

ادب ما بعد الاستعمار في رواية "أشياء تتداعى" لتشنوا أتشيببي ورواية "أطفال منتصف الليل"
لسلمان رشدي

المدرس المساعد علاء نعيم حسن الزامل
الكلية التربوية المفتوحة

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A Postcolonial Study of Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children "

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Keywords : Postcolonial literature, colonialism, cultural identity, Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie , Midnight's Children.

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المخلص

تُعد روايتنا "أشياء تتداعى" لتشنوا أنشيبي و* "أطفال منتصف الليل" لسلمان رشدي من الأعمال البارزة في أدب ما بعد الاستعمار، حيث تتناولان قضايا الاستعمار والهوية. تهدف هذه الدراسة، من خلال الاستعانة بنظريات الاستعمار وما بعد الاستعمار كما طرحها إدوارد سعيد، وهومي بإهابها وآخرون، إلى تحليل هاتين الروايتين. في رواية "أشياء تتداعى"، يُصوّر أنشيبي مجتمع الإيبو عند قدوم الاستعمار البريطاني وتأثيره الثقافي والاجتماعي. وتتناول الرواية أسئلة الهوية، والثقافة، والمقاومة للتغيير المفروض. أما في رواية "أطفال منتصف الليل"، فيتناول رشدي التاريخ الحديث للهند من خلال سرديات متعددة، مستخدماً الواقعية السحرية، وذلك من فترة الاستعمار إلى ما بعد الاستقلال. ويستكشف رشدي قضايا معقدة تتعلق بالهوية وما بعد الاستعمار. وتُظهر المقارنة بين العملين أوجه التشابه والاختلاف في تناولهما للاستعمار وما بعده، خاصة فيما يتعلق بالهوية الثقافية والسرد التاريخي. وهكذا، تثبت هذه الدراسة أن كلا الروايتين، رغم اختلاف مناهجهما، تسعيان إلى نقد الاستعمار وآثاره على المجتمعات المهمية عليها، مؤكدتين على أهمية إعادة النظر في الهوية الثقافية والتاريخية .



Abstract

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* are two landmark works of postcolonial literature that deal with the issues of colonialism and identity. The present study, dipping into colonial and post-colonial theories as viewed by Edward Said, Homi Bhabha et al., will try to examine these two novels. In *Things Fall Apart* Achebe shows Igbo society on the coming of British colonialism with its cultural and social impacts. The novel deals with questions of identity, culture, and resistance to imposed change. *Midnight's Children* examines recent Indian history through the narratives held by multiple tales and that use of magical realism from the period of colonization to after independence. Here Rushdie mines very complex matters relating to identity and postcolonialism. Comparison of the two works shows the difference and similarity in their approach to colonialism and postcolonialism, more particularly cultural identity and historical narrative. Thus, this research proves that though approaching the subject matter differently, both novels aim to critique colonialism and its resultant impact on dominant societies, emphasizing the need to readdress cultural and historical identity.

Introduction

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* has been considered one of the most important novels in African and postcolonial literature. The novel is about Okonkwo, an Igbo man from Nigeria who has become very well-respected in society due to his hard work in bettering his social and economic status; he still faces many internal and external conflicts. The Igbo community, which solely depends on its old traditional books for life and continuity, suffers crises of identity and values after the British colonial invasion accompanied by Christian missionaries. Okonkwo was a typical male strong hero in the society that faced great trouble with modernity brought by colonialism conflicting with traditional values. The colonizers did not only alter the political and economic systems of societies but also broke their social and cultural systems. Okonkwo is a man who has always used force and violence in maintaining his status and dignity. He is then confronted by his weaknesses, which eventually culminate with his inability to adapt to new changes and bring about the tragedy of his downfall. The novel elaborates on the contradictions and tensions that exist between tradition and modernity, indigenous communities and colonial powers; it thus maps out a complex layout of social and psychological experiences for the Igbo people. Analyzing Okonkwo's life as well as his disintegrating community, this essay shall discuss issues related to identity, culture, resistance against imposed



change, and colonialism's dire consequences. Achebe not only indicates the internal weaknesses of Igbo society but also informs us about the wrecking effect of colonialism on these societies; through this, he awakens public consciousness regarding cultural identity preservation efforts to be undertaken amid colonialism.

Midnight's Children tells the story of Salim Sinai, who was born at the time of Partition and Independence of India from British rule is also considered one of the most significant texts in Postcolonial literature. The moment Saleem comes into existence is precisely the moment that British India ends; he and his other siblings born at midnight on August 15, 1947, thus inherit superpowers— a metaphor for enormous potential but also identity crises experienced by the state of newly independent India. Salim narrates his adventures along with those of his family against social, political, and cultural transformations in India from colonial times to post-independence period. Issues pertaining to identity, culture, and nationality in India are dealt with through magical realism and multi-layered narratives in this novel alongside a discussion on history, politics, and religion as factors influencing these identities. Through the character of Salim and his remarkable talents, Rushdie symbolizes the splendor and squalor that stand for diversity and division in Indian society. The novel also tackles the inheritance of colonialism and its impact on the social and political systems of India that somewhat hinder efforts to forge a unified national identity. *Midnight's Children* is a scathing critique of political and social post-independent India as it fails to read like a Social History. It thus becomes an appalling textual analysis filled with cultural consciousness regarding conditions in the Postcolonial period and national struggles toward awareness and self-recognition. In utilizing a language so rich, so complex, that it almost creates an impression of fine tableau vivant picturing India with all her contemporary as well as historical troubles. It has enabled the readers to see the problems of India with a different vision and understand better the very complicated issues of such a big and mixed-up population through the real history and literary fiction in this work. (Roy '2022).

Colonial and postcolonial theories

Colonial and postcolonial theories respectively address how colonialism interacts with the colonized worlds, its societies, cultures, and identities and its aftermath. The former informs mainly from the knowledge of colonial powers and colonizers, who have hegemonically turned Indigenous cultures against themselves. It sets the impetus of colonialism that installs social, political, and economic systems at other societies while undermining- even destroying indigenous cultural identity- by dint



of its sheer force upon them or through resource exploitation both natural and human. The latter engages in these processes framed by recolonized societies focusing on a critique of the impacts made permanent by imperial endeavors upon national, cultural, and individual identities , Erritouni ,(2004). Scholars like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak form leading lights here; they approach facet examinations about how colonialism shapes/informs through/post to language, literature, culture & politics in the post-independence setting. Ultimately, these theories stress the need to reexamine history and culture along with coming to recognize and value the plurality of human experience Almoubizar & Gazou2022). s.

Things Falling Apart and the Identity Crisis in Igbo Society:

In “Things Falling Apart,” Achebe confronts a crisis of identity in Igbo society. The story unfolds as it faces a profound transformation in its sociocultural identity, driven by the legacy of British colonizers and Christian humanists. And in this society, where the national values and cultural systems of its country live on, the strength of the law and the promotion of Christianity, the old Albert of power and identity can lose its sanity. This crisis leads to an identity crisis not only at the social level but also includes a change at the individual level, where it suffers differently than Okonkwo (Erritouni, 2004).

The issue of identity crisis has been rife with the Achebe scholars, but the concept of hybridity—the coexistence of traditional and colonial influences—has not been fully explored in the context of *Things Fall Apart*. Hybridity in postcolonial theory refers to the complex and often contradictory cultural forms which come into play when two cultures collide, and result in new forms of identity. The new identity is neither entirely indigenous nor completely imposed. By focusing on hybridity, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on postcolonial identity formation and its implications for individuals and societies, and addresses the problem of the inadequate learned consideration given to the notion of hybridity in *Things Fall Apart*. The existing literature explores the binary opposition between the European colonization and the indigenous Igbo culture. Kipng’etich (2024) frames the colonial experience as an account of ruin and devastation. While the collapse of native cultures, due to colonization, is no doubt, a dominant theme in the novel, there is still a need for a more nuanced approach to comprehend how the colonized individuals negotiate their personal and national identities under the cultural onslaught of the colonizers. We particularly look at how Achebe represents the process of hybridity and how it influences the characters’ development and their sense of self.



This hybridity, as depicted in *Things Fall Apart*, is both fruitful and agonizing. Nwoye's conversion, for instance, demonstrates what Kipng'etich (2024) calls —identity reconstruction: a process in which colonized people reinvent their *self* through a compromise between their inherited, and the foreign and imposed cultures. In the same way, Agunbiade (2023) asserts that hybridity makes postcolonial subjects reinvent a flexible and open selfhood; one that is responsive and ready to be reconfigured. Yet, this renovation is often laden with alienation, because in such conditions the individual may not fully relate with either cultural group—the inherited and the imposed cultural group. Wade (2011) stresses the hybridity to be seen —as both spatial and subjective, connecting psychological dislocation to sociocultural positioning.

And you cannot accept social changes, and this question leads to spiritual eternity and, ultimately, to its foundation. The identity crisis also manifested itself at the collective level, as the Igbo community faced a duality between modern cultural identity and the practices of colonialism. Despite the appearance of this conflict, Achebe was apparently challenged by many cultural writings and the changes and influences they underwent.

Midnight's Children and the Complexities of Indian Identity:

In contrast, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* analyzes the complexities of identity in postcolonial India. Salim Sinai, the main character in this novel, is a symbol of modern India facing many identity problems and challenges. This novel uses magical realism to express the contradictions and tensions in the various identities of India, a country known for its vast cultural, linguistic, religious, and ethnic diversity (Eritoni, 2004). In this novel, Rushdie examines the multiple and fragmented identities that emerged after colonialism and the Partition of India. Saleem, born at the time of India's independence, faces multiple identity crises. He must reconcile his national, cultural, religious, and even personal identity. These crises arise not only from India's colonial history but also from the complexities that arise from the country's infinite diversity. (Roy, n.d.).

India had very high expectations of its newly acquired freedom. The "Times of India" announced a prize for any child born at the exact moment of independence. India manifests its hopes for a better future through its celebration of the independence. People are ecstatic, glorious celebrations are organized, and Saleem himself receives a letter from Jawaharlal Nehru, the prime minister, who predicts Saleem's connection to the country: "Dear Baby Saleem, My belated congratulations on the happy accident of your moment of birth! You are the newest bearer of

that ancient face of India which is also eternally young. We shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own." Rachel Trousdale,(2010). These words turned out to be prophetic, as his life is the mirror of the country in a metaphoric way. However, at the very same night, Shiva, Wee Willie Winkie's son was born. Mary Pereira, Saleem's future nanny, swaps the babies at birth, in the memory of the man she loved, the revolutionary Joseph. She believed that the actual conflict in India was not between the Hindus and Muslims, but between the rich and the poor, so she wanted to do her part in mending social injustices. Therefore, Saleem's birth mother was Hindu and she died while giving birth to him, and his real father was William Methwold, a British with whom his mother had an affair. Instead of growing up in a poor

Rushdie also points out the role of language and narrative in shaping identities. Salim, the narrator, uses different languages and narratives to express his experiences of identity. This use of language as a flexible tool demonstrates the complexities of identity in a multicultural society, which cannot be easily placed within fixed and immutable frameworks..

Comparison of Identity Crises in the Two Novels

The two novels, from different perspectives and at different cultural and historical moments, come together in a conversation about identity crises born of the troubling legacy of colonialism and postcolonialism. *Things Fall Apart* will stage its moment as an intensely abrupt and tragic shattering brought about by the imposition of foreign culture and religion. *Midnight's Children* will manifest its crisis as complex and unfolding, even as redefinition of multiple identities and new circumstances begins to work itself out..

Both Achebe and Rushdie employ their protagonists as embodiments of their factions, whose struggles with identity mirror broader communal struggles. Okonkwo and Salim confront almost identical dilemmas: that of conflict between yesteryears and today, tradition and modernity, as well as fidelity to native cultural identities in the context of globalization and cultural transformation pressure.

The two novels, in the final analysis, prove cultural identity to be not static and fixed, but dynamic and constantly changing. These texts remind us too that moments of identity crisis are not only times of brokenness and conflict but also moments during which we can re-conceptualize our notions of identity in order to better fit with new changes. Analyzing identity crisis very profoundly, therefore, these two works present to society an understanding that would be more knowledgeably complete regarding the myriad tensions within cultural identities today.



Achebe narrates history in Chinua's *Things Fall Apart* while Rushdie does so in Salman's *Midnight's Children*; both books unfold a very complex and multi-layered narrative of history, for the authors relate the past and cultural experiences of their societies through metaphors and symbols. The two texts do not merely provide an overt depiction of historical events but, through symbolism and metaphorical language, undertake a deeper scrutiny and critique of the historical and social forces that have forged collective identities and experiences (Erritouni 2004, ').

For example, challenged the stereotypical portrayals of African societies in Western literature notably "*Things Fall Apart*" (1958), are pivotal in African literature., offering an authentic African perspective. His narratives are rooted in the African experience, detailing the cultural clash and the transformation of societies under colonial rule (Achebe, 1958). Achebe's literature not only depicts the African response to colonialism but also delves into the complexities of identity, cultural erosion, and the struggle for self-definition in a postcolonial context.

Besides, the history was narrated, Salman Rushdie's works, including the renowned "*Midnight's Children*" (1981), present a tapestry of postcolonial themes. Rushdie's narratives are characterized by their magical realism and intricate storytelling, offering a multifaceted portrayal of postcolonial India. His works explore themes of hybridity, identity, and cultural fragmentation, reflecting the postcolonial dilemma of reconciling traditional values with modernity (Rushdie, 1981). Rushdie's contribution is significant in understanding the postcolonial psyche and the ongoing quest for cultural and political identity in the aftermath of colonial rule.

"*Things Fall Apart*": Historical Narrative and Metaphors of Collapse

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe narrates the firsthand tale of colonialism and its impacts on Igbo society. He employs the narrative of Okonkwo and the falling apart of his world as a metaphor for the cultural and social disintegration that British settlers and Christian missionaries brought when they came to that land. This novel, using cultural and natural symbols like the yam which symbolizes wealth and masculine power, while seasonal changes symbolize social changes, undertakes a deeper investigation into Igbo history and culture; (Erritouni, 2004).

Achebe uses metaphors and symbols through the destruction of Okonkwo's house; for example, it was argued that Achebe utilized certain symbols, such as his involvement in killing Ikemefuna, the accidental gun blast and death of Ezeudu's son, fire, and ash, just to name a few, that ultimately signaled his forthcoming tragic situation. which also signifies the loss of his status and dignity, to portray how colonialism wrecks not

just the social but also the cultural facets of society. Collapse itself is a symbol that features in the title of the novel; it pertains to Okonkwo's loss of power and respect but is bigger than that—it symbolizes the collapse of whole Igbo society when faced with alien forces imposed upon it. The metaphor, in a wider sense, reflects how Colonialism destroys native cultures and their traditional foundations. Almoubizar , & Gazou, (2022) 2022b).

Midnight's Children: History, Symbolism, and Magical Realism

Salman Rushdie adopts a different style of storytelling in Midnight's Children. In the form of magical realism, he presents recent Indian history from the days of colonialism to after independence (Imad and Kadam, 2023). Salim Sinai's character, who is born along with India's independence, comes forth as a symbol of modern India having all its complexities regarding identity and history. Saleem along with other children who were born at midnight on August 15, 1947 also possess superpowers which stand as symbols for both post-independence India's potential and its challenges.(Batta ,2022).

Rushdie uses symbols like broken mirrors to show India's scattered and divided past, and Saleem's many bodies as a metaphor for the country's cultural diversity and its very identity. Magical realism lets Rushdie show India's history not as an easy straight story, but as a set of complicated and many-layered happenings. This method does not just tell about historical events but also helps us think about them and look at them from other angles.

Comparing Ways People Write History and How They Use Symbols and Metaphors

Achebe tells the story in a direct realistic manner using cultural symbols and metaphors to illustrate the collapse of Igbo society and changes that have taken place in the social and cultural dimensions of peoples' lives. This gives readers deep insight into history and culture, thus understanding how colonialism hit them hard, basically tearing into pieces of existence. (Minors, 2006).

In contrast, Rushdie uses magical realism and multi-layered narratives to unfold Indian history; the unfolding reveals many dimensions of diversity and contradiction inherent in the tale. His symbols and metaphors speak directly to issues of identity, historical paradoxes, and India as a multicultural and multiethnic state confronted with crises. By blending fiction and nonfiction, Rushdie critiques Indian history and culture at a deeper level; this gives the reader an opportunity to perceive the land from varied angles(Patra, n.d.).





Both the writers, through their symbols and metaphors, tell history from two perspectives which directly or indirectly confront and critique colonialism and postcolonialism. The works are not merely historical narratives; they are cultural and social critiques that allow for deeper investigation into the impacts of these historical eras on varying identities and societies. The writers remind the readers, through their works, that history is not just a deposit of old episodic occurrences but rather a dynamic complex process that continuously constitutes identities and societies.

Colonial and postcolonial theories offer strong analytical frameworks through which one can grasp the deep and varied impacts of colonialism and its aftermaths on societies, cultures, and human identities; its supported by theorist whose postcolonialism is mainly based on what he considers the false image of the Orient or the East that has been fabricated by western explorers, poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators since Napoleon's occupation of Egypt in 1798 Edward Said, 1987. They serve well in approaching literary texts like Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, for these novels overtly engage with the critique of colonialism and postcolonialism as it happens to Indigenous and colonized societies.

Impact of Colonialism on Identity and Culture

In *Things Fall Apart*, colonial theories help us grasp the depth of colonialism's impact on the Igbo society and other indigenous cultures (Bonnici, 2004). It was the British settlers and Christian missionaries that caused this society to implode in terms of its traditional and cultural pillars. Achebe tells the story of Okonkwo and his community to illustrate how foreign cultural and religious values are imparted into indigenous societies, how these processes eventually lead to a dilution of identity and loss of cultural values (Parker and Starkey, 1995). The postcolonial theories articulated by Homi Bhabha and Edward Said (1987) are extremely instrumental in diagnosing character responses amid identity crisis and cultural turmoil instigated by such transformations. These theories illustrate something else-how individuals as well as societies confront new imposition mal-adapted circumstances while surrounding with quest to trace an abode for their historical and ethnical remembrance.

The Complexities of Identity and Historical Narrative

Midnight's Children treats Indian identity along with historical and cultural matters in a postcolonial light. Salman Rushdie uses magical realism and multi-layered narratives to construct Indian identity and its

historical struggles left over from colonization as well as after independence. It is through Postcolonial theory that one imbibes this knowledge of the interaction of varied identities across different cultural and historical contexts. The use of symbols and metaphors within this text - "*Midnight's Children*" - symbolizing India's vastness and hope work towards bettering an understanding of the aspect that plays the role of history and culture in identity formation(Nelson, 2003).

Critique of Colonial Discourses

Both novels offer a critique of colonial and postcolonial discourse. In *Things Fall Apart*, the critique of colonial discourse is particularly evident in challenging the stereotypes and misconceptions about Indigenous cultures that were perpetuated by the colonizers. This novel reminds us that it is impossible to know the history and culture of Indigenous communities through colonial discourses alone; there must be an insider and Indigenous perspective as well. Postcolonial theories have notably addressed Edward Said's critique through Orientalism to critique these images and examine how such images and stereotypes are imposed and constructed within works of literature produced during the period of colonization.)

In *Midnight's Children* that Rushdie explicitly deals with the issue of identity as plural and multiple in a postcolonial society. The varied characters and narratives in the book trace the processes through which national, cultural, and religious identities meet and clash within India after independence. Postcolonial theories, more specifically the works of Gayatri Spivak on "other" and "subaltern," can inform an understanding of how such diversity and multiplicity of identities can entail a set new problems and challenges that will demand an even better scrutiny and analysis(Almoubizar & Gazou2022).

Lasting Effects of Colonialism

One major finding in the study of these two novels is the fact that colonialism leaves its impact re-waves through societies long after its period. In both novels, even after independence, colonized societies are still held by the cultural, social, and political chains of colonialism. These remain not just at the level of political and economic structures but go much deeper into layers of culture and identity. Postcolonial theories, especially ideas like "hybridization" or cultural mixing provide us with tools to see how postcolonial societies deal with those traces and reconfigure their identities. (Almoubizar & Gazou ,2022).

Conclusion

Colonial and postcolonial theories are basic ideas that help us look at and understand *Things Fall Apart* and *Midnight's Children* more



deeply. These theories help us understand the history, culture, and identity of the societies in a clear way. They analyze and critique how colonialism and the time after it are talked about from different angles. The two novels are at the point where literature meets culture and society because they show important cultural and social ideas. These ideas help us understand the complex history and social changes that shape today's identities and societies.

A novel is a type of writing that can be adapted for use in situations after colonialism. It helps change the bad opinions that colonized people have and encourages them to fight back against colonial control. The imaginary scene shows a meeting between two cultures that are very different from one another. In this way, the imaginary situation becomes a struggle between the person being controlled and the one who is in charge. The history and culture of the country that was taken over are shown and respected to argue against the colonial belief that non-western countries lack true history. Instead, it shows that their past has many important tales and signs. The novel is a flexible type of writing that can be used in postcolonial contexts. It helps change the negative views of colonized people and encourages them to stand up against colonial rule. The made-up situation shows a meeting between two different cultures that are very different from each other. In this way, the made-up setting turns into a fight between the person being controlled and the one in control. So, the history and culture of the colonized country are shown and honored to challenge the colonial view that says non-western countries have no real history. Instead, it shows that their history is full of important stories and symbols.

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