

Gendered Space in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: December 06, 2018

Accepted: January 01, 2018

Published: January 31, 2019

Volume:2

Issue: 1

DOI: 10.32996/ijllt.2019.2.1.35

KEYWORDS

Gender, marginalization, feminist, equality, matriarchy, colonial, patriarchy

ABSTRACT

This article provides a critical overview of the treatment of the question of gender in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*. In other words, it probes the implication of women in postcolonial Nigeria, with regard to how their political marginalization constricts the public sphere in Nigeria. It matters to note that the feminist movement eventually contributes to strengthen and consolidate the ideals of democracy and good governance in the country. Yet, the low participation of women in government and politics is due to the gendered political system which is dominantly patriarchal. Thus, claiming for their integration in the political process, women should stand together in order to voice up their aspirations.

1. INTRODUCTION

Life in post-colonial Africa is characterized by a great deal of socio-political disillusionment. Indeed, the post-independent of Africa is bedeviled with social corruption, gender, autocracy, foreign-dominated economy, as well as the betrayal of human ideals among others. Accordingly, like all good African writers, Chinua Achebe tries, as faithfully as possible, to present the Nigerian society. Thus, the main concern in this paper is women's image in Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*. In his early novels, Chinua Achebe tends to belittle women substantially in addition to being very gendered-sarcastic. However, his views on women had changed gradually in his subsequent novels. This might be due to the feminist movements taking place in the society in which he lived. As a matter of fact, the feminist movement is a set of actions undertaken by women for social, political and economical equality. However, the issue of gender, especially in African context has already been approached by a great deal of critics. Accordingly, in connection with our analysis a few of them can be listed: Uzoechi Nwagbara, Udumukwu Onyemaechi, Olayinka Forward, Sonia Choukri Bouziani, Nyamndi George, Finchinchong Charles C, and Abdalatif Mamoun Hassan. They conducted research works raising the issue of gender in post-colonial Africa.

It is certain that for long, the women were left behind to mind the homes, the children and the farms. Their erstwhile dependence on the men deepened as their consumerist status heightened. The men had all the money and the power. For many, colonialism is

blamed as a whip horse but it is colonialism that eventually offered the beacon of light of women's Western education and exposure which propelled to the outer wider world and recognition of the commonality of women's subjugation world-wide. From then, started the feminist quest for rights, opportunities, governance, and equality, seeking women emancipation towards men. It is this facet that we intend to reveal through the main female character of the novel with the central question stated as follows: How are women viewed in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*?

2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*, is a postcolonial novel set in Kangan, where Sam, the military Head of State, has come to power via coup d'état and without any preparation for political leadership. The story is principally relayed by three people: Beatrice, Ikem and Chris. The novel refracts military dictatorship and usurpation of power by the political class to the detriment of the masses in Kangan as well as the maltreatment of women. However, in connection with my study, the complexity of the term 'gender' shows a confusing understanding according to periods. Indeed, facts reveal that during the pre-colonial era African societies were matriarchal in nature. This system of society saw a significant change in the colonial period when the African women received a back seat and males took the lead in becoming the head of the families and clans. During the Independence struggle women stood side-by-side with men to fight for their nation. Since then women had struggled to be a part

of the political system of their country; though they had not been successful until the recent past. Women try to give their best to the tasks that come their way, but they are not always rewarded or praised for it. In Achebe's texts, women are given menial tasks to perform. If they plant crops, they are not allowed to plant Yam and if they work in offices, they are hired as assistants to the males. If they wish to work shoulder-to shoulder with men, they have to earn a scholarship to study abroad for which it is expected of them to offer their bodies. This is the reason why in *No Longer at Ease* every time Obi has to face women who would offer themselves to him in order to get a scholarship. In *A Man of the People*, female characters have been used more as objects than helping hands. One of the critics, Chinyere Nwagbara (2003:345) has questioned the menial roles assigned to women by Achebe:

Women are introduced into politics. They are used as political campaigners. Although Mrs. John raises important questions about Chief Nanga, she remains more of a physically loud person....She is said to be a wealthy princess, she plays a minimal role. She is truly a bundle of good looks and strong determination, but has no formal school education. This, however, does not justify the "ludicrous" role assigned to her.

This signifies the status of women in the traditional Igbo society lies on their hard work playing minimal role, but this image of African women changes with the passage of time. Women began to realize their worth during the colonial and the post-colonial era. This changed image of women has been projected in *Anthill of the Savannah* in which women are strong and self-willed, and are valiant enough to voice their opinion in public. Chinyere Nwagbara analyses the status of women in *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah* and finds out that in the latter text, Achebe tries to redefine the role of African women. The status of women had been aptly portrayed in a number of fictional and non-fictional works of both the African male and female writers. In traditional environment patriarchy overpowered matriarchy. This paper seeks to find out the role played by Beatrice Okoh in *Anthills of the Savannah* that described the changed status of women in modern African society. Indeed, women's rights and women's being have always been taken for granted, nicely and safely tucked away under the bed of patriarchy. Silence was the virtue of women and passivity their garner, but it was not always so. Traditional societies in pre-colonial times had spheres of power and influence for women in closely-

knit organizations that helped them maintain a voice. Noticeably, matriarchy makes place to patriarchy in modern Africa. Colonialism has its merits but its new culture of ascendancy through education, white-collar jobs and money-driven economy relegated women down the ladder.

However, colonial impact on all the colonized nations including Africa had not been disadvantageous throughout. Where the colonized races endured the pangs of slavery and torture, they also learned the art of reading and writing. The Africans took advantage of this and set out to explore the "New Horizons". Neither the males, nor the females lagged behind in this act of gaining wisdom through learning. This experience opened the African females a room that they made use of. They merged their tone with the voices of the "Shrieking White Women", who had been trying hard to make their presence felt in the male-driven world. For the Black women, it was "double-trouble" as they had to face dual oppression, that of being women and that of being black. They tried to prove to the world that they are beautiful in the way they were born and are no less than the males. The Black women were suppressed because of their gender and colour, by the colonizers as well as by their own black men. Due to this dual oppression that they endured, it took them some time to come to the forefront and make African men realize that they too held a significant place in the society. Ultimately they succeeded in making everyone realize that they are to be treated as equals in the governance of the society despite the fact that from the genesis of civilization god created men different from women; a universal truth that will no longer change. This leads to understand that equality between the two sexes is relatively possible. It also matters to note that African realities are different from Western's. As a matter of fact, European women have dropped out the concept of motherhood and they would like to play male role even in marriage so as to marry other women.

Feminist prospects for African woman

In this section we are going to trace the aspirations of African women concerning their treatment. But it matters to recall that African women arrived on the literary scene much later than their male counterparts. Cultural impediments to the education of women, coupled with the Western sexism of the colonial system, kept girls out of the earliest missionary schools. Broadly speaking, a woman is considered as a factor of impact and influence in many levels: social life, relationships, career, and sense of self-worth. Put otherwise, she is the basic formation of families, communities and even nations. From this

standpoint, we can notice that a woman has a significant impact on the continuing human offspring and also has a role in the development of the areas of human life, be it culturally, socially, economically, and politically. Thus, talking of Nigeria, the dimension of power dissonance within socio-political and cultural turf following sexist political paradigm has left a balance sheet of androgynous lore and order, decline in the true worth of women and their indigenous institutions, marginalization, underdevelopment. In the light of this acceptance, the contention put forward by KunleAjayi (2007:13) is relevant:

The Nigerian women have, since independence, been denied opportunities of assuming political leadership at all levels of governance in their nation's federal set-up.

Consequently, feminist writing is informed by the need to break the patriarchal mould which contrives discriminatory political roles to Nigerian women by assigning negative stereotypes to them by men. Obviously, the movement of feminism played a major role in the process of human liberation, thus feminism as a movement was organized around the belief of social, economic, and political equality of the sexes. It aims to highlight and to fight against oppression. And the feminist theory serves as an outgrowth of the general movement to empower women worldwide, it is a theoretical structure that composes convictions about the nature and the reasons for women's mistreatment and imbalance and that propose techniques for killing abuse and securing gender disparity. Therefore, the concept of feminism is to criticize the supremacy of male and to make women become equivalent to men. From this, we find that the main goals of feminism are to reinforce the importance of women and to bring about gender equity. Today, African feminists scholars, activists, artists and politicians such as Leymah Gbowee, Joyce Banda, Simphiwe Dana and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichieas well as feminist organizations such as "the African Feminist Forum" and "the African Gender InstitutE" are at the forefront of using activism, knowledge and creativity to change situations that affect women negatively:

No one but African women ourselves can bear the responsibility to protect the histories of African women and to connect them to the situations of today. We have many glass ceilings to shatter. To begin to do so, we must realize that the current situation disadvantages women tremendously. Women are being systemically marginalized within both our local and global societies. As our

eyes increasingly open to this truth, we must continue to liberate and defend ourselves from limited notions of womanhood. It cannot be stressed enough how pressing that is. We don't need to reinvent the wheel; we can and should take inspiration from those who are already reshaping the narrative of African womanhood and the truth is that feminism continues to be the tool of choice for many of us. (Online).

In this light, the significance of early feminist writers in Nigeria is a canonical revolution to transcend the tradition that shores up the rhetoric of female oppression and inhumanity. This attempt has widened the public sphere as well as deconstructed discourses in Nigerian literature, politics and philosophical thought as Chukwuma (2007:135) puts in the following passage:

The early novels of Flora Nwapa, Efuru(1966) and Buchi Emecheta's Second Class Citizens (1975) and The Bride Price (1976) are replete with stories of the Subjugation of women and their maltreatment. These novels placed women in conflict of sorts and showed how they resolved their various dilemma.

Yet, Chinweizu's assertion in his book tellingly titled *Anatomy of Female Power* is also of much interest. Indeed. His thesis is that women are powerful and exercise that power over men contrary to general belief and acceptance. Accordingly, he (1990:12) writes:

Because every man has as boss his wife or his mother, or some other woman in his life, men may rule the world, but women rule the men who rule the world. Thus contrary to appearances, woman is boss, the overall boss, of the world.

Furthermore, talking of the distinction on power between male and female, Chinweiwu (1990:12) goes on writing:

Generally then, whereas male power tends to be crude, confrontational and direct, female Power tends to be subtle, manipulative and indirect. Whereas aggressiveness is the hallmark of male power, maneuver is the hallmark of female power. And where man is the great physical aggressor, woman is the great psychological maneuver. From a Male-centered point of view of what power is, it is easy to be misled into thinking that a female form of power does not exist at all; and even when female power is Recognized, it

is easy to dismiss it as power of an inferior type, just because it is not hard, aggressive or boastful like the highly visible male form.

Without any doubt, the above quotations serve as fitting prelude to the appreciation of female self-assertion in fiction by select African women to show the various stages and locations of the feminist encounter. The whole objective is to give women a voice and locus in their own affairs especially within the marriage institution and in other affairs of their own concern. Flora Nwapa (1930-93) is one of the African female writers who breaks the silence of women subjugation. Though first published Nigerian and African female writer when she started writing 1966, her writing interest was women and her motive for writing was to correct the disparaged image of women in male-authored novels. She started from the grass-roots and situated her women characters in the village environment with its masculine supremacy and dominance where gender roles and relationships were strictly circumscribed by norms and tradition. She is the author of several novels among which *Efuru* (1966), *Idu* (1970), *One is Enough* (19...). In all these novels Nwapa approached the exploration of the woman's opinions in the face of subjugation and victimization in marriage. On the issue of marriage, for instance, Nwapa claims the women's rights when advising Chinwe, the daughter of Dora, one of the three protagonists who divorced her husband of dwindling means and concentrated on her own affairs. Accordingly, she (1984:188-199) writes:

Chinwe had done the right thing. Her generation was doing better than her mother's own. Her generation was telling the men, that there are different ways of living one's life fully and fruitfully. They were saying that women have opinions. Their lives cannot be ruined because of a bad marriage. They have a choice, a choice to marry and have children, a choice to marry or divorce their husbands. Marriage is not THE only way.

Noteworthy significant in African feminist scholarship, Nwapa's *Efuru* signals a long awaited departure from the stereotypical female portraiture in male-authored African literature. Lately, the prolific Buchi Emecheta joined the fray with *The Joys of Motherhood* in 1990. It is in this vein that the female Nigerian critic, Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi (1988 : 62) writes:

If Nwapa is the challenger, Buchi Emecheta is the fighter... For the first time, female

readers through female characters are aware of their subjugation by their fathers, uncles, husbands, brothers and sons.

In Olayinka's wordings, the silent feminist revolution enacted by Achebe's women is a systematic advancement of democratic project in Nigeria, where the masses, especially women are politically imperiled. To this effect, Olayinka (2006:IV) writes:

If women, who constitute at least 50% of the total population, should bear any burden, it can only be reasonably expected that the rest of the society will have to either directly or indirectly bear part of the burden.

Truly, like that of other African female writers, Buchi Emecheta's writings are of great value for the African women as far as the issue of gender is concerned since they expound the theme of female oppression, the slave girl becoming her leitmotif -- the archetypal African woman buried alive under the heavy yoke of traditional mores and customs. As one can see, Africa has produced a number of female authors who were, and still are, able to assert themselves as writers, both on a national and international scale.

African feminism concerns itself not only with the rights of women from Africa but is also inclusive of those living in the Diaspora as many of the contributors to the literature have often lived "abroad". Therefore, let our inquiring minds not be limited by a geographical location as the name would imply. However, the debates, practices and implementation are most credibly pursued on the African continent. On this account, Ama Ata Aidoo, an authoress of African literature states,

"I should go on to insist that every man and every woman should be a feminist

— especially if they believe that Africans should take charge of African land, African wealth, African lives and the burden of African development. It is not possible to advocate independence of

African development without also believing that African women must have the best that the environment can offer. For some

e of us this is the crucial element of feminism”.

Some interviews conducted with African female writers show their commitment on the fight for women place in the society. Maria Frias (1989: note 16) interviewed Ama Ata Aidoo on the issue as we can learn from this extract:

MF: *You are the author of an often-quoted-article “To Be an African Woman Writer” (1988). What is it to be an African Woman writer nowadays? I am asking this because you have been witness to the literary atmosphere in colonial, post-colonial, and independent Ghana. Is it different now to be an African woman writer?*

AAA: *I actually wrote “To Be an African Woman Writer” in 1975. I had been asked for this piece, as well as many other women around the world, to help the UN put together a position paper for women, for the Conference at Copenhagen. I don’t think it is much different now. I think there is more awareness, but by and large the position of the woman is about the same. There are more African women writers, but this is a very interesting country, María. I did that paper, but I also know now that the Ghanaian society is one of the most liberal societies in this world when it comes to the position of the woman in society. It has always been like that. But it does not change. What I was actually trying to do in the article was to point out that instead of what people think -they say, what do you Ghanaian women worry about, if you are all over the place?- which is true.*

Another interview with Buchi Emecheta is conducted by Joice Boss in *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* as this excerpt reveals:

JB: *An interesting point you brought up in your talk yesterday is the question of whether women have progressed. You say that in some ways, women are going around in circles, but it seems you education as a way out of this circle.*

BE: *Yes, that is the key. Once a woman is educated up to a certain level, then, she will have the confidence to communicate with her sister outside of that culture, and be able to compare notes. And maybe they can learn from each other. Until that is available to almost all women, we will be going around in circles.*

In a word, the movement of feminism played a major role in the process of human liberation, thus feminism as a movement was organized around the belief of social, economic, and political equality of the sexes. Feminism seeks to highlight and to fight against oppression. Feminist theory is an outgrowth

of the general movement to empower women worldwide, it is theoretical structures that compose convictions about the nature and the reasons for women’s mistreatment and imbalance and that propose techniques for killing abuse and securing gender disparity. Therefore, the concept of feminism is to criticize the supremacy of male and to make women become equivalent to men. From this, we find that the main goals of feminism are to reinforce the importance of women and to bring about gender equity. Having said that, the aim of the following lines is to provide the reader with Beatrice’s implications on the issue of African women treatment in Chinua Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savannah*.

Embodiment of gender in *Anthills of the Savannah*

This section deals with the gender issue in Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savannah*. However, before tackling the subject matter it is interesting to understand what gender is. Among the many acceptations given to gender, the simplest and most convenient is “the condition of being male or female”. In connection with the topic, it implies a socio-cultural development of male and female roles as well as relations between men and women. Thus, in their writings the male African writers use gender as the metaphor for class distinctions and political chaos depicting the exploitation and barrenness of women as symbolic of the same occurring in their nation. As evidence, Achebe’s novels focused upon the superiority of the male characters whereas his women characters are portrayed only in the backdrop of the opposite gender although that perception of the issue has been reconsidered. To this effect, this paper views Beatrice as projecting a new role for the woman in modern African literary narratives:

The women are, of course, the biggest single group of oppressed people in the world and, if we are to believe the Book of Genesis, the very oldest. But they are not the only ones. There are others – rural peasants in every land, the urban poor in industrialized countries, Black people everywhere including their own continent... (1987:98).

However, the analysis made by George D. Nyamndi on women’s treatment corroborates the above projection. Indeed, assessing Elechi Amadi’s novelistic attitude to gender relations in his novels of the 60s and 70s, when traditional African society was still very strongly male-dominated, Nyamndi (2004:218) writes:

The Concubine portrays a society in which the woman’s image conforms to the stiff dictates of tradition. Cast in a strait jacket, the woman in

Omokachi village cannot venture one step outside the social path traced for her. All attempts at self-expression by women are checked by the overriding interests of the masculine guilds and ritual castes.

As a matter of fact, the lesser the emphasis Achebe's other novels gave to its female characters, the more *Anthills of the Savannah* highlighted and upgraded the female personae epitomized by Beatrice who has been portrayed as a headstrong girl who was not willing to cheapen herself. As one of the leading characters of this novel, Beatrice Okoh, is a feminist who becomes the epitome of rebellion, and through this she desires to make place for women in the patriarchal society of Africa. She is depicted as a dauntless girl who does not find it hard to put forth her arguments in public and defend them through logical claims. In this light, gender issue is synonymous with womanhood or even feminism as they all aim at revaluing the female sex and setting equity among the two genders. In this connection, we share Udumumukwu (2007:7)' words about the significance of feminism when she writes:

Feminism as a method and discourse is animated by a desire to reconstruct history in order to reconstruct the woman as subject. This implies that the woman is presented or represented not as a mere object of history, put at the margin.

Accordingly, Maduka (1981:11), labelling the importance of literature in Nigeria's political process writes:

... There is a direct relationship between literature and social institutions. The principal function of literature is to criticize these institutions and eventually bring about desirable changes in the society

Moreover, the craft of *Anthills of the Savannah* finds substance in Achebe's women's political participation with Beatrice's feminist activism which is central in resolving the postcolonial Nigerian politics. To this effect, Fonchingong's wordings are meaningful when he (2006:45) writes:

*It should be noted that Achebe moves from the peripheral role women assume in the earlier novels to playing a central role in shaping and mediating the realms of power in *Anthills of the Savannah*...Beatrice is the fulcrum of social change right in the nucleus of socio-political schema ... The portrayal of Beatrice represents a woman shouldering*

the responsibility of charting the course of female emancipation.

Anthills of the Savannah is full of instances where Beatrice fruitfully pleases people with his witty observations and arguments upon the status, role as well as condition of women in the African society. The narrator unveils that Beatrice claims and advocates the rights and freedom of African women that they deserve but are unhappily deprived of. One of the vivid cases is the one Beatrice named a child instead of a man as we can realize:

In our traditional society...the father named the child. But the man who should have done it today is absent...What a man knows about a child anyway that he should presume to give it a name...

'Nothing except that his wife told him he is the father,' said Abdul, causing much laughter.

...Exactly. So I think our tradition is faulty there. It is really safest to ask the mother what her child is or means or should be called. So Elewa should really be holding Ama and telling us what she is. (AOS: 213)

It is significant that, at the naming ceremony of Ikem and Elewa's baby, Beatrice does the naming, even though that role is traditionally fulfilled by a man. Even more significantly, she gives the girl child a boy's name, "Amaechina", which means "May the Path Never Close". The content of the above passage converges to the re-establishment of the African women's rights. This breaking with custom proposes a fresh start, a subverting of Western convention, as well as African too. Beatrice drives the change, driving the others to adjust with what is available. Achebe seems to have seen the deficiency of his past feelings, understanding the requirement for women pronounce their own particular place in African culture, in the event that it is ever to recuperate itself and advance onwards. He seems to cede whatever to recuperate itself and advance onwards. He seems to cede whatever control over prevalent supposition he may have been seen as having through the old man's words toward the end of the novel, "in you young people our world has met its match. Yes! You have put the world where it should sit"(210). Beatrice serves as wellsprings of energy and motivation to the men around her; she helps to revamp or adjust her society for the future. This state of being free, equal from men claimed by Achebe through Beatrice is also backed up by Helene Cixous who rather talks of the new woman, the changed woman who is no longer chained in the confines of her home. Indeed, Cixous talks of new dawn by liberating the traditional

women from the clutches of patriarchy in these terms:

It is time to liberate the New Woman from the Old by coming to know her – by loving her for getting by, for getting beyond the Old without delay, by going out ahead of what the New Woman will be, as an arrow quits the bow with a movement that gathers and separates the vibrations musically, in order to be more than herself. (Online).

In addition, the creation of the character of Beatrice as a mediator foresees a change in Achebe's view of womanhood. As a matter of fact, it is obvious that Chris and Ikem are fighting a common threat from the official quarters unknowingly, while also having to deal with their personal resentments. Beatrice wades in to mediate between Chris and Ikem. In doing this Beatrice does not decide who is right or wrong neither does she force the disputing parties to reach agreement or to accept particular settlement terms. She uses persuasion and conviction to make Chris assess the danger lurking around them and make him to shift his mindset on Ikem even as he complains. Through Beatrice, Achebe strives to affirm the moral strength and intellectual integrity of African women especially since the social conditions which have kept women down in the past era are now largely absent. Optimistically, 'Achebe's newly envisioned female's roles are to be expanded, articulated and secured by women themselves, and the modern African woman is doing just that. Therefore, Beatrice represents the true spirit and heart of the new woman with new roles in the scheme of things. Attesting to the exceptional prowess possessed by Beatrice, Bunali Tahbildar writes that

Achebe creates Beatrice, as a strong, independent-minded, and politically empowered Nigerian woman while Kanaganayakam praises Beatrice as the most important female character that Achebe has created and that the modern Beatrice is also a goddess and a muse. (Tahbildar Online).

From there, one can see in the woman the real force of stability and progress. Through highly successful narrative incidents Achebe demonstrates how women succeed where men might stumble, especially in conflict resolution and home management. This view brings its relevance to bear on the present-day scene where attempts are made, both within the African milieu and on the international stage, to endow women with a new role. From now, it becomes evident that Beatrice is a perfect embodiment of gender as she seeks equality between men and women. She is determined to make something of

herself and saying that every woman wants a man to complete her is a piece of 'male chauvinist bullshit' she completely rejected throughout *Anthills of the Savannah*. Committed to her job Beatrice rejects the notion that men define women in traditional societies. In addition, Beatrice understands the limitations of the men in the novel, who are portrayed as arrogant and flawed as she tells the three main characters, Sam, Ikem, and Chris, "Well, you fellows, all three of you, are incredibly conceited." It is only Beatrice who has the foresight to see that women must be given a role in the government if their country is to make progress. Accordingly, she says:

...The way I see it is that giving women today the same role which traditional society gave them of intervening only when everything else has failed is not enough, you know, like the women in the Sembene film who pick up the spears abandoned by their defeated menfolk. It is not enough that women should be the court of last resort because the last resort is a damn sight too far and too late!(1987:91).

It matters to recall that *Anthills of the Savannah* is a text that seeks to restore women in African society. It's in this sense that the inexorable winds of change have caused Achebe, a consummate pragmatist, to make a volte-face. The secret of his revisionist stance can be deduced from the central theme of his two tradition-based novels, *Things Fall Apart*(1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964). In a world of change, whoever is not flexible enough will be swept aside. Profiting from the mistakes of his tragic heroes, Achebe becomes flexible. In *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), speaking through his alter ego Ikem, a journalist and writer, Achebe acknowledges that the malaise the African party is experiencing results from excluding women from the scheme of things. Beatrice, who has an honor degree from Queen Mary College, University of London, projects Achebe's new vision of women's roles and clarifies Ikem's hazy thoughts on the issue. Ikem accepts that his former attitude towards women has been too respectful, too idealistic. In the same vein, Beatrice gives Ikem insight into a feminist concept of womanhood, with feminist as a belief in the principle that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men. On this account, Professor Marius Basile Ngassaki's article entitled 'Anglophone African Female Writings as a Talking Cure' is of great interest. Accordingly, Ngassaki (2005:159):

Women writers use literature to voice out their feelings in different forms. This is the case with African women writers who have the tendency to struggle against the

oppression which is backed up by African tradition. And they have to fight against repression where they are required to control their inner feelings and to keep silent as much as possible. Fortunately, literature provides them with the opportunity to express their opinions, emotions and feelings without any constraint.

Evidently, Beatrice is articulate, independent, and self-realized, and she re-evaluates women's position, asserting, "It is not enough that women should be the court of last resort because the last resort is a damn sight too far and too late!" (91-92). In Beatrice, Achebe now strives to affirm the moral strength and intellectual integrity of African women, especially since the social conditions which have kept women down in the past are now largely absent. Urbanization and education have combined to broaden women's horizons. Therefore, Ikem tells Beatrice,

I can't tell you what the new role for Woman will be. I don't know. I should never presume to know. You have to tell us (98).

Achebe's newly envisioned female roles are to be expounded, articulated, and secured by woman herself; and this is what the modern African woman should do for the remaining time.

Thus, it can be concluded by saying that African women are perceived as inferior beings who hold a secondary position in the clan irrespective of their insurmountable contributions to the society. They are submissive and oppressed by their ruling males. But, this subjugated image made of them does not lessen the expectation from them and not only are they meant to remain confined to the chores of their respective compounds but also they are expected to lend a helping hand to their husbands and fathers for the smooth functioning of their household. However, the modern women in the post-independence era are different from the traditional women. They not only believe in the equality but also take pains to make men realize their worth so that men do not take them for granted. In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Beatrice sees the flaws of the men running the country and knows that they have failed because they are not providing the people with what they need or embracing the power of women. As such, she becomes an intelligent and perceptive character who represents the promise and morality of women in the novel.

3. CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, this piece of work has examined the view of gender inequality in African society in Chinua Achebe fictional novel *Anthills of the Savannah*. It has been an attempt to document the progress made in the search for equality as seen from the lenses of fictional literature of the author's societies. Indeed, a cursory look at the place of women in Achebe's other works confirms a diachronic development as the case is now different compared to earlier days. Therefore, it becomes worthwhile to note that African literature has been enriched by the voices of women expressing their concerns. From the sixties to the present, various inhibitions and encumbrances of women exercising their human rights have found expression in the literature, mainly in fiction written by women. It results that women play an important role in *Anthills of the Savannah*, and through the character of Beatrice, Achebe develops the theme of the importance of women in the future of Africa. This leads to talk of Achebe's progressively changing attitude towards women's role. The least we have labelled has been that African women, aware of their situation which tremendously disadvantages them for being marginalized within both local and global societies, should through the feminist movement continue to liberate and defend themselves from limited notions of womanhood. However, education remains a mighty step forward for women in the various nations of Africa today and the reality on the ground is that girls are encouraged to read by their parents and have various governments' and agency's sponsorship. From then, we can believe in a new trend, another image granted to women, what hardly existed in the author's former novels.

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