CHAPTER V

POWER PARADIGMS
AND
POLITICS
CHAPTER V

POWER PARADIGMS AND POLITICS

Politics is always a struggle for power, disguised and modified by prudence, reason and moral pretext. (thinkeast.com/quotes)

This Chapter relates the theme of ‘Modernity’ in Power and Politics as conceived by Achebe and Karanth in their fiction. It comprises of two parts: the first part deals with Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease, A Man of the People* and *Anthills of Savannah*. Here the European political concepts imposed on Africa and Achebe’s reaction to post-colonial scenario in Africa are studied. The second part deals with Karanth’s *Headman of the Little Hill* and *Choma’s Drum*. *Headman of Little Hill* is considered a novel of transition wherein the tribals slowly see the colonial master’s interference. *Choma’s Drum* gives a glimpse of the comparison of the native masters and the colonial heads.

Before we proceed further to the politics of either India or Nigeria as depicted in the writings of either Achebe or Karanth, it is necessary to know the political background under which they wrote. The course of human history reveals that it is always a rat race between the small and the big, the powerful and the powerless, the superpower and the subservient. The British, the French, the Portuguese and the Dutch in the beginning were in for a trade expansion. For them the African and the Asian continents appeared very attractive with their abounding supply of raw materials from cotton to coal and spices to silk. It was not just trade that these superpowers needed but wanted to extend their influence all over.

The British framed enforceable rules and regulations through which they controlled their colonies. They brought in their own education system, medical services, administration, judiciary, religion and on the whole a new lifestyle itself.
They restricted the traditional flexibility of the colonies in the name of improvement and development. Thus the colonies were made a part and parcel of the Queen’s England so that they could be controlled more effectively.

The African society before the advent of the British was a pluralistic, dynamic world of different tribal cultures – Huasa to the north, Yoruba to the West and Igbo to the East and Fulani in between. It never had any codified law. A rule became a law by gradual village consensus or was wiped out slowly by evasion or disuse. Balancing of claims for justice was more important than strict adherence to law. It was open and susceptible to external pressure and internal conflicts. Feuds, fights, discords and differences were settled by a collective decision of village elders and men of titles. The clan stood above the individual and it was considered one organic whole. It was a subsistence society and acquiring more than needed was unheard of. There was no chief, be it feasting or war, crime or punishment was always a group decision.

The Indian society earlier to the European advent was a set of a number of tiny villages and towns ruled by kings, queens and the feudal lords in case of tiny hamlets. The advent of the British saw the waning of the feudal system in towns but it did prevail in the interiors and deep in the woods. Most part of India came under the jamindari system and the feudal lords exercised their control over the peasants. As such they were all powerful. Some of them were generous and benevolent while most of them exploited the poor peasantry.

The second part of the chapter deals with Shivarama Karanth’s *Headman of the Little Hill* and *Choma’s Drum*. Both the novels under study are set in the village woodlands with feudal lords over viewing the peasants in their plantations and fields.

**No Longer at Ease**

From ‘No Importance’ to ‘All Importance’, the White education finds its
place on the African soil. Earlier, in *Things Fall Apart* and even in *Arrow of God*, the natives are very much against the White and his learning, at least in the beginning. Anybody seen going to the Church would be condemned and thought off as an outcast. Thus, when Nwoye goes to the Church and their learning center, he is being ridiculed and even his own family members disown him.

But gradually things change and the natives’ attitude towards the White changes. Under various circumstances the natives come to know of the power and knowledge of the White. Hence, a time comes when the natives volunteer to send their children to the new learning center. They go a step ahead and aspire to send the most intelligent of the local natives to England for higher studies. Knowing fully well that it is a costly affair for any individual family, the entire local community starts pooling money to fund the higher education of a tribesman.

The non-resident Umuofians, who are outside, working in towns spread all over Nigeria, wherever they are, start a local branch of Umuofia Progressive Union, which meets every month. Each and every member contribute their might on educating bright native boys overseas which is to be repaid once the student starts working. Thus the Umuofians of Igbo land tax themselves too much to send some of their brighter young men to study abroad. Hence the entire community has a hand in sending their bright sons to bring knowledge. Many had contributed to the scholarship fund for the course of the community even with whatever meager income they earned.

Earlier, Umuofia would have expected a young man to fight in wars and bring home human heads in days of yore. Those were the days when age was respected and achievement revered. Individual achievements, titles, fame, skill in felling of palm trees - all these were considered as great and a man was judged according to the number of titles he won, barns he owned and the number of wives he had. In the
words of Odogwu: “Today greatness has changed its tune. Titles are no longer great; neither are barns or large number of wives and children” (1960 p10). With the coming in of the Whiteman into Umuofia, even ‘greatness’ is being given a new dimension and meaning. Greatness is now in acquiring the things of the White man.

The first scholarship from the fund is being awarded to Obi. The Umuofians want him to read law so that he can handle their legal cases. But Obi reads English instead of Law. The Umuofians though disappointed, console themselves that at least he can get a European post in Civil Services. Obi was a proficient student from the beginning. He was a village celebrity. So he is the first recipient of the scholarship. Obi’s going to England is celebrated with such gusto that all the people gather at Obi Okonkwo’s house and sing, pray and bless the boy Obi for his health, well being and prosperity. The Reverend Samuel Ikedi of St. Mark’s Anglican Church, speaks and says the occasion is the fulfillment of the prophecy:

The people which sat in darkness
Saw a great light,
And to them which sat in the region
And shadow of death
To them did light spring up. (1960 p 8)

The Umuofians are really fascinated by the educated non-resident Umuofians staying outside. Here the narrator says: Those Umuofians who leave their hometown to find works in towns all over Nigeria regard themselves as sojourners. They return to Umuofia every two years or so to spend their leave. When they have saved up enough money they ask for their relations at home to find them a wife, or they build a ‘Zinc’ house on their family land. (1960 p94)
Thus, while the earlier generation was against the Whiteman's education, the subsequent generation, Looks forward to its children getting English education and help their families and their community as a whole. Obi's going to England for higher studies and coming back after four years, both are celebrated with such gaiety that it is more of a public affair and a matter for the entire community rather than a private family affair. The entire community partakes in both the occasions with kola-nuts, palm wine, songs and celebrations. A son of the clan returning home after higher education is considered such a great event that a royal welcome is accorded to him. The narrator indicates this as, "It was decided at their meeting that a big reception should be arranged to which Press Reporters and Photographers should be invited. (1960 p 28)\(^5\)

The President of the Union lauds the efforts of Obi who had brought great honour to the ancient town of Umuofia which could join the comity of other towns in their march towards political irredentism, social equality and economic emancipation. The Secretary highlights the importance of overseas education in the context as:

The importance of having one of our sons in the vanguard of this march of progress is nothing short of axiomatic. Our people have a saying "Ours is ours, but mine is mine." Every town and village struggles at this momentous epoch in our political evolution to possess that of which it can say, 'This is mine'. We are happy that today we have such an invaluable possession in the person of our illustrious son and guest of honour. (1960 p 7)\(^6\)

The Umuofia Scholarship Scheme enables "an endless stream of students to drink deep at the pierian spring of knowledge" (1960). Overseas English Education is considered "The Pierian Spring of Knowledge". Further, the English educated boy,
whoever it is, is not just the possession of a particular family but an asset to the entire community. Awakening has dawned on the natives that if well educated, even their own kith and kin can get into the reading class, and also decide legal matters.

Band of music makers went out two miles on the Umuofia – Onitsha road to await Obi’s arrival. There were at least 5 different groups, if one excludes the brass band of the C.M.S. School Umzofia. It looked as if the entire village was celebrating a feast. The narrator describes the homecoming of Obi in a picturesque way: “Obi’s return to his village was almost a festival. A ‘pleasure’ car was waiting at Onitsha to convey him in proper state to Umuofia some fifty miles away.” (1960 p 43)

As in education, even in matters of religion unlike the earlier generation, which opposed the Whitman’s learning and religion, many of the natives get converted into Christianity and become ardent Christian followers. They are totally against idol worship and heathen practices. Obi’s father Issac Okonkwo is a converted Christian catechist. He participates in all the Church activities and adheres strictly to Christian practices only. Christianity dubs all practices as ‘Heathen so much so that the Okonkwos never allowed their children to share food/drink with any of their neighbours saying it was heathen as they were being offered to idols at home.

On the occasion of Obi’s return from England, the entire Umuofian village is celebrating his homecoming. On occasions like this, it is but customary to offer palm wine and kola nut to the guests by the host. But Christianity had made Issac Okonkwo so blind, that he says he does not want to break any kola nut, not only that he even fails to take palm-wine, a cock and a little money to the Chief rain maker in Umuofia too.

This particular aspect of Issac Okonkwo is not being approved by the elders of the village and one of them even comments on how the natives lose their heads with
the coming of new sayings. Issac Okonkwo retorts back vehemently saying that it is utter foolishness to believe in meaningless practice. The elderly person in turn says: What Satan has accomplished in this world of ours is indeed great; he said for it is he alone that can put such abominable thought into man's stomach. (1960 p 44)

One of the elders who hear of Obi's return voyage to Umuofia crossing the sea feels that definitely their son has escaped and returned from the land of spirits. So he wants to commemorate the day of Obi's homecoming by breaking a kola nut. "This is a Christian house" replies Obi's father. A Christian house where kola nut is not offered to Gods as a sacrifice "this" he says "is a heathen practice" (1960 p 46)

There are one or two who do not follow Christianity but at the same time not totally opposing it also, like Ogbuiqi Odogwu. He, like many others of Umuofia goes to church once a year at harvest time. His only criticizing of the Christian service is that the congregation is denied the right to reply to the sermon. There are certain other aspects which he really likes and understands as "As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be world without end." (1960 p 46)

"As a man comes into the world" he often says "so will he go out of it. When a titled man dies, his anklets of title are cut so that he will return as he came." The Christians are right when they say that as it was in the beginning, it will be in the end. So, on placing the kola-nut in the saucer he says: Bless this Kola nut so that when we eat it, it will be good in our body in the name of Jesus Kristie. As it was in the beginning, it will be at the end 'Amen'. (1960 p 46)

Thus we find that there is an attempt to club both, the native culture of sacrificing kola-nut, but taking the name of Jesus Kristi. This again is a different trend from the erstwhile purely native culture.
Change has crept into the native society in celebrations and ceremonies also. For example, marriage in a family was earlier a matter not of an individual family but the entire clan. The moment anybody came to know of a wedding in a family everybody would participate in it on their own, be it cooking, decorating, fixing the bride price etc. We find examples of this in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* during Obierika’s daughters and Ezeulu’s daughter’s wedding. Celebrations and ceremonies are more a public affair than a personal matter during the pre-colonial times.

In the earlier days, the celebration of wedding was based on bride price, acceptance by the elders and then a feast was being arranged. But now marriage is celebrated with invitation, a wedding ring and a Bible too, to go along with the ring. For example, “Obi buys an engagement ring paying £20 and also a copy of the bible on the saying of Clara.” (1960 p 66)

On the one hand marriage is made a costly affair comparatively imitating the English custom of marriage ceremony or engagement with ring; on the other hand, in the recent times wedding feasts were steadily declining in the towns because of the invention of invitation no man ever attended a neighbour’s wedding unless he was given one of those papers on which was written R.S.V.P meaning Rice and Stew very plenty.

Obi has his own ideas as far as marriage is concerned. He is in love with Clara, the Osu. As things go on, an Osu is a social outcast and nobody ever approves of marrying on Osu. Even Joseph, Obi’s friend cautions him against marrying Clara. Though Joseph is educated too, he doesn’t endorse Obi’s views in marrying Clara. He says:

What you are going to do concern not only yourself but your whole
family and future generations too. 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. (1960 p 67)

To this caution of Joseph, Obi retorts with resentment saying:

It is scandalous that in the middle of the 20th century, a man could be barred from marrying a girl because her great, great, great, grandfather had been dedicated to serve God, thereby setting himself apart and taking his descendents into a forbidden caste. (1960 p 65)

Obi doesn’t mind an Osu. He is bent upon marrying Clara at any cost, though Clara herself is against it in the interest of Obi’s family. Obi has very little religion these days. He wants to be a trend setter in marrying an Osu. Obi is just not ready to listen to either Joseph or Christopher. The attitude of the young Umuofians is strongly detested by the President of Umuofia Progressive Union when he says: “Books stand by itself and experience stands by itself. (1960 p 74)

Judiciary

In the pre-colonial societies of Things fall apart and Arrow of God, any matters of disputes calling for settlement would always be decided by the elders/chiefs of the clan. The procedure was something like this: Any quarrel, disputes, land or war dealings were to be intimated to the elders of the clan first. In turn they would call for a meeting of the people, and the matter would be discussed and deliberated upon. By the time we come to No Longer at Ease, the system of settling disputes has changed completely. It is no longer the days of the village elders assembling together for settling of disputes. It has been replaced by a fully developed English judicial system for trying cases. The Colonial System has effected such a change.
In fact the novel *No Longer at Ease* opens and closes with Obi's case being tried in the court. It is the trial of Obi being charged with the crime of corruption. The entire court hall is jam-packed to listen to the verdict. Obi is being charged with a crime of accepting bribe from a party to sanction an overseas scholarship. He is being caught red-handed, while accepting a bribe of a whopping paltry £20. This is being informed to the Police and Obi is being caught at his home and is remanded to judicial custody. The judge who hears his case remarks: "I cannot comprehend how a young man of your education and brilliant promise could have done this." (1960 p 106)  

It is the day of judgment of Obi's case and every available space in the court room is being taken up. The case had been the talks of Lagos for a number of weeks and on this last day anyone who could possibly have his job was there to hear the judgment. Some civil servants even paid as much as ten shillings and six pence to obtain a doctor's certificate of illness for the day.

The case has assumed such importance due to several reasons mainly because an educated African is being involved and secondly because this educated African is being involved in a corruption case. The colonial Africa is full of bribery and corruption. One finds corruption everywhere. And even the natives have accepted it so much so that one of the ministers in an inebriated condition says: "The trouble is not in receiving bribes, but in failing to do the thing for which the bribe is given". (1960 p 80)  

Now, accepting bribe is no longer considered immoral. On the other hand, it is being considered more a necessary evil. Achebe highlights the greed of his people and traces the roots of corruption even during the Colonial rule.

There is a lot of change in the Umuofian society as a whole. Young educated natives look for a luxurious life right from the day they start earning. They need a
steward to take care of their domestic life, a car and a driver too. Their life-style undergoes changes too. They go in after the pleasures of the skin and go to clubs, balls and bar to dance with girl friends. They fall for fun and merry making. That is how Obi loses his money of £50 which he got from Clara. He keeps it in the glow box and on coming back finds that it is empty. Even a young minister like Sam Okoli is for developing costly hobbies like music and buys an expensive radiogram. The craze for consumer goods has already set in.

Obi and Christopher go to dance in balls along with their girl friends on weekends. Change has swept the native society in terms of career also. The women folk are now no longer just housewives. Many like Clara, take to either 'Nursing' or 'Teaching' careers.

Educated Ibos are being considered head-strong and have their own way and not ready to listen to anybody. For example, in one of his conversations with Obi, the minister Sam expresses that he is happier with a White A.S. who addresses him as 'Sir' rather than an English educated Nigerian who is idiotic and headstrong. So, we find the simple rural Umuofia is totally different from the modern, present day Lagos which is full of complexity, bribery, snobbery, robbery, fun loving, but also non-caring for the words and caution of elders. Unlike in Umuofia where palm-oil lamps are being used, Lagos knows no darkness. Because, at night the electric light shines like the sun and people indulge in talking late into the night. Lagos is always associated with electric lights and motor cars. (1960 p 12) The streets of Lagos are noisy and crowded especially during weekends. Unlike the earlier days wherein feasts and harvests were celebrated in their own rustic way with the entire clan participating, now we find bands of dancers wearing identical dresses seen every few yards. Ga, temporary sheds in front of derelict houses and lit with brilliant fluorescent tubes
tubes for celebrations and ceremonies are a common scene.

Lagos and Ikoyi are twin cities and here cyclists and taxi drivers are common. This is in total contrast to the iron horse of Things Fall Apart which had inspired awe when they saw it for the first time. Ikoyi is full of luxurious bungalows and flats and extensive greenery. Earlier it was just a European reserve. But now some Africans in European posts have been given houses in Ikoyi. The educated natives are fun loving. They love to go to movies and cinema houses. They lead a hi-fi life there. One finds huge signboards everywhere in Lagos, advertising one or the other product.

The educated class of Africans is totally against this bribing and the society in turn is against the educated class. The traders, the police and the driver too are contemptuous about the educated people. The public have accepted bribery as normal and inevitable to such an extent that it is a way of life. Obi himself is so shattered and confused, not knowing what to do at the plight of his country and countrymen that he keeps asking. Where does one begin? With the masses educate the masses? Not a chance there it would take centuries, 'A handful of men at the top' he keeps musing or even one man at the top – an enlightened dictatorship. (1960 p 40)

A Man of the People – Political Aspect

A Man of the People portrays the decadent, corrupt and worsened political situation of Nigeria. At the same time it also projects the less educated ministers who are through and through corrupt and are against the more educated.

The socio economic condition of the nation is highly uncongenial with soaring prices, sinking morality among the public as well as the politicians, traumatic social tensions, looting, arson, strikes etc. On the whole, it is a very depressive picture of Nigeria that is projected. In the third phase of de-colonization the irregularities in Nigeria is very well expressed by Nnandi Azikiwi in these words:
Nigeria was given her freedom 'on a platter of gold'. But this proved quite unlucky. The British during their 50 years of colonization had created at least a spirit of common nationality in Nigeria. But with their departure that power went to that conservative element which had played no part in the freedom struggle. Within six years of independence Nigeria was a cess pool of corruption. (1968 p 82)

Nigeria under the British aspired for freedom, fought for it and acquired it. But the outcome of it was not all that beneficial as expected. Slowly Democratic Government changed over to a shade of dictatorship. The People's Organization Party and the Progressive Alliance Party followed all sorts of illegal methods in campaigning for their respective parties. The Nigerian Outlook reported "countless acts of political violence and thuggery occurred almost daily throughout the campaign, but notably increased during the last four weeks." (1979 p20)

After the elections a compromise was reached between the two parties and started forming a Government in Jan. 1966. But unfortunately the all-powerful Military staged a coup and the administration of the Government was taken over. Achebe's *A Man of the People* was published just nine days after the coup. This is the socio political background of Nigeria under which *A Man of the People* has to be viewed.

The two chief characters in *A Man of the People* are Chief, the honorable Mr. Nanga M.P. and Odili Samalu, a school teacher and an erstwhile student of Mr. Nanga. Both are silently at, snobbish Minister of State, Odili represents the young, boisterous, theoretical common man with practically no experience and tact.

Titular hero with good looks, pleasant manners and a commendable demeanor, born leader with wonderful oratory skills and excellent convincing capacities, chief
Mr. Nanga projects himself as the man of the masses always ready at their service. His is a camouflaged figure of what he is actually not. Bernth Lindfors actually calls him 'one of the finest rouges in Nigerian fiction'. (1986 p83)22

Beyond all these, Nanga shares a peculiar positive trait about himself 'he was one of those people around whom things were always happening' and he always made people feel that he is for them. From a school teacher to the Minister of culture Nanga has grown a lot, now leading a luxurious life, a chauffeur driven huge car, cook and servants all around. His house at Bori has seven rooms and seven bathrooms one for each day of the week.

However, westernized or modern Nanga is, still he likes the Nigerian food prepared by his wife. The Chef prepares for the others, while Mrs. Nanga cooks for the Minister. His children go to expensive English schools and, wear western dresses and speak impeccable English. Nanga has cultivated sophisticated habits like listening to the gramophone, maintains a personal library at home, inaugurates book exhibition posing to indicate his love for books and soon.

In his Ministerial job, being the Minister of culture, he knows not even the spelling of the word culture, yet boasts of African culture. Not only Nanga but the other politicians also take free access to the country’s treasury, join hands with MNC’s in getting the ‘Kick back’ for various public activities. In short the native African politicians are no better in any way in ‘stripping open’ Nigeria – politically, culturally and economically.

The preparations and the election phase present the most inhuman, undermining, unethical employment of chicanery to the full, guns, machetes, weapons, things, muscle power, mercenary, negative campaigning for other, money power and all possible ill methods fly high in the air. Nanga is afraid of Odili’s
honesty and ethics. Hence he tries his best to lure him with money and also promises him a scholarship for overseas higher studies. In the bargain Odili’s old father is made the scapegoat. He is dismissed from the party activity and troubled by the tax people.

If Nanga and the other politicians’ project one side of the political spectrum, Odili Samalu along with his friend Max and his followers form the other part of the spectrum. In *No Longer at Ease* Obi proclaims in a meeting at Umuofia Progressive Union that the country needs young Umuofians. In his conversation with Christopher he argues that “the young educated can afford” to be virtuous. “The experienced men at the top are all corrupt and have no intellectual foundation to support their experience”. (1960 p 17)

Obi is totally against the senior natives at the top positions. His misconception is that University education makes one a gentleman to the core. Odili once makes a categorical remark that, Nigeria would remain corrupt until and unless the old heads at the top position are replaced by young men from Universities.

In contrast to the above ideology of Obi, we find even the young educated natives are equally corrupt as in the case of Max. Achebe shows that in times of need even the intellectual elites take to fraudulent activities and lose their integrity. Practicality is far from reality and Max is projected as receiving £1000 from Koko hiding it from Odili. This example is enough to say that even young intellectuals are prone to temptations, and behind the screen activities.

Conversably in *No Longer at Ease*, we find Obi himself is caught red-handed for a paltry £20. This clearly indicates that the need of the hour takes precedence over moral values. On his homecoming from England, Obi has high hopes and ethical values. But gradually he starts becoming the other way not by choice but by domestic needs.
In the death of Max one sees a failure of the intellectual myth to serve in politics. Intelligence and University Education are all but magnanimous traits no doubt, but how far it works practically in active politics without money is the question. This probably can account for the failure of Max and his group. At the same time one cannot totally deny that all great things make a small beginning. All that Max and his group, whether they come out victorious or succumbed to the contemporary corruption and political pressure, is a different aspect and not that significant compared to the debut attempt they make in countering the corrupt Government. ‘A corrupt politician is a symptom of a corrupt society’. (1986 p 83) He has to be nipped n the bud or else he will be a parasite on the society. Thus Achebe indicates in a literary manner the pre-occupations of a writer as a teacher. He also examines the problems of Nigeria from a different perspective.

Things had got to such a point politically that there was no other answer – no way could you resolve this impasse politically. The political machine has been so abused that whichever way you pressed it, it produced the same results and therefore you wanted another force. Now when it was not clear to me that this was going to be necessarily a military intervention. (1960 p 13-14)

**Anthills of the Savannah**

*Anthills of the Savannah* presents the socio political situation of Post Independent Nigeria after a couple of decades. In Achebe’s own words:

*Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) is in fact the continuation of *A Man of the People*. If *A Man of the People* portrays the ‘political situation of Africa’ immediately after independence i.e., the sixties, *Anthills of the Savannah* gives vent to two decades of post independent
Within six years of independence itself the country was a cesspool of corruption and misrule'. The government was described as "kuptocracy", every official or non-official who had some access to power participated in the universal loot and graft that's what democracy came to mean in the African context (1975 p82)

Two decades of military rule had made the Nigerian treasury bankrupt. The Europeans, who reigned over Nigeria, the less educated politicians like Chief Nanga, the intellectual elites like Max and Odili who never came to power and the members of the Military coup all but never succeeded in giving a proactive leadership. The Indian Express in its Editorial under the heading 'Nigeria's Misfortune' speaks of the Military regime thus;

Much of the third world has been a fertile soil for the rise of the military despots. Oil rich Nigeria has not been crippled by lack of funds to develop the economy and thus to raise the living standards of its people. Here, it is the military class which has enriched itself on the oil wealth more than the politicians. The result has been run away corruption (1987 p7)

When the Military Coup overtook Nigeria, Achebe was very hopeful that at least these young military officials would lead Nigeria to a better future. In fact he very much wanted a forceful external push to be given and that he felt could be done by the military coup. He maintained that:

Where you have a society stuck in mud, in corruption and cannot move either way, forward or back then you really need some violent push to get out of this tray and this might take the form of a military revolution. (1993p7)
This analogy of Achebe has parallel in the Indian and French history also. For example in case of the *Sepoy Mutiny* of 1857 the “gun cartridge episode” of the Indian Sepoys triggered the *Sepoy Mutiny* and in case of the French Revolution it was the *Fall of the Bastille* which was a triggering event for the onset of the revolution. Achebe had hoped that the Military intervention would only prove to be beneficiary to the extent that the next generation of politicians would have learnt a lesson or two from the previous experiences. (1972 p14)

Achebe’s *The Trouble with Nigeria* published in 1983, is a brief tract that presumes a stake in the *The nation state*. (1993 p59-72) It typifies Nigeria’s socio-political history in a bitter language., The remarks of Green, the boss of Obi in *No Longer at Ease* – “The Nigerian is selfish and corrupt through and through” (1960, p 2) is very apt and sums up the real mentality of the native educated Nigerian.

The novel is centered on three characters Chris, Sam and Ikem as David Carroll calls them ‘The Triumvirate’, who belong to the educated elite class and who are associated with each other since student days. Sam is the President present and a Sandhurst trained army officer, Christopher the London graduate journalist is the acting Commissioner for Information and Ikem is the Editor of the *National Gazette* the official Newspaper, Beatrice is a common friend of all the three. The action of the novel is ‘Kangan’ a fictitious locale in Western Africa.

By the time the novel opens, the relationship between all the three is strained due to politics of power and Presidentship. Each one of them is dissatisfied with the other for various reasons and tries to work at their back. Sam, the President finds it very difficult to run the Government with the non-co-operation of his friends, internal conflicts and tribal pressures from outside. Ikem’s crusading editorials’ enrage Sam, and he tries to hunt him due to which Ikem goes underground. Sam’s next target is
Christopher and he flees to Abazon, and is killed in a chance encounter. Sam, the erstwhile ‘charmer’ when Mad Medico first met him has metamorphosed from a ‘paragon of the girls with spiritual purities’ to a blood thirsty, wicked and dictatorial President while his positives raise him up gradually in the social ladder to the top most person of the country. The very same position instills in him the lust to stick to power, arrogance, haughtiness and authoritative nature. Friendship and good relationship have no place in the heart of Sam and he has become literally heartless. The dictatorial reign of Sam has reduced the Kongan State to adultery, rebellions, chaos and ill will all around. Sam, the President without any support from anybody is always busy in snubbing the rebellions single handedly, and sometimes at the point of gun.

Here Achebe just poses the reality fantasy. Sam may be a London educated elite. But politics is not his cup of coffee. He rises to great heights by sheer dint of chance not just merit. Inexperienced Sam becomes a power parasite. The words of Chris in analyzing Sam’s inexperience are very apt.

His excellence came to power without any preparation for political leadership a fact which he being a very intelligent person knew perfectly well and which furthermore, should not have surprised any one. Sandhurst after all did not set about training officers to take over Her Majesty’s throne but rather in the high tradition of proud aloofness from politics and public affairs. Therefore when our civilian politicians finally got what they had coming to them and landed unloved and un honored on the rubbish heap and the young army commanded was invited by the even younger coup makers to become his Excellency the Head of the State he had pretty few ideas of what to do. (1987 p72)
Thus the one time, ethically intact Sam is power and position intoxicated, and always surrounded by sycophants and ear biters. In Sam is portrayed not only the political degradation but also moral bankruptcy. While taking the American girl into his arms he is contemptuous about womanhood in general and passes abusive and derogatory remarks.

Achebe here very clearly indicates that power and position was being thrust on Sam by the military cohorts. It was more a matter of chance rather than choice. Achebe here negates the conception that leadership and administration do not always go with intelligence and that the Fanonian ideology that, when any local culture confronts an alien culture the first generation of intellectual elite have the tendency to misuse power and become headstrong is proved beyond doubt.

The tactful cunningness of Sam is evident in the very early pages of the novel itself when he tries to tackle the Abazonian problem. A team of six members of the Abazonian tribesmen come to meet the President to share their grievance and invites him to the draught stricken area. The Tribesmen are not happy with the situation at home and so they come for an improvement assurance for their draught hit area from the President Sam, who smells the rat. He tactfully instructs Ikem to meet the Abazonian delegation in the hotel so that he could bake some reason to sack Ikem on the ground of political conspiracy with the Abazonian leaders are never given a chance to meet the President but are put behind the bars on the charge of conspiring with Ikem and Abazon is stopped all the privileges due to it. Thus Sam displays the uncanny cunningness and unmerciful humanity in handling the situation. One notices a slow moral degradation and mental apathy in Sam which gather momentum with time.

Achebe for one is not ignorant of the fact that for successful running of
democracy or any government for that matter, the role of the public is equally important. Conversely, the failure of an administration can be equally attributable to the people concerned also. C.L. Innes in this context opines “Achebe’s novels focus on the conflict between social responsibility and individual feeling or self expression” (1990 p166)\(^3\). She makes it very explicit that the Society is equally responsible.

Achebe cites the examples of the execution scene wherein mad populace gather at the appointed place to watch it. It is more an entertainment for the common people rather than a ghastly scene to witness the execution. The mob rejoices at the scene not realizing the sense behind it. Achebe here commends through Ikem on the thoughtless and senseless act of the mob ironically: If its own mother was at that moment held up by legs and torn down the middle like a piece of old rag, that crowd would have yelled with tear in eye watching laughter. (1987 p42)\(^3\)

In Ikem’s words, Achebe packs all the satire and contempt he has for the ignorant multitude. Achebe often wonders at the “bottomless wells of patience” displayed by the multitude towards their wretched leaders. He is pained, intolerant and even egregious about the insensible tolerance of the masses. His rage finds words thus: They have the animal capacity to endure the pain or shall we say, domestication the very words the White Master had said in his time about the black race as a whole. Now we say them about the poor. (1987 p40)\(^3\)

In contrast to the common multitude are the conscientious men like Ikem and Chris who are committed to their crusade against corruption and try to uphold the moral, ethical and social values. Not everyone can be leaders. There are leaders who lead and people to follow. In between, there is always a motivated set of people who act as facilitators in moving the carriage of healthy government? People like Ikem and Chris are the ones who can do that. In one of his interviews, Achebe remarks:
It is people like him (Ikem) who must initiate the action. It cannot be done by the group on the beach, who are delirious and obscenely happy and enjoying the execution. It must be done by the few thinking people. Call them leaders, call them the elite, whatever you like, it is this group who must say ‘this is not right’ (1990 p13).

The most important change or ‘Modernity’ noticed in Achebe is in his delineation of lady characters. In Things fall Apart and Arrow of God, we hardly find any significant female characters. In No Longer at Ease, there is a marginal change and Clara, Obi’s fiancee has a role to play. In A Man of the People, it is Edna and even Mrs. Nanga who participate. But it is only through Beatrice, Achebe has given significance to female characters.

Beatrice is a London educated young lady working as Secretary in one of the departments of Sam. She is also one among Chris and Ikem in installing Sam as the military Head of the State. Beatrice represents the strange and strong foreign educated elite while Ikem’s wife Elewa represents the proletarian person, equally strong and unmindful of comments and criticisms. She in a way represents Elewa’s the common man’s consciousness. Amadi rightly points out ‘Elena’s strength and confidence mean that Beatrice’s class superiority does not affect her in any way. (1991 p 35-54)’

The beauty of Beatrice is that she is the one who senses the impending danger much ahead, and cautions Ikem and Chris about it. She is a clear example of a, sensible and educated modern women in the society. She stands for what she believes and the least bit bothered about Sam. Achebe has portrayed her as the one who manages crisis in an astounding way, unmindful of her own security. She takes the courage of naming Ikem’s child which is usually done by the priest. She goes beyond conventional norms and names the baby Amechina Amen for short meaning May the path never close. In
the naming of Ikem’s child, Beatrice heralds a new and strident future. In the changed context, Beatrice feels women have to take the saddle and raise to the occasion and that is in fact, what she has done. It is Elewa’s uncle who understands the significance behind the naming of the child as Aman and comments, “You people gather in the Whiteman’s house and give the girl a boy’s name. In you young people our world has met its match. Yes! you have put the world where it should sit.(1987 p 227)³⁸

Though Ikem begets a girl, Beatrice feels she is fit enough to carry on the shining path of Ikem.

The novel thus ends with an optimistic note upholding newness, freshness and also upholding Modernity. The three novels of Achebe - *No Longer at Ease, A Man of the People and Anthills of Savannah* portray a shift in his perspective from a pristine culture of *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. Through these novels Achebe projects the deploring and corrupt political situation of post independent Nigeria. If the earlier two novels portray the decadence of tradition, the Colonial and the post independent Nigerian political scenario is in no way better. Earlier people were God fearing and were abiding by the unwritten code of conduct of the tribe. But freedom from the shackles of tradition in the name of ‘modernity’ instead of ensuring liberty entangles the natives to a more selfish, more corrupt, more aberrative, more conflicting, unscrupulous and unhealthy system of power. The universities of education instead of enlightening and training the educated elites for a better future and better nation have induced them for ‘nation leadership’ says Achebe. And these so called ‘educated elites’ have turned into not rational and prudent politicians but practically inexperienced educated elites who strike a dismal chord better in no way better than the semi-educated men like Nanga and other power mongers. In the words of Achebe:
They have cheapened themselves and eroded their prestige by trotting up and down the campus and the waiting rooms of the powerful vying for attention and running one another down for the entertainment of the politician (2009, 147-148).

**Headman of the Little Hill**

*Headman of the Little Hill* is the translated version of the original Kannada version *Kudiyara Koosu* which appeared in 1949. It was rendered into English by H.Y. Sharada Prasad in 1951. *Headman of the Little Hill* is the story of the internal ‘funs and frolics’, ‘joys and jealousies’ of a very small tribal group living in the midst of Western Ghats of South Kanara district of Karnataka.

The Kudiyas are self contained aboriginal tribesmen of Western Ghats who live in small groups. They had been living here since ages among the wilderness of the Ghats with cardamom plants and other vegetation. They claimed the mountain tract for themselves and were free to catch fish or trap and hunt wild life in various ways. In the words of Karanth himself, “The Kudiyas were accustomed to hewing down and burning trees to clear land for the cultivation of paddy. As for food they were self supporting. From their landlords they wanted only cloth and salt.” (1951 p11)

The Kudiyas never grow a second crop where they have already raised one. They do not know the use of ploughs but grow crops sufficient enough for their subsistence and not more than that. They gather the fragrant cardamom from the forest and exchange them for their needs like salt and cloth.

The Kudiyas know no ruler ruling them; nor are they submissive to any authority. *Kalkuda* and *Maleraya* and other forest deities rule them. They are independent of any entanglement and are free to move around and camp wherever
they like. There are too few women for their men and this causes conflicts. This simple and unsophisticated tale of the joys and jealousies of these hill people revolves around Karia, their young headman who is a dare devil in killing a tiger and even catching an elephant. He has inherited the tribal headship from his grandfather but later relinquishes it to free himself from the responsibilities and also finds his own way.

The Kudiyas have a Headman by virtue of ancestry and follow the words of Kalkuda, the tribal deity. The Headman occupies a very important position in the hill. He is the one who settles any feuds, investigates theft and other crimes in an impartial spirit. In fact he is also the person who offers flowers and other things to the priest in times of religious feasts. In short, the Kudiyas' Headman is the clan chief who rules over the clan. If the landlord is the head of the land, the Headman is the head of the clan.

The Kudiyas have a peculiar type of ruling. They are the tenents of one or the other landlord. It is an unspecified relationship which the two cherish:

No law laid down the duties or responsibilities of these men who were not exactly slaves. Once a year the Kudiyas along with their Headman would visit their landlord with loads of wild cardamom and other forest produce and returned with a dhoti and a blanket each.

(1951p11)

Even the landlord is secondary to them, though they believe that the hill has a master as well as a deity. The Kudiyas are a self contented lot with very simple and frugal living. "In that center of the world man needed only two things: salt and cloth. These two would be provided by the landlord. The Kudiyas coveted no money, for their way of life has little need of it. But there are times when they feel an intangible
sense of dependence. But as long as they have strength left in their shoulders they have little worry. The Kudiyas' contact with the outside world is very minimum. There are no roads linking it to the outer world and the cart tract to Kanara and Mysore is wearisome. Footpaths are always overgrown and difficult to make out. One can walk through hills for days together without meeting another soul.

Such being the case, the only link the Kudiyas have with the outer world is their landlord. In the case of the small hill, it is Bhatta who stays in Vitla and visits the hill often. In the case of the big hill, it is Mathew who lives in a town on the hill which is at a day's distance. The owner Mathew has leased it to a relation Valli Braganza who visits the hill during harvesting. Here the novelist Karanth presents the concept of leasing out lands and hills. This shows that many times there is no direct contact between the landlord and the labourers or the Kudiyas.

The lands would change hands frequently and Bhatta is one such landowner who takes over the small hill. Within six months of his taking over, Bhatta not only reigns over the place but brings carpenters and masons from Vitla and has a house built for himself on the hill with the help of the Kudiyas. Bhatta being the landlord leads a luxurious life.

Bhatta looks a prince when he arrives on the back of a brown horse with a retinue. His coming adds a new grace and colour to the lives of the Kudiyas. It is through him that they know the usage of gun, kerosene, tobacco, systematic methods and new techniques in the cultivation of cardamom. He even lets some of the young enthusiasts to use the gun. He often tells them: "Throw your bows and arrows into the fire". (1951, p 12)

Bhatta has a dignity about himself. Whenever he arrives with a silver tapped cane in his hand, young and old in the group stand up and fold their palms in respect.
Bhatta is a tactful and intelligent landowner who has a thorough knowledge of various cropping methods and is also adept in managing, selling and organising. He introduces novel methods in crop cultivation and brings in varied changes:

He was an entrepreneur of the kind that had supplanted traditional landlords. He not only had coconut gardens and paddy fields, but had also mastered the secrets of sowing, rearing, reaping, storing and selling of cardamoms in Coorg (1951 p12).43

Bhatta is considered a master over the hills and not over the clan. Usually the clan is governed by its own norms and as per the dictates of the deity and no interference of any sort from anybody is entertained. On the death of the old headman, a row arises as to who should be made the new headman. Going by the custom of the clan and the saying of the priest, Karia the young boy is the natural heir of headmanship. But this is not being tolerated by Tukra and he brings in the lord of the land Bhatta to settle the issue. The clan deity had pronounced long ago in everyone’s presence that Karia should succeed his grandfather. But Bhatta being tutored by and being biased towards Tukra does not approve of the clan’s verdict though it does not affect him in any manner. He insists that the selection of the new headman be done in his presence as a matter of ego.

Chania, the elected in charge of the clan though very docile in the usual circumstances asserts very clearly that the headman’s place cannot remain vacant for more than seven days. Still when Bhatta doesn’t budge from his stand, Chania appraises in a very emphatic way the custom of the clan:

Master you must not get angry. Ours is a meeting of the clan. It takes place in accordance with time honoured custom. No outsider may have a say here. The village has taken a unanimous decision and it has given
Karia and me the betelnut. The honour given to Karia is his by family right. There is no question of setting it aside. (1951 50)

But Bhatta is not ready to heed to anybody’s appraisal. He vehemently criticises the Kudiyas for not having consulted him in the headman selection process and even threatens the recalcitrant labourers of dismissing them if disobeyed. Nothing works with him and he starts not only interfering but also dominating over the Kudiyas in their clan issues. This very clearly indicates the high handedness and disregard the landlord has for the customs and practices of the Kudiyas. The land lord tries to boss over the natives on issues of religion thereby denying their freedom of faith, belief and even private affairs.

The senior Kudiyas do not relish the words of Bhatta but are not dare enough to voice it openly: “Obedience to the man who took work from them and gave them salt and raiment was in their blood.”(1951, p51-52) Tukra tries to take advantage of the situation by elevating the words of the landlord to that of a deity. The landlord being equated to a deity really enrages Thimma, one of the Kudiyas and he throws out his dissatisfaction by saying:

Master if you are in the right, I do not mind your spitting on my face. But the moment you overstep the limits I am not the man to obey. You must not interfere in clan affairs. Marriage or funeral, punishment or expulsion, we have our own rules. In cardamom picking and all such things, we will obey whomsoever you appoint as foreman. (1951p52)

This adamancy of Thimma enrages Bhatta further. In a fit of fury he shouts:

Scoundrels! Have you the audacity to tell me what I should do? I appoint Tukra to be your headman from this moment. If you listen to
him good; if not you will repent. Know one thing, whoever wags his tail will get thrown out of the hill. If you try to play any game behind my back I shall have you skinned – every one of you. (1951 p52)

The Kudiyas are wounded severally. Never before had they seen authority being exercised on them. An ultimatum was served to them either to obey and stay or to quit. Had it been elsewhere, it could have been a matter of police, government or even courts and lawyers. But the hills are beyond the reach of civilization. No human courts but Gods and spirits tried people here.

With respect to the Big hill, it is a different story. The owner Mathews have leased it to Valli Braganza who visits the hill during the harvesting season. He knows the value of money. He does not bother to build a house for himself as Bhatta. Being a converted Christian he does not have the inhibitions of caste and as such shares his food and drink with the Kudiyas. Though he doesn’t camp in the big hill, he is present for all the important activities like sowing, reaping and festivities.

Once Valli Braganza takes over the big hill, he introduces certain changes. He modifies the earlier custom of presenting clothes to the workers just before the annual fair. Being a Christian, he feels he cannot directly participate in the celebrations distributing gifts. So gives them money and tells them to buy their own clothes. He often feels that the Kudiyas are a stupid lot who go by superstitious religious beliefs and senseless Gods like Kalkuda and Panjurli. Being a Christian he believes in the existence of only one God none other than Christ. He even has the idea of campaigning for the cause of ‘Cross’:

Why should not these stupid people give up Kalkuda, Panjurli and Kalkutiga and follow the ‘crosses? He even asks the Padre to visit the fair and campaign about the glories of Christianity. He even thinks of
building a hut next to the Shiva temple, raise a cross on it and make it a church. (1951 p 85)\textsuperscript{48}

So great is his zeal to promote the new religion among the Kudiyas that he raises a cross on the roof of his own hut on the big hill, and whenever he finds time, tells the Kudiyas of the greatness of Christ.

After the harvesting season, when Braganza had to get back to Karkala, his home town he intends to take Choma's children Giddi and her brother for domestic help. Not able to refuse, Choma and his wife agree. Braganza changes their names to Pauline and Paul, cuts Giddi's brother's long hair and changes their dress too. Giddi is made to discard her sari and is made to visit the church regularly. Giddi's brother who protests in the beginning gradually yields to the lengthy talks of Braganza. Braganza does not have to struggle much to implement the ideas of the new religion into the minds of Giddi and her brother as they knew very little of their religion. In the words of the narrator, "Giddi and her brother knew so little of religion that it is not hard to convince them of the superiority of the modern God over the rabble of barbarous." (1951 p89)\textsuperscript{49} In order to dispel the fear in the minds of Giddi and her brother, Braganza ties a cross around the necks of both of them as a protective talisman. Braganza even lures Giddi with silver mounted ivory comb and a pair of ear rings from a silver smith.

Here comes a crisis for the Kudiyas. They are a set of simple people who are satisfied by what the jungle offers them. They do not have any high aspirations nor are they greedy for anything. Their needs are limited and wants restricted to only salt and clothes. Sometimes these days they are attracted by the beads, bangles and other knick knacks sold by pedlars in the fair. But Giddi is now fascinated by the luring of Valli. She is happy and proud for being a privileged person yet is apprehensive of Kalkuda
whom they have ignored. She even agrees to the marriage proposal of Valli. She is in a conflict not able to decide which is greater – caste or custom or class, and desire, love and heart’s murmur.

While Braganza is so sure and even proud that Christianity is better and more sought after, the Kudiyas are not ready to compromise on their religion however primitive or superstitious. Giddi’s parents and the priest go to Karkala and bring back Giddi and her brother with much difficulty. Both of them are accepted into the clan only after the cleansing ritual.

We find that though the Kudiyas are considered primitive, backward and uncivilized they too have their own ways of living – their own Gods, demons, deities, headman, fairs, festivities etc which they are not ready to forego at any cost. They are staunch tribesmen who do not tolerate even the shadow of a Christian such that they even burn the hut of Braganza in the big hill for having wronged not only Giddi and her brother but the entire clan itself.

Bhatta and Braganza as Chiefs of the small and big hill respectively change, alter, interfere and disintegrate the clan which hitherto behaved like a single organic whole. Both Bhatta and Braganza do not leave the Kudiyas to themselves. They interfere in their religious aspects, in their governing and other clan activities and drive them mad. In case of the small hill, Bhatta heeding to the words of Tukra tries to establish his supremacy over the clan and thereby brings about a rift among the clansmen. Next Bhatta resorts to indecent and uncivilized ways of emotionally blackmailing and threatening the Kudiyas which shatters the peace of the tribe. The tribe is far from civilization, knows no constitution or court of law, yet, has a code of conduct and the entire tribe abides by it. Their ethical values are much rigorously
followed such that even when they dislike Bhatta’s high handedness, they extend him the due respect for he is the one who gives them salt and clothes.

In case of Braganza who is just a middleman between the Kudiyas and Matthew he tries to bring in changes through religion. He taunts and condemns the Kudiyas for their superstitious and baseless customs and practices and is in a marketing spree for his religion. Whenever possible, he tries to drive in his point. Meanest, is the way he proselytizes Giddi and her brother stealthily, forcefully and without the elder’s approval.

In a way both Bhatta and Braganza who are representatives of the modern means of living, in the name of ‘Modernity’ and ‘civilizing spree’ try to gain control over the Kudiyas who are simple nature lovers and stick to their unwritten and unenforced morally abided code of conduct. In this regard it is worthwhile to quote the words of B.A. Vivek Rai:

In his novels like *Kudiyara Koosu* (*Headman of the Little Hill*) and *Bettada Jeeva*, Karanth deals with the encounter between man and nature. He records how man gradually gains control over nature and creates a new culture out of it. (2002 p 86)\(^5\)

Satchidananda Mohanty compares Karanth to the Oriya novelist Fakirmahan Senapathy who also evinces the same interest regarding the tribals. Another comparison is that of Achebe where the peace of the tribesmen are shattered by the advent of the English in *Things Fall Apart*. The only difference being that in *Things Fall Apart* the tribals are initiated to change and even ruled over by the exogenous agents - the English. They are totally alien to the land and its law on the one hand and on the other they neither have the mind to get deep into the lifestyle and understand the tribals, nor do they have any respect or regard to the natives. In case of *The
Headman of the Little Hill, the chief of the small hill Bhatta is an Indian Hindu and Braganza, who mediates for the big hill is an Indian converted to Christianity. Yet both fail to understand the sense behind the life of the Kudiyas and also fail to understand their sensibilities. Both of them are devoid of the basic humanity towards others and also do not empathise with the tribesmen. Considered in this light the Kudiyas are a much better lot as they know their moral responsibilities.

Thus, we can sum up that the Kudiyas tribe is exposed to the outer world or 'Modernity' due to these reasons:

- Due to the advent of the new landlords like Bhatta and Bragenza,
- Due to conversion to Christianity as in the case of Giddi and her brother and lastly
- Due to migration as in the case of Thimma, Giddi and Karia who migrate to the other part of the hills to save themselves.

Among the various attempts to define a Community, Robert Redfield, the anthropologist, identifies four distinct qualities - a smallness of scale, a homogeneity of activities, a self sufficiency across a broad range of needs and a conscious distinctiveness. The Kudiya Community is that which corresponds to the 'Little Community' of Robert Redfield- small, enduring and self sufficient with hardly any self interest.(1956,p8) We find all the vital tenets of traditionalism as postulated by Talcott Parsons - the tribe is an organic whole, which shares the same principles as that of the clan and is rigid enough to make only surficial changes maintaining the fundamental ones in tact..( 1937,p473-490) Karia the new headman is concerned with the peace and survival of the tribe. If all these features speak about the traditional Kudiya community, we also come across various features of modernity: the way Bhatta gets a camp house built for himself getting carpenters and masons from
Vitla; the introduction of Christianity and the process of proselytisation in the case of Giddi and her brother by luring them; the migration of Kariya, Thimma and Giddi and the process of cultivation of the forested slopes and also the way the tribals rebel against the land owners or managers as in the case of Bragenza and Bhatta being opposed. Thus we find that tradition and modernity find their presence presented parallely in the tribe.

Having studied the political and social life of the Kudiya tribe in *Headman of the Little Hill*, we move on to another reputed novel of Karanth *Choma's Drum* which also has a social theme.

**Choma’s Drum**

*Choma’s Drum* is the story of an untouchable by name Choma in Bhogana village in South Kanara. Choma, the protagonist of the novel comes from a low class community who are labourers toiling in the fields from dawn to dusk. Choma’s community usually works under land lords as tenants. Whatever the landlord pays for their labour is partly in cash and partly in terms of food grains. The people do not have any high demands and the only few things they need from outside salt, chilies and cloth which of course are given by the land-lord. During festivals celebrations or illness, the labourers are not able to manage the expenses and as such fall into debt with the landlord which they clear by working in the plantations, for a few months till the debt is cleared.

Working in the inhuman, unhygienic and malarial atmosphere of the plantations, drive the workers sick so are not able to work properly. This further aggravates and further adds up to their existing debt. It is not at all unusual even if the worker die, knee dee, in debts. In such cases, debts are passed on from the parents to
the children also. Hence it is rather unusual to hear of an untouchable having cleared a loan. On the other hand, it is rather a boon if they do not create fresh loans.

Choma, who has lost his wife, is the father of five children. He is eking out his life working in the fields of landlord Sankappaiah. Choma from the beginning nurtures the secret ambition of becoming a farmer, knowing fully well that 'farming is a vocation alien to his community'. Nevertheless, he clings to the hope that someday he would plough in his own or a rental field. Always dreaming of realizing his dream somehow, he rears a pair of oxen to plough his prospective land. When the oxen are old enough to carry the plough, Choma decides to leak out his ambition to Lord Sankkappaiah, who alone, he thinks, can help him to realize his dream. Before going to Sankkappaiah, he divulges his purpose of going to the lord to his only daughter Belli. She at once comes out tartly and cautions her father not to make any such demands and get snubbed.

But Choma is not a type of person who would listen to anybody on this issue. He is angry with Belli for dampening his hopes and remarks:

I had hoped to be a farmer during my wife's time, but it was not given to her to see me so. Since her death I have been hoping that my children will see me realize my dream. Should you now try to kill my hopes? (1978pl19)

Belli is an intelligent down to earth woman who believes in the popular saying that 'a black dog can never be scrubbed white'. She tries her best to apprise her father of the law of the land and also tells him of the futility in aspiring for more. She is very well aware of the fact that to be a farmer one has to be born a brahmin, or a banta or a gowda. Having been born accursed, it is not possible for them to become farmers.
She even acknowledges the helplessness of the land lord in this regard. She abides by
the rules and regulations of the land and does not think of flouting them.

Belli, the daughter of Choma, is young and belongs to the present generation,
but still, accepts traditional customs without questioning. She is not ready to go
against the community custom. She tells her father:

Leave the landlord aside. If you become a farmer, will that not anger
our own community? Moreover, what do we lack now? We have a pair
of oxen which no one else in our community has. We are never without
work ploughing or harvesting. (1978 p 54)\textsuperscript{54}

Belli is one person who prudently reconciles to reality without nurturing any
impossible dreams or even challenging the existing system. Moreover she is satisfied
though not happy at their present condition. She is relieved that at least that they
always have one or the other work to do. She deliberates on her father's ambition and
questions him,

What additional benefits do we derive from farming? May be, we will
harvest a few seers of paddy. But if the rains fail and the crop is bad,
we shall actually be loser. No such worry now. As long as there is
strength in our limbs there will be no want of work. We daily get half a
seer of rice from the landlord. Now the landlord is bound to give us
something more for hiring our oxen; he has already spoken of it. What
more can we wish for? (1978 p 54)\textsuperscript{55}

On his next visit to the landlord Choma hesitatingly requests: “Master, you
have so many tenants. If you could lease me a piece of land, even barren land, I shall
rever your name for the rest of my life” (1978 p 28)\textsuperscript{56}
It was not in tradition for a ‘Holeyā’ (meaning untouchable in Kannada) to own land. Hence the moment Sankkappayya hears Choma’s ambition he is surprised. Never in his life had he heard of such an ambition from a Holeyā and he consults his aged mother on this new issue. As expected the lady of the house, leave alone accepting, curses Choma from inside saying: “Abba! The insolence of these Holeyas” (1978 p 29)\(^\text{57}\)

With this comes the reply of Sankkappayya “Our ancestors never leased a field to any untouchable, and it is not possible by me to do so” (1978 p 28)\(^\text{58}\)

Left to him, Sankkappaya never had any reservations in giving a piece of barren land to Choma, but his mother wouldn’t agree for it at any cost and he wouldn’t go against his mother. This very clearly indicates the conservative nature of the older generation of upper class which is not ready to accept any change in favour of the untouchable. While the younger generation represented by Sankkappayya is not brave enough to go against the wish of the elder, though he himself doesn’t mind. Sankkappayya’s mother is an old fashioned lady who does not want a Holeyā to become a farmer. She counters all the pleadings of his son by arguing: Has anyone else leased a field to a Holeyā? If someone has you may do the same. Don’t be the first to offer brahminhood to an untouchable, for that may only earn you a bad name. (1978 p 47)\(^\text{59}\)

Choma could have very easily realized his wish if he had accepted the offer of the government officer who had offered Choma a piece of land outside the village. But Choma does not accept it as he feels it would mean tearing away from the landlord, which he doesn’t want to. If this is the relationship between the landlord and labourer, then there is the other aspect of relationship between the plantation owners and managers and the workers.
Workers who worked in the plantation for one or the other reason would fall into debt with the owner and had to struggle lifelong to repay it many times unsuccessfully. In Choma’s case, he has worked in a coffee plantation at Kalasa for a few days. He probably had borrowed a small sum of money during the time of his wife’s death. Whenever the planter faces labour shortage he dispatches his supervisor either to collect the money or pick up the worker in order to settle the dues. Many times it was the cunningness of the supervisor who would manipulate the accounts to suit his convenience.

In coffee plantations, hundreds of employees work. All these employees are given separate sheds of size not more than a bee hive. Rows and rows of such sheds stretch across the plantations. The sheds are all murky without proper ventilation. This is the type of dwelling that is provided in the plantations. Choma is forced to send his two sons Chaniya and Guruva to the plantations along with Manuel to work in order to repay his debt. Being home sick on the one hand and unable to stand the unhygienic plantation conditions, Chaniya and Guruva take to toddy and spend a large part of their earnings. As a result of which the debt instead of getting reduced increases all the more.

Added to this, Guruva develops a liking for a neighbouring Christian girl Marie much against the caution of Chaniya. On their way home, Guruva silently disappears with the Christian family without any intimation even to Chaniya. This disappoints Chaniya and Belli while it enrages Choma. Later they learn that Guruva has even married that Christian girl and that he has even got converted to their religion. This infuriates Choma a lot. He is not only disappointed but disillusioned also. He had hoped that his sons would clear him off of the debts and Guruva’s forsaking everybody for the sake of a girl not only enrages but also disheartens him.
He vows not to set his eyes on him once again, as Guruvà has forsaken the creed and
customs of his ancestors for the sake of a girl. Even Belli is shocked that her dear
brother has forsaken not only the family but also the religion for the sake of a girl.

Choma loses his son Guruvà for an alien religion, Chaniya for the deadly fever
and also Kala in the pond. All these frustrate him very much. He is angry with
himself, with God and the untouchable system itself due to which his son could not be
rescued from drowning. On the one hand he is not able to realize his dream of
ploughing a piece of land and on the other he has lost two sons. The third son that is
Guruvà also is lost to him though alive because he has forsaken his own religion and
taken up another religion. By taking up another religion, he has owned land and has
become quite a significant person. Suddenly Choma feels that his own God and his
own religion have failed him and even the landlord Sankkappayya on whom he had
relied so much has also not been supportive. Hence, the thought arises in Choma to
follow the steps of his son so that at least it could be a solace to him that he can
realize his long cherished dream. Here what is significant is, that Choma is deeply
pained for two things: One, he feels that by taking up the new religion he can
probably realize his dream of owning a piece of land. Secondly, he finds that his own
people, his own God and his own landlord can in no way be of any help to him. So
thinking he changes his attitude towards the new religion and decides to take it up so
that at least he can realize his dream. Here there are three aspects involved:

1. Choma is modern in the sense that unlike his fellow clansmen he
nourishes a desire to own a piece of land

2. Not to go by the conventional aspect of sticking to one’s own
religion come what may

3. To think that there is some other alternative.
The road, he now realized he had so long tried to follow been riddled with thorns of frustration, Sankkappayya would never fulfill his ambition even if he threatened to immolate himself before him. He was now sure he would never be a farmer as long as he was an untouchable. He remembered Guruva, without jealousy or anger in his heart. The question rose in his head why should I not become a farmer the way he has? (1978, p102)60

Since his own ancestral God had failed him, what was the harm in accepting the padre’s God? He also remembered Neela’s death. The tragic spectacle stood before him in bold relief and lurid hues as he recalled the heartlessness of those who stopped the Brahmin boy from going to the rescue of his drowning son. Neela would be living now only if he had belonged to any caste but accused Holeyas.

“The Holeyas”, he thought bitterly, “are not wanted by the God of their own clan. Why should that God cause them to be born and tormented?” No more of this troublesome God! His God hereafter would be Christ - the God that enabled Guruva to become a farmer. It no longer mattered who their God was. (1978 p113)61

Choma reveals this to Belli and even she endorses Choma’s view. She asks her father as to why they should not join the new religion which she hopes could bring good to them. Finally Choma also agrees as he feels let down by everyone.

Unlike the earlier generation, which opposed the Whitman’s learning and religion, many of the natives get converted into Christianity and become ardent Christian followers. They are totally against idol worship and heathen practices.
END NOTES

1. www.quotehd.com/quotes/william-hurrell-mallock-quote-politics


3. Ibid., P8.

4. Ibid., P94.

5. Ibid., P28.

6. Ibid., P7.

7. Ibid., P43.

8. Ibid., P44.

9. Ibid., P46.

10. Ibid., P46.

11. Ibid., P46.

12. Ibid., P66.

13. Ibid., P67.


15. Ibid., P74.

16. Ibid., P106.

17. Ibid., P80.

18. Ibid., P12.

19. Ibid., P40.


23. Ibid., P 17


27. Achebe Interview Kunapipi, Volume 9 No 2, 1987, 7

28. Cited in Indian Express dt 01.12.1993, p7


33. C.L. Innes, *Chinua Achebe: The Novelist as Critic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University), (1990) 166


35. Ibid., p40


37. Omal Sougon, *Language Foregrounding and Inter-textuality in Anthills of the Savannah* (Matatu: No 8, 1991) 35 - 54
38. Ibid., p227
41. Ibid., 1951) 11
42. Ibid, P12
43. Ibid, P12
44. Ibid., P50
45. Ibid., P51, P52
46. Ibid., P52
47. Ibid., P52
48. Ibid., P85
49. Ibid., P89
54. Ibid., P54
55. Ibid., P 54
56. Ibid., P28
57. Ibid., P29
58. Ibid., P28
59. Ibid., P47
61. Ibid., p113