

## JIKINYA ANALYSIS\*

\*\_Ndhlalas Jikinya is an eponymous novel whose main character is based on the Shona mythological dance, jikinya hence the title Jikinya. The girl character at the center of the novel is a white child born of the early European Settlers in Zimbabwe. She is nurtured and raised to be one of the best traditional dancers among the Ngora-Shona people after the death of her parents in a war between the Europeans and the African Indigenous people.\_\*

- The name which is titular is also symbolical of the unifying Zimbabwean Cultural dance which some scholars argue to be mythical. Through the adoption of a foreign girl to be an embodiment of Shona cultural aspects, one might argue that Geoffrey is bringing out the inclusivity of our culture that is non-racial, receptive and tolerant.

- \_●The novel marvels at the precolonial life encapsulated in the Ngora people led by the wise and visionary old man Tichafa whose name if translated to the vernacular speaks

of the proverbial impending deaths. The author brings out a village or society not detached from other societies but complete and wholesome with no need for exterior influence for its progressive normalcy has not only brought Unity but also maintained peace to the extent that war is alien to the villagers evidenced by Chedus confession in the first chapter when he is greatly disturbed by the dead bodies lying on the ground to which he confesses that in Ngora such bodies were to be seen only when there is a deadly disease outbreak.\_

\*●Geoffrey is therefore elevating the Shona culture for its wholesomeness (state of completeness) and the attributes alien to the white people which John marvels at. In the novel, the author brings out these aspects which are praiseworthy:\*

- maintaining of peace in the valley✓
- upholding of morality✓
- respect, love and companionship✓
- tolerance and non-racial conduct✓
- reconciliation and forgiveness✓
- attempts on gender equality✓
- childhood grooming✓

- communalism✓
- handling of internal conflicts✓
- unity ✓
- flexibility in racial integration✓
- internalized religion (intrinsically sourced)✓

\*\_●●These among other attributes are elevated by Geoffrey and the fact that change is seen at the end of the novel but only at the hands of white mans interference not only affirms the completeness of the Shona Culture that needed no exterior influence but also exposes the Supremacist and destructive Colonialist mindset which disrupted the state of living in the village. Thus, the author in chronicling the impact of the coming in of white people begins by exposing the disruption of a complete society whose salient survival is on conscious effort of the maintenance of peace, and as Tichafa puts it, peace was not a hand-me-down phenomenon but a village effort towards tolerance.\_\*

■●The tragic heroic act of rescuing Jikinya which ironically results in her death is symbolical since she is an embodiment of the unifying Shona Dance. This then can be argued to be the end of the previously mentioned

attributes applauded by Geoffrey in his text Jikinya.

\*\_●□■ NB; The use of the word rescue suggests that Jikinya was being ill-treated, abused and had been abducted yet the opposite is true and Ironically the attempted act of rescuing her meant a violation of her freedom. The assumption that she did not belong to the uncivilized Village made by the contemptuous and arrogant captain is Condescending, Derogatory, Racist and brings out the Whites

### \*CHAPTER 1; JIKINYA\*

●The story begins with a chronicle of African history which then boils down to the sad chronicle of the precolonial era in Zimbabwe.

~Ndhala pens down through flashback how the Europeans had trudged into the heart of Africa as missionaries, hunters, and gold diggers.

~The novel also touches on African resistance done to retrieve that which they had lost. ☆Through the use of concrete diction, the author captures the loss of lives

during the struggle to repossess their lost land and crushed pride. With this vivid description, the author creates an anger in the reader at the sight of dead African bodies sprawling on their beloved land.

- The description of the white people is the people without feet and knees can be said to be diminutive and ridiculing to further hammer how alien they were in the land.

- ~There is also the use of symbolism to bring out the African culture shown through the beating of the drum.

- ~The author vividly describes how the blacks were defeated by the whites making reference to the Anglo-Ndebele war. The straying of animals in the forests, lions and hyenas preying upon them brings about the theme of Loss. The author makes use of a metaphorical expression when he describes it as the return of the beast symbolically denoting the return of the white man's rule with their guns plundering the indigenous people.

- Through the use of third person narrative Ndhlala brings out Mr. Wilson's acidic attitude towards the local people as he regards them as serfs and himself a racist ironically in a country not his own. He thanks God for giving him a white skin connotatively insinuating that a black skin was a

curse and inferior. This racial slur is deemed to be racist and supremacist in nature.

He is therefore racist, adamant and arrogant.

- The issue of tradition and superstition is also brought out through the peoples belief in the evil spirits that dwelled in the mountains. These beliefs transcended even to the white visitors who preferred to walk long distances other than to walk through the sacred places... preferred to exhaust their efforts on less terrifying territories

- The daughter to Mr. Wilson is saved by an enigmatic character whose identity is not reviewed in the first chapter thereby giving a suspense of character.

~Through the effective use of descriptive diction, Ndhala appeals to the sense of feeling, sight and smell as he describes how the village had been laid to waste and the bodies gorged with spears sprawling on the ground. The use of paradox emphasizes the indignation cry for mercy even in death showing the sorrowful state of the people at the catastrophic war of dispossession.

~The enigmatic character is portrayed as Kind, caring and empathetic. his heart dissolved in pain and perplexity his heart throbbed in pain and unshed tears in his eyes.

## \*CHARACTERS IN CHAPTER 1\*

1. Mr. Wilson
2. Mrs. Wilson
3. Captain
4. Zenda
5. African/Village leader
6. Junior to the captain
6. Chedu (enigmatic character)

## \*THEMES IN CHAPTER 1\*

- a. Unity
- b. War
- c. Racism/ white supremacy
- d. Superstition

e. Culture and Tradition

f. Conflicts (external)

**\*STYLE\***

■ Third person

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**\*JIKINYA\***

**\*CHAPTER 2\***

\*● The chapter begins with a baby soundly sleeping during a tumultuous war time bringing out the theme of Childhood Innocence.\*

● However, the baby's life is filled with pain, war, strife and death as clearly described through emphatic diction. \*This



plight is exacerbated by the unbearable weather conditions which it endures without crying.\*

● Tradition is also brought through Chedu's respectful attitude and manner as he contemplates on consulting and informing the elders about the baby, "Is it permissible by the laws of our fathers?"

\*● Inasmuch as he has been driven by compassion to help the vulnerable baby, he still puts it to mind that he has to honor the village rules and the elders.\*

● Shona customs and beliefs are also laid forth in Chedus fears as he says, "lest others might see it as an ill omen."

\*\_Tsitsi is practical and mindful of the demands of traditional customs inasmuch as she is supportive of her husband's action of looking after the baby. "Let us consult the elders first."\*

\_Chedus reply to his wife is indicative of a caring and respectful husband void of an authoritative patriarchal way of leading the family\_ "Your words are wise"...this therefore brings the theme of Love and companionship coming from the two.

\*\_The use of folklores, a story within a story has been effectively adopted by Geoffrey to bring out a foreshadowing effect as the reader is made privy of that which is to befall the people.\_\*

- Tsitsi is portrayed as a conservative and an ardent follower of the customs unlike her Liberal husband..."let us keep the possibility of being disappointed after we see the elders."

\_NB: It is worth noting that through flashback the reader is made aware of how peaceful the valley used to be before the coming in of the whites, the spears were used for protection against wild animals This has been laid forth to open the mind of the reader towards that which made all to change to disrupt the peace that prevailed in the Valley.\_

\*\_The Ngara people are portrayed as not only peaceful but loving and caring as well as unified as evidenced by the activities they would communally do i.e. hunting and

harvesting.\_\*

\*\_●Tichafa, the village leader is presented as wise and perceptive, a true visionary and an epitome of true leadership that had skillfully shunned and eschewed war thus preserving the peace of the valley.\_\*

●He is also presented as flexible, tolerant and understanding and his bid to handle the Jikinya issue.

## \*CHARACTERS IN CHAPTER 2\*

Chedu

Tsitsi

Tichafa

Jikinya

Tendai

**\*THEMES\***

Culture and tradition

Unity

Peace

Love and companionship

Childhood innocence

Communalism

**\*STYLE\***

Third person narrative

**\*Date: Friday 24 January 2020\***

**\*Time: 22:17\***

**\* \_\_\_\_\_ \***

**\*Hello UVC\***

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\*JIKINYA\*

\*\_CHAPTER 3\_\*

\*●This chapter begins with the description of Ngara village as an entity intrinsically wholesome. Geoffrey paints a village far from the modern way of life yet so compact. The people within had their life guided by several customary aspects such as these celebrations which unified people as the people constantly gathered;\*

- a] the birth of child where only a few people were called to celebrate

-b] week after the babys birth when it is taken out to see the sun people would celebrate...

-c] the cleaning of the yard by the midwife, bathing of the baby and its mother as well

-d] grandmothers, aunts and relatives would come to see the baby...

-e] a ceremony would be held at the end of the month to welcome the baby into the village.

- To fully bring out the unadulterated excitement the village has over these celebrations, the author makes use of hyperbole, "blisters would appear on the dancers feet during these momentous ceremonies."

- \*● The village is also viewed as one with flexible customs as they initiated Jikinya into the village even though the ceremony required a maternal grandmother to be present and Jikinya apparently had none.\*

- However, it is worth noting that these activities were done by the whole community indicating the spirit of oneness, Unity.

Apart from the ceremony, Jikinyas willingness to partake in the communitys activities indicates a possible inter-racial blend.

- This is further accentuated by Tsitsis impartial treatment of her biological children and the adopted Jikinya.

- Geoffrey narrates of the childhood games played by the children which fostered human relations, removed racial barriers and built the spirit of love and reconciliation.

- This also brings about the theme of Childhood Innocence.

\*● However, the author does not paint the village as a perfect cauldron of values as evidenced by the village woman who falsely accuses Jikinya of beating her child because she is white, prejudice and racism.\*

\_● ☆ The author does not however leave the element hanging as after the exchanging of harsh words the children rejoined and continued their games, thus childhood innocence and mothers later reconciled thereby bringing about an element of Reconciliation and forgiveness as the accuser brought firewood as a sign of humility, meekness and a remorseful heart outstretched in need of forgiveness. This spirit is also evident when the boys were engaged in combat in the grazing lands, the victor and the defeated would join hands afterwards and held no animosity.\_

- Apart from the games which were played innocently by the children, the girls were initiated into womanhood at a very tender age.

- The experiences shared by girls during their meetings reveals the animalistic tendencies of men as they indecently assault young gals.

Signs of gender prejudice were insinuated with subtlety as being a woman was synonymized with weakness, "this boy said you are a woman", these words were uttered referring to Tendai. as weak as a woman

- Family unity, family bond and respect is seen in Chedus household. He is esteemed by his wife culturally as the head of the family.

Father to son relationship is marveled at in the novel.

- Culturally children acquired skills as instruments to use before their parents died. This was done to give parents ample time to nurture and mold their children into responsible and relevant beings in the society as aptly evidenced by Chedu and his son Tendai.

- \*●The children were raised, nurtured and trained with a concept of avoiding war at any cost, "whatever you do my Son, avoid war and the shed of blood." This shows how peaceful the villagers are and their respectful nature is seen in that every Elderly man was given an endearing title of grandfather.\*



## \*CHARACTERS IN CHAP 3\*

Chedu

Tsitsi

Tichafa

Togara

Maideis mother

Maidei

Kuda

Jikinya

Rumbai

Tendai

Rudo

## \*THEMES\*

Unity and peace [oneness and togetherness]

Reconciliation and forgiveness

Family ties and bonds

Spirit of communalism

Childhood grooming

\*STYLE\*

Flashback

Use of descriptive

\*JIKINYA\*

\*\_CHAPTER 4\_\*

\*\_●Jikinya is inquisitive as she longs to understand things that are beyond her age. She is curious about the very existence of the earth and whatever is there beyond the mountains. However, she has to contend herself with myths that say that a river dived under the hills to water the fields of the dead beyond. Not only is she puzzled by this, she is haunted also by identity crisis as the only

person she looks like is John, the one labelled as the stranger.\_\*

- The hospitable aspect of the Shona people is evident when they welcomed strangers into their land and even showed them huts. One might argue and say that this was more of blinding faith and too trusting attitude which later turned to hurt them as the story unfolds.

- Ironically one of the strangers given accommodation has a hidden agenda unknown to the people of Ngara.

\*\_●The coming in of the pale visitor is synonymous to the coming in of the white people.\_\*

\*●☆☆Johns dream is symbolical of the betrayal he brings to the people of Ngara. He deceives like Judas Iscariot as he manages to conceal his hidden agenda to the rest of the people.\*

\*\_His vision is that of exploitation had visions of fine tobacco crops that would be sent away to fill the pipes of

men thousands of miles away.\_

- He is deft, contemptuous, disdainful and condescending in nature.

- His dream brings out the reasons why the whites came to Zimbabwe.

- He nurtures colonialists ideas as he foresees Ngora village occupied by the white and the local natives being sidelined to become laborers in their own land and foreman at their best. Occupying the land and moving the people is just but a capitalistic move that is also exploitative

\*\_●NB; Johns dream is also a white mans elevated ego and disregard of the local peoples culture and tradition. He says, until no knowledge of their tradition remained\_\*

■■ The use of biblical allusion, their garden of Eden refers to two aspects. 1] the peace that prevailed in the village. 2] the betrayal that was going to happen just like in the garden of Eden.

- However, it is worth noting that John is ambivalent about that which is to befall the village, "John's heart was filled with sorrow and he wished he had never come" yet he strongly believed that the coming of the whites would benefit the Ngara people.

\*\_Through John, the author unravels the whites supremacist attitude for John believed in the superiority of Europe above all areas of human habitation.\_\*

- This view is further accentuated through the use of the word \*RESCUE\* John mentions that he had to rescue Jikinya from the village as if she needed to be removed from the village to be safe yet ironically the move to move her to a supposedly safe place kills her in the process.

- His view that the Ngara people will not have a say over Jikinya is disparaging and condescending, injustice of providence" This view is couched in a deeper perception that Africa is a place unfit for deep thoughts, a place filled with cruel circumstances in which no joy could be found.

\*\_On another note, John's stay in the village is a sign of tolerance and the flexibility of the Ngara people. It also

brings about the theme of interracial mixing. He appreciates the local artistry and to some extent compares it to that of his people as he marvels at the Shona culture.\_\*

●●■ Geoffrey makes use of songs and symbols to express his ideas and compounds his story telling technique i.e. eagle and vulture story. Tichafa is compared to the eagle because of his wisdom and him being a visionary to his people.

\*\_Jikinyas initial refusal to leave the village can be viewed as a sign of loyalty to the people of Ngara.\_\*

\*●●■ Johns involvement in the rain making ceremony can be interpreted as a sign of cultural flexibility and tolerance as well as cultural integration which transcended to behavioral integration as he felt the need for the rain just as the people felt it thus he even prayed with them.\*

- Secrecy and deception is also seen as John withholds information of the coming in of the white people from the elders. He is aware of the evil nature of his culture, he would have to bring the darker aspects of his culture which he was sure would trouble the elder

- Through flashback the author reveals the history of the Ngora people and the Changanis and their once off fight. Geoffrey marvels at the peace in the village and contrasts it with the war infested John's background.

He goes on to praise that peace was as a result of individual and communal effort, It was a love and peace built with their own hands and not some inevitable inheritance. Tichafa says, I wish there were no wars indicating that he is indeed a peace loving man.

- The author also elevates the African way of life by elevating the power of influence it had over John whose character is portrayed as having changed and transformed as his superiority flare is weaning off, here he was different, changing everyday”

- Cultural integration is also evidenced, he was learning from them and them from him

Geoffrey also demystifies the arrogant belief that the whites had over the concept of learning when he says, learning for the first time in his life that humanity did not only consist of classrooms.”

- The role played by religion is unraveled by the author as he elevates its impact on John the visitor who is shocked at its impact on people and he confesses that “each and every heart was a pulpit and Cathedral in honor of God.” He came to the realization that something else existed other than Christianity

- \*●Tichafa is an embodiment of cultural beliefs and the custodian of the law.\*

- The rain making ceremony brings about thematic issues of culture, tradition, custom, unity, cultural integration and flexibility and \*\_The involvement of John and Jikinya in the highly esteemed and revered practice vehemently affirms the welcoming attitude of the Ngara people.\_\*

- It is through this hospitality and the peace prevailing in the village that John undergoes an internal conflict as he



strongly feels that bringing change would disrupt everything "in the change he would be destroying the peace and love"

- One would like to argue that the falling of rain after the rain making ceremony is an affirmation of the Shona peoples beliefs in Spirits.

■ The issue of gender equality is also addressed as women are involved in important decision making in the society. "When the women arrived the issue was discussed." Furthermore, 3 men and 2 women were sent to the mountains to represent the village.

- One should not side step the mutual relationship between the people of Ngara and John for their separation had only been precipitated by their obedience to the spirits, "their only pain would be in parting with the man whom they have come to regard as one their own."

- Their extent of self-sacrificial love is evident by the villagers willingness to go to war to protect Jikinya, "even unto war,"\* the elders replied in Unison.

- Geoffrey uses an oxymoron to bring this inexplicable

Love. Such love was too simple and too deep to understand”

Johns vagrant nature is seen by his rushed decision to fight alongside the people of Ngara yet he is on the other side during the war.

- The flower is symbolical of the beauty of the Ngara people which is to be plucked and destroyed by war.

\*\_●Just before the fight, Geoffrey compounds the gravity of the matter by the description of the atmosphere, "dark clouds, heavy and threatening crept into the sky..."\_\*

- Use of symbolism, dark clouds blotted out the sun is a premonition of the death and the hope of ever having Jikinya to be plucked from them.

- Furthermore, the dark cloud is said to have drifted from the western horizon, from the west showing the coming of the white people who in this instance are the Dark cloud.

- The narrative therefore ends on a despairing Note as

Tragedy hits the Ngara people. Many villagers lost their lives and Jikinya their cause for fighting dies as well.

\*There is no celebration for victory as there is an impending and likelihood of the white men with guns coming to avenge the death of their fellow soldiers. Peace that had been jealously guarded for a long time had eventually been destroyed. The people are in despair for they see no future in the valley again.\*

●The falling of the Rains after the death of Jikinya and John seems to confirm the voice of the ancestors that they were indeed

\*JIKINYA\*

\*CHARACTERISATION\*

**\*JIKINYA\***

Culturally adaptive

Inquisitive

Respectful

Inquisitive

Loyal

sociable

Caring

Self-sacrificial

Obedient

Hardworking

**\*\_●●She is a symbol of cultural integration and an embodiment of Ngaras customs, norms and myths.\_\***

**●She is also the source of conflicts within the people of Ngara upon her arrival and later with the Changani before her death.**

**\*\_●□■One might argue that the death of Jikinya is**

symbolical to the death of practice of Jikinya dance amongst the Shona.\_\*

- Furthermore, she is viewed as an extension of the people of Ngaras hospitality and the flexibility of the Shona culture or customs as she is allowed to stay with the people despite the racial differences.

- The integration of Jikinya into the village can be argued to be Geoffreys move to elevate the hospitable and welcoming Shona culture.

\*Tichafa\*

\*\_The village head and the custodian of the Ngara laws.\_\*

Lenient

Responsible

Kind/empathetic

Non-racial

Passionate about his beliefs

Peaceful

Visionary/wise

Democratic/open minded

Patriotic

Duty conscious

brave

Selfless

Embodiment of culture

Perceptive

Accommodative

**\*Chedu\***

Loving and caring [fatherly]

Understanding/pro-gender equality

Responsible

Faithful

Hardworking

Sympathetic and empathetic

Bold and daring

Socially intelligent

Non-racial

Respectful

\*John\*

\*\_Through John, Geoffrey exposes the snake-like character aspect manifested through his secret and evasive agenda in the village. In spite of the hospitable welcoming hands of the Ngora people he still harbors deep secrets that would destroy the very state that he was in.\_\*

Inquisitive

Adaptive

Arrogant

Socially intelligent

Strong-willed character

Cunning/secretive/deceitful

Patient

Calculative

\*Tendai\*

Courageous/brave/bold

Loving/compassionate

Protective

Non-racial

Spirit of commeradie

Responsible

Obedient/respectful

Humble

Patriotic

Fearless warrior

\*Tsitsi\*

Forgiving

Tolerant/understanding

Loyal

respectful



Responsible

Non-racial

Cultural embodiment

Cautious in decision making

Suitable helpmate

Sympathetic and empathetic

Wise

Motherly/kind

Cultured

Hardworking

Bold and declarative

Wise

\*Captain in Chapter 4\*

Compulsive/impulsive

Arrogant/adamant

Pompous/proud

Racist

Cruel/hard hearted

Inconsiderate/selfish  
condescending

**\*Minor Characters\***

1. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson (chap 1)
2. Captain chap 1
3. African leader chap 1
4. Togara
5. Maideis mother
6. Maidei
7. Rumbai
8. Vito
9. Rudo
10. Tambudzas mother
11. Two boys who fought with Tendai
12. Two people from Changani and Ngara sent to