

## Catharsis in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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### Abstract:

Catharsis in literature refers to the point at which the tension that has been built within the reader in the course of reading a work of literature gets released. The novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) by Chinua Achebe focuses on a young Nigerian man of great fame who cannot be subject to domination by the white man. As a result, the story is characterized by a series of tense moments when the reader's suspense builds to the brim. Nevertheless, catharsis comes at different points, starting with when Okonkwo can win the wrestling fight against Amalinze the Cat. Beginning with this victory, the reader gets to release tension at various times throughout the story, such as when Okonkwo becomes repentant of his mistakes and pays the fine to the earth goddess, when Ikernefuna arrives in Umuofia, and finally when Okonkwo commits suicide to seal his tragic fate. This analytical discussion of *Things Fall Apart* aims at identifying the critical points within the story when catharsis occurs, allowing the reader to release the inwardly built-up emotions at different points in the story.

**Keywords:** Catharsis, Analytical Study, Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*.

### المخلص:

يشير التنفيس في الأدب إلى النقطة التي يتم عندها إطلاق التوتر الذي نشأ داخل القارئ أثناء قراءة عمل أدبي. تركز رواية الأشياء تتداعى (1958) للكاتب تشينوا أتشيبى على رجل نيجيري شاب ذا شهرة كبيرة لا يمكن أن يخضع لهيمنة الرجل الأبيض. ونتيجة لذلك، تتميز القصة بسلسلة من لحظات التوتر عندما يتزايد تشويق القارئ إلى أقصى حد. ومع ذلك، فإن التنفيس يأتي في نقاط مختلفة، بدءاً من وقت فوز أوكونكو في معركة المصارعة ضد امانلز القط. بدءاً بهذا الانتصار، يحصل القارئ على إرخاء التوتر في أوقات مختلفة طوال القصة، مثل عندما يتوب أوكونكو عن أخطائه ويدفع الغرامة لإلهة الأرض، عندما يصل إيكرفونا إلى أوموفيا، وأخيراً عندما ينتحر أوكونكو ليختم مصيره المأساوي. تهدف هذه المناقشة التحليلية للأشياء تتداعى إلى تحديد النقاط الحاسمة في القصة عند حدوث التنفيس، مما يسمح للقارئ بإطلاق العواطف الداخلية في نقاط مختلفة من القصة.

### پوخته:

له ئەدەبدا پاکبۆونەوه ناماژە دەکات بۆ ئەو خالەى کەوا بارگرژی دموورۆزینیت لەناخی خوینەرەدا لەکاتى خویندەنەوهى کارە ئەدەبیهکەدا. رۆمانى (شتەکان هەلەدمەشێن) کە لە لایەن چینوا ئەچیبى سالى ١٩٥٨ نوسراوه باس لە گەنجى نەجیری خاوەن پایەیهکی بەرز دەکات کە بەهیچ جورێک ناچیتە ژێر رکێفی پیاویکی سبى پێستەمە. لە ئەنجامى ئەوەدا چیرۆکەکە بە زنجیرەیهک لە بارگرژی دا تێپەردەبێت کاتێک کە جۆش و خروشى خوینەر زیاد دەکات تا ئەوپەڕى. لەگەڵ ئەوەشدا پاکبۆونەوه لەچەند خالێکی جیاواز دا دێت، کە لەو کاتەوه دەست پێ دەکات ئوکۆنکو لە یاری زۆرانبازیدا دەبیاتەوه لە ئەمالینز. ئەم سەرکەوتنە خوینەر هیۆر دەکاتەوه لە بارگرژی لە کاتە جیاوازەکانى چیرۆکەکەدا، بۆ نمونە ئەو کاتەى ئوکۆنکو پەشیمان دەبێتەوه لە هەلەکانى و سزای کارەکانى دەدات بە خواوەندى زەوى، کاتێک ئەیکرفونا دەگاتە ئەموفیا، وە کۆتا جار کە ئوکۆنکو کۆتایى بە چارەنۆسى تراژیدیای خۆى دەهێنێت و خۆى دەکوژێت.

مەبەست لەم گفتوگۆ شیکارییە ڕۆمانی (شەهەکان ھەڵدەوێشێن) دیاری کردنی خالە یەکلاکەر مۆھەکانە لە چیرۆکەکاندا کاتێک کە پاکبۆنەو ڕوودەدات، کە ڕێگە بە خۆنەر دەدات ھەست و سۆزی خۆی دەر بێرێت لە کاتە جیاوازەکانی چیرۆکەکاندا.

## Introduction

*Things Fall Apart* focuses on an African Nigerian man of the Igbo community confounded by the white missionaries' arrival. Through the series of unfortunate events that unfolds following the white missionaries' arrival, Okonkwo, a previously respected man, ends up being banished from his village of Umuofia for seven years. Because literature is a discipline that seeks to teach essential life lessons through stories and other genres, the unfortunate unfolding of events in *Things Fall Apart* is told in a manner that builds significant tension and suspense within the reader. In literature, catharsis is simply defined as the emotional release of the tension that has been built by the story within a reader. Precisely, "catharsis" is the way through which a novelist intends to "arouse pity and fear in the audience so that we may be purged, or cleansed, of ... unsettling emotion" (Purwarno & Irawati, 2008, p. 35). Considering that the unfortunate event of killing a clansman that result in Okonkwo's banishment from his village occurs accidentally, there is a tendency for the reader to wait for when justice is served in the story. The climax of reading *Things Fall Apart* is when the reader can finally release the tension built over reading the story.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe suggests that Okonkwo, with all the doings (actions) highlighted in the story, has wholly justified the "tragedy" definition presented by Aristotle. Depiction of "catharsis" in *Things Fall Apart* is intended in a manner so that "serious, important events, in which the main character comes to an unhappy end" (Purwarno & Irawati, 2008, p. 35). In other words, "catharsis" had been keenly portrayed in the concerned novel by suggesting that Okonkwo's tragic fall has resulted in his weakness, tragic flaw, or something that is beyond his controlling power.

Aristotle's opinion of a "tragic hero" suggests that it was significant for him (tragic hero) to evoke both terror and pity amidst the readers effectively. Similarly, Achebe portrays the character of Okonkwo so that the same illustration or characteristics of a "tragic hero" are reflected, and this, in turn, exemplifies instances of "catharsis" in the novel itself (Purwarno & Irawati, 2008).

## Literature Review

### Depiction of "Catharsis"

James (2010) suggests that Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* illustrates a narrative, which highlights details about an Igbo tribe amidst the time when colonization was getting into Africa. Naturally, this means that changes are inevitable in Africa, which brings an immense ill impact on Okonkwo. Precisely, tragedy has an ardent need to awaken "unhealthy" emotions of fear and pity, which in turn, cleans all the feelings with catharsis. This is evident in the actions presented in *Things Fall Apart*, wherein the tragic-hero Okonkwo is seen to face downfall for the love and respect that he has towards the African tradition. In short, the society in which Okonkwo lives has some practices, which emphasizes the imminent downfall. Although Okonkwo abides by all the society's norms, still his life is torn apart (Purwarno & Irawati, 2008). Similarly, Câmpu (2014) suggests that Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* narrates the story of a person who is a representative of the Igbo society and attains a vital position. However, due to the collision evident amidst the European and African values, the situation alters to portray its protagonist.

Adade-Yeboah and Owusu (2013) highlight instances of catharsis in *Things Fall Apart* by stating that Okonkwo is the tragic hero, who enacts actions based on precise principle instead of sheer wickedness. The tragic sources that are evident amidst Okonkwo can be traced back to his emotions alone, which he attaches to the African tradition significantly. In the novel, the protagonist attempts to ensure that he will turn out to be the Igbo society's strong man, but this desire turns to be merely deceptive. Okonkwo's obsession with fulfilling the desire to be a healthy individual makes him completely forget that an individual is supposed to feel. The coarse textures depicted by Okonkwo make him appear more like a beast rather than a man. However, the tragic source illustrated in the novel is brought to light when Okonkwo receives punishment for an accidental shooting of one of his kin, and this alone is considered to be unfortunate enough. His confidence in the African tradition brings his downfall (Adade-Yeboah and Owusu, 2013). Moreover, James (2010) primarily focuses on the "catharsis" that elucidates in *Things Fall Apart*, rather than the tragic source, suggesting that colonization is the significant factor, which compels Okonkwo to hang himself.

### **Illustration of Tragic Environment**

James (2010) explains that Okonkwo has always valued his tradition and upheld it more than anything, but the power of colonization is too hard to fight. This factor leads Okonkwo to understand that it is impossible to sustain under the rule of those men, who are foreign to any of his customs and language. Thus, the way "catharsis" is precisely portrayed in the novel suggests that Okonkwo decides to embrace death than to await the yoke of European civilization in place of African tradition. Purwarno and Irawati (2008) explain that "catharsis" in *Things Fall Apart* is highlighted simply by utilizing Okonkwo and his sustaining. The reason for depicting how the protagonist tries to deal with his emotions of respecting traditions above all reveals a lot about his downfall.

Purwarno and Irawati (2008) further state that "catharsis" evident in *Things Fall Apart* is highlighted by focusing on serious events, which ultimately leads the main character to reach an indeed low end. In this regard, Okonkwo's fate of hanging himself for not bearing the clutches of colonization suggests that the situation is clearly out of his control or the flaw of over-emphasizing his tradition. However, this one flaw not only shatters the protagonist's belief but also makes sure that the downfall is essentially near (Purwarno & Irawati, 2008). Câmpu (2014) exemplifies that the memorable part of *Things Fall Apart* concentrates on the Igbo society's evocation right at the time when "first major incursions of British colonialism into Igbo lands at the beginning of the twentieth century" (Câmpu, 2014, p. 43). The tragic environment vivid amidst the novel comprises Achebe's intention to offer all the African readers a pristine depiction of the time, which can be suggested as 'pre-colonial past' and, after that, the stereotypes imposed by European accounts (Câmpu, 2014). This largely confirms colonialism to be an aspect that makes situations go out of control for Okonkwo.

Nevertheless, Câmpu (2014), while emphasizing the narratives of *Things Fall Apart*, makes it clear to depict "catharsis" by dividing the entire novel into three sections or preferably segments. The initial one comprises thirteen chapters, which offers a precise picture of Igbo society's seemingly traditional nature, right before the British invasion. Another part illustrates in the novel focuses on the protagonist's exile. Right at that time, Christian missionaries and "British colonial administration" make extensive progress in relocating the traditional norms to the modern one (the one influenced by the European civilization). Ultimately, in chapter 20, Okonkwo (the protagonist) is seen to return

home from exile and initiates ill-fated attempts to ensure that cultural destruction is restricted, but then he commits suicide (Câmpu, 2014). This leaves a trace that Okonkwo failed in his pursuits of retrieving back his traditions amidst the influence of the British colonialism that has chosen death at the end. Correspondingly, Adade-Yeboah and Owusu (2013) suggest that Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* ensures to portray the protagonist so that claims cannot be made of liking Okonkwo he cannot be entirely ignored without receiving admirations (Adade-Yeboah & Owusu, 2013). Achebe's motive is to suggest the "catharsis" issue in a manner through which the tragic hero's actions can be perceived with reasons backing up his (protagonist's) low setting.

Silue (2019) comments that Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* exemplifies the clash that Igbo's traditional religion was Christianity. The way Okonkwo upholds his tradition and culture is precisely evident in the deeds and actions. This also leads him to face his downfall. In this novel, the protagonist's fault is that he could not accept the need to "change" as the only alternative when facing a crisis of cultural emergence. This, itself, makes situations turn completely wrong and uncontrollable to the protagonist, and it leads to his acceptance of death as the proper way of dealing with the cultural issues around him.

Similarly, Adade-Yeboah and Owusu (2013) suggest that the novel reflects details about the African tradition and the struggle, which Okonkwo had done to value his society's rule more than any other aspects in his life. Okonkwo commits suicide because it is unbearable that long-valued tradition is falling apart due to British colonialism and Christian religion's introduction. The belief that prevails in African culture suggests "a belief in continuity of life extending from the ancestors through the living to the yet unborn. It means therefore that the practitioners of this type of culture believe in conjoint experience of life with their ancestors. In the light of this, misfortune can be averted from the path of the living and the yet-unborn, while sudden calamities can be demystified through divination" (Adade-Yeboah & Owusu, 2013, 37). This thinking prevails extensively in Okonkwo's mind, but alterations evident in this culture shatters the protagonist and fails to deal with it, makes death a welcoming aspect rather than accepting defeat and the European culture completely.

## Discussion

Catharsis issue lingers on quite precisely in *Things Fall Apart*, and Achebe makes sure to open "a casement on Umuofia revealing to us the compelling tragedy of Okonkwo, a hero, we cannot claim to like, but do not fail to admire" (Ahmed, 2018). This novel is a perfect way to exemplify the protagonist as a "tragic-hero" for the actions committed and fate met in the end. The description of Okonkwo is neatly presented in the first paragraph of the novel to determine his varied villages' respect. Okonkwo is the one who has the determination to achieve significant accomplishments for them and the entire community, and that is how he is considered a hero (Purwarno & Irawati, 2008).

The novel narrates Okonkwo's story, a young man who manages to build his name among the villagers for his bravely and hard work. He is the only man to have been able to gain the fame of defeating the most outstanding wrestler who was well known in the nine villages of the Igbo community. Thus, Okonkwo earns fame and recognition among his villagers for the extraordinary things he has managed to do, including that "as a young man of eighteen he had brought honor to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat" (Achebe, 2013, p. 3). Amalinze the Cat's defeat by Okonkwo is significant because he is the famed wrestler whose back is known never to touch the ground during

fight. Thus, although unexpected, Okonkwo has managed to do that which all the men in the nine villages have not been able to do by defeating the Cat.

Nevertheless, Okonkwo's fame does not stop at that. On the contrary, Okonkwo goes ahead to do the unexpected again, when he manages to rise from poverty, which is the tradition for his family and builds his wealth through hard work. Despite hailing from the family of Unoka, the well-famed lazy man of the village who has accumulated multiple debts from almost every neighbor and villager, Okonkwo does not share in his father's shame. On the contrary, he commits to hard work, and in the end, his barn is full of yams, has married three wives, and accumulates significant wealth. As a result, "although Okonkwo was still young, he was already one of the greatest men of his time" (Achebe, 2013, p. 8). However, the story's tension starts to build when Okonkwo's greatness and the fame, respect, and reverence he has earned from his villagers become tainted by the subsequent developments in the story.

The best instance of carelessness was vivid when Okonkwo accidentally killed a boy from the Igbo clan, and this happening took place when he attends Ezeudu's funeral. During the ceremony, the mishap took place when Okonkwo's gun explodes, and an iron piece pierces into the heart of one of Ezeudu's son. This happening, although was accidental yet is essentially an abomination to the entire Igbo society, which in turn compels the otherwise respected protagonist to exile. Thus, carelessness can be grounded as the precise reason why his much-valued society has forced him to leave the clan. The lines, "The only course open to Okonkwo was to flee from the clan. It was a crime against the earth goddess to kill a clansman, and a man who committed it must flee from the land. The crime was of two kinds, male and female. Okonkwo had committed the female because it had been inadvertent. He could return to the clan after seven years" (Achebe, 2013, p.132) exemplifies the condition that is faced by the protagonist for the action, which has taken place just because he is careless at that moment.

Moreover, right amidst Okonkwo's exaltation, extensive alterations are evident amidst some of the villages because of Christianity and White men's introduction. Correspondingly, this creates a scenario, which is impossible for Okonkwo to bear, and that makes him accept the path of committing suicide as the primary means of avoiding the Igbo society's humiliation (Purwarno & Irawati, 2008). Evident that presents the last catharsis point of the story.

According to Aristotle, catharsis occurs when the emotions of anger, fear, and pain build within the reader by a story becomes cleansed (Worth, 2000, p. 333). Thus, the first incident of catharsis in *Things Fall Apart* comes when Okonkwo can resolve the fate of not ending up like his father. Okonkwo's father, Unoka, was a lazy man who earned nothing from his villagers other than contempt. Because Unoka had not applied any effort to feed his family, Okonkwo and his siblings had lived in poverty all their lives. Therefore, the story in first develops tension over the lack of cordial relationship between Okonkwo and his father. Okonkwo develops a poor relationship with his father for his laziness and because he had not earned himself any title by the time he died. Men who did not deserve any title within the Igbo community were considered equal to women. As a result, "Okonkwo was ruled by one passion-to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved" (Achebe, 2013, p. 13). By hating everything that his father loved, Okonkwo is doing the very best to distance himself from any identity that his father held among the villagers. Okonkwo's father owns the identity of a lazy,



reckless, lying loafer who eats borrowed ceaselessly from his neighbors and drinks palm wine without ceasing.

Consequently, the story identifies a point where catharsis is required to resolve and release the existing tension and emotions by stating that "Okonkwo's fear was...he should be found to resemble his father" (Achebe, 2013, p. 13). From learning that Okonkwo lives in fear, the reader is exposed to the building tension of trying to evaluate how Okonkwo will finally be able to sidestep the shame his father has brought on him and emerge a man of honor in his village. As a result, catharsis, or what is simply considered releasing or cleansing tension within a story, first comes in *Things Fall Apart*, when Okonkwo can win the wrestling fight against Amalinze the Cat. By winning the battle, Okonkwo immediately earns respect and a title of honor among his villagers and all the Igbo community's nine villages. Through Okonkwo winning the glory of the bravest and fiercest warrior of his village, catharsis in *Things Fall Apart* is achieved, and emotions of fear over whether Okonkwo will end up like his father cleansed.

Unfortunately, just after cleansing the fear that Okonkwo will end up like his father by installing Okonkwo as a man of great honor in his village, *Things Fall Apart* goes right ahead to introduce another twist that builds new tension within the reader. The new tension creates by the story begins after Okonkwo marries and starts a family. With his third marriage, Okonkwo establishes the anxiety of exposing the entire village of Umuofia to the curse of drought and poverty. The tension emerges from Okonkwo's third wife's actions of plaiting her hair without first preparing food for Okonkwo. Thus, when Okonkwo is expected to receive his noon meal from his third wife, Ojiugo, he instead finds that she is not home and has prepared no food. Okonkwo waits for Ojiugo to arrive, and he instantly beat her up until the villagers came to witness the beating. While beating his wives and children is not unusual for Okonkwo, as to invite the villagers to go and see the beating, Okonkwo happens to administer this beating on Ojiugo during "the Week of Peace" (Achebe, 2013, p. 29). Therefore, Okonkwo has violated a severe tradition of the Igbo community and, with the violation, invites a possible curse to the society. The entire village is awestruck by Okonkwo's actions because beating anyone during the Week of Peace is unheard of in Umuofia, regardless of the crime or mistake. Thus, tension is created in the story when the village priest comes to Okonkwo's house and informs him that because of his actions, the earth goddess who causes crops grow is "insulted and may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall all perish" (Achebe, 2013, p. 30). This development's impact is that suspense is created within the reader over what will be the fate of the village now that Okonkwo has insulted the earth goddess. However, the tension is resolved by another point of catharsis when Okonkwo is commanded and obeys the village priest's call to pay a fine of "one she-goat, one hen, a length of cloth and a hundred cowries" (Achebe, 2013, p. 31). Thus, the point at which Okonkwo becomes repentant of his mistakes and pays the fine becomes essential for cleansing the tension held within the reader's mind over the possible drought and poverty fate of the Umuofia village in the future.

Further, although Okonkwo successfully manages to sidestep the fate of shame and contempt like his father has earned within the village, a new tension in Okonkwo's life will emerge from the relationship with his son, Nwoye (Begam, 1997). Nwoye is Okonkwo's first son, and Okonkwo has very much envisioned that his son would take after him by becoming a brave and hardworking boy so that he also does not bring shame to the family-like his grandfather has done. However, to

Okonkwo's disappointment, Nwoye does not seem to embrace and strive to emulate his father's masculinity and greatness. Thus, the story introduces another tension surrounding in Okonkwo's life by stating, "Nwoye, was then twelve years old but was already causing his father great anxiety for his incipient laziness" (Achebe, 2013, p. 13). Considering that Okonkwo has dreaded the possibility of himself or his son turning out like Unoka, new tension starts to build within the reader over how this possibility of Nwoye turning up like Unoka will be resolved. The anxiety regarding whether Nwoye will turn out as Okonkwo has wanted or disappointed him by turning up like Unoka is intense throughout the story. All signs indicated that Nwoye would turn up like his grandfather, Unoka, considering that he never does anything like Okonkwo will have wanted. As a result, Okonkwo considers Nwoye weak and womanly and is not proud of him as his son.

Nevertheless, catharsis comes to cleanse the tension over whether Nwoye will disappoint his father when Nwoye, following the arrival of Ikernefuna. Ikernefuna is a lad from a neighboring village offered to Umuofia as a war sacrifice to prevent war between the villages, ending in bloodshed (Achebe, 2013). When Ikernefuna arrives and is adopted by Okonkwo as his son, he develops a close friendship with Nwoye and helps him a great deal towards becoming the man that Okonkwo has wanted of his son. Thus, the arrival of Ikernefuna becomes the catharsis cleansing and releasing the tension and emotions of fear and anxiety hold by both Okonkwo and the reader because Ikernefuna helps shape Nwoye positively. Thus, Nwoye turned out masculine, and "Okonkwo was inwardly pleased with his son's development, and he knew it was due to Ikernefuna" (Achebe, 2013, p. 52). As a result, it can be seen that the arrival of Ikernefuna became a point of catharsis in *Things Fall Apart* since the negative emotions of fear and anxiety hold by Okonkwo and the reader regarding Nwoye's fate are cleansed.

Nevertheless, while the arrival of Ikernefuna has emerged as a blessing in the life of Okonkwo for helping Nwoye become the man Okonkwo wanted, *Things Fall Apart* goes ahead to add a twist to the story and makes Ikernefuna a source of tension for the reader. Indeed, the arrival of Ikernefuna does not only emerge as a source of tension for the reader but also emerges as a source of tragedy in Okonkwo's life. Aristotle argued that catharsis occurs when a tragic hero who has persistently been placed within a gloomy environment gets released or destroyed by the tragedy (Purwarno & Irawati, 2008). In *Things Fall Apart*, Ikernefuna introduces a tragedy in Okonkwo's life in such a tragic environment that Okonkwo is in a complete disaster. After Ikernefuna has come into Okonkwo's life and has grown fond of him as his adopted son, although he does not show it, the story introduces a twist to get rid of the boy from the village has finally come. Because Okonkwo has loved Ikernefuna and accepts him as his son, the news of getting rid of the boy saddens Okonkwo, and he "sat still for a very long time supporting his chin in his palms" (Achebe, 2013, p. 56). The sadness that Okonkwo felt when it is pronounced that Ikernefuna is to be killed stemmed from the fact that deep-down, Okonkwo loves, and admires Ikernefuna more than his son. Therefore, the pronouncement that Ikernefuna is to be killed disturbs Okonkwo psychologically, but he has no power to stop it because it is the village oracle's pronouncement, and no one can go against it. However, the real tragedy stems from the fact that Okonkwo has been warned not to participate in the killing of Ikernefuna. The oldest man in the village, Ezeudu, had warned that "that boy calls you father...Do not bear a hand in his death" (Achebe, 2013, p.57). However, Okonkwo did not pay attention to this warning and accompanied the rest of the men from Umuofia village who are escorting the boy to his death. The

series of events towards the killing of Ikernefuna builds tension and suspense for the reader as the reader becomes eager to know if Okonkwo will participate in the boy's death. Thus, another point of catharsis is the killing of Ikernefuna. Despite the warning he has received against participating in the boy's death, a tragic happen involving Ikernefuna running towards Okonkwo for help after he has been struck with a machete by the other men saw "Okonkwo drew his machete and cut him down... He was afraid of being thought weak" (Achebe, 2013, p.61). Thus, the fear of being considered weak that Okonkwo holds from the beginning becomes his primary undoing source.

Starting at this point of the story where Okonkwo kills Ikernefuna against the older man's warning in the village, the reader is left with no doubt that Okonkwo's fate is tragic. However, despite the hard work that is aimed by Okonkwo to achieve a respectable position in society, his downfall is imminent because of the "hamartia" or the tragic flaw committed by him in the novel. Precisely, the depiction of instances that suggests carelessness is the tragic flaw that has been achieved by Okonkwo (Purwarno & Irawati, 2008).

The only aspect that Okonkwo admired is his Igbo culture, which shatters with the advent of British colonialism as the Christian religion is compelled to all. The feelings or the emotions which Okonkwo has shown towards the said society are the only reason that brought the tragedy sooner than expected in the novel. There is an aspect that highlights "catharsis" in the story and comprises the way through which Okonkwo decides not to accept or greet the European culture, which in turn, makes "death" the sole available option (Ahmed, 2018).

Moreover, the reason for which Achebe's protagonist (Okonkwo) faces a tragic end can be his hamartia (frailty or error). This is clearly understood from the fact that the starting of *Things Fall Apart* is filled with prosperity, but at the ending, it depicts no such aspects. This sums up the protagonist's actions and the fate met at last for his traditional valuing errors more than any element. In the novel, Okonkwo is the individual who is known throughout the nine villages and is respected by others. He "is a nobleman, who has a good reputation and reverence in the vanity. He is a person known in nine nearby villages. Everyone respects him and admires his nobleness" (Ahmed, 2018). However, the situation does not keep being the same, and by the end, he is seen to suffer when he finds his traditional practices to be withered away by the advent of colonialism (Ahmed, 2018). This precisely narrates the incidences faced by the "tragic hero" and the possible catharsis, which had been significantly delineated in the narrative.



## Conclusion

*Things Fall Apart* is a famous novel about a young Nigerian man of great fame who cannot be subject to any form of failure or defeat. Despite the numerous achievements that Okonkwo has made in a short span of his young life, his inability to condone any loss leads to his tragic end. While intending to teach the important lesson that sometimes great men can fall and perish due to a single weakness, the story builds significant suspense for the reader, requiring catharsis, which is a point of releasing the tension that has built up in the reader in the course of reading the story. Thus, in *Things Fall Apart*, catharsis comes at different points, starting with when Okonkwo can win the wrestling fight against Amalinze the Cat. The reader then gets to release tension at different other points throughout the story, including when Okonkwo becomes repentant of his mistakes and pays fine to the earth goddess when Ikernefuna arrives in Umuofia to help shape Nwoye into a masculine boy, and finally when Okonkwo commits suicide to seal his tragic fate. Through the multiple points of catharsis in the novel, the reader can at least sigh relief, albeit for a moment, to allow the reader to take in more of the tension that the story keeps building from the beginning to the end.

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