

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
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FEMINIST TRENDS IN
ACHEBE'S POSTCOLONIAL NOVELS

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**FEMINIST TRENDS IN
ACHEBE'S POSTCOLONIAL NOVELS**

By

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Abstract

This research aims at analyzing and showing trends of feminism in the three novels of Chinua Achebe. It tries to explore the feminist outlook of the writer taking the portrayal of female characters. And also it uncovers the development of these female portrayals in the selected novels. And finally the research examines the role of female characters in their given society and in the given period.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter, introduction, tries to enough information about the background of the study and its significances and objectives. The second chapter is Review of Related Literature It starts by defining important terms and attempts to give the nature and classification of feminism in line with the aim of the research.

The next chapter is Analysis and interpretation of the selected novels according to Marxist feminist literary criticism. The analysis tries to find out how feminist outlook of the writer outshines in the novels of different periods. In addition to this, it proves whether the writer portrays his female characters in the same way or differently. To indicate and show the presence of trends in feminism, the study attempts to give comparative analysis of the female characters of the three novels.

The fourth chapter is summary and conclusion based on the analysis of the research. The conclusion recapitulates the core findings in a nutshell. This can also serve a springboard for other researchers.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Literary theory has been developing in the course of this century into branches of literary studies that is studied and taught as a distinct subject in its own right (Jefferson, 1982:7). The distinguishing feature of modern literary theory is its own connection with practical literary critics.

Recent trends seem to suggest that literary theory itself grows and develops in a process of comparison and cross-referencing. This is to say that new schools of theories and thoughts have been modifying from time to time with new ideas. Feminist criticism has also come into the foreground relatively recently, and can well be area of innovation in the field. *Kim further states:*

Feminist poetry began in a hundred places once, in writing workshops and at open readings, on the kitchen tables of self-publishing point or activities, and in the work of already established forma; strategies and thematic possibilities..... did begin to flower may fully in a single decades of the transformed politics. (1996:3).

Feminist literary criticism is the application of the theory of feminism to the analysis of literary texts. It came into existence recently after the change in culture of families to express ideas about it through poetry. This created an atmosphere of both personal freedom of expression and collective response that accommodate women's needs and aspirations for poetry. Though the development of this theory or literary criticism has

been set or known as 'feminism' since recently, women have been protesting against gender biased inequalities historically long before. Feminism as a movement appears barely before the nineteenth century. In fact, no record exists of the use of the word before 1850. But discussion of the woman question, however, begins long before 1800. (Cherry, 1978:1).

This implies that protest against patriarchy (sexist discrimination) in the traditional society is not new; it has been there for ages. However, the belief that men are superior to women has been used, feminists have observed to justify and maintain the male monopoly of positions in politics, social power, economy and others is recent. Feminists argue that the inferior position long occupied by women in the patriarchal society has been culturally, not biologically set. Thus, feminism, like Marxism, is rooted in the political discourses of modernity, but also challenging its idea of sovereignty, equality, liberty, rights and rationality.

Feminist movement is now diversifying its horizon and getting focus almost in every zone of our world after established in 1970 with the efforts of feminist literary schools and critics in the United States and Great Britain. Particularly, writers of both sexes (Male and female) are given a great responsibility to propagate these gender inequalities in their piece of writing. As a result of this, literature, especially novels are the means taken by many writers to minimize marginalization.

The connections between feminism and literature are deep and abiding and begin in our consciousness about our lives (Ibid:7). Obviously, literature is one of the common ways that can propagate gender issues. Cheryl argues concerning this.

We also hope that the anthology will raise a few consciousnesses along the way because we all could benefit from becoming more sensitive to the women's movement, more sensitive to literature, and more sensitive to ourselves as the movement and literature affect our daily life. (XVIII).

As can be inferred from here, it is useful to examine the ways in which literary texts reinforce gender issues or gender inequality. This is because it is important to know the ability to see when and how gender roles operate in literary works as these works reflect the society's way of living and habits in general. As a result of this, we can minimize the problem in our own life.

Thus, critics (both women and men) need to understand what it meant to be a woman, to consider how much of what society has often inherently female traits deemed are culturally and socially constructed. Beauvoir's *The second sex* (1949), Betty Friedan's *The Feminist Mystique* (1963) Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970), Teresa de Lauretis's *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (1984), Annette Kolodny's *The Lady of the Land* (1975), Judith Fetterly's *The Resisting Reader* (1978), Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) are the dominant of the many critiques that questioned cultural, sexual, intellectual, and psychological stereotypes about women.

Though all feminists are under the umbrella of the term feminism that describes a whole range of approaches to literature and culture, they have different strategies or ways of handling their criticism in order to achieve their goals. Some feminist critics seek to interpret the works of male authors, with particular attention to women characters, in order to explore the moral, political and social restrictions women traditionally

faced. Other feminist critics choose to analyze the works of women authors that have been previously overlooked by male critics.

According to Guerin, feminist criticism is always political and always revisionist, no matter what the emphasis. And most feminists now agree that despite their diverse approaches there is a distinctive feminine sensibility, even "A primordial female part of the psyche reflected in style and in language itself" (1992:185). Kolodny and Showalter, as well as Rich, have argued powerfully for this latter notion and have used it as a foundation for literary and political awareness.

Following this Western Philosophy (feminist mode of criticism) and the seed of female consciousness, across the world, including Africa, women have achieved a new and constructive awareness that subversively questions the back stage of her position. This questioning is led to a new socio-literary production constructed with the language of "revolt reappraising" the worth of the woman and her rightful position alongside man in all societal power structures. Following this footsteps of the Western ideology, many African writers came to be conscious of it. They have tried to uncover the traditional gender hierarchies in their creative writings. They have included the issues about the relationship between husband and wife, father and children and mother and children.

A number of writers like Cyprian Ekwensi, Ousmane Sembene, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Alex La Guma, Peter Abraham, and then Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Grace Ogot, Bessie Head provide most of the background material for the discussion and analysis of the African female experience in fiction. Their works concern with the socio-cultural perception of women and the dominant factors that encourage problems or crises in their lives.

Moreover, writers like Agovi, K.E. *A Dual sensibility* (1990), Aidoo, A.A. *Our sister killjoy* (1977), Amadi, E. *The concubine* (1966) and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) have also treated the representation of women in their respected culture. Africanist writings reacting to and attempting to correct these distortions omitted and silenced women's histories. The influence of established male and female writers in Africa and Europe is also significant to minimize the oppression. Particularly, female writers in the post-colonial period have strengthened their struggle in line of the notion of feminism. Male postcolonial writers, like Achebe is also believed to be handled gender issue in his novels. Achebe, in his three postcolonial novels: *No Longer At Ease* (1960), *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) is believed to be treated feminism and being conscious of women in his creative writings. Thus, the base of this research is on this assumption and tries to prove gender ideology in his consecutive fictions.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

It is believed to be women are the bulwark of a society. Undoubtedly, their contribution to the over all development of mankind and the nature in general is great. Starting from raising children at home and other routine works of the family up to the country's top leadership, they are as important as men. This is because they are considered to be half part of their husbands and the family. Unlike this fact, women have been marginalized from their own respected culture for ages. Traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective and decisive. In contrast, women are presented as emotional (irrational), weak, and submissive. These gender roles have been used very successfully to justify such inequalities, which still occur today. Tyson (1999:85-86) says:

... as excluding women from equal access in politics, academia, and the corporate world, paying men higher wages than women for doing the same job (if women are even able to obtain the job), and convincing women that they are not fit for careers in such areas as mathematics and engineering.

Even though people today believe that these inequalities are minimized because of some anti-discriminatory laws passed by governments, these laws may not be implemented properly unless the traditional society brings a behavioral change. Gerdalerner as quoted in Lodge (1988: 345) explains:

Women have been left out of history not because of the evil conspiracies of men in general or male historians in particular, but because we have considered history only in male centered terms. We have missed women and their activities, because we have asked questions of history which are inappropriate to women..

This implies that women's roles have been marginalized due to the patriarchal (sexist) beliefs of the traditional society. The belief that men are superior to women economically, politically and socially has been imposed in the traditional society. It is this male dominant culture that initiated feminists to develop feminist criticism to reflect and expose the deep-rooted biased culture. Feminists' assumption is that women are oppressed by patriarchy economically, politically, socially and psychologically.

Gender issues play a part in every aspect of human experience, including the production and experience of literature whether we are consciously aware of these issues or not. As Cheryl is concerned, as we move toward the broader range of feminist fiction, we will find novels written with known sentiments about the women's questions. As feminist critics reread male texts, they describe how women in those texts are considered in culture and society. African writers also share this issue as

their major lesson in their works. Achebe, the known Nigerian writer, is being aware of this crucial feminist issue.

There are some reasons, which motivated me to engage in this study. First, feminist literary criticism is a fast growing and crucial theory that touches every body's individual life. Unlike Hamm, as quoted in Guerin (1992:235), who argues that no man can read as feminists because at any time he can escape into patriarchy, many well-known male critics have read and taught as feminist critics.

According to Wilfred L. Guerin et.al, some of the known male feminist critics include: Houston A.Baker, Paul Lauter, Wayne C.Booth, Jonathan Culler, Terry Eagleton, Lawrence Lipking, and Robert Schools, and there will undoubtedly be more male students and critics like me who find the issues raised by feminism to be the issue they want to study. To add what Walder said concerning this issue "Feminist criticism has certainly provide the most vital contribution to the debate in recent years, and cannot be ignored by anybody interested in studying fiction." (1995:98). Feminist literary criticism looks at how female characters are portrayed and the role of these characters in the story of male authored literary texts. Three Novels of Achebe are taken in this research paper for analysis and interpretation of feminist trends.

The other main reason that initiates me to work on this approach is the absence of a research on works of the same author based on feminist trends. However, there are related works on feminism and gender. To mention some of them: Mulumebet Zenebe[1996]: *A comparative analysis of the images of men and women in the works of some Ethiopian women writers*, Mekonnen Zegeye[2000]: *Images of women and plot structure in the Novels of Fekeremarkos Desta*, Muluaem Denbegna[2005]: *Aspects of Feminism in Amadi's The Concubine and the Great Ponds and*

Emecheta's *Second Class Citizens: A poststructuralist Approach*, Tigist Defru[2005]: *The Images of Female Characters in Two Male-Authored Amharic Films: Kezkaza Wolafan and Semayawi Feres*, Mekonnen Fekadu[2000]: *Images of women in the fictions of selected African women writers: A comparative Black Feminist study*, are the major ones.

Based on the above facts, it is convincing and timely to make a study to analyze and show feminist trends in three Achebe's novels. Namely: *No Longer At Ease [1960]*, *A Man of the People [19966]* and *Anthills of the Savannah [1987]*. Thus, the study is expected to examine and answer the following questions:

1. Where are African women in the postcolonial world and how fairly represented in his works?
2. To what extent Achebe attempts to advance the social roles of female characters in his postcolonial novels? Or is gender oppression remains statuesque?
3. How are female characterized and portrayed in the novels as they are reflections of their respective society in the given periods?
4. How else would females equally participate in the new nation?

Based on the changes in characterization of each novel, it will be suggested about the writer's outlook on feminism in the given periods.

In describing literary feminism of these novels of different periods of the same author, I shall concentrate on such matters as female characterization and their position in their period rather than on the intention of the author, a far more complex problem. The study reflects the gender issue of Nigeria in particular and most of Africans in general.

1.3 Objective of the Study

As it is tried to indicate in the statement of the problem, the main objective of this study is to investigate and analyze three novels of Chinua Achebe according to Marxist feminist literary criticism. Based

upon the analysis, the study will show developments or trends of these novels in terms of the feminist ideology of the writer in different periods and different social environment of the society. An effort will be made to investigate how women characters are treated in these novels as they are the reflection of the culture they live in.

Unlike gender of the author (must be a female to talk about feminism), this works will be evaluated from feminist perspective in the given period and society. To achieve this general objective, the analysis intended to:

- Investigate females' position in political power, social roles and cultural roles as depicted in the novels.
- Identify if there is any change or advancement of females' social roles in the selected novels as these literary works are representatives of the given society.
- Magnify and show the extent of females roles and their portrayals in their times.
- Uncover the attitude of male characters towards feminist ideology and female characters.
- Show gender inequalities in power, acceptance and roles in that particular culture and time in the given novels. And these clues can lead to show the development of the writer's feminist ideology through time if there is a clear change in perspective.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Feminist criticism is a fast growing movement after the question is raised repeatedly in the twentieth century novels. It becomes every body's issue in every part of social activity. As it is mentioned above, the term feminist criticism, is the movement to examine the ways in which literature as a result of cultural productions reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women. Cheryl. Et.al says:

It is evident that a tradition of feminist critique exists. With a great accessibility to education, for women, with the greater rise of feminism in the twentieth century, such criticism has become more widely represented, more universally known (4).

Since feminism is a universal issue existing everywhere in every society of the world, it is suitable to tackle or minimize gender bias by modern institutional and cultural means. This research traces to examine how the author magnified the role of female characters to show feminist ideology in his novels. As a result of this, other researchers can make further studies on similar issues. As the research tries to identify how women are marginalized, discriminated, and characterized as weak in a given culture, the research is hoped to contribute its own share to the general knowledge of feminist literary criticism and to other related studies.

By analyzing the three novels of Achebe, it can be suggested a useful ideas concerning how to improve the wrong perception about women in the whole society. With the assumption of all these general advantages of the study, it is expected to have the following specific significances:

- By critically analyzing the five novels, it can open a door for other researchers to know how a particular group of society or ethnic group traditionally treats women.
- Moreover, the study can help to understand the realities of the periods where the novels set and relate the development of the society on gender related issues. This can help also help to understand the condition of African women in particular and the world in general in their respective society.
- The study also can contribute its own share to inform scholars about the perception of traditional society on the role of women in the over all activities of their social group and the society in general.

- It has also a great advantage to enable other concerned bodies to understand the real situation of women's roles from these literary works and take measure for its improvement.
- Additionally, it is vital to show the role of writers to reflect their societal problems.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The focus of this study is on critical analysis of the selected three postcolonial novels. It does not include other colonial works of the author. In addition to this, the study will focus only on gender issue rather than the main theme of the novels. Themes may help to feminist literary criticism in evaluating the roles of female characters; however, the study doesn't discuss theme as major issue.

Female characters will be evaluated and interpreted according to their roles in the socio-economic context of the society using Marxist feminist literary criticism. But the study doesn't include the analysis of Psychoanalytic feminism. But, characterization as major independent issue will not be discussed in this study.

The aim of the research is not also to investigate the general cultural outlook of the societies of the country in general and the texts in particular: Yet, women characters may be analyzed as they are victims of their respective culture.

1.6 Limitation of the Study

As any research is not complete by itself in all aspects, this study may also face some limitations. The expected limitation of this study is interview with the author. It could be better to help the study with

interview to make it more effective; but due to some constraints, interview will not be made.

Unless the study is focused on the linguistic items given in the listed novels, it is difficult to base on the writers intention and other factors. Needless to say, some technical tribal words and expressions may be difficult to interpret and this may affect the analysis negatively.

1.7 Methods of the Study

Since the study is unable to use instruments like interview and questionnaire, it is limited to thorough textual analysis of the selected novels. It uses descriptive analysis to achieve its objective. Texts will be taken from all three novels for interpretation and for proving feminist ideology of the writer in that particular novel and time as well.

Feminism continues to flourish in its many forms such as psychoanalytic, Black, Lesbian, Marxist feminism and others. It is difficult to handle all these Varieties of feminist literary Criticism. But, Marxist-feminist criticism will be used in line with this research because of some reasons. In line with this Eagleton (1983), Says

Literature is a historical phenomenon. ...Socialist and feminist critics are quite at one with them on this it is just that they wish to point out that such deepening and enriching entails the transformation of a society divided by class and gender. They would like the liberal humanist to draw the full implication of his/her position. (209-211).

The research looks on feminist trends in the consecutive novels focusing on the female characters. Their historical conditions of the period they are written will be the base of the analysis. Representation of women in politics, economy and social involvements will be analyzed to prove the

gender ideology of the novels, the country (Nigeria) in particular and the continent in general. In order to clearly show all these images, Marxist-feminist criticism is important. This is because Marxist literary criticism often shares with feminist criticism, a desire to challenge the power structures in contemporary society and show the issue of marginalized gender. It can also show the cultural influence in the novels that makes one of the discourses that determine a text's historical meaning in relation to gender. Therefore, Marxist-feminist criticism will be used as a technique for the analysis of the texts.

Based on the definition of Marxist- feminist literary criticism, the selected novels will be analyzed and evaluated using the descriptive methods in relation to feminist literary criticism. On the sections of the review of related literature, and background of the study, definition of some important terms will be given.

The research contains four chapters. Chapter one is introduction which contains: background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, limitation of the study and methods of the study. The second chapter includes definition of important terms and attempt to review the nature and development of feminist literary criticism. The next chapter is Analysis of the quoted texts or linguistic items according to Marxist-feminist literary criticism. This covers quoting and interpreting of the three novels. The last chapter is summary and conclusion based on the analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Literature

2.1 Defining Feminism and Feminist Literary Criticism

The rise of feminism is undeniably one of the major events in the development of literary criticism of this century. Feminist approaches have pushed forward both the theory of literary criticisms and the understanding of individual works of literature. Hagan (2000) says:

... feminism is probably the most important influence on social and political literary study in the last half century. Feminist political activism, feminist literature, feminist theories and analyses, have radically altered the way in which many of us think about society and about literature. (167).

It is believed that feminism as a movement increases awareness in all aspects of life. According to Hagan, due to feminist works, the questions we ask about literature, the literary works we read, are very different today from what they were fifty years ago. Therefore, it seems crucial to include feminism in the social and political philosophy.

Feminism, however, exists in a rich diversity of forms, reflecting a complex historical development. This has been especially important as feminists try more and more to examine the experience of women from all races and classes and cultures, including, for example, black, Hispanic, Asian, Lesbian, handicapped, elderly and Third World Women Guerin, (1992:183). Kolodny as quoted in Guerin, (1992:183) describes: "... this richness as a "playful pluralism," for it exhibits liberal tolerance, interdisciplinary links, and an insistence on connecting art to the diversities of life."

Waugh (1989:143) also says concerning the diversity of feminism as:

Perhaps more than any other mode of criticism, feminist theory has cut across and drawn on multiple and contradictory traditions while presenting what is arguably one of the most fundamental challenges to previous critical orthodoxies in its revaluation of subjectivity and the category of 'experience'.

Here, it shows feminism's plural nature with many different varieties of theories. According to Michael, although many different types of feminisms are collected under the generalized heading of feminism, they can be divided loosely into broad trends with distinct philosophical approaches:

- 1) Feminisms that primarily aim for women to achieve equal status with men within existing social structures; and
- 2) Feminisms that reject the possibility of women's achieving total emancipation under existing social structures and, therefore, seek to dismantle and restructure the social system.

Though Michael tries to narrow the plural form of feminism into the above two types of feminisms, they don't contradict each other; rather they both try to expose and uncover the traditional and patriarchal oppression of women.

They differ in their specific aims and strategies to show this gender hierarchy. Hogan (2000:170) says:

Virtually all feminists agree that women should not be underpaid relative to men, and thus they support equal pay for equal work.... Similarly, feminists universally or nearly universally oppose preferential hiring or promotion for men based on sex. They also oppose the unequal division of housework between men and women, at least when the spouses work the same amount of time outside of the home.

Despite the difference in specific aims and implementation strategies to avoid the inequalities, all feminists support affirmative action programs. The similarity in affirmative action to discrimination against women is a common point for all feminists.

Feminist literary theory is a complex, dynamic area of study that draws from a wide range of critical theories. Although feminist literary theory is often described simply as the use of feminist principles and techniques to analyze the textual constructions of gendered meaning, "feminists' definitions of gender and of feminism have undergone a number of significant alterations since the early 1970s." Based on this already existed assumption and applying in a new ways, feminist literary theory has been increasing in a diversified directions or branches. Despite this diversify; most feminist literary theorists share several assumptions. The first and most important issue is that they generally agree on hierarchal ordered male-female gender relations impact all aspect of human social existence.

Another writer, Sheneka, also argues:

Feminist Literary criticism is the most interesting and most difficult of all definitions. Feminist Literary criticism analyzes another author's work but with a feminist slant.... In every author's 'works', the female characters have strong presence... whether good or bad. Feminist literary criticism examines the author's female characters and assesses their role within the author's work. (<http://hubcap.clemson.edu/~spark/f/c/fliterit.html>).

It is better to define feminism, or feminist literary criticism according to its objective, which is clearly put in the above source. Writers, like Patrick, also support the above definition. He says that feminist literary criticism is the term for criticizing literary works through the examination of female point of view, concerns, and values. According to him, feminist

literary criticism encompasses not only female literary works but also male literary works, leaving men to be held accountable for their portrayal of women as well as men in their literary works.

Others define feminism as a collection of social theories, political movements, and moral philosophies largely motivated by or concerned with the liberation of women from subordination to men. According to the free Encyclopedia, feminism is a belief in the social, political and economic equalities of sexes. It further defines:

A movement organized around the conviction that biological sex should not be the pre-determined factor shaping a person's social identity or socio-political or economic rights. A large portion of feminists are especially concerned with what they perceive to be the social, political and economic inequalities between the sexes which favors men at women's expense. (<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/jlyach/Terms/feminism.html>).

Feminism, unlike on basis of only women critics struggle, refutes or rejects sexist oppression politically, socially, privately and otherwise. Therefore, most forms of feminist literary criticism share a fundamental assumption that is uncovering the historical and cultural subjugation of women. Unlike Showalter's 'Gynocritics-concerns itself with works by women only, feminism can be treated as a movement both by male and female works against the inequalities. In addition, this can be reassured in both sexes' writings.

The question how are women portrayed in works of art and literature brings different feminists into a common point. It can be broadly defined: "feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women" Tyson (1999:83).

Guerin, (1992) summarizes feminism as:

... feminism is concerned with difference and marginalization of women. Feminists believe that our culture is a patriarchal culture, that is, one organized in favor of the interest of men. Feminist literary critics try to explain how what they term engendered power imbalances in a given culture are reflected, supported, or challenged by literary texts. (182).

Feminist literary criticism, according to him, is a political manifestation against the absence of women in socially meaningful spaces and social hierarchies. Therefore, since most feminist social movements promote women's rights, interests and issues, feminist literary criticism, then, is a specific kind of political discourse. It is a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism. Thus, Feminist Literary Criticism is the term for criticizing literary works through the examination of female points of view, concerns, and values regardless of the sex of the critique.

A brief and general working definition of feminism, without erasing the difference between the various feminisms it encompasses, is summarized by Michael as follows:

... it is a political and critical stance that focuses on the sexual and gender biases inherent to society and its cultural products and on the social construction of gendered beings and of sexuality. It aims to expose the ways in which Western male-centered culture works in order to retain its power, to subvert those means and challenge the very structure of society, and ultimately to offer blueprints for a restructured and new society. (1996:23).

This implies that feminism is a movement that rejects the possibility of women's achieving total emancipation under existing social structure and therefore seeks to dismantle and restructure the social system. Its primary aim is to achieve women's equal status with men within the

existing social structures. In general, feminism is grounded on a struggle to expose and counter the traditional oppression of women.

2.2 Multicultural Feminism

As it is mentioned above, feminism exists in a rich diversity of forms, reflecting a complex historical development. According Guerin (1992:83), this diversity has been especially important as feminists try more and more to examine the experiences of women from all races and classes and cultures. Though all are concerned with analyzing gender inequality and promotion of women's rights, interests and issues, there are many more feminist issues treated differently. All are concerned with women, but beyond that they may not have much in common. To mention some of the subtypes of feminism: Marxist-feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, Liberal feminism, socialist feminism, Radical feminism, Minority feminism (Black and Lesbian feminism) and French feminism are the major ones. In addition to these, there are many other subtypes of feminism. Feminism has plural nature. The difference among them lies in their philosophical applications, specific aims and strategies for achieving those aims. Michael, (1996) inter-marries the varieties as follows:

Feminism in all its variants is an active political stance; it critiques the dominant male-centered culture from a particular position and view point which takes into consideration the complex of power relations-particularly gender/sex relation-between people, institutions, ideologies, languages, and other systems that function within culture at large and aims in various ways (depending on the type of feminism) to end women's oppression. (2).

Feminism is thus inherently an activist oppositional politics that seeks specific social and cultural changes within the context of everyday material existence. Several subtypes of feminist ideology have developed over the years and all these varieties as it is suggested above are specific

political oppositions whose aims are ultimately revolutionary-to eradicate women's oppression.

Many feminists draw on elements of psychoanalytic and Marxist theory as well as other critical theories because they find them useful in examining issues relevant to women's experience. According Tyson (1999:93), Psychoanalysis can be used to help us understand the psychological effects of patriarchal ideology as well as how and why women and men internalize it. Marxism can be used to help us understand how economic forces have been manipulated by patriarchal law and custom to keep women economically, politically and socially oppressed as an under class.

As the theoretical background of feminism is concerned, it is too difficult to define and assess the various overlapping classifications of feminism. Yet, Marxist-feminism and psychoanalytic-feminism are selected for theoretical discussion. Then, Marxist feminist criticism is particularly selected for analysis of the selected works. This hybrid of sorts is chosen because it is believed to be important for the purpose and ways of analysis in the given works.

Thus, Marxist-feminist literary criticism is the backbone of the analysis of this research as it is believed to give the material world in which women are daily oppressed as women and situate their analyses of women's oppression with specific political, cultural, historical, economic and ideological contexts.

2.2.1 Marxist Feminism

Marxist literary criticism often shares with feminist criticism a desire to challenge the power structures in contemporary society. For feminist, the

issue is a marginalized gender; for Marxists, the issue is not gender but economic power, leading to political power. Guerin, (1992) describes as:

Marxist feminist criticism focuses on the relation of reading to social realities, refusing to accept the separation of art from life. Certainly, the establishment of women's studies programs, book stores, libraries, political action committees, film boards, and community groups attests to the crucial connection between theory and reality offered by feminism.(194).

Marxist feminism emphasizes on the existed cultural setting and criticizes the prevailing ideologies of our culture. It further suggests that men must understand the relationship of men and women as one of unequal power, specifically one of traditional subjugation and oppression of women. Wilfred L. also points out quoting Karl Marx and Friedrich Engel's that Marxist feminists attack the revealing capitalistic system of the West, which they view as sexually as well as economically exploitative. Marxist feminists thus combine study of class with that of gender. According to Guerin, personal identity is not seen as separate from cultural identity. As they emphasize historical and economic contexts of literary discourse, they often direct attention toward the conditions of production of literary texts.

Wallace (1997), tries to relate or look materialist feminism as an explicit or implicit engagement with Marxism, with a view to analysis of the social structures. A materialist feminist critique according to him, examines the ways in which ideologies of history, class, race and the economic are implicated-individually or collectively in the construction of gender identity and subjectivity. He tries to put this as follows:

Materialist feminists demonstrate the relation between capitalism and patriarchal configurations of oppression, while problematizing the orthodox Marxist notion that class analysis alone is capable of adequately addressing the interest of women. (247).

Marxist feminists also began to critically reexamine both Marxist and Freudian texts in an attempt to articulate questions concerning familial configurations. Such critique of the psychic became tools to examine the social representations.

Another writer Mitchell, as quoted in Wallace (1997) argues:

Mitchell calls for an analysis of all structures influencing women's subordination. She emphasizes both the economic and psychological realities of women's participation in the labor force-that is, women as a reserve army of labor, the kinds of work for which women do and do not receive payment, and the historical changes in what has been considered "women's work." (248).

The other subtype of feminism, overlapping with Marxist-feminism, is socialist feminism. Unlike Radical feminists, which call for the destruction of the entire male sex, socialist feminists do believe that men can coexist with women in this post-capitalist vision of the future. This is because socialist suspects the capitalist system to be the root cause of female oppression, rather than males themselves. Socialists argue that a population can be nurtured into a state of equality, and as such, would have no need to separate men from women. "With the abolition of the class structure, a socialist may argue, comes the erosion of male domination within the society." ([http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminist theory](http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminist_theory)).

Warhol (1991) states that Socialist feminist criticism has yet found a place with in andocentric literary criticism, which wishes to embrace feminism through "a legitimate public alliance". Therefore, Socialist

feminism or Marxist feminism interests in the emancipation of women as individuals in revolutionary politics.

He further argues that when women are released from profound social and economic oppression into greater autonomy and potential political choice, gender as well as class oppression can be vanished.

Here, the role of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored. Power division in the literary texts, for example, are linked with increasing explicitness to differences in economic function. Literature is a form of struggle and a form of power. And literary texts tell us more about the intersection of class and gender.

When we see the relationship between Marxism and feminism, we get the term "inequality". If feminism can be described as a concern with gender inequality, Marxism is similarly concerned with class and economic inequality. As a struggle against inequality and oppression, Marxism would appear to be the naturally of feminism. Wallace (1997) says concerning the relationship of feminism and Marxism as:

Both Marxism and feminism are then both struggles against oppression and both entail theories of oppression. It is often on the level of theory that Marxism seems most useful to feminism. For, as theory, Marxism constitutes an elaborate model for explaining oppression synchronically and diachronically how power works and how it changes. (19).

Here, Marxism can treat gender inequality in its paradigm, seeing as a secondary to class oppression and class conflict. Wallace further reveals that along with the withering away of the state, once private ownership of the means of production is abolished, male and female will be equally free.

On the other hand, some feminists like Ehrlich express their doubt concerning the ultimate solution of Marxism to gender inequality. She

points to the continual oppression of women in Marxist states to illustrate that conventional overnight revolutionary transformation of the modes of production does little to change sexist ideology. She further asks as quoted in Donovan, 1985:88):

Why are there so few women in decision-making positions in socialist states? Who does the house work? Why are lesbianism and male homosexuality suppressed? Are children in socialist countries socialized according to sex role stereotypes? Are women equally represented in all occupations? Are their incomes equal to men's? ...In sum, if patriarchy still exists in socialist countries, why?

This is to emphasize that there must be conscious rising in addition to the mode of production. "It is people who will have to decide to get ride of the state." According to her, a feminist restructuring of work requires creating a situation in which thinking and doing, planning and routine work, are parts of the work each of them does: it requires creating a work situation in which can both develop themselves and transform the external world. This is the classic Marxist concept which avoids alienated labor. In Marxist terms Hartsock sees the material basis of women's existence as constituent of women's consciousness. While women also work for wages, their primary institutionalized activities are housework (Production of use-values) and child rearing. Hartsock's "feminist standpoint" is rooted in the labor experience and practice of traditional women.

Marxist feminist theory basically states that the class struggle is the feminist struggle. Marxism offers both a way of finding historical evidence of women's oppression and can describe how writers consciously or unconsciously transpose that evidence into their texts. "The repression or misrepresentation of women can be methodically exposed and analyzed when you believe, as Marxism does, that discourse

is a form of power (<http://seneca.vab.es/scott/marxist/scott.2.htm>). Therefore, if we try to find something that would link Marxism with feminism, according to Scott, both are theories about the power of the "real" world and its impact on literary imagination.

Marxist feminists, like other Marxist critics, are often attacked for undervaluing or misunderstanding the nature of quality in art Guerin (1992:194). For Marxist feminists, literary value is not a transcendent property, but something conditioned by social beliefs and needs.

2.2.2 Psychoanalytic Feminism

One of the major subtypes of feminism is psychoanalytic feminism. It is a social movement based on the work of Sigmund Freud and his psychoanalytic theories. Its basic point is gender is not biological but is based on the psychosexual development of the individual. Psychoanalytical feminists believe that gender inequality comes from early childhood experiences, which lead men to believe themselves to be masculine, and women to believe themselves feminine. It is further maintained as:

... gender leads to a social system that is dominated by males, which in turn influences the individual psycho-sexual development. As solution it was suggested to avoid the gender-specific structurization of the society by male-female co-education. (<http://www.answers.com/topic/psychoanalytic-feminims>)

Freud further argues that women's social position and power- lessens relative to men had little to do with female biology and much to do with the social construction of femininity. Another comment by Talitha says:

Psychoanalytic and gender feminists believe "women's way of acting is rooted deep in women's psyche." For the psychoanalytic feminists, the ideal "human person is a blend of positive feminine and positive masculine traits."(http://darking Wing uoregon.edu /- munno/ /oregon Courses/ REL 408 W03/REL 408 Tong summaries/Talitha-Tong-htm)

According to Talitha, Psychoanalytic feminism places focus on psychosexual development, a form of Psychoanalytic feminism, with an emphasis on object relations (i.e. the child's bond with the mother's breast). Elian Showalter also supports this criticism in her "Feminist criticism in the Wilderness" as "In psychoanalytic terms, 'lack' has traditionally been associated with the feminine, although lac(k)anian critics can now make their statements linguistically." Lodge, (1988:342). Freud tentatively identified the roles women and men have to play in the drama of the family. And even more important, his description of the process through which the infant evolves into the socially prescribed roles of adulthood, remain a base upon which an important branch of contemporary feminist theory is built. Freud develops his psychosexual development as follows:

The infant begins life in the "Pre-genital phase," which is divided into an oral stage where "the sexual aim consists in the incorporation of the object into one's own body" and an "anal-sadistic" stage. This stage, because of its sadistic nature, seems to be a quintessentially masculine phase.(Donovan, 1992:92).

Freud associates the terms sadism and Masochism to represent masculine and feminine behavior respectively. He further suggests that there is no pure masculinity or femininity in any person. "Every individual person shows a mixture of his/her own biological sex characteristics with the biological traits of the other sex and a union of activity and passivity" (Ibid: 92). According to him, genital phase, which is a period of "object selection," comes. This stage divides itself in to three

stages. The first occurs while the child is between three and five years old; the second is a latency period that lasts until the third phase; which is puberty. This last stage of the second phase has an important role in the later social interaction of the child. As it is quoted in Donovan, Freud argues as follows:

... the psychic forces develop which later act as inhibitions on the sexual life, and narrow its direction like dams. These psychic forces are loathing, shame, and moral and esthetic ideal demands. It is a process of repression and of "sublimation". (Donovan, 1992:93).

As a continuation of this stage, he articulates his first concrete ideas on female psychosexual development. "The transformations of puberty" is the third central notion that until puberty boys and girls are very much alike but that at puberty "the sharp differentiation of the male and female character originates".

2.3 Postcolonial Condition and Feminism

Literally, Post colonialism refers to the period following the decline of colonialism. In other words, it is the period after the end or lessening European empires' domination. Although the term post-colonialism generally refers to the period after colonialism, the distinction is not always made. Post-colonialism refers to "a collection of theoretical and critical strategies used to examine the culture, literature, politics, history, and so fourth of former colonies of the European empires."

Postcolonial theory deals with the reading and writing of literature written in previously colonized countries, or literature written in colonizing countries, which deals with colonization or colonized peoples. It focuses particularly on:

1. The way in which literature by the colonizing culture distorts the experience and realities, and inscribes the inferiority, of the colonized people
2. Literature by colonized peoples which attempts to articulate their identity and reclaim their past in the face of that past's inevitable otherness.

The second point focuses, on some of the complexities of the postcolonial situation, in terms of the writing and reading situation of the colonized people. It is built in large part around the concept of otherness. "Otherness includes doubleness, both identity and difference so that every other, every different than and excluded by is dialectically created and includes the values and meaning of the colonizing culture"

With the passing of time since independence, authors have begun to turn their eyes to the more harsh realities of the present and by doing so, attempted to discuss a dialogue about the issue of women in African society. Among the many challenges facing postcolonial writers, one is the attempt to uncover gender inequalities in the traditional society.

Salah in his article 'women's identity and the postcolonial state in *'Year of the Elephant'* argues as:

One of the main concerns of postcolonial theory is to lay bare the dehumanizing and economically devastating consequences of colonialism on indigenous populations and to restore voice to the natives who had been silenced and exploited under colonial rule. (Research in African Literature, Volume 34, No.3 Fall 2003:66)

In this context, the postcolonial experience has been continuing to be unfair to women as the colonial policies were not the same for men and women. In modern times, "Western ideology introduced by colonialism, has in a paradoxical manner grossly affected the female position in Africa

today" Chukukere, (1995:5). This is to mean that the colonial ideology and legacy has had an influence in the postcolonial era. Colonialists were perceiving women as incapable of their political contributions, believing that political power and political leadership is a man's exclusive domain.

Vijoen mentions three usages of the idea of postcolonialism that are pertinent to his discussion, i.e., postcolonialism as space, postcolonialism as time or a time frame, and postcolonialism as an ideology (political stand). According to him, these three components of the meaning of postcolonialism make up a significant part of the postcolonial world into which African women's movements are given meaning lived out and experienced. He further explains:

African women have been part of the colony (time frame/spatial). African women have also been involved in resistance to colonization from the time it began, using various means, tools and strategies (ideological/spatial). At the third level, African women also experience postcolonial ideas in which certain thought patterns place them in specific locations in the global divide, both physical and intellectual (spatial ideological).
(<http://www.arts.wva.edu.au/Motspluriels/Mp,500a.html>)

These three meanings are therefore inter-related and interwoven in the lives of African women. Most postcolonial feminists argue that oppressions relating to the colonial experience, particularly racial, classes, and ethnic oppressions, have marginalized women in postcolonial societies. Thus, feminists today struggle to fight gender oppression within their own cultural models of society rather than through those imposed by the Western colonizers.

Feminism and postcolonial discourses both seek to reinstate the marginalized in the face of the dominant and early feminist theory, like early nationalist postcolonialism sought to invert the structures of

domination. Both discourses are oriented towards the future. Both are the projects towards revolutionary disruption in society. Encyclopedia of Feminist Literary Theory (1997) says concerning the intersection of postcolonialism and feminist literary criticism as follows:

Feminist literary critics concerned with postcolonialism focus on a variety of issues, such as the history and structures of colonialism evident in literature, and the roles of female characters and women writers play in relation to colonization. (315).

According to the above Encyclopedia, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, postcolonialism introduced several important revisions to feminist criticism. One postcolonial model of criticism argues that the dynamics of colonization-the domination of one culture by another-can also be found in other relationships. This domination of culture of the Western make African women powerless exploited and subordinated in postcolonial period.

In addition to critiquing literary and cultural colonialism, feminist literary critics use postcolonialism to study the works of "colonized" writers, the writing produced within a particular region during and after its colonization.

2.4 Traditional Gender Roles in Africa

As it is mentioned in the statement of the study, negative gender representations have been used dominantly to justify such inequalities. These beliefs are diversified and deep-rooted in the traditional society which excludes women from equal chance to social, political and cultural activities and advantages. Tyson (1999) further argues as:

The belief that men are superior to women has been used, feminists have observed, to justify and maintain the male monopoly of positions of economic, political, and social power, in other words, to keep women powerless by denying them the educational and occupational means of acquiring economic, political, and social power. (86).

According to Tyson, that is, the inferior position long occupied by women in patriarchal society has been culturally, not biologically, produced. As a result of this patriarchy (sexism), which means women are innately inferior to men, they are oppressed by traditional gender roles. It is as a result of this job classification, based on sex that all feminists' ultimate goal to change the world by promoting gender equality. This is because gender issue play a part in every aspect of human production and experience, including the production and experience of literature, whether we are consciously aware of these issues or not (Ibid:87).

Traditional gender roles are not exceptions in Africa; indeed, these beliefs are deep-rooted and habituated in the social structures and in our languages. In the traditional fairy tales, proverbs and other oral literatures in general, it is possible to read patriarchal ideology-sexist expressions that express incompetence of women in social, political and cultural activities.

The traditional society of Africa was generally regarded as 'a man's world'. Yet, scholars believe that the African women, in her tribal past had, in addition to her revered roles of wife and mother, well-defined social and political functions within the society.

The role of African women in the traditional society is mainly confined around the family. These include: her responsibilities as mother, wife and home administrator. Chukukere (1995) argues as:

This childbearing function encourages early marriages, and negotiations in connection with them are often handled by the extended family. A woman's importance and stability in her husband's home are judged by the degree of her fertility, especially her ability to bear Sons. If she is childless, she is considered a failure in her primary duty and often suffers considerably as a result. (2).

Here, it is important to understand that her roles are as a wife and home administrator. Her major tasks are cooking, feeding the family members and keeping the home and its surrounding tidy. Following their mothers' footsteps, daughters continue to socialize according to the cultural norms of their respective societies and role expectations. This trend is thus transmitted from generation to generation in the same manner.

Concerning their economic participation, the traditional African women contribute to their families' budget. In agriculture, for example, they weed and tend the crops, often growing vegetables and fruits. "In some societies, women have played dominant roles in peasant economies, occasionally bearing sole responsibility for cultivation and disposal of crops while others hold both land and cattle in their own right" (Ibid:2)

In politics, women also have no significant place. According to Chukukere, the colonial Officers regrettably failed to perceive the political contributions of women, believing that politics is a man's exclusive domain. Consequently, warrant chiefs—symbols of the destructive elements of indirect rule—were created and women particularly suffered under their arbitrary jurisdiction (Ibid:4)

Novelists like Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emechi who treat women as subjugated within the traditional African society, specifically challenge the myth of the unchanging and naive rural women who accept without

question, the social norms of their male-oriented society. While these writers (female writers) accept the significance of wifhood and motherhood, they also expose the dilemma in the lives of their heroines whose difficulties are tensioned between personal profession aspirations and endorsed traditional social norms. This is the reflection of the patriarchal society of Africa, which is represented by the protagonists and their limitations. Chukukere says in relation to this:

On the contemporary scene, the dilemma in the life of the heroine in fiction is, much like her traditional counterparts, compounded by her experiences in marriage. Through this institution, it is shown that her aspirations may not always correspond with those of some of her rural counterparts who are faced to sanction polygamy as a socio-economic necessity. (1995:11-12).

According to tradition, the already established norm of the African society, women are raised to believe that their future and stability depend on the success of their marriages and on the protection of their husbands. Their life is materialized in the institution of marriage.

It is the issue of African women and their traditional roles in the traditional African society that is reflected in many African women and men's writings. There are many writers of both sexes who advocate female liberation from various social injustices. Through the nature of their protests, they are considered to have aligned themselves to the mainstream of the feminist movement.

2.5 African Male Writers and Representation of Women

The unsatisfactory appreciation of the significance of women in life has spilled into imaginative literature. Through their own points of view, the majority of male writers often presented their cultural reality as

traditionally deep-rooted habits. Chukukere (1995) supports male writers, as they are part of the struggle to bring equality as follows:

... before examining in detail the content and technique of the female response, an overview of male imaging of women in fiction is necessary, especially since the male writer's perspective has, to a large extent, influenced the female writer's reaction. Some male writers have created female protagonists whose characters and mannerisms are treated with precision and authenticity of detail. (7).

On the other hand, she claims on other writers who departed from this to project certain homogeneity attributable to some basic similarity in men's overall conception of women. In the second group of writers, the role of female characters is made marginal to the plot of the stories while only a few emerge as powerful and credible protagonists.

According to Chukukere, the ideal female created by some male writers in fiction on the other hand, often acts within the framework of traditional roles as wife and mother. So strong are social values that the respect and love, which a woman earns, is relative to the degree of her adaptation to these roles. This can be proved in some of the major male writers' works. Achebe's Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* Slaughters a goat for one of his wives who has had three Sons in a row, Elechi's Madume in *The Concubine* is demoralized by his wife's inability to produce a male heir. "On the other hand, a barren woman is considered a social failure and invites the wrath of her family and society." The extent to which the female internalizes this belief

victim is symbolized through Agom's dilemma in *High life for Lizards* (Ibid). She further illustrates:

The consequence of a woman's unorthodox behavior is shown as Okonkwo in Things Fall Apart heavily beats Anasi, his wife, "for failing to provide his meal" (P.26) and Ekwueme in the concubine attempts to physically discipline A hurole Legimate as this viewpoint is, it fails to reflect much of the complex and analytical perspectives of the reality of her situation. (Chukukere (1995:7).

Here, it shows that African women are given meaning in terms of servant of their husband in the oppressive traditions of their respected culture. Through the writers (male writers) positive vision of women, they raise our awareness of the need for social justice and equal sexual participation in matters that affect humanity. They contribute a lot by giving the heroines a better and positive role in their fiction. For example, Ramatovlaye and Penda in *Gods Bits of Wood*, Seline in *A Wreath for Udomo*, Wariinga in *Devil on the Cross* and Mma-Tau in *Time of the Butcherbird* remain some of the most dynamic and politically conscious heroines in the African novels (Ibid:113).

On the other had, some other male writers expose the image of women in their traditional society by characterize as weak, dependent and irrational. They play down the social significance of women in their writing or traditionally accepted virtues that confine women within family hood. This picture clearly shows the patriarchal traditional society of their respected countries.

Unlike the criticism of some female writers against male writers claiming as they are unable to oppose marginalization, they have been played their roles in unveiling and exposing the situation.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

3.1 A Marxist Feminist Criticism of Three Achebe's Postcolonial Novels

In this third section of the study, it attempts to make a thorough analysis and interpretation of feminism in the selected novels with the help of Marxist feminist criticism. The novels included in the study are: *No longer at Ease* (1960), *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987)

The study intends to investigate female's roles and positions in the social, cultural and political conditions as depicted in the novels. It also examines if there is any change of roles or advancements reflected in the writer's works, as they are reflections of their society in the given periods. Furthermore, it tries to relate the attitude of male and female major characters towards each other and to the issue of feminism.

In handling these interpretations, it gives much focus to uncover the female characters' social roles and power hierarchies according to the features of Marxist feminist criticism. This is because Marxist feminism as a strategy can help to show feminist trends of the author in the consecutive novels of the postcolonial period. Thus, the analysis will be categorized according to the female characters' roles and responsibilities in the given novels and contexts of the time.

3.1.1 Female character as passive and victim of the social class in *No Longer At Ease*

No Longer At Ease (1961) is written in the transitional period of Nigeria to get its independence. It was a period of transition from colonialism to postcolonial identity. And it is a quest for national leadership and national identity, which is represented by an educated generation Obi Okonkwo. With *No Longer at Ease*, the setting moves from rural to urban Lagos, a very sophisticated town of the time. The novel explores the challenges to democracy, corruption, gender relation in the post-colonial political and economic uneasiness in Nigeria.

Achebe starts his visionary feminist ideology in *No Longer At Ease* with his minor character of Joseph's girlfriend Joy. He tries to give some qualities (positive qualities) towards her but makes her simple-minded. This is clearly expressed in the dialogue between Obi Okonkwo, the major character and Joseph as:

"She was a nice girl but sometimes very foolish. Sometimes, though, I wish we hadn't broken up. She was simply made about me; and she was a virgin when I met her, which is very rare here." (15).

This implies that she is characterized as "nice" in terms of her virginity. She is also made for the sake of her boyfriend unlike the reverse. This shows that her destiny is with the man and with her virginity. This is her traditional role to stay as valuable and significant in her society. In addition to this, she is as a means of empowerment for her husband being honest and loyal of her virginity and "foolish" out of this situation.

We see Achebe opposes polygamous trend, as it is no more significant in the postcolonial period in his nation. This is quite different from his previous works. Unlike the world in *Things Fall Apart* in which patriarchy and polygamy intrudes oppressively into every sphere of existence, the

world in *No Longer At Ease* avoids polygamy. Achebe tells us this through his old character Obi Okonkwo's father who knows perfectly the two world's conditions. Obi Okonkwo's father says:

The men were great in their day. Today greatness has changed its tune. Titles are no longer great, neither are barns or large numbers of wives and children. Greatness is now in the things of the white man. And so we too have changed our tune. We are the first in all the nine villages to send our son to the white man's land. (54).

This is to say that power and 'greatness' is now through education. It is no more through the criteria of the Okonkwo's society-with many wives and children. This novel mirrors the social condition of the two periods is different and his character (Obi Okonkwo's father) also changes his perception of power and feminist ideology accordingly.

In works set in the postcolonial world, women are characterized as "nurses or teachers" with a significant role in their society. These works confirm clear development. In *No Longer At Ease*, following the minor character mentioned before, there is a radical change in the style of female portraiture. Clara (Obi's girlfriend and fiancé) is educated, economically or financially independent woman. She is a nurse by profession in her overseas education. And now she is financially independent.

On the other hand, Achebe gives her incomplete qualities. He fails to give her complete and fully strong characters. Perhaps, this may be the influence of female characters of his previous novels. She is not morally powerful. She is the victim of the traditional belief of her society. Her overseas education couldn't eliminate this deep-rooted perception and feels inferior in her own personality. She believes that she is not the

appropriate mate of Obi Okonkwo. This is not because he is more educated than her but of the cultural impositions. As the relationship between Clara and Obi strengthened, he wants to marry her. However de-motivated by the name given to her family and affected her too much. She is mentally unstable and says, "I can't marry you," suddenly as Obi tried to kiss her under the tall mango tree at the edge of the swimming-pool, and exploded into tears." (70).

As can be inferred from their dialogue, she is not mentally strong to forget and forgive the traditional rebuffs of the society. Though she is educated, she is unaccomplished character. She is presented as a lovely girl who maximizes her pleasure. She is a lover but unable to question why such discriminations are created. She is intellectually emancipated but her education doesn't enable her to question. The novelist particularly recognizes the influence of European education doesn't help her a lot as compare with the male character-Obi. He asks:

"Why can't you marry me? For answer she threw herself at him and began to weep violently on his shoulder.

'What's the matter, Clara? Tell me.'

... 'I am an Osu,' she wept. Silence.

She said, quite firmly, almost gaily a terrible kind of gaiety. One the tears 'Nonsense!' said Obi.

She bitterly feels shameful of this traditionally sanctioned norm of her society. She also fails to reject it and convince Obi (her boy friend). Here is the weakness that makes her simple minded. Obi knows that this is outdated traditions. Perhaps, his Western education helps him to decide and ignore his friends' advice not to marry her. Joseph repeatedly warns Obi to follow the norm of the society rather than to marry an 'Osu'- an outcast girl. However, Obi rejects anybody's request and decided to buy an engagement ring. The narrator says:

It was scandalous that in the middle of the twentieth century a man could be barred from marrying a girl simply because her great-great-great-great-grand father had been dedicated to serve a god, there by setting himself a part and turning his descendants into a forbidden caste to the end of time. Quite-unbelievable. (72).

Achebe is therefore, claiming against the old culture that it was the beginning of patriarchy and gender inequality. He further asserts that this traditional or uncivilized assumption is no longer valid in the new era particularly in the postcolonial time. The social classification of the pervious generation is insignificant at this period. One can be deduced from this is that modernization has been minimizing oppression.

In addition to this, Obi feels pity on the victims of this unscientific believe. It seems to be an attack on the traditional assumptions and on Clara, who fails to oppose openly. Clara is socialized with the cultural norms of her respected society even after she became a nurse. She has little contribution in the struggle against such assumptions. So, she is comparatively weak than her male counterpart (Obi).

It is expected that education could enable her to widen her knowledge and there by enhance her struggle against such believes. But, she is no more mementally powerful and ready to do this. Here, we can even dare to say that Achebe gives her this quality to indicate the awareness of educated females of that time. He keeps describing her in a very particular way; that is as passive. She even accepts the destiny of the women of the period, the alienation of some group of society, as an outcaste.

On the other hand, Obi, as educated young man contradicts with his friends, like Joseph and his beloved parents on the old believe. "And here

was an educated man telling Obi he did not understand." (72) He says, "Not even my mother can stop me," (72) ignoring his friend's suggestions. This cultural conflict between the two generations indicates that the old patriarchal culture has no acceptance by the new educated generation.

Educated generation-personified with Obi Okonkwo, challenges the notion of old culture on marriage as opposed to Joseph's continuous advices. Joseph argues:

'What you are going to do concerns not only yourself but your whole family and future generations. If one finger brings oil it soils the others. In future, when we are all civilized, anybody may marry anybody. But that time has not come. We of this generation are only pioneers' (75).

This dilemma clearly shows the conflict between the new idea and the old custom. Even Joseph is optimistic about the future civilized generation that equality of gender and freedom of choice will be achieved. But, Obi seems to be static in his idea that it is time to overthrow the old thinking and begin a new phase. The president also strongly opposes Obi's decision to marry an "Osu" "I have heard that you are moving around with a girl of doubtful ancestry, and even thinking of marrying her..." (82:83).

Obi gets oppositions from every corner of the society for his modern and wise idea. At the end of the novel Obi reads his hopeful poem about Nigeria. His poem was written in London in 1955. His struggle against traditionalism seems to be very challenging. When he reads the poem, he expresses his Marxist feminist view in his poem as:

*God bless our noble country men
And women every where.
Teach them to walk in unity
To build our nation dear;
Forgetting region, tribe or speech,
But caring always each for each. (103)*

In general, Achebe creates Obi, an educated man who denies traditionalism refusing his mother's threatening warning of death if he marries an outcast or Osu. Here, his mother represents traditionalism and the outcast protagonist Clara represents the modern female of that time. Though Clara is educated, financially independent woman, she is an Osu, an outcast woman.

The novel depicts a desire to come to a new outlook of marriage. We see Obi Okonkwo, the major character stands on women's side opposing harmful and outdated assumption of the traditional society. And he strongly opposes the social order or hierarchal social order. This Marxist feminist view extends to his poem, which is written in England that shows his vision of gender equality in the new independent Nigeria.

3.1.2 Female Character as Rebellious and Socially Responsible in *A Man of the People*

Achebe in *A Man of the People* expresses his political disillusionment in the new independent nation in particular and in the continent in general. He tries to explore the greed-greed for power and abuse of power in Nigeria in the Postcolonial era. *A Man of the people*, which is written in 1966, is a remarkable work of Achebe. The writer expresses his excitement and disappointment of Nigerian's First Republic in his novel.

In addition to this main theme, Achebe seems to be aware of the status of women in the new independent country. Where are African women in the postcolonial world? Where are African Women in Achebe's Postcolonial novels?

In *A Man of the people* (1966), Achebe reflects his feeling about the existing socio-cultural situation of the period. His depiction about the attitude of male towards women is emphasized. There are images of women playing traditional roles such as singers and dancers. It says:

Five or six dancing groups were performing at different points in the compound. The popular 'Ego Women's Party' wore a new uniform of expensive Accra cloth. In spite of the din you could still hear as clear as a bird the high powered voice of their soloist, whom they admiringly nicked named 'Grammar-Phone'. (Achebe, 1966:1).

Here, Achebe depicts women's role as a group or committee that can create or maximize pleasure in their own society. This depiction shows the role of women, in addition to their revered roles of wife and mother, they have well-defined social and political functions within the society. We see them sing the 'Grammar phone' for political agitation. However, the writer expresses his less concern about their dance through his omniscient narrator by revealing "Personally I don't care too much for our women's song." (1) This seems to give insignificant image because it is women's dance that didn't create any impression on the narrator.

The writer directs us how much women are dependant on their husbands irrespective of their husbands' background. As a continuation of his first famous novel (*Things Fall Apart*), which advocates polygamy as an acceptable norm of the traditional society, he includes this social custom in this novel. It says:

And I must say this for my father that he never tolerated any of his wives drawing a line no matter how thin between her own children and those of others. We had only one Mama. The other two wives (at the time there are more now) were called Mother by their children, or so and so's mother by the rest. (32).

In addition to exposing the polygamy in the modern postcolonial era, it shows that the father is authoritative and dictator for his wife. They (wives) are voiceless. As wives, women come in multiple numbers, as actual or Mothers of first class and 'Mothers by their children'. This indicates that to have many wives, particularly for great man, has been part of the traditional society. And it is expected and accepted rule and norm till 1966, after independence.

However, there is a strong resistance to polygamy by the new generation through the homodiegetic narrator-Odilli. He strongly opposes when his father intends to marry his fifth wife. It is presented as follows:

My father and I had our most serious quarrel about eighteen months ago when I told him to his face that he was crazy to be planning to marry his fifth wife. In anger I said he was storing up trouble for others. This was, of course, a most reprehensible remark to make. (35).

This antagonism, between the old and new, educated and traditional generation on gender issue is clearly reflected. Odilli, an educated person, representing the young and new generation is quarrelling with his father who represents the old generation or traditional society. It also implies that the new generation in the postcolonial Africa supports gender equality opposing polygamy- old customs. He further expressed his pity as: "She was clearly a homely, loyal wife prepared for the penalty of her husband's greatness." (41).

We see chief Nanga's wife, a beneficiary of the colonial, utilitarian education, dissatisfied with her husband. She complains repeatedly. This resistance shows the writer gives focus for up grading women's opposition to bring their equality. For example, she reflects her dissatisfaction as: "Any woman who marries as minister,... has married worse than a night- watch man." (41) Mrs Nanga complains to Odilli about her husbands many times, but later on she returned to her traditional role being economically and socially dependent. Consequently, she remains simple, unaccomplished and dependent on her husband.

One of the most heroic women in African Literature is Eunice in Achebe's *A Man of the People*. She is a lawyer. Her fiancé Max is a lawyer too. She together with other professionals found the Common People's Convention that opposes corrupt chief Nanga. When chief Kok's thugs a few inches far from Eunice shoot Max, she takes irreversible measure, which amazes many people:

Eunice had been missed by a few inches when Max had been felled. She stood like a stone figure, I was told, for some minutes more. Then she opened her handbag as if to take out a handkerchief, took out a pistol instead and fired two bullets into chief Koko's chest...and then the policemen seized her and dragged her away .A very strange girl, people said. (160).

A strong woman, who opposes corruption in the independent country, gets strong resistance from corruptors and they killed her finance Max. Here is the decisive decision taken by the loyal woman. She shot Koko once and forever and fighting and instability continues between supporters of both groups across the nation.

Though the prime Minister reappoints the former cabinet, with Mrs Koko as Minister of women's Affairs, the government falls and the army takes

over. The army declares Max as the hero and martyr of the revolution. Eunice released from Jail. Thus, the respect ion goes to Eunice because she is the one who catalyses the reaction. Her role in over throw of the corrupter political regime is great because she continues on her stand and her fiancée stand to corruption. Therefore, she is characterized as a free woman with not only a sense of individual responsibility but also a social figure.

Achebe's portrait of Eunice is as strong that can bring political change in her society. On the other hand, he expresses her incompleteness by saying:

...took out a pistol instead and fired two bullets in to koko's chest .Only then did she fall down on Max's body and begin to weep like a woman; and then the police men seized her and dragged her away. A very strange girl, people said. (160).

This implies that to what extent a woman is strong? She can't leave her femininity. She is morally discouraged. She is characterized as strong on her stand that have great role in the political turmoil of her country. But, she is unaccomplished and simple minded as she is weeping 'like a woman' Achebe adds 'weep' as women's tradition to his firm girl ready to fight for her ideals.

What makes her "strange" girl? In this case, the condition which fighting broke out and political turmoil disturbing the country, this girl reacts timely and directs the story to its resolution. This is quite different from the traditional gender roles, which cast women as emotion (irrational), weak, and submissive. These gender roles have been used very successfully to justify such inequalities, which still occur today. The novel challenges this belief portraying Eunice as decisive, strong,

rational, and protective. This is why the people said, "A very strange girl", she challenges the traditional power relation to gender that symbolizes the weak become 'feminine' and the strong 'masculine'.

One of the Marxist point is that, by providing a revolutionary ontology for woman's daily experience, gives historical significance to the everyday cultural activity. If we try to apply this to *A Man of the People*, it is easy to see that Achebe was trying to create a portrait of a perfect female in contrast with a perfect wife. It can be also said that it was his first attempt to create the idea female character in this novel. Unlike the treatment of female characters in *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer At Ease*, Achebe creates politically powerful and strong girl like Eunice in *A Man of the People*.

Polygamy, as a form of institution of marriage, was the center of discussion in the traditional society. This is clearly reflected in some African fictions, particularly, in Achebe's colonial novel *Things Fall Apart*. According to Achebe, in this colonial novel, the polygamous families are depicted in history as having been suitable for that period. He points out that this was accepted as a valid norm in near past. Thus, Achebe and other writers see polygamy as a natural way in the colonial periods and before that. Monogamy was wrong foundation for durable marriage in the given society.

The assumption behind polygamy is that many want to be natural. To be polygamous is natural. It is living life to the society. The basis for polygamy is the 'biogenic superiority of man's reproductive capacity and the inferiority of women's biogenic reproductive capacity.' A good example is the world in *Things Fall Apart* in which patriarchy intrudes oppressively into every sphere of existence. It is a 'Eurocentric' world

where the man is everything and the woman nothing. Women are quantified as part of men's acquisitions. For Okonkwo, the major heroic character in his first novel, three wives are the indicators of successful farmer, warrior, and man of worth.

In contrary to this deep-rooted norm in the traditional and cultural society of the colonial time and before, Achebe starts to give out dated picture through his characters. Odilli, who represents the educated and modern postcolonial time, says:

"You will be making a big and serious mistake if you allow anyone to rush you into marriage now. You are too young to be rushed into marrying, especially marrying a polygamist...No, Edna, it is in your own interest. Don't go and spoil your life. " (110).

Here, Odilli is advising Edna not to marry early to a polygamist, indicating that polygamy is no longer an indicator of a great man, a hero, and a successful farmer. It rather lowers a man's social status, as unacceptable norm. This shows Achebe's progressively changing attitude towards women's roles and attitudinal change of the new generation towards women. Odilli further criticizes the old thinking as:

*' No, Edna, it is in your own interest. Don't go and spoil your life.
'What is your business in it?'
'None whatever. Except that I think a beautiful young girl like you deserves better than to marry an ancient polygamist.(110).*

This implies that polygamy is no longer useful in the postcolonial period. It is the norm of old generation that a man is respected by the number of wives he has. Although some African writers depict modern women as alienated, as prostitutes, they usually reject the view that polygamy is a value to be propagated in the new world. The ancient believe and habit

doesn't work at the time the novels are written. He further criticizes Edna after she responds that she knelt to the old oppressive structure by saying "that is the world of women". (110) Odilli claims as: "Rubbish! An educated girl like you saying a thing like that!" (110) to alleviate the painful oppressive traditional culture of the old world.

Furthermore, Odilli tries to show us liberated outlook as: "it is your own interest" This is to say that Edna can decide herself for her own further life. This contradicts with the socio cultural situation of the society of the previous periods. In other word, this statement outshines a new way of thinking in the postcolonial Nigeria. Had it been in the ancient time, it would not have been possible for her to decide her own future life. But since the post independence era, new thinkers like Odilli come with new ideology arguing that females can equally decide their future vision. However, this is a trial hoped to happen by the writer.

Some writers such as Ama Ata Aidoo of Ghana and Flora Nwapa of Nigeria have insisted that the image of the helpless, dependent, unproductive African woman was one ushered in by European imperialists whose women lived that way. On the other hand, Achebe seems to believe that women were traditionally subordinated to sexist cultural mores. I, as a critic support the second group I believe that Achebe tries to reflect the traditional mores, as they are deep-rooted even before the colonialists. Of course, the colonialists aggravated it by giving all leaderships to men of their own citizen and some helpers of the natives.

3.1.3 Female Character as Liberated and Morally Powerful in *Anthills of the Savannah*

In *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), Achebe's new vision of feminist ideology is articulated. In addition to the main theme of political turmoil after independence in Nigeria, gender question in the new structure is emphasized. He raised African women's roles as a larger problem of the postcolonial nation. He presents strong central female character who serves a source of passion and inspiration-Beatrice. His narrative calls for the essential issue of gender equality in the postcolonial nation.

Achebe's vision seems to be based on the need of awareness for a new and consistent vision of women in the independent Africa. And this call is not to colonial leaders; rather it is to young African leaders like Ikem. In the beginning of his novel, he starts to give weak role of the chief secretary. She is characterized as powerless and economically dependent on her boss. It says:

The chief secretary, whose presence of mind is only inhibited by the presence of His Excellency moves over to the sill, unhooks a latch and pushes back a glass window and the world surges in to the alien climate of the council chamber on a violent wave of heat and the sounds of a chanting multitude. . (Achebe, 1987:9).

As his previous novels, he characterizes her as dependent on her boss. On the other hand, he reflects masculine thinking as: "But today's incident has shown that a man must not swallow his cough because he fears to disturb others..." (19). This indicates that patriarchal or sexist discriminations characterize women as inferior, submissive and weak. This traditional deep-rooted assumption of the society, which represents women with "lack" implies patriarchal ideology of the given society.

Achebe continues to reflect the lifestyle of women in their respected society. Ikem Osodi, his second witness in his novel, dreamt the harsh condition of women taking his neighbor woman, who is always beaten by her husband. In his dream, he rethinks as a nightmare about this woman as her husband always beats her. He feels pity and expressed it, as "He crawled through the third door. Perhaps he will beat his beautiful wife tonight; he hasn't done it now in months (34). The narrator subtly expressed his pity for a woman living Mr. So Therefore's wife life style. He goes on to describe this beautiful woman's life.

Here, Achebe is challenging the traditional treatment of women in Nigeria and Africa as well. This implies that the writer is not glorifying the traditional life; rather, he is blaming the authoritative husbands who are not open to share their problems to their respected wives. Therefore, Achebe through his main character-Ikem, is not only illustrating the details of women's daily experience in home, but also challenging the backward act of their husbands. Through this, he tries to show how they are traditionally oppressed and marginalized in the cultural structures that maintain inequitable relations between men and women.

Achebe is telling the new, educated generation to revise their father's old believes and to take corrective measures in the new era. This is reflected in the dialogue between Beatrice and Chris as follows:

*'How long has Ikem known that Joy girl?' I asked.
"I can't tell you. I had only seen her a couple of times before this afternoon."
"She seems so young. And so illiterate. What can he possibly be saying to her?" I asked.
"Ikeme doesn't say much to any girl. He doesn't think they have enough brains."
"Good for him, the great revolutionary."
Well, you know, I am exaggerating a little. But really women don't feature too much in his schemes except as, well, comforters.(35)*

Beatrice, who has an honors degree from Queen Mary College, University of London is now at ease concerning the future and destiny of women in the nation. She projects Achebe's new vision of women's roles and criticizes Ikem for being less concerned on the issue. She further asks Ikem to focus on the role of women in his political thinking. But he doesn't understand what she says and became angry with her. After she gives enough examples where he fails to emphasize women's contribution in resisting the colonial invaders successfully, the idea appealed to him or he understood the case. As she is an educated and strong woman, she convinced him. She starts her argument as follows:

For here's a man, who has written a full-length novel and a play on the Women's War of 1929 which stopped the British administration cold in its tracks, being accused of giving no clear role to women. But the way I see it is that giving women today the same role which traditional society gave them ... It is not enough that women should be the court of last resort because the last resort is damn right too far and too late! (91).

This indicates that Achebe seeks to link and emphasize the question of African women's roles to the new nation with new parties. Beatrice gives Ikem insight into a feminist concept of womanhood. She is presented as independent, articulated and self-realized. She re-evaluates women's position claiming the new party for excluding women from positions or political hierarchies. That is why she asserts, "It is not enough that women should be the court of last resort because the last resort is a damn right too far and too late!" (92).

Through Beatrice, Achebe now is striving to affirm the moral, political, economical and intellectual integrity of African women. Particularly, the social conditions, which have kept women down in the past, are now seem to be absent. This is because Ikem was new or strange to this new

insight but accepted it and even appreciated Beatrice for her doctrination. However, it was not easy for her to convince Ikem and bring him to her side. Even in the beginning, he failed to accept her idea as it is but after a time he understood everything and appreciated her. He says:

'BB, you may be wondering why I am behaving so strangely today. Well, I've come on a mission the like of which I'd never undertaken before ... I've come to thank you for the greatest present one human being can give another. The gift of insight. That's what you gave me and I want to say thank you. "Insight? Me? Insight into what?" 'In to the world of women" (96) .

This educated, strong and firm woman ready to fight the old assumption and representation is now successful on her ideology. Here, Ikem is getting clear with the new idea and regret with his past opposition to the motion. "You told me a couple of years ago, do you remember, that my thoughts were unclear and reactionary on the role of the modern woman in our society. Do you remember?" (96) Achebe is speaking through his "alter ego Ikem", a journalist and writer, is asserting that to talk about equality in power and avoiding gender oppression is timely. Unlike his previous male characters who are polygamists like Mr. Nanga, Ikem is educated, wise and the one who believes on discussion.

The turning point in the novel is Ikem's realization about his prior mistakes regarding women. Though his former attitude towards women has been too respectful, Beatrice repeatedly had accused him of having "no clear role for women in his political thinking" (91). The problem, he comes to realize in the course of the novel, stems from his discovery of inherent sexism within African traditional culture. Ikem's love letter to Beatrice, in conjunction with the novel's hopeful, a woman centered ending realizes the condition. In the letter Ikem writes, he tries to show his previous weak vision of women's roles. He starts to blame himself as:

" One of the things you told me was that my attitude to women was too respectful"

"I didn't"

"You bloody well did. And you were damn right". You charged me with assigning to women the role of a fire-brigade after the house has caught fire and been virtually consumed. Your charge has forced me to sit down and contemplate the nature of oppression- how flexible it must learn to be, how many faces it must learn to wear if it is to succeed again and again." (97).

This realization is not limited to Ikem as a character. It is also the wakeup call for the young educated African people. Ikem's rethinking about the past gender oppression, and power classification is also the writers new realization as he recognizes his mistake and injustice of his earlier treatments of women characters.

Claiming the past, Ikem is dealing with visions and perceptions of the future. He came to realize that there is a need of a new understanding of social change in his country. He goes on the outlines this in his letter. First, he understood that "Women are, of course, the biggest single group of oppressed people in the World and, if we are to believe to Book of Genesis, the very oldest. But they are not the only once" (98)

Ikem, as the mouth of Achebe in the novel, reflects his Marxist view diversifying the problem of oppression. On one hand, he seems to criticize the Book of Genesis for women's oppression. On one hand, he magnifies the diversification of oppression inline with the oppressor and the oppressed.

For the first point, he even blames the Old Testament for the oppression of women. He argues:

'The original oppression of woman was based on crude denigration. She caused Man to fall. So she became a scapegoat. No, not a scapegoat which might be blameless but a culprit richly deserving of whatever suffering Man chose thereafter to heap on her. That is Woman in the Book of Genesis. (197).

After he states that women are oppressed, he came to identify the root cause and historical background of it. This is clearly Marxist outlook. Marxist offers both a way of finding historical evidence of women's oppression and can describe how writers consciously or unconsciously transpose that evidence into their texts. So, Achebe, stands as a Marxist, tries to expose the repression or misrepresentation of women in the Book of Genesis.

Furthermore, Achebe through his narrator wants to tell us historical development of women's oppression raising our ancestors' assumptions. This implies that Achebe, like some African writers, doesn't merely believe that oppressions relating to the colonial experiences, particularly gender have marginalized women in postcolonial societies. He challenges the assumption that gender oppression is only a result of colonization. His argument is that the oppressor and the oppressed referred back to the period before colonization. But, this doesn't mean that the Westerns have no role even in the period before colonization. The Old Testament or the Book of Genesis, which Achebe raised as the beginning gender oppression, is brought by the Westerns.

In addition to this, Ikem refers to our ancestor's tales, which aggravate gender inequality. According to Ikem, women have been oppressed since the beginning of time. They have been accused with the causing of Man's great fall in the Old Testament. He says:

Out here, our ancestors, without the benefit of hearing about the Old Testament, made the very same story differing only in local colour. At first the sky was very close to the earth. But every evening Woman cut off a piece of the sky to put in her support or, as in another version, she repeatedly banged the top end of her pestle carelessly against the sky whenever she pounded the millet or, as in yet another rendering. So prodigious is Man's inventiveness, she wiped her kitchen hands on the Sky's face. Whatever the detail of woman's provocation, the sky finally moved away in anger, and God with it. (97).

As can be seen here, traditional stories and myths shape a cultural gender roles and behaviors. The above quoted myth validates men's oppression. The author, through his narrator, attacks a patriarchal myth that idealizes the oppression of women.

This tale, which is commonly told in the traditional society, as Ikem said, is a means of oppression. This reflects that women act against the God's will together with the sky. He further thinks that the New Testament needs to avoid discriminatory rebuffs. "Well, that kind of candid chauvinism might be Ok for the rugged taste of the Old Testament. The New Testament required a more enlightened, more refined more loving even, strategy-ostensibly, that is" (97-98)

Achebe through his narrator argues that the New Testament should be better that it brings the women to 'supreme'. His advice is that the New Testament should be as a strategic to rise up women's perception. He says:

So the idea came to Man to turn his spouse into the very Mother of God, to pick her up from right under his foot where she'd been since creation and carry her reverently to a nice, corner pedestal. Up there, her felt completely off the ground she will be just as irrelevant to the practical decisions of running the world as she was in her bad old days. The only difference is that now Man will suffer no guilt feelings; he can sit back and congratulate himself on his generosity and gentlemanliness. (98).

This strong argument, which included in Ikem's "love letter" to Beatrice is a call to men to take corrective measure on the outdated treatment of women in their society. It is hoped that educated men like Ikem can take and change the world. He is warning the new generation that without new things, new ideas, a cycle of failure is doomed to repeat. According to Ikem, our ancestors were striving to bring up women in their own way being unaware of the New Testament. These are all arguments by Ikem about the oppressed ones. The past was not a better time and place for women and he is striving to change this picture and bring a new World by giving the chance to women.

His concluding part of his "love-letter" lies on the invitation for Beatrice to decide and determine the role of women in the political arena. It is an invitation for women to come and join in political decisions. He further calls for every individual to understand the case and contribute his own or her own role. He expresses his reformist view as:

"Thank you, BB. I owe that insight to you. I can't tell you what the new role for woman will be. I don't know. I should never have presumed to know. You have to tell us. We never asked you before. And perhaps because you've never been asked you may not have thought about it; you may not have the answer handy. But in that case every body had better know who is now holding up the action. (99).

As we can see from his remark of his first part of "love-letter", it is a responsibility of everybody to approve that women are our creators, the center of the continuity of human being. The narrator believed that a new thinking on equality of gender is vital with the participation of every individual.

As mentioned above, Ikem emphasized that the oppressed ones are not only women but also other groups. He tries to describe the heterogeneity

of the problem. As the magnitude of the problem is wide, the treatment of women is also different. In this view, he tries to define consideration of women as World wide oppressed group. He argues, "There is no universal conglomerate of the oppressed" (99). It is to show that each situation deserves its own unique attempt at a solution. By realizing the status of women in Africa, he tries to show that each of the world's cultures has its own vision of femininity.

Ikem comes to a greater understanding about the fate of Africa. He is optimistic about the future. He expresses his promising argument and optional solution as:

"Society is an extension of the individual. The most we can hope to do with a problematic responsible psycho-analysis would aim to do more, for to do more, to overthrow the psyche itself, would be to unleash insanity. No. We can only hope to rearrange some details in the periphery of the human personality. (100).

He further notices, "any disturbances of its core is an irresponsible invitation to disaster" He underlines the advantage of "re-forms" around what it is, its core of reality; not around an intellectual abstraction." It is to mean that the reform can be power that is political and economical because psychologically it is abstract. He commented for wise and meaningful action of politicians. And requested every individual (including himself) to take this assignment and do it. He approves that he is responsible to understand the problem as an artist and struggle on it to bring behavioral change on the society. He says:

"I didn't owe this insight to you; BB.I drank it in from my mother's breast. All I've ever needed since was confirmation. "Do I contradict myself?" asked Walt Whitman. "Very well, I contradict myself," he song defiantly."I am large, I contain multitudes." Every artist contains multitudes... Because a genuine artist, no matter what the ultimate enmity between art and orthodoxy. (100).

He doesn't leave the task to Beatrice anymore because he believes that an artist plays leading role to propagate and to find solution. He asserts that to struggle against the oppressed mother means to struggle against oppression of mankind. Moreover, he blamed for those who don't feel pity on "the beloved oppressed" and alienates the "oppressors". This Marxist view shows that the oppressed groups are important for the future for the nation, and as a catalyst in his vision of his country's future.

Ikem, and therefore Achebe's potential sexism, represents African sexism deserves an African response. A response that is made clear by Achebe through his conclusion is a conclusion in which only the women remain. The naming ceremony at the novel's end further ties the empowerment of women in strengthening the country. This is based on the underlined concepts introduced in Ikem's letter. In the traditional society of Africa, male are supposed to given names for a child. This is the dominant culture but now in *Anthills of the Savannah's* world, females have given the name: "... Beatrice decided to perform the naming herself and to do it right away." Here is how Beatrice explained:

'In our traditional society,' resumed Beatrice, 'the father named the child. But the man who should have done it today is absent...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.' (223).

This breaking of the deep-rooted custom and tradition implies a new challenge and a new beginning in the new era. With the leadership of the strong fighter of oppression-Beatrice, the change gets acceptance by the other women but after Beatrice's visionary explanation. This realizes the need for women declare their own place in African society and the progress on wards. This break of culture refers to a new phase of women's involvement in decisions and social structures.

The other most important point, which Achebe used to reflect his view about the role of women in the new nation, is the unexpected approval of the old man to Beatrice's wise measures. The old man is Elewa's uncle who came to Beatrice's house to participate in the naming of the child. But Ikem's child has already been named a boys' name meaning as "AMAECHINA: May the path-never-close" indicating continuity of the shining path of Ikem, the martyr.

At the beginning he heard that the child is named by women, he is surprised and shocked for this breach of tradition. But after he understood that the decision was right considering the talent of these women and the time it deserves, he appreciated them. He asked, "Who gave her the name?" All of us here,' said Beatrice, 'All of you here,' pleased the old man. 'All of you are here father?' 'Yes and mothers' (225) the old man is amazed because this creates for him an estrangement which contradicts with what he knows before. He expresses his amazement as: 'You young people, what you will bring this world...'(225)

Finally, the old man adds a speech that supports the new thinking and advised the women to keep on. He reveals that the new world has got new leaders-women. He glorifies as:

'Do you know why I am laughing like this? I am laughing because in you young people our world has met its match. Yes! You have put the world where it should sit... My wife here was breaking her head looking for kola nuts, for alligator pepper, for honey and for bitter-leaf...' (227).

Here, it can be inferred that there is a transformation of roles from a housewife like the old man's wife to a perfect woman who has strong ideology to run in the society. This implies according to Marxist feminists, all cultures are virtually bound up with personal identity.

The woman who have changed the set norm of the society to a better stage, created something critical in the new society. This is promising hope in the future of the nation and perhaps in the continent. This assertion that women are integral in the building of the new African society emphasizes the damaging effect of oppression outside the colonized-colonizer relationship. Achebe strongly argues that hope lies not in separating women's issue from society's issues, but in integrating them. He further suggests that it is better to let them involve in every social aspects and continually in the process of social change.

Achebe adapted myth to explain his reversal of gender roles, silencing men by eradicating men and their oppressiveness. This is directly put in the final kangan naming the ceremony, the largely female community reaches a consensus that a mother should name her child, “what does a man know about a child anyway that he should presume to give it a name?” (222). Killing of the two male characters, Achebe finally gives or hands back the power to Beatrice and women.

3.4 Comparative Analysis of Three Major Women Characters in the Three Selected Novels

In three of the selected novels of the postcolonial time, we see Achebe's progressively changing attitude towards women's roles. His feminist prospects in the given periods are chronologically developed. Perhaps, the Igbo people whom Achebe describes will represent the rest of Nigeria and a great many of the nations of Africa. So, his literatures (s) reflect (s) the existing social and traditional condition of Nigerian women and the majority of African women in their respective society. Therefore, it is

possible to see Achebe's progressive vision of women characters in his postcolonial novels comparatively.

Clara, in *No Longer At Ease* is educated woman a nurse in profession. Unlike the colonial women characters of Achebe's novels, she is at least educated and economically independent. She is expected by her society to be active and determinant in her country.

In contrary, Clara, as educated woman, is found to be mentally weak and inactive as victim of her traditional rebuffs. She is an Osu-an outcast girl in her tribe. What is most surprising is she accepts this norm as her destiny after her Western education. Obi was intelligent enough to reject and convince his parents that this discouraging traditional believe (Osu) is "nonsense" and meaningless. He further decided to marry her. But Clara responds in the most unreasonable way; she tries to show herself as if she is not fit for him taking this outdated believe.

Her education didn't change her much. She is not strong to oppose traditional unreasonable norms. She fails to bring moral strength to reflect modern outlook being economically free. Unlike Obi, she possesses no special knowledge, holds no special position in the political structure. She is often innocent and open to her boy friend. Joseph describes her as:

But Clara was not like that; she had no coyness in her. Not much, anyway. That was one of the things Obi liked best about her. She had seemed so sure of herself that, unlike other women, she didn't consider how quickly or cheaply she was captured. (70).

This implies that she is reluctant in her character. Although one might expect Clara, as educated, to be strong, mentally and physically

resistant, productive or creative and role model for aspiring women's position, such is not necessarily the case. She is weak minded women; obedient to her traditional assumptions. She is passive just like the illiterate women of the period.

If we compare Clara with Eunice, one of the heroic women in Achebe's novels, there is a big gap in their characters. Eunice is a lawyer who strongly opposes the corrupt government of chief Nanga. She is among the active participant of the young educated Nigerians of that time. In addition to this, she is a leading figure who facilitates the downfall of the corrupt administration of that period. This is clearly observed in her participation of killing chief Koko with brave decision. Odilli appreciates Eunice as:

Seeing them so confident and so well equipped was for me the most morale-boasting event of the past so many weeks. I envied Max his beautiful, dedicated girl, some people are simply lucky. (136).

As a lawyer, she knows what measure to take because she has social responsibility. Eunice is a very strong character. She can be considered as one of the modern professional women in African literature that is free of old traditions unlike Clara.

The credit for the revolution goes to Eunice since she catalyzes the reaction. After Koko is killed, the way paves to the army to takeover the leadership and falls of the corrupted government.

Here, you see Eunice's role is decisive. Therefore, the very liberated woman in *A Man of the People* creates a surprising thing in the natives, "A very strange girl" when she shoots chief Koko.

Thus, Eunice has a strong characterization since she is also the founder of the common people's convention that opposes corrupt chief Nanga and his cliques. Unlike the wife of Chief Mrs. Nanga who is unsuited to the lives of her husband, Eunice is a prominent figure in the political situation of the country.

Marxist feminists emphasize the material world in which women are daily oppressed as women with in specific political, cultural, historical, economic, ideological contexts. It is here Eunice struggles to bring a change of women's involvement in politics being economically independent. She improved Clara's passiveness in all aspects. However, Achebe adds a feminine concept-luck to his strong portrait, "Only then [does] she fall down on Max's body and begin to weep like a woman..." (160).

To her intellectual and self-confident positive image, Achebe adds negative quality "weep like a woman". Nevertheless, she is intellectually, morally and economically unique woman representing young educated women in Nigeria and perhaps in many countries of Africa.

When we pass to Achebe's third novel, *Anthills of the Savannah*, we get Beatrice, another strong character. Beatrice who has an honors degree from Queen Mary College, university of London, Projects Achebe's new vision of women's roles. Her characterization is very intelligent and outstanding in her society. She questions the role of women in the nation repeatedly. She argues that women should have a defined role in the new nation. This was a continuous point of discussion between Ikem and Beatrice. And finally she brought Ikem into a feminist concept of woman hood. She is very successful in convincing Ikem and persuading him about her new ideology.

As an educated and honored graduate, she plays an active role in raising this crucial issue and convincing others. It can be inferred that she is a self-actualized woman of the period exploring and propagating timely question-gendered equality. Beatrice spends much of her time to describe and make clear to her husband Christopher and Ikem.

The new image in Beatrice characterization is her is morally positive and innovative idea. Ikem describes her as:

... this is one of the most brilliant daughter of this country, Beatrice Okoh. She is a senior Assistant secretary in the Ministry of Finance- the only person in the service, male or female, with first-class honors in English. And nor from a local university but from Queen Mary College, University of London... We are very proud of her. (75).

Unlike the previous two female characters, she is honor graduate, intelligent person of the country even as compare with men. This characterization is quite different and idealistic as compare with any other Achebe's female characters. These all-positive images of Beatrice come from her intellectual level of her academic achievement.

After she re-evaluates women's roles in the country, she stands with her question and brings a change of mind in the two male characters. Therefore, she is articulate, independent (financially) and self-actualized women perhaps ever created in the literary imagination of Achebe. Therefore, Achebe's new vision of female roles is secured by women themselves and indicates the modern Nigerians in women particular and African women in general are going just like that.

However, Achebe's two male characters Ikem and Chris have lost their lives in the political instability of the nation. What is surprising in their

death is they were the only intellectuals who accepted Beatrice's ideology (new idea) to consider in their leadership. So, what happen to her struggle against inequality? Is it interrupted with the death of the two tragic heroes? Achebe didn't tell us anything about it but she is a firm woman ready to fight further for her ideas.

It can be inferred that the symbolic representation of the new born child is hopeful. Achebe is optimistic about the role of women in the future. Perhaps, the 'New men' and 'New women' he mentioned in his narrative are symbolically representing to the child and new female intellectuals like Beatrice. Particularly, naming the newborn child by women implies or politically foreshadows females' power in the new structure of the nation as decision-makers.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Most creative writers in postcolonial Africa shifted from the theme of colonization to other current themes such as feminism. Many issues of concern to feminist thought are raised and addressed in their novels. Among the issues taken up by writers like Chinua Achebe, in the state of feminist theory and criticism are the representation of women in literary texts; the access of women to the economic means of survival; women as part of their communities; women's role in politics are the major ones.

Achebe, one of the famous writers in Africa deals with the theme of feminism in his postcolonial novels. Unlike the representation of women in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, he tries to give them good features in his three novels namely: *No Longer At Ease*, *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*. He seems to be conscious of women's roles in the new independent nation. By enabling them to be educated, economically independent, he glorifies their major roles in their respective country. Being independent economically means here being independent of their husbands to participate in the political structure of the nation.

Three of the female characters: Clara, Eunice and Beatrice in *No Longer At Ease*, *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah* respectively are educated, financially independent and are not house wives. They too have roles in the political situation of the nation in comparatively different situations.

Moreover, they have educated or intellectual husbands or fiancées. The reason why Achebe makes them educated is to give them power. Once if

they are educated, they would get salary and power in their society as well as in their home. If they are no more economically dependent on their husbands, they can be free to involve in the sociopolitical activities of the nation. This is where Achebe reflects his own Marxist feminist outlook. The Novels' Marxist feminism ideology and their stress on the economic and ideology of the female characters are significant to avoid oppression.

Furthermore, gender is a relation of power, where by the weak become 'feminine' and the strong become 'masculine' according to Marxist feminists. The novels challenge the traditional associations of female with feminine and limited in the home and male with masculine and controls economic and political power. The depiction of these female characters is not as objects and house wives; it is rather as intellectuals who are ready to solve their society's problems.

When we see their male counter parts (intellectual and democrat husbands and fiancées, they are no more authoritarian and oppressive to them. They are democrats who believe on discussion and dialogue for everything. Obi, Odilli and Ikem in *No Longer At Ease*, *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah* respectively are disciplined and democrat towards them. Unlike their fathers who represent the old generation, they are gentle and self-confident characters who represent the new generation. So, Achebe's novels assert that changes in the status of the relationship between the opposite sexes are necessary with new men alongside new women that are educated men and women.

Nevertheless, though the women characters have common qualities in their characterization, they have a big power difference in their respected political situation. Clara in *No Longer At Ease* is passive and relatively less concerned to involve in the social and political activities of the nation

of the period. She is very much influenced by her traditional name as an Osu. Even she doesn't oppose these traditional rebuffs as an educated woman. Generally, she is subjective towards every activity in the new nation.

Comparatively, Eunice in *A Man of the People* is a courageous lawyer who strongly opposes the corrupt government of that time. She with her former schoolmate Odilli strives to overthrow the dictator and dishonest administration of the nation. She even participates greatly in aggravating the downfall of the regime by killing chief koko. In short, she is considered to be a hero in her own society on her struggle against corruption.

The most heroic female character is Beatrice in *Anthills of the Savannah*. She is an honors degree in her status. She represents Achebe's new vision of women's roles. As a woman, she raises the issue of gender oppression repeatedly. She strives to change the system of the old oppressive government with fully participating in the new structure. She successfully convinced the new educated young scholars Ikem and Chris to consider her question in their new political system. Moreover, she gave a name for a new born child substituting a man which is against the old tradition. This shows that she is not only devoted to bring gender equality in the nation but also the beginner of new outlook in the new generation. The newborn child perhaps symbolizes women's power and leadership in the new structure.

Achebe used myth, symbolism and dialogue as a strategy to convey his gender struggle in his works. In addition, he created gender male and female characters to strengthen and transfer his feminist ideology.

Achebe structures his narrative in such a way that shows the gradual realization of women's strength in a society. Feminist criticism now

marks out a broad area of literary studies, eclectic original and provocative. Hence, Achebe's explicit focus on the middle-class, and his concentration on the nature of female subjectivity, speaks directly to the source of anxiety within socialist feminism today. His feminist thinking in the texts shows political desire of upgrading women for autonomy and independence.

Women are also made increasingly powerful in these novels by being endowed with the capacity to involve and decide political as well as social issues. Beatrice is symbolized to deny and ignore the traditional divisions of power between men and women.

The foregrounded female roles in *Anthills of the Savannah* implicate that women in the post colonial period are decision makers and politicians. The writers protest against power inequalities between women and men is highly emphasized and given hopeful measures

In general, Achebe's progressively changing attitude towards women roles in Nigeria and in many countries of Africa are highly emphasized in his novels. His Marxist feminist outlook clearly shows the development or trends of feminism in the postcolonial novels. As a writer and critic, he believes that the repression or misrepresentation of women can be exposed and uncovered when we believe, as Marxism does, that discourse is a form of power. And he tries to apply this in his three postcolonial novels. The trend of feminism in the roles of the female characters in the three novels is progressively changing for better.

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

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