



# Postcolonial Perspectives Of Chinua Achebe In "The Trouble With Nigeria"

Jereena Babu, Lecturer of English, Jain PU College,  
Bangalore

Dr Shiva Chaudhary, Assistant Professor, Dept. of English  
Center for Management Studies – Jain (Deemed-to-be) University  
Bangalore

## Abstract

Chinua Achebe's "The Trouble with Nigeria" is a postcolonial text that explores the challenges that Nigeria faces as a nation after gaining independence from British colonialism in 1960. The book is a scathing critique of Nigeria's political and economic systems, which Achebe argues have been shaped by the legacy of colonialism. His novels represent the concept of Postcolonialism and focus solely on the subjugation of the African community to the British administration as a whole. The scope of this paper is limited to the accounts of the African community of Achebe's texts only and has not been explored in the works of other known African literary authors thus limiting the scholar to formulate a pin-point understanding of this topic. The current research paper focuses on enquiring the following aspects; the racial profiling to be identified in the modern context by analysing colour politics and its relation to the Black American dream; the ontological space occupied by the white supremacists affecting the space of the other minority; analysis of the politics of colour and its relation to the black American dream identifying racial profiling in the modern context and studying the ontological expansion of the space occupied by the white supremacists against the space denied to the other minority.

**Key words:** Postcolonialism, Racism, African Society

## Introduction

Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian writer and critic, is often considered one of the most influential voices in postcolonial literature. Achebe's works are celebrated for their portrayal of African culture and their critiques of colonialism and its legacies. Achebe's postcolonial perspectives are reflected in his writing in a number of ways. In the words of Chinua Achebe “If you only hear one side of the story, you have no understanding at all” which brings us to the scope in question.

## Review of Literature

The discourse of skin colour is widely spoken of in the texts of Chinua Achebe where a single character tries to process the predicament his African counterparts go through as he observes his community trying to surpass all the hurdles created by white supremacist rules. The dream that every black American had was to finally be able to walk out in the open, to be able to be identified as a human being, or at least this was Martin Luther King's dream. The novels selected for this study highlight the numerous sacrifices made by the African people in order to save the rest of their community from being discriminated against but all in vain. Luther's dream would hence then be reduced to a utopian vision again and black people will face a dystopian future. The following articles written by MacLeod and Englebert emphasise on the ideas proposed above. The limitation to these articles and to this topic is that it is focused only on the community as portrayed in Achebe's novels thereby extracting only said circumstances of the black community.

Ethnic absolutism arises from the perspective of people taking into consideration the biological race of a person to claim racial differences for segregation. This is just another fancy word created by white supremacists to define the existing racism or in other words to sugarcoat their actions to defend their racist perspective. This comes alongside the theoretical framework of “Bodies Out of Place” which offers a counter-frame narrative to the white's frame of superiority where they assume that they possess superior knowledge and power over all other sectors of society. The white's fear of blacks or any other minority rising to power has led them to create an ontological expansion of their space so as to give them a feeling of enjoying and establishing everlasting supremacy over them. The normative feature of whiteness extends a feeling of safety to them, which in turn becomes the somatic norm that is later enjoyed by those who are placed in power positions. This concept has very clearly been drawn out in Achebe's novels. While exploring this idea in his novels, the scholar also observes the same theme in the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, where the lawyers and the judicial

system who consist of white people refuse to believe that a black man is innocent. Acknowledging that the black man was innocent strips them of their power to condemn him as well as to accept that not all black people should be seen as convicts. “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... Until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it” (Lee 36). Moreover, the fear of black people’s uprising against the wrongful conviction would also force them to rethink their stance of not providing them the space to be acknowledged as a community of their own. Though Harper Lee’s novel does not directly contribute to this study, this research will subsequently also highlight the vital role that white supremacists play in the creation of a space that selectively allows them to gloat in their whiteness and establish power positions while throwing shade on the black minority:

The older you grow the more of it you’ll see. The one place where a man ought to get a square deal is in a courtroom, be he any color of the rainbow, but people have a way of carrying their resentments right into a jury box. As you grow older, you’ll see white men cheat black men every day of your life, but let me tell you something and don’t you forget it—whenever a white man does that to a black man, no matter who he is, how rich he is, or how fine a family he comes from, that white man is trash (Lee 207)

The following articles written by Schur and Kim analyse the trials of black American people and their struggles with colour post-colonisation. While this research presents no limitations in terms of this topic’s context it also contributes to a wider scope of study if the proposed topic is not located accurately.

## Analysis

Achebe argues that Nigeria's postcolonial leaders have failed to address the root causes of the country's problems. He contends that Nigeria's political and economic systems are deeply flawed, and that corruption, tribalism, and a lack of accountability have undermined the country's progress. He argues that these problems are the legacy of colonialism, which created a political and economic system that was designed to benefit the colonial powers at the expense of the colonized people:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the

unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership (Achebe 1)

Achebe also points out that Nigeria's postcolonial leaders have failed to provide adequate education and healthcare to the population. He argues that these basic services are essential for the development of any nation, and that the failure to provide them is a reflection of the government's priorities.

In "The Trouble with Nigeria," Achebe also highlights the role of language in postcolonial Nigeria. He argues that the English language, which was imposed on Nigeria by the colonial powers, has created a cultural divide between the educated elite and the majority of the population. This divide, he argues, has contributed to the country's social and political problems.

Racism as a polyphonic discourse addresses the issues of the lack of hybridity in thought among the supreme colonialists who have demarcated the diversified through the process of discriminating against their voices which, in a racist colonist's perspective, does not deserve to be voiced. To the supreme colonist or in these texts, the white race who conquered half of the whole world, the thought of being further separated from being identified as a pure race without having to give up their ethnic roots to merge or rather live in harmony with another, is looked at as a disturbing loss in the retainment of their colonial roots and their power to be the only authoritative symbol. Racism is understood differently when talked about from two gender perspectives. Though through both the contexts people experienced discrimination, the situation surrounding them contributed significantly to their treatment from within their own community and the superior class.

Firstly, Achebe's works challenge the Eurocentric perspective that often characterizes colonialist literature. Achebe portrayed African societies as complex and diverse, with their own histories, cultures, and value systems. Through his work, Achebe sought to disrupt the narrow, stereotypical depictions of Africa that were perpetuated by colonialism.

Secondly, Achebe's writing often addressed the political and social upheaval that accompanied decolonization in Africa. His novel "Anthills of the Savannah," for example, explores the challenges faced by postcolonial African states, such as corruption, authoritarianism, and economic inequality. Through his writing, Achebe highlighted the difficulties of creating a truly independent and just society in the wake of colonialism:

Aha! Come to think of it, that might explain the insistence of the oppressed that the oppressor must not be allowed to camouflage his appearance or confuse the poor by stealing and masquerading in their clothes. Perhaps it is the demand of that primitive integrity of the earth... Or, who knows, it might also be something less innocent (for the earth does have its streak of peasant cunning) - an insistence that your badge of privilege must never leave your breast, nor your coat of many colours your back... so that... on the wrathful day of reckoning... you will be as conspicuous as a peacock! (Achebe 142)

Finally, Achebe's work also addresses the psychological and cultural impacts of colonialism on both colonized and colonizer. His works often highlight the psychological trauma experienced by colonized peoples, as well as the cultural dislocation and erasure that came with colonialism. At the same time, Achebe also explored the ways in which colonizers were shaped and affected by their experiences in the colonies.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, Achebe's postcolonial perspectives are characterized by a deep engagement with the complexities and legacies of colonialism. Through his writing, Achebe challenged the Eurocentric narratives of colonialism and sought to provide a more nuanced and nuanced portrayal of African societies and their experiences of colonization and decolonization. Hence, Achebe's "The Trouble with Nigeria" is a postcolonial critique of Nigeria's political and economic systems. Achebe argues that Nigeria's problems are deeply rooted in the legacy of colonialism, and that the country's postcolonial leaders have failed to address these underlying issues. The book is a powerful reminder that the effects of colonialism can linger long after the colonizers have left, and that postcolonial nations face unique challenges in their quest for development and progress.

**References:**

Achebe, Chinua. *The Trouble with Nigeria*. Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Pub, 1998.

Achebe, Chinua. *Anthills of the Savannah*. Penguin Books, 1987.

Lee, Harper. *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Arrow Books, 2010.

Said, Edward W. "Intellectuals in the Post-Colonial World." *Salmagundi*, no. 70/71, Skidmore College, 1986, pp. 44–64, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40547786>.

Schur, Richard L. "Locating 'Paradise' in the Post-Civil Rights Era: Toni Morrison and Critical Race Theory." *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 45, no. 2, [Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, University of Wisconsin Press], 2004, pp. 276–99, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3593567>.

"From Mikhail Bakhtin to Maryse Condé: The Problems of Literary Polyphony." *Borrowed Forms: The Music and Ethics of Transnational Fiction*, by Kathryn Lachman, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2014, pp. 29–58.

