or participation in decision-making. Rather than promoting conflict between men and women, feminist theory seeks to understand how more balanced and inclusive relationships can contribute to social justice and human well-being.

A central concern of feminist theory is the unequal distribution of power. In many patriarchal societies, women are expected to preserve social and cultural traditions while having limited opportunities to influence the rules that govern their lives. Their contributions are often essential to the functioning of society, yet their voices remain restricted or overlooked. Feminist criticism therefore examines both visible and hidden forms of inequality.

This perspective is particularly relevant to *Things Fall Apart*. Women play a vital role in preserving family life, raising children, maintaining cultural traditions, and supporting community stability. Characters such as

Ekwefi and Ezinma demonstrate strength, resilience, and emotional depth. However, women often occupy secondary positions within the social structure and have limited participation in public decision-making.

The novel also suggests that women experience multiple forms of marginalization. While they are affected by patriarchal traditions within their own society, they are also influenced by the social changes brought about by colonialism. Their experiences reveal how gender inequality intersects with broader social and historical transformations.

Using feminist theory enables this study to examine the representation of women, the operation of patriarchal power, and the consequences of exclusion within Igbo society. It also supports the argument that stronger and more inclusive communities emerge when all members of society are given opportunities to participate, contribute, and have their voices heard.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Data Collection and Analytical Approach

This chapter analyses Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* through close textual reading. It focuses on the relationship between colonialism, internal inequalities, power, and social fragmentation in Igbo society. The discussion examines how these issues are reflected through the experiences of Okonkwo, Nwoye, women, and other members of the community. By analysing the characters, important events, and cultural practices, the study explores how both external and internal forces contribute to the collapse of Umuofia.

The analysis centres on the experiences of Okonkwo, Nwoye, women, and other marginalised members of the community. Each character represents a different aspect of Igbo society and reveals how power affects individuals in different ways. Okonkwo represents authority, masculinity, and resistance to colonial rule. Nwoye reflects generational conflict and the search for identity and belonging. Female characters such as Ekwefi and Ezinma demonstrate the important role women play in preserving family life and cultural traditions despite their limited participation in public decision-making.

Close textual reading guides the discussion throughout the study. Particular attention is given to important events, dialogue, character development, and cultural practices. Incidents such as the killing of Ikemefuna, the Week of Peace, the treatment of women, Nwoye's conversion to Christianity, and Okonkwo's final actions are examined to understand how fear, authority, exclusion, and social expectations influence both individuals and the wider community.

The study also considers the everyday practices that reveal hidden inequalities within Igbo society. Women contribute to maintaining family stability and preserving traditions, yet they are often excluded from positions of authority. Younger generations struggle to express different perspectives, while certain social groups experience exclusion because of traditional beliefs. These internal tensions do not immediately

destroy the community, but they gradually weaken social unity and create opportunities for colonial influence.

Historical context supports the analysis without dominating it. The study recognises the destructive impact of British colonialism on Igbo society while also examining the internal conditions that make colonial expansion more effective. Rather than presenting colonialism as the only cause of Umuofia's collapse, the discussion explores how external domination and internal inequalities interact throughout the novel.

Postcolonial theory and feminist theory provide the main analytical framework. These perspectives help explain how colonial power, patriarchy, social exclusion, and unequal power relations operate within the novel. However, the discussion remains grounded in Achebe's narrative, allowing the characters, events, and cultural practices to guide the interpretation rather than forcing theoretical ideas onto the text.

Throughout this chapter, the analysis demonstrates that *Things Fall Apart* is not only a novel about colonial conquest but also a powerful exploration of internal inequalities, unequal power relations, and social fragmentation. By examining these issues together, the study argues that societies become more vulnerable when justice, participation, and inclusion are denied to some of their members. In this way, Achebe's novel continues to offer valuable insights into contemporary discussions of social justice, equality, and Sustainable Development Goal-16.

3.2 Colonialism and Internal Inequalities in Igbo Society

Igbo society in *Things Fall Apart* is presented as organised, culturally rich, and deeply connected to its traditions. Family relationships, religious beliefs, communal ceremonies, and systems of justice create a strong sense of identity and belonging. Achebe challenges colonial stereotypes by presenting a society that governs itself through its own customs and institutions. At first glance, Umuofia appears united and stable. Achebe describes the community through organised ceremonies, councils of elders, and respected religious traditions, demonstrating that precolonial Igbo society possesses its own political and cultural order rather than the disorder often suggested by colonial narratives.

However, beneath this stability, the novel reveals inequalities that gradually weaken the community. Not every member of society experiences the same degree of participation or recognition. Women have important responsibilities within the family but remain excluded from many public decisions. Younger generations begin to question traditions that older generations consider unquestionable. Certain individuals and groups experience social exclusion because of long-established customs. The *osu*, for example, are described as "a thing set apart, a taboo for ever." This description illustrates that exclusion is already embedded within the social structure before the arrival of the British. Although these tensions are not always visible, they shape relationships within the community and limit equal participation.

The arrival of British missionaries and colonial administrators does not immediately destroy Igbo society. Instead, colonial influence expands by entering through existing divisions. Individuals who feel rejected, unheard, or marginalized become more willing to accept alternative systems that promise belonging and recognition. This process is reflected when the Christian missionaries welcome those who have experienced exclusion, particularly the *osu*, offering them acceptance denied by traditional society. Colonialism therefore succeeds not only through political authority but also by taking advantage of social inequalities that already exist within the community.

Achebe does not present Igbo society as either completely perfect or completely unjust. Instead, he portrays a complex community with both strengths and weaknesses. Its traditions preserve identity and social order, but some customs also create exclusion and silence. As Abiola Irele argues, Achebe restores dignity to African society while refusing to idealise it. This balanced representation is one of the novel's greatest strengths because it encourages readers to recognise both the achievements and the limitations of traditional society.

Through this representation, *Things Fall Apart* suggests that external domination becomes more effective when internal unity has already begun to weaken. This idea reaches its most powerful expression in Obierika's observation: "He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart." The statement does not attribute the community's collapse solely to colonial force. Instead, it suggests that colonialism becomes successful because the bonds that once united Umuofia have already been weakened by internal divisions, exclusion, and unresolved tensions. Achebe therefore invites readers to consider that strong communities depend not only on resisting external threats but also on addressing inequalities from within.

3.3 Women, Marginalisation, and Social Exclusion

Women occupy an essential position in Igbo society throughout *Things Fall Apart*. They preserve family life, raise children, pass cultural values from one generation to another, and contribute to the stability of the community. Through their daily responsibilities, they help maintain traditions and strengthen social unity. Without their continuous efforts, the survival of both the family and the community would be difficult. Achebe therefore presents women not as passive figures but as an important foundation of Igbo society.

Despite this important role, women do not enjoy equal participation in public life. Their responsibilities are recognised within the family, yet their voices remain limited in many social and political matters. Important decisions are generally made by men, while women are expected to accept and support these decisions. This unequal distribution of authority creates a society in which contribution does not always lead to equal recognition. Achebe reflects this attitude through the saying, "No matter how prosperous a man was, if he was unable to rule his women and his children... he was not really a man." The statement links masculinity

with authority over women and children, suggesting that power within the household is treated as a measure of male status. It also reveals how patriarchal expectations become accepted as part of everyday social life.

Achebe does not simply present women as victims. Instead, he portrays them as resilient individuals who continue to preserve their families and traditions despite living within patriarchal structures. Characters such as Ekwefi and Ezinma demonstrate emotional strength, wisdom, and loyalty, reminding readers that women's influence often exists beyond formal positions of authority. Ekwefi's devotion to Ezinma and her willingness to follow the priestess during Ezinma's illness reveal courage and determination that challenge the assumption that women occupy only passive roles within the community.

This study argues that the marginalisation of women should not be understood simply as a conflict between men and women. Rather, it reflects the consequences of unequal participation within society. Justice does not require the rejection of tradition or the destruction of family values. Instead, stronger communities are built when both men and women are respected, heard, and allowed to contribute their perspectives. As Florence Stratton argues, women in Achebe's fiction play essential social and cultural roles despite their limited access to formal authority. A society based on mutual respect, participation, and trust is more capable of preserving its unity than one built on fear, silence, and unequal power.

3.3.1 Women as the Guardians of Family and Tradition

Throughout *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe presents women as the foundation of family life and cultural continuity. Although men occupy most positions of public authority, women carry many of the responsibilities that preserve the community from one generation to another. They raise children, care for their families, pass on traditions, and provide emotional stability during times of happiness and hardship. Their contribution is often quiet, yet it is essential to the survival of Igbo society.

Achebe repeatedly shows that the strength of the family depends not only on male authority but also on women's patience, sacrifice, and resilience. The home becomes the place where cultural values are first learned and preserved. Mothers teach children respect for traditions, community values, and family responsibilities. In this way, women become the first guardians of Igbo culture, even though they are rarely recognised as leaders within the wider society.

The relationship between Ekwefi and Ezinma illustrates this idea clearly. After experiencing the loss of several children, Ekwefi develops a deep emotional bond with Ezinma. Her love, care, and determination reveal a different form of strength from the physical courage celebrated by men such as Okonkwo. While male power is often measured through titles, warfare, and public reputation, women's strength is expressed through endurance, compassion, and the ability to protect family life despite repeated suffering. Ekwefi's courage is especially evident when she follows Chielo through the night to protect Ezinma, refusing to leave

her daughter despite fear and uncertainty. This episode demonstrates that maternal love becomes a powerful form of resistance and devotion.

Ezinma also occupies a special place in the novel. Okonkwo repeatedly wishes that she had been born a boy, saying, "She should have been a boy." This remark reveals an important contradiction within the society. Ezinma possesses many of the qualities admired in men, including intelligence, confidence, and emotional maturity, yet her opportunities remain limited simply because she is female. Achebe therefore encourages readers to question a social system that recognises individual ability while restricting participation on the basis of gender.

These examples demonstrate that women are not passive members of the community. They actively preserve the values, relationships, and traditions that hold society together. Their influence often operates within the family rather than through public authority, yet this influence remains essential to the survival of the community. As Florence Stratton argues, women's contributions in Achebe's fiction are fundamental to the preservation of both family life and cultural identity, despite their limited access to formal authority. Achebe reminds readers that societies are not sustained only by political leaders or warriors but also by those whose daily efforts maintain the bonds between people.

From this perspective, recognising women's contribution does not weaken tradition or challenge the importance of family life. On the contrary, a society becomes stronger when it values the contributions of all its members. Respecting women's voices and recognising their role in preserving culture can strengthen social unity and create relationships based on mutual trust, shared responsibility, and justice rather than unequal power.

3.3.2 Patriarchy, Silence, and Double Marginalisation

Although women play an essential role in preserving family life and cultural traditions, Achebe also reveals the unequal power relations that shape their daily lives. Igbo society is largely organised according to patriarchal values in which men occupy positions of authority while women are expected to obey and support them. As a result, women contribute significantly to the survival of the community, yet they rarely participate in decisions that affect their own lives. Their contribution is recognised through responsibility rather than authority.

Okonkwo represents the strongest example of this patriarchal system. Throughout the novel, he believes that authority should be maintained through fear, discipline, and physical strength. His wives often become the victims of this belief. Achebe states that "Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand." This description establishes domination as a defining feature of his family life. He beats his wives, humiliates them, and rarely shows understanding or compassion. During the sacred Week of Peace, he violently beats Ojiugo for what he considers a minor offence. Achebe notes that "he committed a great evil" by breaking

the peace of the sacred week. His anger becomes more important than the traditions he claims to defend. Ironically, the man who constantly presents himself as the protector of Igbo customs becomes one of the first to violate those customs through his uncontrolled violence.

The experiences of Okonkwo's wives demonstrate how little space women have to express disagreement or defend themselves. They remain silent not because they accept injustice, but because the social structure leaves them with few opportunities to challenge male authority. The silence of Okonkwo's wives should therefore not be interpreted as weakness or acceptance of injustice. Instead, it reflects a patriarchal system in which openly challenging male authority could lead to punishment, conflict, or further marginalisation. Their silence becomes a strategy for survival rather than a sign of agreement.

As Florence Stratton argues, women in Achebe's fiction occupy essential positions within family and society, yet patriarchal structures often deny them equal authority and public recognition.

This unequal relationship within the family reflects a wider imbalance within the community. Women are expected to preserve the household, raise children, support their husbands, and maintain cultural traditions, yet they are rarely recognised as equal participants in shaping society. They carry many responsibilities but possess limited authority. Their work strengthens the community, while their voices remain largely unheard.

The arrival of colonialism does not remove these inequalities. Instead, women experience another layer of marginalisation. They continue to live within patriarchal traditions while also facing the social and political changes introduced by colonial rule. In this sense, women become doubly marginalised. Their exclusion does not begin with colonialism, but colonialism enters a society where unequal power relations already exist and further complicates their position.

This study does not argue that harmony between men and women should be replaced by conflict or rebellion. Rather, it argues that stronger communities are built when justice accompanies tradition. Respect, participation, and mutual trust strengthen both the family and society. When women are recognised not only for their responsibilities but also for their perspectives and contributions, the community becomes more inclusive and better prepared to face internal and external challenges. Achebe therefore encourages readers to reflect not only on the destructive effects of colonialism but also on the importance of justice within society itself.

3.4 Okonkwo: Resistance, Power, and Internal Oppression

Okonkwo is one of the most significant and complex characters in *Things Fall Apart*. He is admired for his courage, determination, and commitment to preserving the traditions of Igbo society during the arrival of British colonialism. Throughout the novel, he strongly resists colonial rule because he believes that it threatens the identity, culture, and independence of his people. However, Achebe presents a deeper contradiction within his character. While Okonkwo struggles against external domination, he also exercises

domination within his own family. His understanding of strength is shaped by fear rather than balance, and this fear gradually influences his relationships, his leadership, and ultimately his downfall. The following sections examine how Okonkwo's fear of weakness, his use of power, and his treatment of others reveal the relationship between resistance, authority, and internal oppression. They also demonstrate that the collapse of his leadership results not only from colonial intervention but also from his inability to adapt, listen, and balance strength with justice.

3.4.1 Fear of Weakness and the Construction of Masculinity

Okonkwo's greatest fear is becoming like his father, Unoka. Throughout his childhood, he associates his father's poverty, debts, and lack of social status with weakness and failure. Achebe explains that "his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness." Determined to erase his father's legacy, Okonkwo works tirelessly to become respected within his community. His success as a farmer and warrior reflects discipline, ambition, and perseverance. However, his desire to become the opposite of his father gradually develops into an obsession.

For Okonkwo, masculinity becomes closely connected with physical strength, authority, and emotional control. He believes that kindness, sympathy, and tenderness are signs of weakness because they remind him of Unoka. Achebe observes that "he was ruled by one passion to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved." As a result, Okonkwo suppresses his emotions and expects others to do the same. His identity becomes governed by fear rather than confidence. Instead of balancing courage with compassion, he defines strength only through power and control.

Achebe suggests that this fear shapes almost every important decision Okonkwo makes. Rather than acting according to his own conscience, he frequently acts according to how he believes other men will judge him. His public reputation becomes more important than his personal relationships. As Simon Gikandi observes, Okonkwo's rigid understanding of masculinity reflects both his personal anxiety and the wider tensions within a society facing profound change. Ironically, the fear that motivates his success also becomes the force that destroys both his family and his future.

3.4.2 From the Oppressed to the Oppressor: Violence, Family, and Abuse of Power

Okonkwo's fear of weakness gradually transforms into oppression within his own household. Although he rejects colonial domination and refuses to accept foreign control over his people, he governs his family through fear, violence, and unquestioned authority. Achebe describes him as a man who "ruled his household with a heavy hand." This brief description establishes fear as the foundation of his authority. Achebe therefore presents an important contradiction: the man who fights against oppression also becomes an oppressor himself.

His wives experience this oppression throughout the novel. They are expected to obey without question, and disagreement is often answered with violence. Okonkwo's beating of Ojiugo during the Week of Peace clearly demonstrates that his anger becomes stronger than the traditions he claims to defend. Achebe states that "he committed a great evil" by violating the sacred Week of Peace. Although the Week of Peace represents harmony, self-control, and respect for the community, Okonkwo breaks its sacred laws because he cannot control his desire for authority. The protector of tradition becomes one of the first to violate it.

His treatment of Ikemefuna reveals an even deeper conflict. Despite developing a close relationship with the boy, Okonkwo participates in his execution because he fears appearing weak before other men. The elder Ezeudu had warned him that "That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death." Nevertheless, Okonkwo strikes the final blow because he is "afraid of being thought weak." Instead of following compassion, he chooses reputation. The same pattern appears in his relationship with Nwoye. Rather than understanding his son's gentle nature, Okonkwo responds with anger, rejection, and violence. His leadership therefore creates fear rather than trust, pushing his own family further away instead of strengthening it.

Achebe presents these relationships to show that oppression does not exist only through colonial rule. It can also develop within families and communities when authority is based on fear instead of justice. As Biodun Jeyifo argues, Achebe presents Igbo society as a complex culture with both admirable qualities and internal contradictions. Okonkwo becomes both the oppressed and the oppressor at the same time. While he fights against British domination, he unknowingly reproduces another form of domination inside his own home.

3.4.3 The Collapse of Leadership and the Tragic Irony of Resistance

Okonkwo's exile marks the beginning of his gradual isolation from the society he hopes to protect. During his absence, Umuofia changes politically, socially, and religiously. Christianity attracts those who have felt excluded from traditional society, while British colonial institutions gradually weaken the authority of village leaders. When Okonkwo returns, he expects to resume his former position, but he discovers that the community has already begun to change.

Unable to accept this transformation, Okonkwo becomes increasingly driven by revenge rather than careful leadership. He believes that violent resistance is the only solution, even though many members of the community no longer share his views. His final act of killing the colonial messenger demonstrates both his courage and his complete isolation. Instead of inspiring collective resistance, his action reveals that he is now standing alone. When Obierika observes, "He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart," he expresses not only the destructive impact of colonialism but also the loss of unity within the community. This moment reinforces the central argument of the present study that colonial influence becomes more effective when internal divisions have already weakened social cohesion.

His suicide completes the tragic irony of his life. Throughout the novel, Okonkwo dedicates himself to preserving Igbo traditions and protecting the honour of his people. Yet his final action violates one of the most important customs of the very society he wishes to defend. Achebe explains that "It is an abomination for a man to take his own life." The man who spends his life protecting tradition ultimately dies by breaking one of its most sacred laws. His death therefore symbolizes not only his personal defeat but also the tragic collapse of the values he struggled to preserve.

Achebe therefore presents Okonkwo as a tragic figure whose downfall cannot be explained by colonialism alone. Colonial rule certainly accelerated the collapse of Umuofia, but Okonkwo's inability to balance strength with compassion, authority with justice, and tradition with understanding also contributed to his tragedy. As Simon Gikandi argues, Achebe portrays change as a complex historical process in which both external forces and internal tensions shape the fate of individuals and communities. Okonkwo's life suggests that a society cannot successfully resist external oppression while internal fear, exclusion, and unequal power continue to shape relationships within the community.

3.5 Nwoye: Generational Conflict, Identity, and the Search for Belonging

Nwoye is one of the most important characters in *Things Fall Apart* because his story reveals how emotional conflict within a society can create opportunities for change. Unlike Okonkwo, who believes that strength is measured by physical courage and authority, Nwoye is thoughtful, compassionate, and emotionally sensitive. Achebe describes him as "a sad-faced youth," immediately suggesting that he struggles to meet the expectations imposed upon him. His quiet personality does not represent weakness but reflects an inner conflict between his own values and the rigid definition of masculinity promoted by his father.

From an early age, Nwoye finds it difficult to identify with Okonkwo's understanding of manhood. Okonkwo constantly fears that his son resembles Unoka, whom he considers weak and unsuccessful. He repeatedly pressures Nwoye to reject compassion and become a fearless warrior. This pressure creates distance rather than understanding between father and son. Instead of feeling accepted within his own family, Nwoye grows up trying to become someone he is not. Achebe therefore presents generational conflict as more than a disagreement between father and son; it reflects the inability of one generation to recognise the emotional needs of the next.

The execution of Ikemefuna became the turning point in Nwoye's life. Ikemefuna has become like an elder brother to him, providing friendship, guidance, and emotional support. Before the execution, the elder Ogbuefi Ezeudu warns Okonkwo, "That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death." However, Okonkwo ignores this advice because he fears appearing weak before other men. After Ikemefuna's death, Achebe writes that "something seemed to give way inside him." This simple sentence carries profound emotional significance. It suggests that Nwoye's trust in his father's values begins to collapse. The event

forces him to question whether traditions that demand violence at the expense of compassion can truly represent justice.

Nwoye's decision to join Christianity should therefore not be understood simply as betrayal or rejection of his culture. Achebe explains that the Christian hymn "seemed to answer a vague and persistent question." The missionaries do not win Nwoye through force but through acceptance, compassion, and a sense of belonging. Their message offers hope to those who feel misunderstood or excluded. His conversion reflects a search for identity rather than an abandonment of his people.

Through Nwoye's character, Achebe suggests that colonialism succeeds not only because of military or political power but also because it speaks to individuals who already feel disconnected from parts of their own society. Nwoye's emotional isolation begins long before the arrival of the missionaries. Colonial influence becomes effective because it enters through existing divisions rather than creating them entirely. As Simon Gikandi argues, the conflict between tradition and change is one of the central tensions in *Things Fall Apart*. Nwoye's story therefore supports the central argument of this study: societies become more vulnerable to external domination when internal relationships are shaped by fear, exclusion, and the absence of mutual understanding.

Rather than presenting Nwoye as weak or disloyal, Achebe invites readers to understand the psychological reasons behind his choices. His search for belonging reflects a universal human need to be respected, heard, and accepted. The conflict between Nwoye and Okonkwo therefore extends beyond one family. It symbolises the wider tension between tradition and change, authority and compassion, and exclusion and inclusion. In this way, Nwoye becomes one of the strongest examples of how internal social fragmentation prepares the ground for colonial influence.

3.6 Colonialism Enters Through the Cracks: Social Fragmentation and the Collapse of Umuofia

Achebe presents colonialism as a powerful external force that transforms Igbo society. However, *Things Fall Apart* also suggests that colonial domination does not succeed through military strength alone. Instead, it gradually expands by entering a society that already contains internal divisions. The novel demonstrates that social fragmentation, unequal power relations, and the exclusion of certain members of the community weaken collective unity long before the arrival of British colonial rule.

Throughout the novel, Achebe portrays Igbo society as rich in traditions, cultural values, and communal life. At the same time, he does not idealise this society. Women play a central role in preserving family life and cultural continuity, yet they remain excluded from many positions of authority. Okonkwo governs his household through fear rather than mutual respect, creating emotional distance between himself and his family. Nwoye grows up feeling misunderstood and isolated, while the *osu* and other marginalised members

of society experience exclusion because of inherited social status. These inequalities do not immediately destroy the community, but they gradually weaken the trust and unity that hold it together.

Achebe illustrates this process through the arrival of the Christian missionaries. Mr. Kiaga welcomes those whom traditional society has rejected, declaring, "Before God there is no slave or free." This message offers dignity and acceptance to individuals who have long lived on the margins of the community. The missionaries do not attract only those who reject Igbo culture; they also attract those who have never fully belonged within it. Their success therefore depends not only on the strength of colonial institutions but also on the weaknesses that already exist inside the society itself.

Nwoye's conversion illustrates this process clearly. His decision follows years of emotional conflict, rejection, and disappointment rather than sudden persuasion. Similarly, the acceptance of Christianity by the *osu* reflects a search for equality and human dignity. Achebe therefore suggests that colonialism becomes more effective when people who have been denied recognition discover alternative communities that promise acceptance. The external force succeeds because internal belonging has already been weakened. As Simon Gikandi argues, the encounter between tradition and colonialism is shaped not only by external intervention but also by internal tensions that influence the response of the community to change.

Okonkwo's tragedy reinforces this argument. He believes that military resistance alone can protect Umuofia, yet he fails to recognise that unity cannot be preserved through fear. Throughout the novel, he opposes colonial domination while exercising domination within his own household. This contradiction reflects a wider social problem. A community that struggles with internal injustice becomes more vulnerable when confronted by external challenges. Achebe therefore invites readers to consider that resistance requires not only courage but also justice, inclusion, and mutual respect.

From this perspective, *Things Fall Apart* extends beyond the history of colonial Africa. It offers a broader reflection on how societies respond to periods of crisis and change. Communities become stronger when all their members feel respected, heard, and included. Conversely, exclusion, silence, and unequal power create divisions that weaken social cohesion over time.

This interpretation is captured in Obierika's powerful reflection: "He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart." The statement summarises the central argument of this study. Achebe suggests that colonialism enters through the cracks created by internal inequalities, exclusion, and social fragmentation. This interpretation also reflects the principles of Sustainable Development Goal-16, which promotes peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. *Things Fall Apart* therefore remains deeply relevant to contemporary discussions of inclusion, social justice, and sustainable peace.

IV. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE

4.1 Conclusion

This study examined how Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* presents the relationship between colonialism, internal inequalities, and social fragmentation in Igbo society. Rather than presenting colonialism as the only reason for the collapse of Umuofia, the analysis has shown that Achebe offers a more balanced and complex picture. The novel demonstrates that external domination becomes more effective when a society is already affected by unequal power, exclusion, and unresolved internal conflicts.

The study explored how different forms of inequality shape the lives of the novel's characters. Women play an essential role in preserving family life and cultural traditions, yet they remain excluded from many positions of authority. Okonkwo fights to protect his community from colonial rule, but he often governs his own household through fear and violence. Nwoye's decision to join Christianity reflects not only a religious change but also his search for compassion, acceptance, and belonging after experiencing emotional rejection. Together, these experiences show that internal divisions weaken the unity of the community long before colonial rule is fully established.

The findings also demonstrate that Achebe does not idealise either Igbo society or British colonialism. While he celebrates the strength of Igbo culture, he also encourages readers to question the inequalities that already existed within the community. At the same time, the novel clearly shows the destructive effects of colonial intervention on traditional institutions, leadership, and cultural identity. Through this balanced representation, *Things Fall Apart* becomes more than a historical novel. It invites readers to reflect on justice, leadership, identity, and social responsibility.

The main contribution of this study is its argument that colonialism succeeds not simply because of its political or military power, but because it enters a society that is already affected by internal inequalities and social fragmentation. By examining the experiences of Okonkwo, Nwoye, women, and other marginalised members of the community, this research demonstrates that external domination and internal injustice are closely connected. This perspective offers a different way of understanding the novel by examining both forces together rather than treating them as separate issues.

The study also highlights the continuing relevance of Sustainable Development Goal-16, which promotes peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. Achebe's novel suggests that lasting peace cannot depend only on resisting external threats. Strong communities are built through justice, equal participation, mutual respect, and the inclusion of all members of society. When fear, exclusion, and unequal power become accepted as normal, communities become more vulnerable to conflict and division.

Although *Things Fall Apart* is set in colonial Nigeria, its message remains relevant today. Many societies continue to face inequality, political conflict, displacement, discrimination, and struggles for justice. Achebe

reminds readers that a society is strengthened not only by preserving its traditions but also by ensuring fairness, dignity, and respect for every individual. For this reason, *Things Fall Apart* continues to be an important literary work that contributes to discussions of social justice, equality, leadership, and sustainable peace in the contemporary world. Its enduring relevance reminds readers that societies become stronger not only by resisting external threats but also by confronting internal inequalities with justice, inclusion, and mutual respect.

4.2 Limitations of the Study

Like any research, this study has certain limitations. First, it focuses on only one novel, *Things Fall Apart*, by Chinua Achebe. Although the novel provides rich material for understanding colonialism, internal inequalities, and social fragmentation, the findings cannot be generalised to all African literature or all postcolonial societies.

Second, this research is based on literary analysis rather than historical, political, or sociological investigation. The study interprets the novel through postcolonial and feminist perspectives while relating its themes to Sustainable Development Goal-16 (SDG-16). Therefore, the discussion reflects a literary interpretation rather than a comprehensive historical, political, or sociological analysis of colonial Nigeria.

Another limitation is that the study concentrates on selected themes, including colonialism, internal inequalities, women's marginalisation, leadership, identity, and social justice. Other important aspects of the novel, such as language, symbolism, narrative technique, religion, and cultural rituals, are mentioned only when they support the main objectives of the research. A detailed analysis of these themes falls outside the scope of the present study.

Finally, the study relies mainly on close reading of the novel and selected scholarly sources. Different theoretical approaches or additional literary texts may produce different interpretations. Therefore, the findings should be understood within the scope and objectives of this research.

4.3 Future Scope and Recommendations

This study explores *Things Fall Apart* through the themes of colonialism, internal inequalities, social fragmentation, and social justice. However, the novel offers many other perspectives that deserve further research. Future studies may examine Achebe's use of language, symbolism, religion, indigenous knowledge, or environmental themes to develop a broader understanding of his literary contribution.

Researchers may also compare *Things Fall Apart* with other African, Asian, or postcolonial novels to explore how different societies experienced colonialism and how writers from different cultures represent identity, resistance, justice, and cultural change. Such comparative studies would provide a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences between postcolonial societies.

This research also encourages future scholars to continue exploring the relationship between literature and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG-16. Literary works are not only artistic creations; they also help readers understand important social issues such as justice, equality, peaceful coexistence, inclusion, and responsible leadership. Examining literature through this perspective can strengthen the connection between literary studies and contemporary global challenges.

Finally, this study recommends that *Things Fall Apart* continue to be taught not only as a classic African novel but also as a literary work that encourages critical thinking about power, leadership, justice, identity, and human dignity. Although the novel was written decades ago, its message remains relevant in today's world, where many societies continue to face conflict, inequality, discrimination, and social division. Literature cannot solve these problems on its own, but it can encourage understanding, dialogue, and reflection. For this reason, *Things Fall Apart* will continue to be an important text for students, researchers, and anyone interested in building more just and inclusive societies. Its enduring relevance demonstrates that literature not only preserves the past but also helps readers reflect critically on the present and imagine more just futures.

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