

Journal



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This paper is in response to Solomon O. Iyasere's critique about Chinua Achebe's book "Things Fall Apart". The critique is an exploration of the narrative techniques in the book and considers the juxtaposition of past and present as narrative techniques used in the book. The critique pans the existence of tribal customs in the village as describe by Chinua and condemns the practice of harsh punishments for simple acts like letting loose a cow in the agricultural fields. According to Solomon, though the setting of the village with its agricultural base is a valid excuse for safeguarding the crops, nonetheless the critique feels that this is no excuse for resorting to harsh and rigid punishments for these acts. Solomon's main contention is that the rigidity of the laws that are in vogue does not leave any room for mitigating circumstances and hence there should be some sort of balance in the way the social structure in the village is maintained as well as enforced. In my opinion, condemning the practices in the village as backward or tribal misses the point of the book. The book is mostly about how the pastoral communities live and work together as a unit along with the necessary conditions for social cohesion that are needed for the village to exist as a unit. Solomon's critique overlooks this aspect of the story as well as ignores the way in which the village needs to sustain itself. Of course, the critique is definitely strong on the point of the medieval spirit that pervades the village. However, it is to be understood as describing a place in another period rather than an anachronism. The critique should have explored how the lives of the peasants and the farmers were dependant on the vagaries of the weather and hence the appeasement of the same can be understood from this perspective.

The book is mostly about how the codes of conduct that are necessary for

the social mores to be enforced are laid down and the behavior of the people in the village made to conform to these traditions and customs. However, as the critique points out, some of these laws seem barbaric. My point in the preceding paragraph was about how the critique betrays ignorance about how life in the tribal societies was and the way in which the pastoral communities went about their work and life. To take this further, the communities described in the book exist as a set of interdependent units and are closely knit. Hence, there needs to be some sort of balance between the way they live and work. Division of duties needs to be done so that everyone contributes to the success of the community.

In conclusion, I have responded to the critique by providing a contrarian view of the theme explored in the critique. I have summarized the critique and provided points to support my argument as well. I would like to mention that I do not totally disagree with the critique.