It is therefore evident that in whatever way his works may be viewed or reviewed, the aspect of searching for tradition embedded in the flatness and larger than life characters cannot be missed.

CHAPTER 4

PERSPECTIVES OF CHANGE

The writings of Achebe can be traced in phases according to the periods of their publication and their immediate socio-political implications. The African trilogy was written at the period of pre-independence where much colonial influence on the culture and history of the peoples was taking place. It was during this period that he had taken upon himself the responsibility of purporting cultural transformation through reminiscences for his people and bringing an alternative picture of African history to the Western world.

He takes on the realistic picture of the post independence Nigeria and assesses the existing norm of society. He is unhappy about the reaction of his society to the new found independence. It is in these depictions that we find an undeniable presence of fragmented ideologies and standards in the society. The two most important books perhaps that came about as the living examples of this change are *Anthills of the Savannah* and *The Man of the people*. The collection of short stories *Girls at War* and *other stories* also are a continued canvass of the aftermath of the independence. The direct consequences are definitely the coups because of the lack of leaders with integrity or ‘people’
for that matter. The lingering colonial elements that had begun to become the pseudo lifeline for the educated and better off masses became one of the greater reasons for the deterioration of the social values and the cause for creation of the power hungry individuals who eventually gained control and caused the death of the peace in the nation.

And yet other than the political area it also pertinent to see if there was any other aspect of the change that decolonisation had brought about which became another agenda for Achebe. In the Trilogy he portrays the first few steps taken by the Igbo community towards an understanding of the incursion of the alien culture and administration which shakes up the core of their existing norms of the life they had always led and understood.

There is a gradual influx of the new power and its consequences begin to show. There we find the tryst of tradition with colonialism and imperialistic pressures and the conflicts thus arising from it. Keeping in pace with the changing times Achebe moves on to portray the times after colonialism. While many have called his works an optimistic nostalgia for the past, yet it cannot be overlooked that he brings about a balance by giving a critical outlook into the weakness of his people and their inevitable downfall.

He tries to critically analysis into the choices his people have made over their own roots in seeking answers from the half comprehended ideals of their colonisers. There is no glossing over the negative elements of his people and the society both modern and traditional; they fall under his critical views.

His propaganda for the responsibility and role of the writers in their society is time and again repeated within the pages of his books. He embeds his spokespersons in the form of his characters and lends them his voice. This
trait is seen more conspicuously in the post independence works where the conflict is no longer between the colonisers and the natives but rather between the natives and the elite citizens of the nation.

This is a sign of the society’s downfall when they have already forgotten the struggle for their liberation from alien invasions on their customs and traditions; and they follow suit in twice colonising their own underprivileged for the money and the power they had seen in their colonising counterparts.

In the Anthills of the Savannahs, Ikem represents the possibility of change. His method is to expose through means of ‘crusading editorials’, ‘essays in overkill’ (Achebe, Anthills 23) so as to gather support for the collective burden in the prevailing issues. He is able to start that change he wants to see but ironically only in his death as well as Chris’ does the real move for the desired change come.

It actually serves as a catalyst that brings a group of people together and they gather around Beatrice and thereafter it presages the “possibility of a new beginning; a new dispensation” (Rutherford, 3). It is for his provocative oratory and stand that he is fired from his job then arrested and eventually murdered. Achebe believes that change is as much credited to a good leader as that which can be attributed to any historical moment. But mostly it is the leader who plays a critical role for the successful wave of change in the society. He articulates:

“But if you look really seriously at revolutions, you will see that the great changes in history have been brought about by a handful of people. It is also true that you might say, “The times were ripe”. And no one can dispute that
either; the two must play a part. But I think the spark, this little catalyst without which a chemical change will not happen, is vital. This critical element has to be brought in before you can energise the mixture into action. And this is the role of leadership: to create the circumstance in which the people begin to act with awareness” (Ibid, 3). It draws out the similar views and ideologies of Achebe himself who has adopted his own method of education and correction in order to expose the subterfuges of the colonial administration as well as the then functionaries of the indigenous ruling elite. This trait is perhaps a continuing action of the stand that he takes against the misrepresentations of Africa by not only the Europeans but the African writers themselves who relied on the European version of Africa.

But in keeping with the task of highlighting his beliefs, he does not deviate from the path of being the story teller. He tells the story of a new Nigeria with a new perspective from that of the world he portrays in the previous works, in the two post independence works. It is most interesting that while the transitions were happening the Eurocentric world was trying to come to terms with the modes of the African realities as was being given by both African and European critics.

Wole Soyinka vehemently opposed against the concept of ‘Africanness’, propagated by certain critics like Gerald Moore and Bernth Lindfors and even African critics like Jeyifo. He asserted that there was no clear indication as to what the term really meant, and to confer on it the idea of associating just the African past and its oral traditions as a part of literature. He comes up with something he calls ‘revolutionary humanism’ (Soyinka, 27-57). It is perhaps this
ideal that had become a backbone for writers like Soyinka and Achebe to write in
the English language as opposed to the stand taken by Ngugi and his Gikuyu
works and Ousmane and the Senegal works (qtd in Lindfors and Kothandaraman,
83). In being true to the fact that as a writer he has the role of a teacher, he has
made his works the canvass of the age and the socio-political changes that
become a part of his nation and his people. It is then that after independence that
he came up with a very critical and strong novel. A Man of the People which has
perhaps been a product of the disillusionment of a post independence Nigeria that
awakened in Achebe bitterness against his people. This novel has been distinctive
and much noted, because of the absence of the trait that he is generally known
for, which is the absence of the Igbo proverbs. But it must not be missed that he
had used the proverbs to emphasise on the particular context used.

For instance, the proverbs in Arrow of God play an intrinsic part in
exemplifying the dignity that existed in the society while in A Man of the people,
whatever proverbs have been put in have been for the comic effect except where
Odili’s father has been mentioned. His perspective of change that all had been
waiting for is not all that glorious and the anticipation for a better Nigeria post
colonial does not happen as the country goes through one crisis after another.
This is the reason why the novel is not a contemplative work but a dismayed
reaction against the deteriorating present in Africa. It is a sardonic kind of
tragedy from Arrow of God. It is a serious indictment of post-independent Africa.

Perhaps this is why this book is considered a departure from
his usual trait, but it would still make sense to say that this book was a
natural addition after Arrow of God. Achebe could not help reacting to the
turmoil in the nation but with a book almost laying out the grim future. The
political turn of events, the military coup so to say, provoked many including
the dictatorial government there to suspect him of being a rebel and Achebe and his family went through a life threatening adventure displacing them; and all that, because he had already foreseen it in the novel.

Yet the character that caused so much of controversies Nanga, has been questioned for his credibility. There have been critics who have accused the author of manipulating the attention of the readers against the character as the archetype for the reactionary generation (Agovi, 191-93). It would be very superficial to state that the novel is about his individualism as has been argued, and the pursuit for materialism which is the main cause for all the evils of corruption, greed and cynicism. The story of Nanga is more than a story of greed and associated vices. As another critic would say that an individual’s action cannot wholly be the cause of the downfall of the entire nation (Gupta, 86). There is another interesting way of looking at the age of the novel.

It can be convincingly said that the novel is the story of the circumstances that the African state has to go through wherein it is completely breaking with the past (Cook, 21). Resultantly it is going through the process of confronting the new administrative mechanisms on its own.

So there we have the Nanga of the new nation on the one hand possessing and the Odili also of the new nation, on the receiving end. Generally placed, it does not give a constructive end as the future nor does it seek answers by delving into the past. This is evidence enough that Achebe did not gloss over the ugly side of the African nations but was their greatest critic.

It is evident that Achebe does not project Nanga as a character but as a signifier of the evil in the society he talks about. It is a strategy that Achebe
adopts to emphasise the satirical content of the book which has also been looked into as a change into a social criticism.

When he becomes the representative of the people, there is an introspection on the character of Chief Nanga even in the literal sense. Achebe moves between the worlds of the nation state, the ethnic groups and the transitory phase between the two. This is a state that all has to go through in order to become a part of the change in the African society. It creates a path to power that individuals like Odili, Obi Okonkwo and President Sam are initiated into.

Their world is always associated with the ‘moral set up’ of their ethnic roots and interweaving them during the transition, is only considered as an outrageous act. (Parker and Starkey, 91) The whole move towards this path is seen from the second novel *No Longer at Ease* as he shows the society move into a transitory phase. It seems to be magnified into a much bigger picture though as the author’s reaction seem to be unobstructed and unfolds into another story in the light of the previous ones except here the shades show the recurring lines in a different light.

The story is that of a disenchantment and disillusionment; where the exposure into the world of the Western civilised world actually brings in the ambiguous search for the balance between the two worlds: their ethnicity and their new found alternative. This is seen as a quest by the Umuofians, who believe that:

“In our folk stories a man gets to the land of the spirits when he has passed seven forests, seven rivers and seven hills. Without doubt you have visited the land of the spirits” (*No Longer* 59).
The land of the spirits is the world they cannot comprehend yet, a world where they have not ventured yet. The allusion to Yeats poetry is seen manifested especially with the element of disillusionment being highlighted through each passing novel.

We see the underlying concept of the ‘second coming’ or the apocalypse ringing through all the novels. Not only the social but also the economic layers are affected by the political transitions the nation goes through. Individuals adapt to those changes in ways they understand most and it is not always pleasant. The reaction of the characters is seen in the chapters that unfold and their tragedy is precipitated in their attempts to cope with the changes.

Be it Okonkwo or Obi or Ezeulu or the more influential figures like Chief Nanga and His Excellency Sam, President of Kangan. The characters either become the champions of his causes like Okonkwo and Ezeulu or they become the figure of the Messiah or the Beast who brings in chaos and destruction in the event of trying to bring in the ‘promised land’. The allusion to Yeats ‘Second Coming’ does not therefore end with Things Fall Apart; it is continued as the anarchy once let loosed is beyond control.

He uses paradigms to justify his stand and in this light it can be said that the depiction of the social evils are actually a prefiguration of the worse times to come. He subtly adds in that the chaos caused has to be rectified from any further permeation into the society. It is with this bend of mind that he raises the question of the legitimacy of political power and of the leaders who attain that path by pushing their paths to power.

Both the novels talk about the chilling experiences of the consequences of such questionable leadership. The depiction of the coups and counter coups follow Anthills of the Savannah after A Man of the People which was perhaps
a kind of a prologue to the latter novel. There is no assurance of a better leader or a better tomorrow where he has splattered images of the so called Messiahs in the form of soldiers and their leaders who corrupt shamelessly and commit crimes against men and women.

Achebe seems to be fulfilling his stand for the role of the writers as the prophets foreseers of the society where he has described the events of the military coup in his novel much before it actually happened in Nigeria. The first person narrator Odili Samalu, is not able to get across to the people because of his inability to relate and therefore respond to the needs of the poor and the needy that he separates himself from.

It is of no surprising matter that characters like Odili and Obi being exposed to the education and the culture of the Western world become a case of intellectuals who are confused. They linger on about the path they need to take and allow the guile of status and position in the society they belonged to, to get the better of their traditional roots. They actually come to occupy the space between the government and the public and often end up trying to please both for the sake of their selfish well being.

It is shown in both the novels that the class of intellectuals aligned themselves with those in power and the poor and the illiterate were left at their mercy. As in all postcolonial nations, the welfare of the nation is left in the hands of the people who have been educated in the West and so they become distant form their own roots. Very few are able to retain their traditional integrity.

Perhaps it is this condition that prompts Achebe to highlight the fact that the army commander with virtually no knowledge and experience on politics or world matters takes on control of the nation for the lure of power
and riches, and leads it into the condition where deterioration has set in. He is backed by a group of individuals who are equally ineffective and are not connected at any point to the people from the outside. Chris is the commissioner of information but fails to hear the testimony of the delegation from the drought stricken Abazon just like the President who refused to even acknowledge the fact that it was a truly national crisis. The story is heard by Ikem Osodi who later relates it to the more than two thousand students in the University of Bassa in Kangan. In doing so he is able to demand attention from the audience, it is a kind of a coup on them where they had been brought to come to terms with the ground reality.

Abazon refuses to affirm the Presidents’ bid for unlimited authority by refusing to give their consent for the President for life referendum. Refusing to deal with the drought is his way of getting back at the people for the act of dissension. Ikem also initially becomes a part of the silent spectator to the referendum and the villagers from Abazon take it as a political act of subjugation of their freedom. But his refusal to be silent after his suspension is also another opportunity won to voice out his discord.

Change turns round the corner when on Ikem’s death Chris gets out of his farcical responsibility as the information officer with a job not to broadcast certain directives, and sends them out for the general public for information. The authority or the President is mistrustful about everyone around him especially where information is disseminated and publishes distorted comments of that made by Ikem on the President. Achebe shows the breaking of the nation from its past and entering into the age of the sole individual who seems to be the immediate solution to their dilemma.
The students tear out the pages of the National Gazette and Chris is able to get out true information regarding the accounts that led to the assassination of Ikem. The transmission of correct information to the public and their awareness of the real story is one element of getting to become a part of the initiation of change. The intellectual community understood the importance of the influence of the writers with their stories to tell people.

Ngugi had a different approach to the exposure of truth. He presented the picture of the emphasis of the role that the lower classes had to play in the struggle for liberation. He presented the peasants as the initiators of culture and not dehumanised objects. His writing demanded the participation of the people in the political events of the nation. In a colonial set up the writer's removal from the social realities is an aid to the colonial or imperial regimes. Achebe therefore asserts that the writers’ role extends beyond the persona and the art itself. The story had to be told and with truth.

But it is glaring that he leaves out delving into the limitations and imperfections of the anti-colonial nationalistic movements which has played equally big roles in shaping the characters of Nanga and Odili from the new cut of the nation.

*A Man of the people* is a serious indictment on the changing society but structurally has not been as Achebean as he could have got. This is perhaps on account of his leanings towards his authorial ideology concerned with the destiny of his people and the nation. The problem cited at the end of the novel is carried over to *Anhills of the Savannah*. It has been very clear that Achebe has been ideologically leaning towards the upliftment of his society and his people. This work on the other hand is his fierce fight on ideologies and its
exploitations by the all parties from the society with vested interests of their own at the cost of their own humanity as he shows in the characters.

The ‘anthills’ is the master symbol of the tale, the most significant imagery and the title of the novel. The *Anthills of the Savannah* are actually the elders of the Abazon who embody the accumulated wisdom and experiences of the people there. They stand for the collective instinctive wisdom of the race who survive time to, “... to tell the new grass of the savannah about last year’s brush fires” (*Anthills*, 38).

He stands as the greatest critic for the debasement that takes place in the society and vents his an authorial fury on those who pass on the blame on the foreigners who had ruled their nation covering up their own crimes and sins. It may be noted that this disillusionment he projects here is also elemental for the intellectual of the Third World Country who had held strong beliefs in the decolonisation for a purged beginning.

He is not ashamed to admit that the lingering colonial ideas and the ideals also have been imbibed by his people. He exposes the grim truth that they have taken it further by adding their own opportunistic interests by sacrificing the ideals of their roots for greed and materialism. It is considered as one of the most explicit works on modern Nigeria where the need to tell a story to be reminded of the past and to find ways of coping with the present has been shown with great pains. The social responsibilities of the writers in the society has been emphasised upon.

Achebe while hoping for a change is also aware that any majestic visions of transforming the world at once is but an illusion and develops his own vision for a more organic society. He is opposed to the idea of the
existing conflict between classes and propagates for a unity between the elite and the people and be undisturbed by the unsettling notions passed around by the theories and ideas of the colonisers. Ikem ridicules Marxist systems such as the proletariat because he believes that, “...roots have been dug up and branches hacked away” (Ibid, 139).

The existing conflict is not between the bourgeoisies and the proletariat but between the poor, illiterate peasant mass and the educated and Westernised elites in the society where their relationship is almost contemptuous; the latter of the former. Achebe places four such redeeming characters in the novel who try to bridge the gap in their own situations. These four characters are Ikem, Chris, Beatrice and Emmanuel who in their own way come to terms with their real place in the society and try to make a connection with the people of the common masses.

The exemplary behaviour of these characters are meant to be a lesson for the Nigerians, as an intellectual like Ikem marries Elewa from the lower working class, Beatrice who did not believe in equal behaviour for the lower classes manages to remove her high handed nature and Emmanuel falls in love with Edamma again who belongs to the lower class.

He tries to show the promotion of the reconciliation of the two classes that is not only the rich and the poor, but the common people and the elite in the society. The other beauty of Achebe’s effort in portraying the reconciliation is the extension of his vision for harmony which extends beyond myth and embraces symbolism, ritual and mysticism. The symbol of the new path towards the unified future is seen in the portrayal of the birth of Ikems daughter symbolising the new Nigeria. The massive space between the classes is restored through the ‘ecumenical fraternisation’ (Anthills, 224).
Achebe’s vision of organic harmony may be too optimistic for some but it is woven with the interplay of history and reality in its various facets. He sends out the message that “society is an extension of the individual”, (Anthills, 99). So, it may also seem that the ills in the society are the result of human wickedness and can be brought about by the reformation of the individual. On the other hand the materialistic interpretation says that the laws of social development justify exploitation and injustice (Berlin,5). According to this theory, it becomes inevitable that in this process of one class pursuing its interests, the other may be exploited by the other which was only rational. It is to say that the conflict between the classes is built in and it is an inevitable chain of events. Achebe completely rejects the latter and does not sympathise with the believers in class as they seem to,

“...see no blot of villainy in the beloved oppressed nor grant the faintest glimmer of humanity to the hated oppressor” (Anthills, 100).

The concept of change for Achebe does not necessarily mean complete control of and by the social and economic organisation but what is necessary is the realization of the basic goodness of a man’s soul which helps to create new meanings allowing the ushering in of a new and fresh social and political order. He believes in the ability of the individuals to have the power of contributing to the making of meanings and values and bringing about a new social and political order.

He has made it clear in the essays he wrote about this dilemma and says that, “The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership.” (Achebe, Trouble 1) He seems to be implying that Nigeria needs a
leader who is deeply rooted in traditional values for a better understanding of the problems of the common people. His Excellency’s tendency to cling onto the foreign journalists is just another consequent of the Western education and stay as shown in the novel. But it cannot be overlooked that he does not delve deep into the consequences of having that kind of leader and on whether it would really be conducive to the future of Nigeria when the nation would finally come to contact with greater international forces other than the Europeans.

He looks at it from the point of an artist and not as any theorist which is why his interpretation of the reality seems to be idealistic. A lot can be argued critically, as far as his interpretation of reality is concerned, but the fact remains that he has built it on humanistic values of human dignity and the gift of freedom. This is because he has kept track and pace of the developments of the Nigerian society.

He is aware of the significance of the past and its impact on the present and this can also be seen in the character of Beatrice Okoh who is Chris’ beloved and also the most powerful and well rounded female character in Anthills. We see an autobiographical account where she tries to ward off allegations against her as a power hungry woman who manipulates men in power for her vested interests. She has been an embodiment of the modern Nigerian woman who basks in the comfort of her educated background and her position in the society. But she also forgets her role in becoming the inspiration for the lesser privileged in her society. The education and the position give her an arrogance she exercises only on the lesser people. She throws an insight into her own weaknesses as a human and does not simply
dwell on the glory of the past but rather comes to grips with the present by “bringing together the many broken pieces of this tragic history” (Anthills: (82)).

The voice he lends to Beatrice is perhaps a move to understand the need for female empowerment in the African context. He had been criticised by women litterateurs for showing a contemptuous attitude against women. And perhaps he acknowledges the need for the other African writers to pick up pace in recognising African women in ways other than the secondary positions given to them by the men in the society.

The place and position of the women in Things Fall Apart and the other two novels in the trilogy are harsh and demanding. Their lives are controlled only by domestic obligations and the men in their lives, mostly the husbands. Anything effeminate was never considered worthwhile and men without titles were often compared to frail women. Even the portraiture of Clara in No Longer at Ease to a great extend is limited and fails to give the portrait of women a complete modern makeover. But we see the change in the portraiture and the depths the characters possess are seen by the time Anthills of Savannah is published.

Beatrice voices against the entire society which shows against the role women played in the struggle for liberation. The same kind of treatment is given to the role of the working class and the peasantry and she speaks against such predisposition in her critique of Sembene’s film. In a new turn of events it is seen that she takes charge of the struggle and yet refuses to claim predominance of her position. She is able to rebuke and criticise Chris for his complacency in making good use of his power and is unable to bring about the change expected of him in his position. She states,
“The story of this country as far as you are concerned is the story of the three of you...” (Anthills, 66).

In Things fall Apart also we see the role of the woman heard and respected only when she shows herself in the garb of the priestess Agbala, the oracle of the hills. Her voice of power and divine wisdom is given due importance as the voice of the gods in her possession. So also we see Beatrice almost attaining that same divine status in taking charge and lending out her voice in a male dominated set up.

It is noteworthy to dwell on the fact that Achebe focuses on the part of the story where the traditional ritual involving daughters is spoken of. The ritual is based on the myth that when Power wrecked havoc on the earth, the Almighty Sun sent his daughter Idemili to clothe his naked body. The immense sacrifice that the daughters in the African society are expected to make at times that are called for. Achebe takes a dig at even Beatrice in this matter because like all those who were educated in the Western traditions, she did not know much of the native traditional legends and myths.

But she was nevertheless aware of the native tales that had the power to subvert the colonial history and the myths surrounding it. In all his works Achebe refers to the native stories which refer to warnings of the moral nature. In specific he seems to be talking about the world view of the Igbo people that they worked better on discussion and consensus and tells us about the tale of the man arrogant enough to wrestle his Chi because he underestimated his chi as a weakling and scrawny and was rightly defeated.

He lays emphasis even in the stories that the Igbo people did not recognise any kind of totalitarian head even in their own community. Any
dispute regarding the welfare of an individual or the community was taken by a group of titled elders in the community who put on the garb of the egwugwus or the masque representatives of their gods and then was decided upon. There was no room for personal ambition for power and whatever title they had to take titles they had to work for it and prove their worth.

That is why the two protagonists of Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God, Okonkwo and Ezeulu fail in their attempts to remain in isolated power and encounter tragedies of great magnitude when they attempt to exercise isolated power. There is an understated warning that the people have innate love for freedom and there is always a possibility for dialogue with the elders in the society. He emphasises on the values of respect and integrity amongst the people, this is the reason why there is room for dialogue in the Igbo tradition, they act as checks and balances in checking the chances of any particular individual coming to power.

Fanon had predicted the emergence of a class structure whom he called the under developed bourgeoisies, which in all societies eventually assumed leadership post independence and sat at the pinnacle of newly found power. He asserts that this class consciously and unconsciously inherited colonial elements. It is inevitable that the class becomes corrupt and followed suit. The predicament was the inclusion of the intellectuals in this class. He calls for the intellectuals to align themselves with the lower class of the society who make up the core of being ‘a people’ (Fanon, Wretched 121-163).

Achebe is committed to the weaker groups of the people as he is dissatisfied with the inefficient and the ineffective middle class of Nigeria. He is aghast with the inability of the class of intellectuals to address the issues of the poorer and the most affected lot of the society. He is not
satisfied with the way that the same practises that had been condemned were being followed by the same group of people who opposed it.

He spoke of the dual function of the African writer as the spokesman for propagating the rich and varied cultural heritage of the Africans. The other was to be able to address the issue of recurring trend of colonialist ideals of oppression of the weak, this time it was by the black people on the black people itself. This has been portrayed vividly in A Man of the People. It should be of no surprise then that he changes sides from being a cultural spokesman of his people to that of becoming a social critic. He asserts that the place of the writer is not in the sidelines like that which Chris assumes initially in Anthills, till the assassination of Ikem, but should be right in the centre of it.

It is not to say that Achebe is focussing on the functions of the three characters separately and with Beatrice as the added strength, that is the beginning of the solution to the problems of the new nation state. He is rather trying to show that mute voices also can find strength and tell their story which can change the generations. He has talked about the significance of the story in the essay “What has literature got to do with it?”

He calls it the agent of change, preserver of heritage and the custodian of tradition. It is these three roles that he demands from the African writers. It is the stories that can help a people survive through generations. The relationship exists in the form of a continuum as he had spoken of in the essay, ‘Hopes and impediments’ (Achebe, Hopes 121). It therefore attains the status of a cultural process; more than just a creative activity.
Achebe believes that the role of oral literature has not altogether lost its context even in the modern world. The act of storytelling that can be seen as the past time for communities can actually help people survive through crisis and prompt action despite the fact that the artist would not be immortal. Emmanuel the President of the students union states that, “It wasn’t Ikem the man who changed me. I hardly knew him. It was his ideas set on the paper.”*(Anthills, 223)* The grim and gory realities of change that had been the bane of everybody’s existence becomes a call for a continued struggle and it is symbolised in the naming of Ikem’s daughter, ‘may-the-path-never-close’.

Achebe does not become dismissive of the masses and their efforts at revolutions. He criticises not the failure of the masses but rather criticises the failure of those in power to establish their connection with the poorer masses of the “dispossessed country.” The novel completes the cycle that Achebe has dreamed for his country.

He paints a canvass of unity through the space that Beatrice provides to nurture the hopes of the people’s struggle. Having been able to rid herself of the high handed and superior attitude, towards the lower class women including her maid Agatha, she is able to offer refuge to those in need of hope after the death of Chris and Ikem. There is a breakdown of class and gender barrier and because there is a bonding of the classes there are endless possibilities for the opening up of classes. He expresses renewed faith on the people and the power of the story.

Even in the path he calls for change, Achebe embeds the significance of the story and shows that it has the power to subvert the unpleasant and gory details of history and stand up in opposition to political
authoritarianism. Agwu the god of the healers grants it especially to some, who are the chosen sons,

“Agwu picks up the disciple, rings his eye with white chalk and dips his tongue, willing or not, in the brew of prophesy, and right away the man will speak and put head and tail back to the severed trunk of our tale” (Anthills, 125).

The old man narrates a tale of the tortoise and the leopard and likens it to the struggle of the people of Abazon where the battle is unevenly matched and the struggle would later be remembered as a battle that was fought for its worth, irrespective of the consequence. The tortoise is aware of the battle nevertheless, does not lose hope,

“Because even after I am dead I would want anyone passing by this spot to say, yes, a fellow and his match struggled here” (Anthills, 128).

The old man embodies the traditional respect accorded to an elder in the community where they passed on their wisdom by means of tales told with moral teachings for inspiration, courage in times of need and food for thought. The old man is arrested for the bold stand he takes against the military dictators but he has made his mark and his contribution to the struggle for liberation. Ikem narrates his story to the students of the University of Bassa and observes that storytellers face great risk in the times that they were living. They were fearless enough to challenge the political, religious and even the academic groups.

“Storytellers are a threat. They threaten all champions of control; they frighten usurpers of the right to freedom of the human spirit-
True enough, he is arrested soon and killed in a fake encounter to silence his voice. In their tradition the storyteller was not merely someone who narrated tales for the sake of leisure, but was concerned with the values and socio-political change of the community. Achebe has given us a picture of political and social regeneration with the change that comes about in Anthills. He shows through the narration given by the storytellers, the old man and Ikem, the beauty of the traditional skills of oratory.

In the same way Achebe and his other contemporaries like Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo who was his best friend and like Ikem is lost in the struggle for liberation. They face the consequences of having a story to tell and telling it loud. Achebe does not lose his original touch even when he is assuming the role of a social critic in *Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*. The old man is the voice of the elders in the society and stands for the traditions that they have not lost yet. He speaks with depth and meaning and alludes using proverbs to intensify the meanings.

Proverbs have been used in African tradition to reach out to the people and break down the intensity of the meaning to them. Conversation was considered as an art to them and each tried to outdo the other by the use of proverbs and its manner of use. The old man also uses his art to reach out to the people and incite them to continue the struggle. He describes Ikem and the significance of his position and role in the struggle through this powerful allusion,
“...the cock that crows in the morning belongs to one household but his voice is the property of the neighbourhood. You should be proud that this cockerel that wakes the whole village comes from your compound” (Anthills, 122).

The effect that this method of public speech has is only seen in the response from the people. They relate to the speech and the message becomes comprehensible because they participate in it. The distance between the elite and the common people is seen to have bonded towards the end of the novel. In fact even Ikem who is praised for his brilliance and position is far removed from really understanding his people at the grassroots.

He had not even visited his village. But the visit to his village is the life changing event that transforms his entire attitude to life. It helps him realise his true calling and that is when he decides to stand up for the rights of his people. The intellectual arrogance displayed by all the major characters is seen to be erased by the end of the novel. There is reconciliation even between Beatrice and her maid Agatha as it is between Ikem and Elewa and Chris and the common folk. Achebe artistically allows Chris to understand the poor, and gives him an opportunity to feel their life, when he disguises himself in the clothes of the common people as he has to flee Bassa under the shelter of the taxi drivers.

Achebe throws a farcical touch when Sam the Western educated, feels ashamed to acknowledge that he is Nigerian and knows the use of proverbs. When Prof. Okong begins his speech with proverbs he cuts him off and demands discontinuing the use. He basically shows that there have emerged two different classes; the western educated elitist group and the commoners including the working class who try to speak the language of their employers.
There is the Standard English and the pidgin that has emerged from the entire experience. The major difference that is seen is the fact that in the first three novels Achebe has tried to show the existence of the culture of the Africans through the medium of language. By the time the novels talked above are published, he is projecting the establishment of the language of the colonisers as made their own by the Africans. In a way it is a sign that decolonisation has begun not just politically but socially as well. They have been able to tame the weapon that was used to whip them and made it their own.

Another aspect that is talked about in the novel is the change of attitude that Achebe projects towards women in his works. This is also a wind of change that has come into the society. The Igbo people are known to have very strict patriarchal values and ideals as has been seen in the trilogy and the other works. The women other than the first wives and educated women like Clara in \textit{No Longer at Ease} do not have any voice or say in the matters of the state or the society. But in \textit{Anthills} Achebe brings about the desired change and the novel almost becomes the story of Beatrice as the centre of the struggle.

Achebe seems to be looking at the perspectives of change from Beatrice’s point. She is the modern Nigerian woman educated and working for the militia with her own dreams and ambitions to follow. She is almost indispensible to the ruling regime and becomes the bonding point for the masses separated by classes. And then there is Elewa who is the illiterate counterpart and is used to the condescending treatment meted out to her by the educated classes including her beloved Ikem. He refuses to acknowledge
the fact that he has a relationship with a woman of such low standing till such a time as the realisation of his own roots and his relation with her. Even Chris for that matter does not move further with the way that he deals with Beatrice except for times of intimacy that he shares with her. It is believable because the fact that the two women are governed by their patriarchal values despite their position. Both are subject to the boundaries of the social norms specified by their society.

The change has been because of the exposure and access to education but the fact remains that the women in general needed reformation more than any militant movement. In *Girls at War* Achebe hints at the consequences of the war and their effects on the populace. The degeneration of values has been explicitly shown in the way that the women have been compelled to barter their virtues for food and the other essential items. Reginald Nwanko of the Ministry of Justice gets affected by his encounter with Gladys, who once is a professional woman constable from the militia but later deteriorates into a young woman fighting for survival amidst the war.

“Gladys he thought was just a mirror reflecting a society that had gone completely rotten and maggotty at the centre…I have a duty to her.”(*Girls*, 119)

There is a lot of difference in the way that the women are projected in the previous works for instance *Things fall Apart*. The worlds that Achebe presents are largely agrarian and very Nigerian which in turn is very patriarchal in its mannerisms. While it is also a picture of oppressed worlds of both men and women he has also shown the changing facets of women as the consequents of colonisation and the decolonisation that happens as the after math.