



THE METAPHORS OF POSTCOLONIAL AFRICA IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *NO LONGER AT EASE*

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ABSTRACT

The African continent is one of the destinations known for nature, landscape, wildlife, and human exuberance. Intellectual prudence can also be imprinted in the arts, science, and literature scripts. Distinguished writers like Wole Soyinka, J. M. Coetzee, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Chinua Achebe have embarked on multicoloured African ethics, rituals, customs, moralities, and traditions in their literary juxtapositions. Chinua Achebe is a prominent novelist who has contributed to humankind's appreciation and acknowledgment of the postcolonial stipulation of Africa, particularly Nigeria. His literary expositions mainly concentrate on the social and political dichotomy of Africa. The lack of proper education, the roots of corruption, and the youth's inclination toward a Western lifestyle act as the predominant theme in Chinua Achebe's fiction.

Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) is an influential literary expression that candidly portrays the collision of colonialism with African humanity. This has created both constructive and destructive effects witnessed in the management of colonizers. The dilapidation of moral, ethical, and cultural ideals has damaged the social order of postcolonial Africa. The native folks are fascinated by the stylish and comfy existence of the colonizers. In the dominance of colonizers, the African populace was not open to the rudiments of scientific progressions. Subsequently, the colonizers shed light on the significance of education, which would help them to place intellectual products in a competitive global setup. Hence, the research paper aspires to project the metaphors of postcolonial Africa in Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* within the contemporary scaffold.

Key Words: Metaphors, Africa, Colonial, Postcolonial, Chinua Achebe, and Obi.

Introduction

Postcolonial literature has provided multicoloured instances of humankind in the backdrop of their fight for survival. Literary terms like 'Colonizer' and 'Colonized' have permitted intellectual thinkers to understand and experience the state of the human race. The colonial meet is a widespread phenomenon that facilitates the discernment of the practice of cross-cultural possessions. It is a procedure with comprehensive effects on the financial and political association of archaic and traditionally acknowledged societies in both ancient and modern worlds. It has also fashioned a thoughtful force on the cultural uniqueness of all the ethnic clusters. Consequently, it shapes the division of the broader experience of cross-cultural communication. These interactions picturize the multicoloured images of the colonized who suffer owed to slavery, inhibition, and racial discrimination. In *The Empire Writers Back*, Bill Ashcroft writes:

The postcolonial text is always a complex and hybridized formation. It is inadequate to read it as a reconstruction of purer traditional values... The reconstruction of 'pure' cultural values is always conducted within a radically alerted dynamic of power relations. (1989)

Chinua Achebe's second novel, *No Longer at Ease* (1960), resembles a sequel to *Things Fall Apart* (1958). The novel is set in Nigeria and deals with the theme of political independence. The dominance and spread of Westernization have led to the natural imposition of a cross-cultural lifestyle in the African civilization. Being an observant novelist, he depicts the haziness, vacillation, dichotomy of principles, and ethical anarchy that exemplify colonial African humanity and concentrates on the dilemma of knowledgeable youth wedged in the condition of challenges and difficulties. The novelist blames Western colonial authority for mutilating African customs. But he also applauds the colonizers for imparting education that has benefitted the indigenous people. Education has managed indirectly to depose supernatural practices.

The indigenous Africans followed the conventional life that their fellow seniors were administering. To ransack the prosperity of Africa, the power overseas has demoralized the customs and traditions of indigenous tribes. This act of colonizers forced them to fall under its rule and administration. The authority of colonizers imposed on the Africans is reasonably apparent in all aspects, as observed in Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*. Without showing any resistance, the native people closed their eyes and began to fall asleep



on the guidelines put forth by the colonizers. The intellectual colonial capitalists have implanted the germ of supremacy by taking control of European positions in Africa. This is done to favour some explicit ethnic hamlets to embrace the domination over other ancestral clusters. In one of the public meetings, the Chief of the Umuofian Progressive Union (UPU) says:

Many towns have four five or even ten of their sons in European posts in this city. Umuofia has only one. And now our enemies say that even that one is too many for us. But our ancestors would not agree to such a thing. (2010)

The intellectual blindness of indigenous Africans is witnessed as and when they absorbed the intrinsic worth of colonizers knowingly or unknowingly. This has resulted in the commencement of discriminating themselves to surpass one over the other for supremacy. The colonizers have been able to enjoy supremacy and domination in mental, physical, and geographical over the indigenous Africans. The native Africans have failed to decode and understand the hidden treachery of colonizers. Even they never attempted to be conscious and cautious of the inferior treatment meted out to the colonized. Instead, they just dreamt of the sophisticated life being

enjoyed by the colonizers. The language, dress code, and modern etiquette have fascinated them and caused them to forget their individuality in the native domain. They were unquestioningly expecting the comforts at the cost of their native tranquilities. In *Black Skin, White Mask*, Frantz Fanon opines:

The feeling of the inferiority of colonized is the correlative to the European's feeling of superiority... It is a racist who creates his inferiors. And the myth of the bad nigger is a part of collective unconscious... (1976)

In *No Longer at Ease*, Obi Okonkwo represents youth who wish to have the comforts Westerners enjoy. He is a converted Christian who dreams of obtaining a Western education and aspires to join the Senior Civil Service. His typical character sheds light on and echoes the colonial mindset developed by the indigenous Africans, as expressed by Achebe. Obi, the protagonist's premarital acquaintance with Clara, is an instance of sin as decided by the codes and conducts of African tribal clusters. In immersing himself in the Western world of illusion, he disregards his responsibilities to work for the progression of African society. Still, he focuses more on his love and sensuality with Clara. His acquaintance with Clara results in her pregnancy, but

she terminates it. The love episode of Obi showcases the quick changes among indigenous people due to their fascination with Western life.

The clever attitude of colonizers has indirectly urged the natives to convert and accept the Christian religion. This has caused the natives to live in a world of ambiguity, to accept the new ideals, and to forget their gods, religion, customs, rituals, and practices. However, with the offered guarantees and fascination towards modern life, the tribes of Umuofia have converted to Christianity in large numbers. The new religion, which had a colonial flavor, brought incredible transformations in the thinking and approach of the Umuofian tribes. With the lifestyle change, the only optimism noticed is the decline of fights between the clans. They have stopped murdering and taking revenge on the opposite ethnic groups. Here, we are introduced to another character called Mr. Ikedi. He is a guy from the urban locality who makes a serious attempt to counsel the juvenile Obi. Mr. Ikedi counsels him as:

Umuofia would have required you to fight in her wars and bring home human heads... Remember that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. I have heard of young men from other towns who went to the white man's

country, but instead of facing their studies, they went after the sweet things of the flesh. Some of them even married white women. (2010)

Being an ardent and observant aficionado of literary mechanisms, one should comprehend that colonialism itself is not the rationale for the disaster of Umuofian tribes. However, it is also a problem that is prevalent in African life. They are named as corruption, lack of education, less transparency, and fighting within the clusters. Even their beliefs in the supernatural elements are perceived as bane and curse rather than boon and gift. Though Achebe openly admits that he is a converted Christian, he finds Christianity has failed in Africa. He opines that the fascinating religion called Christianity has not been able to wipe out the social evils and practices in the Umuofian clusters. With the greater love, admiration, and fascination towards modernity, the indigenous people of Africa still consider the 'Osus' as inferior in matters of marriage. The father of Obi Okonkwo says:

Osus is like leprosy in the minds of our people. I beg of you, my son, not to bring the mark of shame and of leprosy into your family... You will bring sorrow to your head and the heads of your



children. Who will marry your daughters? (2010)

The education imparted by the colonizers through their Christian institutions has been able to bring positive vibrations among the youth. However, the love and acquaintance between Obi and Clara cause the readers to ponder the reasons for rejecting the girl. It is claimed that the playboy Obi belongs to the greater clan, whereas the blameless girl Clara hails from a much lesser clan. Here, it is very clear that the education provided by the Christian institutions is not able to eradicate and change the pre-fixed mindset of the Umuofian clans. The colonizers have succeeded in sowing the seeds of modernity. Still, they have failed to touch the roots of native people, which would help to witness a changed society as anticipated. It is observed that colonialism has botched to transform social malevolence despite inviting and converting the folks to their religion.

The authority of colonialism has brought a radical transformation in the customary practices of the indigenous Africans. More than the colonizers, the native Africans are observed as the ones who play spoilsport to obliterate their beliefs, rituals, and customs. The rise in the practice of colonial attitude by Africans has affected both men and women. They started to believe that the

consumption of alcohol was a mark of status and manner in the modern social order. The protagonist Obi's surveillance of a girl at a party showcases the approach of African youth and their fascination for sensual pleasure. Even girls are observed moving from traditional attire to modern outfits to attract male folk. The youth manage to understand that the consumption of alcohol can only make people dance to musical tunes. In *Achebe's World 1980*, Robert M. Wren writes:

Through the grandson of Okonkwo, the novel becomes a parable of modern Nigeria, a commentary on apparently universal corruption and on the colonial judgment of the new African generation. (1981)

Forgetting moral etiquette and stepping to the musical tunes is amusement for the British colonizers. They believe dancing very close and touching the body is an act of privileged culture. This has erroneously stimulated the learned Nigerians to choose Western jazz, which has never been considered an element of African ethnicity. The juvenile Nigerians vary in taste and conduct from the aged conventional populace. In the company of colonizers, they begin to forget the customary traditions and express interest in imitating the West by involving in amateur dance. This eventually appears as

an act of instigating the opposite sex to be involved in the sensual conduct. These involvements of Nigerians lead to the subsistence of cultural anarchy. In the literal sense, Africans have lost the flavor of their art, culture, tradition, and cuisine, which assists in constructing a lucid alleyway for the colonizers.

Conclusion

To put it canonically, change is the natural phenomenon of human survival in the nook and corner of the world. A change should fall in line for the betterment of creatures in all walks of life. It should always bring changes without wiping out the deeply rooted vibrancies of art, culture, conduct, tradition, heritage, and cuisine of defined landscapes. Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* is a literary treatise that opens up the optimistic avenues and pessimistic realities of postcolonial African civilization under the authority of European colonizers. His literary protagonists like Obi Okonkwo, Clara, and the practice of 'Osus' juxtapose the elements of transformation. The franchised command of imperialists never permits the upholding of the ethicalities of Africans. Their supremacy makes the youth of Nigeria befall for temporary comforts, which slowly evaporates the long-earned integrity of celebrated mores.

Being an eminent cultural emissary of Africa, Chinua Achebe projects himself

as an individual who neither regards nor disregards the metaphors of postcolonial Africa in *No Longer at Ease*. His stand towards the authority of colonizers appears as neutral. He has greater admiration for the etiquettes put forth by the ancestors of postcolonial ethnic groups. He is also mindful of the benefits bestowed by the imperial powers to study Africa as a land of multi-coloured metaphors. In a way, he is caught in a fictional quandary to assess and accept the hardcore actualities emanated out of colonialism. The contribution of educational institutions to the upliftment of youth and the fascination of educated youth appears to place him in a thought-provoking state. Hence, the novel has fruitfully juxtaposed the metaphors of postcolonial Africa and the influence of education in wiping out societal evils for the betterment of human accomplishments.

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