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Hegemony and Resistance in Chinua Achebe's Anthills of Savannah

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Abstract

Postcolonial Literature is Literature from nations colonized by European governments. It typically discusses the issues, difficulties, and effects of a nation's colonization and its aftermath effects. It primarily addresses issues related to a colony's political and cultural freedom. However, it also touches on topics like racism and colonialism. Colonialism was upheld not only by physical force but also through the power of speech. To maintain colonialism, discourse (which includes poetry, novels, travel memoirs, etc.) had to establish a kind of world order in which the superiority of the colonial and inferiority of the colonized subjects was presented as the original and natural order and any departure from this was deemed unnatural. For "colonizing the mind," particular modes of representation and knowledge systems, including those from history, biology, anthropology, literature, philology, and philosophy, were strategically employed to uphold this world order. In a present research paper, the African point of view is represented by the postcolonial writer Chinua Achebe, who discovers the racial and colonial oppression in the fictional setting of Kangan in the novel, Anthills of Savannah. Using myths, legends and idiomatic expressions, the writer celebrates the uniqueness of African culture and sensibility. The researcher also intends to explore the women characters and their significant role in building African culture and sensibility and fighting against capitalism.

Keywords

race, gender, colonialism, Post-colonialism, African literature

I. Introduction

European colonies had virtually completely controlled almost all regions of

the world. Edward W. Said's project has become a model of resistance to the violent representations of colonial discourse. In his book Orientalism (1978), Edward W. Said addressed this issue in-depth and made an effort to formalize the study of the subject as postcolonial studies. Similarly, the author of Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction (2019), Leela Gandhi, has mapped out the postcolonial issue in broader intellectual and philosophical contexts. She also reaffirmed that post-structuralism, postmodernism, Marxism, and feminism were all closely related. Her publication Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction (2019) also contributed to the field of cultural theories.

Leela Gandhi, however, asserts that this concept of Orientalism by Edward Said has certain restrictions because it does not consider the likelihood of variations in Oriental discourse. In his later writings, he acknowledges that his earlier work fails to sufficiently understand the colonized country's resistance to the material and discursive power of the colonized and that this resistance, whether real or imagined, needs to be questioned.

Similarly, the article "Colonialist Criticism" (1974) by Chinua Achebe is a scathing attack on the persistence of colonialism in non-Africans' critiques of African Literature. African authors write for their own people, but Europeans evaluate and analyze the writings and works they generate. Every piece of literature must pass through the grids of European authors. Achebe criticizes the idea of "universalism" in this essay, which alludes to European nationalism. The writings of European authors have consistently highlighted the concept of universality. From this vantage point, they also evaluate an African work and conclude that it is not universal since it needs to address universal issues. They believe the text to be false since it solely represents an African perspective and an African problem, which cannot be a global problem. They cannot address a universal problem, but Achebe challenges the idea of universality. He objects to universality since it is only a euphemism for the European self-serving and because every work of literature should discuss how its setting has developed due to its past, present, and culture. Any voice that cannot melt with the centre's voice cannot simply be dismissed. Africans have experienced racism, a part of their past that cannot be separated. They can write about their racial history, which is unexplored in canonical literature. The voices of black people are absent from works of popular literature. Therefore, the term "universalism" must be dropped because it does not address space-specific concerns.

Therefore, it is inappropriate to condemn Third World literature on the grounds of "universalism," as the assertions made by European writers regarding their intimate familiarity with African Literature continue to be false. Due to their inability to comprehend Africans' inherent culture and sensibility, their claim that they can evaluate African Literature objectively falls flat and needs to be more reliable. With its particular setting, specificity, and cultural ethos, African Literature is written. Therefore, an African text cannot be judged objectively using generalizations and universality as the basis for criticism. It is also necessary to consider the notion of numerous ethnicities, cultural specificity, social norms,

rituals, cultural practices, and indigenous peoples' sense of indigenousness. "I should like to see the word 'universal' banned altogether from discussions of African Literature until such a time as people cease to use it as a synonym for the narrow, self-serving parochialism of Europe until their horizon extends to include all the world" (Achebe, 1974, p.3). the author claims. The uniqueness of African Literature cannot be explored on general principles because this would only allow for a limited European knowledge of non-European cultures and literature.

II. Achebe as Teacher

If we examine Achebe's development as a critic in postcolonial studies, we must recognize his essay titled "The Novelist as Teacher" (1965), which discusses turning a novelist into a pedagogue instead of just a storyteller. Achebe considered this novel part of his educational role to reduce oppression and dictatorship in the African scene. The author tried to combine the role of the novelist with his political responsibility as an African writer: he once wrote:

"I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past with all its imperfections was not one long night of savagery from which the first European acting on Gold's behalf delivered them" (Achebe, 1965, p.10).

The author strives to teach Africans how to preserve dignity through a purely social perspective. Through his works, he hopes to educate readers about the precolonial history and unexplored cultural heritage. He also desires that his people not harbour any resentment toward their forebears or past. The colonial interpretation shouldn't be taken as absolute truth. According to him, the task of a writer cannot be separated from the commission of a teacher because "For the moment, it is like things that we may need to counter racism with what Jean-Paul Sartre has called an anti-racist racism, to announce not just that we are as good as the next man but that we are much better" (Achebe, 1965, p.45). Regeneration and reeducation are necessary. Even though the past may have numerous flaws, lessons must still be learned from it.

Postcolonial writers have made significant efforts in recent years to "write back" to colonial historians who have characterized oppressed people as "savages" and "barbaric" to the civilized colonizer. Postcolonial writers must therefore dispel the myths that were spread by colonial authors. There are many instances of Victorian Literature being modified. A Tempest (1969) to The Tempest (1611), Things Fall Apart (1958) to Heart of Darkness (1902), Foe (1986) to Robinson Crusoe (1719), and Wide Sargasso Sea (1966) to Jane Eyre are only a few of them (1847). Achebe attempted to teach his people how to preserve their dignity by creating a fictional city called Kangan.

III. Between Oppressor and oppressed

It is a city in West Africa. The city is socially divided into two classes that

contradict each other: the former is the ruling class, and the ruled one. The ruling class is represented by the character of Sam, who is the President government. He was called Excellence. As accused by Viney Kirpal, the ruling class is isolated from the poor, confined to the privileges of power, immersed in its trappings, and yet weak and bourgeois in their thinking. (Kirpal, 1993). The latter is the ruled class represented by the working class, such as taxi houses, students and market vendors. A hybrid class also belongs to the ruling class in a nominal way. This hybrid society acts as a mediator between the different categories.

In the fictional Kangan setting of Achebe's book Anthills of Savannah, a tumultuous political revolution is depicted. Three main characters-Sam, Chris Oriko, and Ikem Osodi-centre the story. The three had been friends since childhood and are currently carrying out their duties after coming to power. Sam is the de facto leader, the President of the Kangan Republic. Sam is the brutal character who considers Kangan as a private interest of an institutional nature, so all his interests in it are material. (Nwagbara, 2010). To delineate the oppression and cruelty in Kangan, an early discretion is provided in the character of Sam. It becomes clear to us from the beginning of the events that Sam cannot trust his old friends and is still worried for two reasons, the first because they represent the vulnerable class and the second because of the prophecy of the former President Ngongo, who once said "your greatest risk is your boyhood friends, those who grew up with your village, keep them the arm's length, and you will live long" (Achebe, Anthills, p.32). The three friends were supposed to be an influential and effective force in the Kangan government, but due to Sam's arrogance and selfishness, a dispute occurred between Ikem and Christ and His Excellency Sam.

Thus, Chris ascends to lead the Information Department in Ministry, while Ikem takes over as National's editor-in-chief of a widely read, governmentcontrolled publication called the Gazette. The President of the dictatorship and his cabinet convened in the western African nation of Kangan at the start of the book. This state of Kangan has been in power a few years after the previous ruler was ousted. Sam's tyranny, arrogance, and selfishness caused great hope in Kars. He realized that his people had a role in the persecution that Kane's society was experiencing. He tried hard to get close to the worker class and asked Sam to also visit the people in Abazon, but Sam represented nothing but the arrogant sovereignty far from the people, which was unaccepted by Chris, who submitted his resignation as Minister of Information.

Chris and Ikem become aware of the reality of the Kangan people when they come in contact with them. He used to hear that many poor families lived in one room and complained at the time when he was living in the presidential palace in air-conditioned rooms. And when he was forced to flee with Emmanuel Obote, the student, and Braimoh, the taxi driver, he saw the miserable conditions of that poor class, and he resided in his rooms with five of Braimoh's sons. He becomes a member of Braimoh's family sharing their clothes and suffering from mosquitoes and bedbugs. Chris was killed trying to save a girl from the police. Ikem is a poet who speaks out frequently, is intelligent, and intends to restructure the government. Chris mediates between Sam and Ikem. Sam has little concern for his people as he seeks to increase his power. According to Ikem and Chris, Sam is quickly becoming a despot. Like Chris, Ikem realizes how bad the working class conditions are. He became openly anti-president and wrote many articles criticizing the government and questioning its intentions against the people. Ikem insists that it was "the role of the writer to ask questions and make challenges... writers don't give prescriptions. They give headaches!"(Achebe, Anthills, p.132)). He used to meet students and criticize the ruling regime. So Sam considered him a traitor. Sam removed him from his post. Then. Sam sent the government secret police to capture him and then kill him.

Although Ikem speaks with the poor class, he takes many social considerations. For example, he states that he will not be able to ride the taxi with his girlfriend, Elewa, in front of people. Elewa, his girlfriend, is aware of these social considerations in his personality. She realized that she was merely an object of an intimate relationship. So she said to him, "woman done chop sand for dis world...If Ino Kuku brings stupid nyarsh to come dump for your bedroom you for de Kick me about like I be football" (Achebe, Anthills, p. 99).

IV. The Resurgence of African Women

The writer draws a picture of the woman in the novel through the relationship between Ikem and Elewa. The author depicts the woman as a creature that must receive attention and appreciation. Ikem is the author's spokesperson, as he treats women of all classes with respect. For Beatrice, the educated lady, Ikem had "the most profound respect for three kinds of women, peasants, market women and intellectual women" (Achebe, Anthills, p.92). He, himself, admits that:

The women are, of course, the biggest single group of oppressed people in the world... but they are not the only ones- there are others- rural peasants in every land, the urban poor in industrialized countries, black people everywhere, including continent, their ethnic own and religious minorities and castes in all countries. (Achebe, Anthills, P. 98) Moreover, the author also portrays an array of women characters depicting their significant roles in the corpus of fiction. In this respect, Charles C. Fonchingong asserts that Achebe is considered to have jumped from the marginalized position of women in his previous novels to a dynamic role in Power in Anthills of Savannah. An example of this is a figure that represents a sociopolitical turning point for the role played by emancipated women. (Fonchingong,2006).

In Anthills of the Savannah, Achebe depicts women as having an integral part of this society, and their social value cannot be underestimated. Their social status must be improved, their dignity must be preserved, and their identity recognized. Although Klim was, to some extent taking into account social considerations, he held Elwa's dignity by acknowledging the child's lineage. Elewa, Ikem's Elewa. The sexual relationship with Elwa represents reconciliation between the rich and poor classes. The couple brings birth to a child "Amae China", which means the path will never close. (Achebe, Anthills, p. 9). In Kirpal's words, this name also implied "the utopian vision of oneness between Nigeria's elite and her people". (Kirpal, 1993, p.9). Thus, the name fills the gap between the elite and poor classes.

The female characters are also given attention. In the book, there are a lot of strong women. Beatrice, Chris's fiancée, was an intelligent woman with a decent job as an administrator for one of the state offices. Beatrice Okohis, Chris's fiancée, is a multidimensional character who receives enough attention in Achebe's book. Beatrice changes the state of the African woman as asserted by Epounda in her article "Gendered Space in Chinua Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah: Despite the little importance that the writer gave to women in his previous novels, it is completely different from the great importance that he gave to women in this novel, as he was keen to depict the rapid development of the woman's personality represented in Beatrice, who refuses to be defeated and refuses to be weak. (Eponda, 2019). Beatrice plays a crucial role in mediating the relationship between Chris and Ikem.

Given that she was their fifth daughter when they were due with a son, she was an unwelcome kid by her parents. Nwanyibuife, which means "A Female is Also Something" (Achebe, Anthills, p.52) became her name. She honours the daughter of Ikem and Elewa by attending the naming ceremony and giving her the boy's name Amaechina. This naming ceremony is an opportunity to embody equality between women and men. (Epounda,2019). Through her character, Achebe portrayed women's ability to succeed in situations where men might stumble, especially in resolving conflicts, managing the home, raising children, and caring for their education. Thus, women have a more critical leadership role than men. The current trend, not only in the African community but also in the international community in general, is to give women a leadership role, which is what Achebe did.

V. Economic Factor

The author highlights the economic element in the novel and its significant impact on racist and class practices. The depiction of the luxury experienced by the affluent class and their passion for material well-being was due to the toil of the working class, which was, in fact, the source of pleasure and luxury experienced by the affluent class. The writer portrayed the wealthy class in an exaggerated way of luxury in using air conditioners at a time when the working class suffered from the "violent wave of the heat" (Achebe, Anthills, p.90). At a time when the poor did not find clean shelter or food, the cost of building the President's house reached forty-five million dollars (Achebe, Anthills, p.90). Sam is keen to bruise Kangan's economic position. And he must drop it in disarray and enjoy the privileges of the global capitalist empires. Post-use countries must still be in failed attempts to rise to be able to obtain loans. Sam wants Kangan to be deprived of the opportunity to catch up with third-world countries and maintain a clean budget. and where a loan is to be provided, the condition that the nation cannot refuse loans. (Lazarus, 2011). Achebe was aware of what Lazarus later mentioned, and the people had to realize that the ruling power did not intend to reform the economy of Kangan. And Achebe plans to find solutions far from Marxism.

Achebe was not a Marxist during Iklem's speeches. As portrayed by Miss Cranford. So when Miss Cranford read Iklem's articles on the dangers of Kangan's economic positions, She comments: "The editor who I hear is a Marxist of sorts appears to imagine he can eat his cake as well as have it, as we all tend to do this side of democracy." (Achebe, Anthills, p.74) To preserve the economic and capitalist element in the novel, the novelist used the character of Ikem as his official spokesperson. He tries to encourage social transformation through the educated class, not by facilitating violence and civil wars. The lectures that Iklem gives to the public aim to promote change outside the sphere of the ruling class. From his point of view, every social class should contribute to raising the country's economic level, cleaning the sector that the members of this class are tired of (Erritouni. 2006). And if they do not do so, they contribute to expanding the area of persecution. Their role is mainly moral: ""have the moral authority" to demand accountability from the political class (Achebe, Anthills, p.153). The young generation must be educated so that they can give lectures and seminars on national leadership and have a significant impact on social transformation. Therefore, Ikem reminded us that if the young generation does not receive the required formal education, they will not be heard and have no influence over the ruling class. And Ikem considers these revolutionaries to be a "democratic dictatorship of parasites" (Achebe, Anthills, p.160). If they make petty revolutions, as when " motor vehicle advances and allowances are threatened» (Achebe, Anthills, p.160). Such revolutions will never lead to a radical change in the government. For him, solutions must be found to get rid of imperialism.

VI. Symbols As Reality

The title of the novel symbolizes the struggle of Nigerian society; the title itself is symbolic. David Carroll Once wrote: that "the time of drought has come round again for the people of Abuzon, but the scorched anthills, surviving to tell the new grass of the savannah about last year's brush fires, offer little hope of renewal. Also, they are the reminder of people's struggle as a warning and a promise" (Carroll, 1990, p.177). Thus, anthills stand as a symbol of despair or hope. Moreover, Tidal Wave symbolizes the unstapled state of the Nigerian people Sometimes, hope raises them high to achieve a dream, justice, and get rid of persecution, and sometimes the level of dreams decreases to turn into mere illusions. The naming ceremony of Elewa-Iken baby symbolizes togetherness and democracy. All people gather regardless of skin colour, sex, or religion. Gelfman (2012) notes that Achebe is trying to bridge the gap between social classes by holding such traditional ceremonies. Where people of different classes meet, the

rich with the poor, and despite the different religions. An example is the Christian Beatrice's relationship with her Muslim maid, Aghata. Although she treated her with disrespect and contempt, she treated her with respect at this celebration. Moreover, the black Lake suggests Nigerian society. Kabakli writes that "the black lake may be taken for the chaotic situation of Nigeria and the dry stick coming out of the bare earth floor may foreshadow Beatrice's pen of writing" (Kabakli,2013, p.177). And iron grills have symbolic meanings in the novel, and these iron grills may represent precaution and protection Kalbakli (Kalbakli, 2013).

VII. Religious Perspective

By adopting archetypal outlines in Beatrice's character, she is represented by the goddess Idemili, who was assigned to oversee morals in humankind. "So the Almighty, looking at his creation through the round undying eye of the Sun, saw and pondered and finally decided to send his daughter, Idemili, to bear witness to the moral nature of authority by wrapping around Power's rude waist a loincloth of peace and modesty" (Achebe, Anthills, p. 61). Her persona is respected in this legendary tradition as well. She develops commitment, wisdom, understanding, and compassion for her people and the land of her area, even though she does not believe in myths. Achebe also uses the creation story to add meaning to the novel's ordinary happenings. By putting a loincloth of peace and modesty around power's rudimentary waist, the Almighty restrains the abuses of power in his creation, according to this old African story. He also sends his daughter Idemili to Earth to bear witness to the moral nature of authority. Idemili restrains all earthly capabilities morally by managing her personality's vices of arrogance, avarice, acquisitiveness, and aggression. Even though Beatrice completely drifts away from the myths and stories of her ancestors, she has inherited the role of Idemili. Beatrice does the civilizing act that she received from her country in inheritance. She embodies Achebe's best hope for the ability of people to survive in the face of the violence and greed that are all too typical in the modern-day scenario.

VIII. African Setting

Achebe uses the English language to correct and improve the inaccurate portrayal of Africa in the canonical western texts. The postcolonial African state of Kangan serves as the background for the novel Anthills of Savannah. The province of Abazon, from which a delegation and its leader have travelled to Bassa, the nation's capital, to appeal for assistance because the region is suffering from a drought, is rooted in the past traditional dignity and mythological oral culture. Achebe also uses elements like pidgin English and African parables and proverbs to illustrate and provide insight into the rich history of African culture. In his novel, he seems more concerned with portraying society as a whole than merely characterizing varied characters. The narrator tells the story of a political intrigue scene from the saga of contemporary African culture. The history of civilization is enmeshed in struggle and conflict, and the epic does not appear to be coming to a conclusion. The narrative keeps on, so Achebe is also giving headaches, not prescriptions like Ikem. Since there are several narrators in the book, readers don't have to rely on one narrator or character to form an opinion. Achebe represents the literary legacy of Africa in this way by emphasizing the entire community rather than a single narrator or character. The novel's crux is the deft mingling of African traditions, folktales, myths, and proverbs with contemporary political views and Christian theology. Due to the complete chaos and disarray of the present, two divergent perspectives merge, and the conviction in the previous system has been strengthened. With a deep sense of the past and oral heritage, the author upholds the storytelling tradition in his novel.

IX. Conclusion

In this paper, the critique of Achebe does not attribute all African ills to the colonizer. Some of the African ills are internal. Corruption, for him, stems from the failure of the rulers to establish a bond between social classes., The paper focuses on the different paths cut outside of political power. Since the novel is considered dynamic in that it is controlled by the abundance and diversity of events, our presentation of the practice in the period between events and commenting on it. Granting political power hold do not have restrictions on these relationships, verbally and logically, through Ikems's speeches and articles. Through the lectures of Iklem and Chris, the writer was able to depict the postcolonial era as an unrealistic, completely detached, moral world. An educated and intellectual generation must confront this political, moral and economic corruption with logic.

The novel represents corruption and oppression of lower classes in a very dynamic approach. The treatment of the underprivileged people and the land of Abazon is evidence that the Kangan government is corrupt. Early in the novel, Corruption and betrayal are shown in Sam's doubts about those close to him due to his desire for power. Sam orders Chris to oust Ikem from his editorship. Chris disagreed with Sam's ruling and refused to carry it through. Chris is more knowledgeable about Ikem and whether or not he participated in the protest that the Abazon delegates organized. Ikem was dismissed from his position, and soon after, he spoke to a group of university students. He was quite active and outspoken regarding the administration. Ikem was killed because he spoke out against corruption and the oppression of the underclass. Sam was threatened by him because of Ikem's conscious voice, which caused him to be murdered.

Logic and awareness have a significant role in motivating the oppressed classes. Chris noticed people living in an oppressive environment when travelling to Abazon. He also understood the seriousness of the issue and that the government was doing nothing to address it. He became aware of the catastrophe that his friend Ikem had previously observed and acknowledged upon noticing the anthills on the side of the road. Chris came to the idea that Sam had become quite hazardous in the third segment. Since the novel relied heavily on oral and written discourse, symbols seemed necessary for such creative work. The use of symbols and images enriched the drawing of postcolonial Nigeria. For Echebe, The death of members of the hybrid class may give life to the working class. Soon after Ikem's murder, Elewa gave her the name Amaechina, a boy's name. "What brings us here is the child you sent us. May her oath be straight...'...May she have life, and may her mother have life. what happened to her father? May it not happen again...May all of us have a life!" (Achebe, Anthills, p.136). The novel so concludes with this the novelist's imaginative vision.

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