Chinua Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savannah* is a political novel which depicts the turbulent neo-colonial power hierarchies and the strategies of exploitation in the fictitious African state called Kangan. *Anthills* is Achebe’s first novel after the Biafran war, the civil war in Africa in which Africa was divided into the East and the West based on their cultural priorities. The novel mainly centers on the European educated megalomaniac dictator Sam and his childhood friends who came to power soon after the Europeans left the country. In *Anthills* Achebe tries to awaken the true sense of cultural belonging in the characters by means of tradition and myth.

Achebe in *Anthills* etches the evil and ugly march of power in the neo-colonial era in the fictitious country named Kangan which is Nigeria in reality. The novel starts with the descriptions of characters who are Western educated men, following the British values and life style and blindly imitating their British masters who left Africa. Sam, the head of the Kangan state and self proclaimed ruler, blindly imitates the life style, customary practices, language and all aspect of English culture (AS 45). The blind pursuit of Western culture sometimes seem to be foolish when Sam, the power drunk ruler of Kangan talks to people of well to do class about the Westernized affairs (AS 46). Sam, the Western captivated megalomaniac ruler had his education from Lord Luggard College, where more than half of his teachers were British (AS 22), and they influenced him to adapt to the British policy of the time.

The Social class of Kangan is defined by the degree of Western education one has received. The Western educated natives of Africa are in a more advantageous position to get government jobs and societal recognition compared to the other strata of society.
They are more prone to political power than other population in the development of a new nation. The fictitious Kangan society is divided into two divergent social groups: the ruling elite class and the downtrodden natives. Kanganese, the native people of Kangan represent the ordinary downtrodden people of Kangan who are totally neglected by the ruling class. His Excellency, the name attributed by Sam himself and his childhood friends in his government namely, Chris and Ikem belong to the elite class who control the economy and ideology of the country whereas the ordinary people include the taxi drivers, students, general workers, peasants, women working in the market, and other ordinary class people represent the downtrodden poor strata in Kangan. The hybrid class in Kangan forms the intermediate group who always lies between the ruling class and the oppressed lot.

Sam, the self proclaimed ruler of Kangan and his despotic government is totally alienated from the downtrodden class of people in Kangan. The elite class members in power possess most of the wealth of the nation and loot and squander the public treasury for their better living conditions and luxurious life. The luxurious life of the elite class is described in the convening of Council meetings in the luxury air-conditioned rooms with all sorts of lavishness. Whereas on the other side, ordinary people of Kangan suffer from ‘violent wave of the heat’ (AS, 9) and anxiously wait to meet the president to get a remedy for drought. The ruling class represents the ugly march of power and runs through the national wealth by constructing the Presidential Retreat at a cost of forty five million dollars and its refurbishment costs around twenty million dollars. The picturesque description of Sam’s castle and its other paraphernalia is given by Beatrice who is an invitee of His Excellency as follows:

Going up to it with the great shimmering expanse of the artificial lake waters stretching eastwards into the advancing darkness on your left and the
brightly lit avenue taking you slowly skywards in gigantic circles around
and up the hill, on top of which the Presidential Retreat perches like a
lighthouse was a movingly beautiful experience. (AS 73).

Sam, the power drunk ruler of Kangan is depicted throughout the novel as an
insecure military dictator after bullying eleven intelligent and Western educated natives.
His vanity and snobbery reverberates in the Western man’s colonial attitude to the
natives of Asia and Africa. Sitting in the hermetically sealed Council Chamber, Sam is
hurdled by the clattering of the Abazonian delegates and he retorts as under:

“A storm? Someone asks. The low hibiscus hedge outside the window and
its many brilliant red bells stood still and unruffled… it was no ordinary
storm. The Chief Secretary whose presence of mind is only inhabited by the
presence of His Excellency moves over to the sill, unhooks a latch and
pushes back glass windows. And the world surges into the alien climate of
the Council chamber on a violent wave of heat and the sounds of a chanting
multitude. And His Excellency rushes back into the room at the same time
leaving huge doors swinging. ‘What is going on?’ he demands frantically.
(AS 9)

The terrible insecurity and unusual fear of the authoritarian rulers especially the
military dictators in neo-colonial countries is vividly and ironically portrayed in this
context. The prayers of six delegates from the Abazon, the drought inflicted area of
Kangan, break upon the impregnable eternal silence of Presidential Palace. His
Excellency here uses the coloniser’s expression, ‘multitudes’ for people which remind
us of the distance he keeps between himself and the people of his country. Sam and his
trustworthy Western educated ministers step into the shoes of their masters to mimic
Western cultural practices, especially their manners and mannerisms to exalt
themselves to the position of their colonial masters. The expressions used by His Excellency in the novel like ‘alien climate of the Council Chamber’ and ‘violent wave of heat’ contrasts the conditions of drought in the Kangan state to the luxurious air conditioners inside the Council chamber.

In *Anthills* after colonialism, new elite in the form of dictators rise to power. Ikem Osodi, the editor of the magazine titled ‘National Gazette’ complains about his own men saying that they are worse than thieves and the leaders who openly looted their treasure, whose effrontery soiled their national soul. Ikem in this context refers not to the White men but to his own country men who have ruled the country worse than that of the colonizer during the colonial oppression era. When the colonial powers left the country, there was vacuum and nullity in the newly formed country and the more advantageous and powerful native elite came into power. Ikem’s speech in the university of Bassa directed to all Nigerians rather than to any particular class, he pleads, “you must develop the habit of skepticism, not swallow every piece of superstition you are told by witch doctors and professors… when you rid yourself of these things to our potentiality for assisting and directing this nation will be quadrupled”. (AS 160-161)

In *Anthills* Achebe tries to awaken the true sense of African cultural values and nationalism in the people of his country. Most of the people of Africa after the European subjugation transformed themselves to the enchanting and sophisticated modern Western culture. Sam, His Excellency of Kangan is an embodiment of Western values and culture who behaves like a typical European. The major bourgeoisie characters, Sam, Ikem, Chris, Mad Medico and Beatrice are educated in Britain, adopt not only Western customs and values but try to imitate and admire the English. The Western educated elite class of Kangan kept some distance with the ordinary people as
they felt that they were superior to the ordinary mass. The elite members of Kangan are Western educated people who interpolated into their positions of colonial subjects who were inferior to the British, but at the same time considered to be the ruling elite and the top in the hierarchy of power of Kangan State compared to the ordinary people of their country. When they were students in the British education system, they never learnt anything about Africa or African culture but familiar with the imperial academic curriculum and the cultural identity of the colonizer, which was one of the tools or strategies adopted by the Westerner to continue their rule indirectly in Kangan.

Beatrice Okah, Chris’s girl friend and a Western educated lady is portrayed as a female hybrid character in the novel. Beatrice, though born in Kangan, graduated from London, earned a degree in English and came back to Kangan to work in the government. Beatrice even during her education in England did not know anything about the African cultural tradition, myths and legend of her people as they played little in her upbringing. (AS 100). Beatrice is portrayed in the first part of the novel as a hybrid character who always tries to hide and suppress her African identity to become successful in the neo-colonial power equations. Beatrice’s cultural domination shows her cultural mimicry of the Western ways of life and ideology which she inherited from her European masters during her education. Beatrice’s cultural erosion is not a single noticeable instance in the novel where most of the elite were lured by the Western education, the dominant education system of the colonial era. The colonial flaw of power in the education system is highly evident in the representation of Achebe’s female character Beatrice as follows:

“She was born as we have seen into a world apart; was baptized and sent to school which made much about the English and the Jews and the Hindu and practically everybody else but hardly put in a word for her forebears and the
divinities with whom they had evolved. So she came to barely knowing who she was.” (AS 100).

However, in the course of time, Beatrice realizes her own cultural roots, her African cultural tradition, its myth, proverbs, legends, practices, dress code, food habits and values and ideologies of her own society which her ancestors preserved and cultivated over the ages. Beatrice realises that it is her moral duty and gratitude to guard the pristine culture of hers and she recollects it as:

“So, two whole generations before the likes of me could take a first class degree in English, there were already barely literate carpenters and artisans of British rule hacking away in the archetypal jungle and subverting the very sounds and legends of daybreak to make straight my way.” (AS 104).

Analysing Anthills in the neo-colonial perspective, Achebe opines that after colonialism, new elite class members in the form of dictators rose into power. In the novel, Ikem, the editor of National Gazette, complains that the country men are worse than thieves. He refers not to the Westerners but his own countrymen as strangers who looted their treasury and polluted their nation after implementing the European colonial policies in the new decolonized African country like Kangan. When the European powers left Africa, elite or educated bourgeoisie class natives seized power to steer the administration of the country. The main intention of Ikem’s radical speech in the University of Bassa is to address all Nigerians rather than any particular class. Ikem pleads in this context: “You must develop the habit of skepticism, not to swallow every piece of superstition you are told by witch-doctors and professors…when you rid yourself of these things your potentiality for assisting and directing this nation will be quadrupled” (AS 160-161) The aforesaid passage reveals Ikem’s belated patriotism and
concern about his country, which is to be liberated from the ugly grip of power to reinstate the nation’s cultural identity.

The Western educated elite characters in the novel represent the upper class powerful society of Kangan which is a microcosm of Britain. These characters act like the coloniser who left the country recently and do little for the well being and interests of the ordinary class of people of Kangan. Sam, Chris and Ikem represent the national bourgeoisie who blindly imitate the Westerner in every aspect. In *Wretched of the Earth*, the chapter titled *The Pit falls of National Consciousness* Frantz Fanon says, “The national bourgeoisie of the colonial countries identifies itself with the decadence of the bourgeoisie of the West. We need not think that it is jumping ahead; it is in fact beginning at the end”. (WE 153) The major Western educated characters in the novel represent the Western bourgeoisie, who throughout the novel detach from the common people of Kangan. His Excellency embodies many of Fanon’s views on the national elite who represent the neo-colonisers of the newly independent Kangan. He represents a leader whose contact with the masses is so unreal that he comes to believe that his authority is hated…and judges the ingratitude of the masses harshly (WE 166). Sam is blind with power and under the spell of that power he himself declares that he is to be addressed by others as ‘Your Excellency’. Sam wishes to be elected by the people as a President for life which was not agreeable to the people of Abazon. The revenge of Sam towards the Abazonians is that he reduced the water supply to Abazon as a punishment for not supporting him to be the President for life. He appoints his representative to meet the Abazonian delegates and dismiss them. This shows the harsh and megalomaniac attitude of the bourgeoisie class towards the ordinary class of people. The inner fear and mental imbalance of the President is highlighted in his frequent upsets at the small issues raised against him. The mental imbalance and insecurity of
Sam leads to paranoia and as a result he turns against his childhood friends and plots behind the brutal murder of Ikem, who constantly shows contempt for Sam’s actions and publishes editorials against him, which is soon perceived as a threat to the existence of the President. Depicting the character Sam, Achebe shows the pitfalls of seeking power at the expense of the People. Even though Sam is a native who had his education from Britain, no way has it benefited Kangan or its people but they suffer from his absolute power and corruption.

The first name of the Western educated characters in the novel resembles Christian religious affinity and European identity. Sam, Chris, Beatrice are educated in Great Britain and adapted to the Western culture in many ways. Sam’s admiration for the people who speak Standard English, listening to the Western music, eating Western food, using breakable plates and attending night clubs, dance and sex with White women shows his blind passion for the White culture. Fanon argues that the Western educated elite identify it with the Western bourgeoisie more than with their own people. Mad Medico, the White man is kept as a true friend of Sam who embodies his trust of the Westerner than his childhood friends and natives.

Racial attitude plays a vital role in Anthills. Fanon here reminds us the racial attitude of the Westerner saying that it is a hundred times better than that of the national bourgeoisie of newly independent continents. He condemns that the native elite imitate the Western coloniser in everything even in racism. Fanon is of the opinion that, it is by no means astonishing to hear in a country that calls itself African remarks which are neither more or less than racist. He asserts that the national bourgeoisie in a newly independent country imitates colonial thoughts of racial segregation in the negative and corrupt form which they inherited from their European masters. It is extremely harmful to the prospect of Africa. Analysing Anthills in this context, Sam “was fascinated by the
customs of the English…when he told me about his elegant pipe which he had spent a whole morning choosing in a Mayfair shop I could see that he was not taking himself seriously at all”. (AS 45) The above passage shows Sam’s blind pursuit of European ways of life and the shallow and insignificant mannerism. In the latter part of the novel Ikem shows us how Sam lost his national identity as an African and adapted to the glorious, hallowed English as “His major flaw was that all he ever wanted was to do what was expected of him especially by the English whom he admired sometimes to the point of foolishness”. (AS 44-45) The racial attitude and colour supremacy of the Western educated elite is criticized by Ikem as follows: “They don’t need and can’t use the luxuries that you and I must have. They have the animal capacity to endure the pain of… domestication”. (AS 37) The above criticism of African natives by the national bourgeoisie is more oppressive and severe than that of the racial attitude of the White coloniser during the colonial period. Achebe here warns his own people that the threat and oppression come not from the Westerner but from the Western educated elite class who are neo-colonising Africa. They are not the representatives of African people because of their cultural supremacy over the semi literate people of Africa and cannot be identified with the ordinary mass. Achebe adds on saying that what is in Africa in the eighties is the indirect continuation of Western colonialism as the Europeans handed over the country to their own native counterparts, who successfully had education from Great Britain and act and behave in a better way than the European masters as in Anthills “It does not seem to me that the English can do much harm to anybody today. After a long career of subduing savages in distant lands they discovered the mostly dangerous savage of all just across the English Channel and took him on and brought him to heel”. (AS 47)
Laura Pilar Gelfman, a notable critic on African Literature analyses *Anthills* in the light of religion and economic perspective. Ikem’s speech addressed to the students of the University of Bassa in the twelfth chapter of the novel indicates the veer of problems that Kangan in particular and Nigeria in general face under the elite’s power. Ikem opines that the elite class of Kangan who came to power is totally ignorant of the needs of their people and practices, the sets of rules which are different from what they preach. Using money and religion as tools to maintain their power, they enslave the masses to their own whim and fancy and culture. The relationship of religion and economic class exemplifies this confluence of culture and replication of English practice.

Religion plays its vital role in *Anthills* to uplift the national culture which is vanishing from the people of modern Africa. Achebe’s aim here is to create awareness in his own countrymen, the need to preserve and practice the pristine culture of Nigeria. Inculcating the cultural identity, Achebe introduces the story of naming ceremony, which helps him to create national unity among the elite and the ordinary class of people. The naming ceremony symbolically represents democracy which closes the hiatus between elite and the poor. It also even helps to reconcile the people from other religious groups and to start hands on mission to revamp national cultural identity. Prior to the ceremony, Beatrice comes from an elite Christian fundamental family background, looks down upon Agatha, a servant girl with aloofness and disrespect. The naming ceremony portrays Beatrice’s new found respect to African tradition and culture from her religious and economic perspective. In *Anthills* religion seems to be a luxurious affair where Christian religion of Western origin appears to be the embodiment of civilization, luxury, power and all sorts of better living conditions and
social status while the ordinary people of Nigeria represent poverty, impure water and other dire circumstances.

The triumvirates namely, Chris, Ikem and Sam are introduced at the beginning of the novel as the embodiment of power. Chris, however, gives up his job as editor of the National Gazette which eventually makes distance from Sam. Sam tries all his way to make Ikem obedient to him and comply with his will and put down with his harsh attacks on his government. Chris shows no connection with the common people and remains personally detached from the problems of Kangan. It is very late when Chris realizes the madness of Sam due to excessive power and which leads him to give up his political position and comes back to the life of ordinary common people of Kangan and understand his country in a better way than before.

Ikem on the other hand recognizes the common people of Kangan. However, Achebe asserts that the recognition with ordinary people is not enough to make a good model for a national representation of people rather involvement with the different sectors of society in all other forms. It is very clear in the context that the Western educated elite classes of Kangan keeps distance from the ordinary class of people and are not ready to share their ideas and opinions and fail to communicate with the less educated. This shows their cultural supremacy in language, mannerism, ideology and vision which prevents them from mingling with the semi literate poor native Africans. Ikem’s patriotic speech delivered before the people of Abazon is not understandable to the elderly men of Abazon, as his refined, impeccable Standard English is in no way accessible to the ordinary Pidgin English speakers. In the Abazonian celebration, one elderly man says in Pidgin English, “I had never read what they say, he writes because I do not know ABC. But I have heard of all the fight he has fought for poor people in his land.”(AS 112-113) Ikem is not careful of his language as to which category it is to be
served. He also fails to convey his message to the non-English speaking population of Abazon exalting and uplifting the exuberance of his verbosity, which is mimicking the manners and mannerisms of their Western masters.

Frantz Fanon in *Wretched of the Earth* raises the problem of language, the linguistic practices of the Western educated elite who come to power in the newly formed country. Fanon addresses these elite as: “If you speak the language of everyone, if you are not obsessed by the perverse desire to spread confusion and rid yourself of the people, then you will realize that the masses are quick to seize every shade of meaning.”(WE 189) Ikem here assumes that the ordinary people of Kangan are inept in understanding the political situation of their country. The problem lies with intellectuality of the elite that separate them from the poor people of Kangan. According to Fanon, the fault with Ikem is his inability to communicate with his own native people and to get an idea of their inner renderings. These instances in the novel lead to the creation of gap between the elite class and ordinary people in Kangan. Ikem later realizes the vision and perception of his native people when he visits the Gelegele market and witness a quarrel between a drunkard and a gigantic stranger carrying a small box in his hand. The incident amazes Ikem as the people who witness the incident reveal their understanding of the whole situation. Ikem says, “I was really amazed by their perceptiveness.”(AS 43) This shows Ikem’s inability to identify himself with the common people of his country. Ikem is also aware of his power over the people of his country. The incident in which Ikem sends his girl friend Elewa to her home in a taxi brings out his power over the taxi driver where he threatens the taxi driver by pointing his torchlight at the driver’s face and checking the registration number. Ikem also talks to the driver in such a manner that the situation shows the hierarchies of power, the intimidation or threat of Ikem exposes his upper class attitude to the taxi driver who is a
member of the ordinary class people of Kangan. Ikem reprimands the taxi driver, “Do you know it is an offence to operate a vehicle without interior lights according to the Criminal Code chapter forty eight section sixteen subsection one hundred and six.” (AS 34) Ikem here plays upon the driver’s ignorance and even shows off his higher education which allows him to lie to the illiterate driver, who is not even in a position to recognize the real law and Ikem’s lie: “he doesn’t know I am (lying) and he is scared” (AS 34) All the triumvirates in the novel appear as representatives mis-fit to the African society and they all deserved to be dead at the end of the novel.

Achebe in Anthills, tries to accomplish the revival of national culture by incessant struggles, in the form of which are embodied in the indigenous myths and legends. Achebe uses myth of the Sun, who is symbolized as Sam whose power’s scorching heat destroys the entire Kangan country. The destructive nature of Sun creates all sorts of calamities and the request to him to visit the calamitous area that ultimately results in severe drought. The pillar of Water is another myth introduced by Beatrice who seeks to put out the fire of the Sun and also to quench the parched lands, that is Abazon itself. Corruption-prone and masculine power is sought to be checkmated by Idemili, God’s daughter. Achebe succinctly portrays the legends of the male power and the same is neutralized through the female resistance through the comparison made between Beatrice and the Goddess of Idemili as:

In the beginning Power rampaged through our world, naked. So the Almighty, looking at his creation through the round undying eye of the Sun, saw and pondered and finally decided to send his daughter, Idemili, to bear witness to the moral nature of authority by wrapping around Power’s rude waist a loincloth of peace and modesty. (AS 102)
In Ikem’s writing, His Excellency has been compared as an angry Sun whose “crimson torches fire the furnaces of heaven and the roaring holocaust of your vengeance fills the skies.” (AS 30) Idemili incarnates and ascends to the Earth in a pillar of water which quenches the famished earth. The myth recalls the present calamities of Abazon where the drought stricken region is suffering under His Excellency’s rule. Although Beatrice is an elite character, she challenges and subverts its primacy. She survives the destructive days of His Excellency’s government and heralds a new age at the end of the novel as she presides over a new form of naming ceremony like the ant hills of the savannah in Ikem’s Hymn to the Sun, “surviving to tell the new grass of the savannah about the last year’s brush fires.” (AS 31) Hence Anthills depicts the destructive activities of the Western educated elite and urges a new kind of nation building.

In Anthills Achebe depicts the male chauvinism of Sam, Chris and Ikem and reminds that their fortunes do not constitute adequate representation of the nation’s history. His is a point where Beatrice explicitly makes to Chris, “Well you fellows, all three of you, are incredibly conceited. The story of this country, as far as you are concerned, is the story of the three of you.” (AS 66) Ikem also raises the question of oppression of women saying that women are inferior to men. Beatrice very openly challenges male chauvinism when she says, “that every woman wants a man to complete her is a piece of male chauvinism bullshit. I had completely rejected before I knew there was anything like the Women’s Lib.” (AS 88) His Excellency shows chauvinism by inviting Beatrice to a party hosted by him to provide the ‘woman’s angle’ (AS 80) on Kangan for an American journalist. Chris’s chauvinism is reflected when Beatrice leaves for the party, he warns her saying to keep all ‘options open’ when
dealing with His Excellency. The sexual connotation of this suggestion evokes anger in Beatrice and she makes her feelings known to Chris after the party.

In *Anthills* analysing it from the gender and class perspective, the Western educated native bourgeoisie and the ordinary class of people differ in language, class, philosophy of life and even in the inter-personal relationship. Beatrice is represented in the novel as the well educated elite whose social privileges underlie her dealings with her African maid Agatha. Beatrice talks to Agatha in pidgin English as Dennis Walder (1998) explains, “it is important to distinguish between Pidgins, which have small vocabularies, restricted structures, lack expressive potential and are usually not a first language and creoles, which are distinct varieties of English spoken as their mother tongue by ‘native speakers.’” (Blackwell 47) On the other hand Elewa, Ikem’s lover is a market woman who gives birth to a child after Ikem’s death. Like Agatha, Elewa also speaks Pidgin English. The Western educated characters know this Pidgin English – Chris speaks pidgin on his travels to Abazon- but he never uses it when he communicates with each other officially. English is even used as official language in governmental administrative affairs in Kangan. These different varieties of English and its uses demarcate the class and gender of Kangan in the linguistic and social milieu.

According to Ikem, students in the universities in Kangan are also corrupt in one way or the other. Like the politicians of their country, they also buy and sell votes, intimidate and even kidnap their opponents. Ikem continues to purify themselves, clean up their acts and develop the habit of skepticism before they can have the moral authority to lecture the national leadership. (AS 160-161) Emmanuel Obote is represented as a student leader in the university who is an ardent admirer of Chris. When Chris absconds and flees for life, Emmanuel accompanies him and chart out plans to get Chris out of danger. Emmanuel is represented in the novel as a student who
is in contrast with the typical students of Africa with one quality, the most derelict in civic duties. Achebe also opines that Emmanuel will continue Christ’s project in encouraging people to think for themselves regardless of environmental hardships.

The social status of women characters in Anthills has improved compared to the other novels of Achebe. The women characters in the novel undergo transformation and Achebe is skillfully framed and cast roles to the characters based on their education and experience. Elewa, Ikem’s girlfriend, does not possess any formal academic education and she is cast as a lower class shop sales girl. Beatrice, the Western educated lady, who had her education from London University, gets a decent role as Senior Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Finance. In spite of her gender, Achebe gives her a high esteem status role and education though she belongs to the hybrid class of intellectuals.

Beatrice’s relationship with Agatha, her housemaid in the novel reminds the coloniser-colonised relationship. The relationship also seems to be vicarious in nature that the master and slave attitude is evident in many contexts. Instead of kindness and compassion, Beatrice shows rudeness and meanness towards Agatha, who according to Beatrice is “so free with leaflets dripping with the life blood of Jesus and yet had no single drop of charity in her own anaemic blood.”(AS 183) The harsh and rude behaviour of Beatrice changes only after Ikem’s death. One day Beatrice rebukes Agatha over a misconduct she has shown to Elewa, she sits in the kitchen weeping bitterly. It is for the first time Beatrice apologises, “I am sorry, Agatha” Agatha is well accustomed with Beatrice’s rudeness and tough handling of the affairs on different occasions cannot believe her kind words or gestures but retorted “through the mist of her tears, a Sun shine of smiles.”(AS 185) Vinay Kirpal, one among the noted Indian critics on African Literature also opines that this behaviour is important as “for the first
time Beatrice consciously attempts to establish contact with a common person… she makes the same contact that Ikem had made with Elewa” (133)

Achebe represents Sam as an embodiment of power. The popular adage “Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely” is very apt to Achebe’s novel *Anthills*. The novel describes the Kangan struggle for a successful form of postcolonial self government through the experience of three friends – Chris, Ikem and Beatrice intricately involved in the Kangan government. Sam is occupying the position of President of Kangan after the Europeans left the country. Relishing his power, he insists on being called “Your Excellency” and decides to be elected as President for life. In the beginning he is represented as a ‘baby monster’ who gradually transforms to a full-fledged evil dictator in the end. Achebe fleshes out the dangers of the blind pursuit of power in the real neo-colonial Africa through the central character of his novel, Sam.

According to Achebe, the real problem of Nigeria especially the fictitious Kangan is the oppression of the ruling class rather than the external threat of colonisation. He criticizes the elite of his country for perpetuating the governmental corruption by remaining ignorant of the common man’s problems: “Those who sabotage the nation by their unproductivity and Fraud are the real villains, the real oppressors, who make sure that all the rural inhabitants of Kangan remain powerless and in poverty” He also observes, “When your fat civil servants and urban employees of public corporations march on May Day wearing ridiculously undersize T shirts and school-boy caps… and spouting clichés from other people’s histories and struggles, hardly do they realize that in the real context of Africa today they are not the party of the oppressed but of the oppressor.”(AS 159)

Though the major characters sit in the centre of power, they ignore the native people and care little to provide the basic needs like water supply by closing the pipes to
Abazon. Sam is taking revenge against the Abazonians as they voted against him to become the President for Life. Sam is portrayed as a military officer rather than a civil leader in the novel who governs the country without any checks and balances. The media and public service departments and their officials stand for the dictator and they interpret laws according to the whim and fancy of the government. In Anthills, the problematic issues are handled blindly by the NTBB (Not To Be Broadcast) strategy. Ikem exemplifies a NTBB issue, where the government restricts his power and silences Ikem for speaking against its corruption. Later in the novel Ikem uses the technique of prophecy and persuades his own natives to his side to act against the corruption and ugly march of power. Ikem also uses wise sayings, storytelling, myths and aphorisms of his village elders, orally handed down from generation to generation to instill patriotism in people and to revamp the pristine culture of Africa.

In spite of the changes in the government, the British attitude remains. The Western philosophy and life style continues in Kangan as the country’s new leaders are products of the new imposed Western culture. The major elite characters like Ikem, Sam, Chris and Beatrice had their education in Britain and they modelled their lives and beliefs after the life style and philosophy they had been taught. The British life style and globalised colonial English language conferred respect on them and that eventually formed a gap between the elite class and the ordinary people of Kangan. The Attorney General’s comments to Sam reflect the separation between the elite class and the ordinary class of people:”"As for those like me, Your Excellency, poor dullards who went to bush grammar schools, we know our place, we know those better than ourselves when we see them. We have no problem worshipping a man like you. Honestly I don’t. You went to Lord Lugard College where half of your teachers were Englishmen.”"
Anthills envisages the Western cultural supremacy of the native elite in a negative and prerogative manner. Professor Okong, a member of Sam’s cabinet is an ardent follower of Standard English. Sam’s aversion to ethnic proverbs and aphorisms of his culture, which are frequently quoted by Professor Okong in his conversations as “I don’t quite get you, Professor, please cut out the proverbs, if you don’t mind.”(AS 19) Here Sam’s transformation becomes complete where he fully adapted to the Western culture imbibing Western values, practices and the overall philosophy of life becomes a secular person. In Anthills apart from Achebe’s novel Things Fall Apart, Pidgin has become the legitimate language of the common people while Standard English represents the language of the elite class of Nigeria.

In postcolonial countries, especially in Asia and Africa, the new leaders come into power after getting their education from Western countries. Their connections to the British do not end with education, rather they blindly follow in the footsteps of their White masters, mimicking the Western cultural motifs like dress code, food habits, attitude and the overall aspects of Western life. The close relationship of Chris and Ikem with the English character Mad Medico illustrates their desire to emulate the Western style of life. The fifth chapter of the novel narrated by Chris gives the picturesque description of the drunken party in which all the elite class members participate. Mad Medico, the Western character and poet describes the table manners and the art of Western drinking style, especially the mixing of liquor with ice cubes, squeezing lemon, pouring it into the glass with the utmost care is vividly portrayed. The description of the process given by Chris follows:

Mad Medico pours out two long gins made longer still by ice cubes he has transferred with his fingers from a plastic bowl. He pours a little tonic water into each and I ask him to add more to mine. Then he throws into each glass
a slip of lemon from another bowl giving it a little squeeze between thumb and forefinger before letting it drop, and stirs. Twice or thrice in the preparation he has licked his fingers or wiped them on the seat of his blue shorts. (AS 54)

Ikem’ girl friend Elewa, the attribute of African culture and values, horrifies while meeting Mad Medico, the English man for the first time at his huge stature as she meets an English man for the first time in her life but later her Anglophobia changes to admiration. Elewa’s fascination grows as she explores with wide open eyes of amazement when she knows about Mad Medico’s strange home. Mad Medico is delighted when he sees Elewa watching everything in the bar in detail and says, he is inspired by Elewa, especially her simplicity inspired him to write a poem. Mad Medico’s infatuation for the graffiti also reminds of the Western mania in the novel.

Beatrice, the embodiment of Western culture, attends a party hosted by Sam as a special invitee and the description of the venue is depicted as a microcosm of Europe and Western culture. The picturesque description of the party hosted by Sam reminds us of the Western emulated ways of dressing, mannerisms, snobbery and the varied food habits. Beatrice continues: A pleasant – faced army major searched my handbag at the entrance and another officer took me up a wide and red carpeted flight of stairs. At the landing a huge open door led into an enormous and opulent room where guests were already settled in… (AS 74) While introducing Beatrice to the American lady, Sam is literally reading her Curriculum Vitae, uplifting her Western education and social status in Kangan as Senior Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Finance. In Sam’s conversation, he is underlining and over emphasizing Beatrice’s first class degree in English which she obtained from Queen Mary College, University of London and with profane feeling saying, not from a local university in Africa. Sam enjoys Beatrice’s
Standard English, which is a mark of aristocracy and dignity and challenges the American media women saying that nobody can ever beat Beatrice in English.

Beatrice’s descriptions of the ladies who attend the party, hosted by His Excellency, are mostly surprising. They are all overdressed for the occasion. The food served in the party is vividly described by Beatrice as, “The food was really simple and tasty including shrimp cocktail, joll of rice with plantain and fried chicken; and fresh fruit salad or cheese and English crackers for dessert. The wines were excellent but totally wasted on the company.” (AS 77) The Western priorities of food is depicted here as a form of cultural mimicry shown by the native elite. Beatrice gives the excessive crave of the native elite for the liquor in Anthills as, “The Bassa men stuck as usual to the beer they had been drinking all day; one of the ladies had double gins and lime and the other two a shandy of stout and Seven Up which one of them – Irene, I think her name was – apostrophized as Black Is Beautiful.” (AS 77) The above passage envisages the loose culture of Western life and even women are prone to liquor as a blind imitation of the practice of their colonial masters. Elite class members irrespective of sex believe that the social recognition comes only from the Western ways of life, especially their dress code, food habits and cultural etiquette. They ignored their native food culture and replaced it with the luxurious food habits of Western world like fried and marinated dishes. The native yam, coco and other natural ethnic food stuff of Africa disappear from the life of people and society as the elite class or the native bourgeoisie of the newly formed government promote only the Westernized food, considering it a mark of luxury and aristocracy. The voluble nature of the American lady after consuming a liberal dash of liquor reminds of the popular quote of Charles Dickens’s fatherly figure Mr. Micowber represented in David Copperfield says, ‘When the ale is in, the wit comes out.’ Beatrice continues the American Lady’s mannerism as: “The American girl
drank three large glasses of Moselle in addition to the dry sherry she had had as a starter with the shrimp cocktail and whatever else she had tucked away in the lounge before dinner, all of which was clearly proving too much for her…” (AS 78)

*Anthills* depict the social functions of the elite class in the neo-colonial Kangan in a vivid and lucid manner. The party hosted by His Excellency is attended by all the representatives of his governmental machinery, including the Director of State Research Council, Chief of the Army, Senior Assistant Secretary and Press and Media delegates. The representation of the upper authorities of various governmental machineries shows the inter-personal communication between the different governmental sectors of Sam’s government. The criticism of the government raised in the party is totally ignored by His Excellency and he redirected the conversation to his subject of interest. His Excellency proves himself as an excellent host, but everyone sitting around him agrees with him but they are represented as dishonest and insincere.

Agatha, Beatrice’s house girl belongs to an evangelical church, a movement or sect of Christianity gaining popularity in Kangan. Evangelism is spreading slowly in Kangan at the time of neo-colonialism in Africa. Agatha belongs to the sect called YESMI, an acronym for Yahwe Evangelical Sabbath Mission Inc. The preaching of her evangelical sect and their beliefs are highly observed in her behaviour, as she is reluctant to cook or strike a match or do anything on Saturdays. Her food for the day is prepared the day before which includes bread and cold stew or any odd scrap of food or plain garri soaked in ice water with eight lumps of sugar and a whole tin of milk. Achebe here exalts the liberty given to the lower class people to profess, and practice their religious faith and the efficacy of their prayers is skillfully depicted.

Ikem is represented in the first part of the novel as a shining elite vested with European cultural values and supports and joins in the government formation campaign
in Kangan. Later, he abandons his elite social position and comes down to the grass level as an ordinary Kanganese. Ikem has always a heart for the down trodden poor class people of Kangan. As an editor of the National Gazette, he speaks for the interest of people regardless of his personal safety. Beatrice recollects about Ikem especially his concern about three classes of women: peasants, market women and the intellectual women (AS 92) and the same are acknowledged by Beatrice quoting the eloquent speech of Ikem as:

The women are, of course, the biggest single group of oppressed people in the world… But they are not the only ones. There are others—rural peasants in every land, the urban poor in the industrialized countries, Black people everywhere including their own continent, ethnic and religious minorities and castes in all countries.(AS 98)

Here Ikem is represented as a man of great kindness and profound compassion for the poor. But in reality he is witnessed as a class biased character. Ikem has opposing attitudes to both Elewa and Beatrice. Elewa is a poor shop assistant who is an embodiment of African values and customs whom Ikem loves and considers as his girl friend. Beatrice on the other side is portrayed as a Western educated hybrid character who is in an elevated social position with Western values working for the Kangan government. Ikem’s attitude towards his lover Elewa is depicted through an incident where he sends her back home by taxi at midnight, not even ready to stay a lower class lady back at his home throughout the night. Ikem very clearly mentions the reason why he does not let her stay back in his house as “I simply detest the very notion of waking up and finding beside you somebody naked and unappetizing.” (AS 37) Elewa, even though semi literate, very clearly knows that she was sexually exploited by Ikem as an instrument and she says: “Woman done chop sand for dis world… If I no kuku bring
my stupid nyarsh come dump for your bedroom you for de kick me about like I be football?” (AS 34)

However, Ikem’s attitude to Beatrice, the well educated, socially elevated upper class elite is entirely different. Beatrice recollects Ikem’s humanitarian attitude as “one of the humiliating evenings” of her life in London, when she was deserted by her boyfriend at a dance party for a White girl. She contacted Ikem over the phone for words of consolation and as a result Ikem “donned his wool cap and muffler and his coat and headed into the snow and caught the last train in a South London station well after midnight.”(AS 92) There is no wonder that Beatrice considers Ikem to “be considerate to a fault, and could go to great lengths of personal in convenience to help a lady in distress.”(AS 92)

Anthills illustrates the culture in which women must save the country from its downfall, a feat only possible with the creation of Kangan tradition and myth. Traditional stories and myths can shape culture’s gender roles and behavioural patterns. Through myth only the outside world gets the cultural standards of a country. In Anthills, in order to dismiss the male supremacy and patriarchy, Achebe evolves a new system of power through a series of myths. Achebe often uses patriarchy with creation myths in his novels. He uses creation myths to criticize the oppression shown by the male dominated patriarchal society towards women. Ikem uses the creation myths from both the Bible and the oral tradition of his ancestors. According to Ikem, women have been oppressed since the beginning of time; they have been accused of Man’s great fall and shoved on to their ‘corner pedestal.’ Ikem therefore argues here that creation myths are not about the beginning of the earth; rather they are the beginning of men’s oppression on women. Ikem continues his contention saying that Christian and traditional creation myths evolve in order to dilute men’s guilt and adapt to changing
cultural actions. In order to comfort men in their oppressing position of power, they adjust their myths, reasoning women to remain silent and subjected.

Achebe twists and turns mythical history of his country adapting myths to explain his reversal of gender roles. He makes men silent by emasculating and eradicating men and their oppressiveness. The novel itself is a myth, undeniably Nigeria itself, its characters, setting and stories are mythical in nature. At the end of the novel the naming ceremony of Elewa’s child, the myth transforms fully and proclaims that the mother should name her child, “What does a man know about a child anyway that he should presume to give it a name.” Thus the naming ceremony of Ameachina, Elewa’s daughter permits Beatrice all other women of Kangan to flip the hierarchical pyramid.

In Africa, women are represented individually and in group as embodiment of strength, solidarity, rationality and transmission of cultural and spiritual values. Relationship among women embodies solidarity and strength for resistance. Considering women as the transmitters of culture, including spirituality and beliefs, Achebe says that women should break the silence that has been their doom for years. In the same sense, Elewa’s new born child symbolizes hope for future and the naming ceremony is arranged as a function in which members of all religious sect participates. The break in tradition in the novel suggests a new beginning, a subverting of not only Western tradition but African as well. Beatrice here stands as a deity or goddess to shoulder the spiritual leadership, the moral responsibility to transform her country, to rewrite or adapt the culture for the future. Achebe’s clear vision of Africa here comes as a reality when the empowerment of women strengthens the country, which is underlined in Ikem’s love letter to Beatrice.

In Anthills Achebe adopts storytelling as a mode of instilling patriotism and national consciousness within people to redirect Kangan to its glorious cultural past. Achebe is
here valorized as a preserver of heritage, custodian of tradition and the agent of change who can only save the country from the evil clutches of neo-colonialism. According to Achebe, storytelling is not a leisurely pursuit relegated to the writers but an ongoing and everlasting cultural process woven out of the fabric of daily life. In African societies, storytelling plays its vital role as the ancestors orally hand down the cultural matters to the next generation through the same mode. The stories they imbibed from their ancestors, sitting around the fire place in communal societies, transmit to their group identity and history which strengthen their will to adapt themselves to the new circumstances. Africans are really the hotten tot suffers who changed themselves to new environment which is reminded by Frantz Fanon in *Wretched of the Earth* as:

“The storyteller replies to the expectant approximations, and makes his way, apparently alone but in fact helped on by his public, towards the seeking out of new patterns... the drama becomes... part of an action in preparation or already in progress”.(WE 294)

The traditional function of the storyteller has not been discarded by Achebe in *Anthills*. Even though the place of setting the novel is urban, Achebe does not compromise on his ethnic style of storytelling which most of the African novelists celebrate in their literary compositions. Achebe says, since even the storytellers are mortal, the story alone survives, like the anthills survive in the savannah after the parching drought. The story’s endless capacity to meet the need of the time is brought home to the readers reminded by Ikem’s speech to the students of the University of Bassa, in which he quotes the prophetic and aphoristic anecdote of ‘The Tortoise and the Leopard’, a story of political mediation on the importance of struggle by the elderly man of Abazon.
In *Anthills*, the wisdom of African culture is presented through myth, which is represented as people’s shared asset and does not belong to the leader, elite class and a particular group of people. The myth of Idemili warns people of the danger of power and it seems a prediction of the rise and fall of Sam. Sam, His Excellency according to Chris and Ikem, is not a bad man to begin with. However, after he possesses power, a host of problems crop up. He not only develops an 'unquenchable thirst' (AS 104) for power, but also distrusts his cronies, weeds out dissidents, shuns the common people and even ignores their protests. Stories are important in the culture because, according to Supriya Nair (1993), they transmit 'group identity and history', and serve as the 'guidelines to cope with the demands of one's environment.'(Nair 117) They pass on the values as well as the collective identity to posterity. As Achebe says, 'People creates stories or rather, stories create people’ (Achebe 112) through the elder of Abazon, Ikem realizes the power of this tradition. The story about the leopard and the tortoise told by the elder, for instance, reflects the wisdom and the value of their culture – the importance of trying 'our fathers were defeated but they tried' (AS 128). Stories are ever-lasting, so stories and the storytellers are very essential as the Abazonian elder explains this point by saying:

The sounding of the battle-drum is important; the fierce waging of the war itself is important; and the telling of the story afterwards - each is important in its own way. I tell you there is not one of them we could do without. But if you ask me which of them takes the eagle-feather I will say boldly: the story...Because it is only the story can continue beyond the war and the warrior. It is the story that outlives the sound of war-drums and the exploits of brave fighters...the story is ever-lasting... Like fire, when it is not blazing it is smoldering under its own ashes.
The return of Beatrice to her own cultural roots in *Anthills* shows the triumph of the people’s struggle for ages in spite of failed promises, leaderships and betrayed hopes. (H.I 220) Beatrice’s entire supreme Western attitude, including her cultural supremacy with market women and taxi drivers and her superior attitude to her maid Agatha changes thorough the crisis in her life caused by the sudden demises of Chris and Ikem. Her desolated home becomes the refuge of Briamoh, the taxi driver, Emmanuel, the student leader and Adamma, the nurse. This break down of class barriers and gender discrimination acts as the harbinger of the new rise of hope in Africa. The naming ceremony of Elewa’s child symbolizes the new order, a change in the cultural system of Africa with its slogan ‘Women should rule the country.’ The naming ritual in African cultural scenario is performed by male representatives especially the father of the child. Since Ikem is no more, Elewa’s uncle gives silent consent to Beatrice, the prophetess of the new generation to name the child. Elewa is also wholeheartedly ready to name her child with a boy’s name, Amaechina which means “may- the- path- never- close.” (AS 222) Achebe here assimilates the cultural values Ikem, a hybrid bourgeoisie intellectual and Elewa, an illiterate working class representative through the newly born Elewa’s child Ameachina and opens up the path to the next generation. The child Amaechina stands as a symbol which suggests the utopian vision of ‘oneness’ between Nigeria’s hybrid elite and the ethnic mass.

Achebe, the doyen of African literature is well aware of his nation and culture who believes that true patriotism and national consciousness alone can save his country from the clutches of foreign cultural influences. The cultural practices of the Africans in the newly formed Africa are the blind imitation of the Westerners so as to rise up to their colonial masters. Achebe here retorts that the violent force of colonialism shatters the culture of indigenous people of Africa and their sense of identity. In *Anthills*, Achebe
depicts the fictitious African state named Kangan where cultural identity and political violence interrelated during and after the colonial era. By using different types of Coups and other political agitations, the Westerners transformed the cultural identity of the African people through their language, education, dress code; interpersonal communication and religion by imposing the Western values and cultural priorities. This cultural transition ultimately leads to cultural hybridity, which is the most important visible characteristic of modern African society. Ikem, one of the hybrid characters, who is emulated by the Western systems, says that the real danger with modern Africa is not the Westerners themselves, but those ‘misshapen freaks like Amin and Bokassa sired on Africa by Europe’, implying that the mixing of ethnic African culture and the modern enthralled Western culture might cause devastation. Considering this point, analyzing Achebe’s novels, returning to one’s own roots, is very important and that is one of the strategies Achebe advocates to revamp his ethnic culture and national consciousness within his people. Okafor, one of the critics of Achebe quotes here as:

“How then is an adequate revolution for me to espouse – to help my society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement. I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past – with all its imperfections – was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God’s behalf delivered them.”

Achebe’s language is Standard English blended with pidgin to express a new voice out of Africa, speaking of African experience in a world-wide language. Achebe, unlike other African writers, like Ngugi of Kenya to choose English as a medium to convey the hardships, trials and tribulations of his people at the time of colonial
oppression to the world at large. He attempts to construct the image of Africa in the native angle through the Westerner’s language intimating the rest of the world that the Africa represented in the Western oriented literary texts and movies are wrong perceptions. Achebe believes that the Writers role is to make the world aware of the national culture of a country. It is the moral responsibility of every citizen of a country to save and preserve the pristine culture of one’s community when it comes as an endangered one. He uses Igbo vocabulary, proverbs, images and speech patterns to convey the heritage of his culture to the new generation. Achebe also aims to reclaim his cultural heritage and at the same time to indicate new directions for constructing change. For Achebe, the transition from a new kind of postcolonial culture should not abandon the old ethnic culture of his own country, the repository of old values and practices but to bring the old meet with the new. This new form is the story he transmits through the various narrators in Anthills. Achebe relies on the maxim ‘The story is our escort’, a character in Anthills says, “Without it, we are blind…” Anthills embody a tradition that can adapt to the new; the problem Achebe confronts is preserving national and cultural identity in the teeth of the inevitable blending of different cultures.

Achebe’s new vision and faith of his community is reflected in the concluding part of the novel. Achebe here believes that a writer’s task is always not to lead the people in their confrontation with unjust power structures, but to point out the legitimacy of their cause and their capacity to attain triumph. Achebe’s story in Anthills in one sense gives political education to his people, directing and empowering them to act according to the situation.

In Achebe’s Anthills, the military has just assumed power after ousting a corrupt and incompetent civilian administration. As far as the people are concerned, the removal of the civilian government is well deserved; ‘our civilian politicians finally got what they
had coming to them and landed unloved and unmourned on the rubbish heap’ (AS 12). Anthills suggests that it is the corrupt nature of the politics practised by civilian politicians that brought about military intervention, which is expected to embark on a programme to restore order. This, however, is not to be. Young army officers execute the coup that ousts the civilians from power. Beyond the immediate need to take over the reins of government, the young coup-makers have no articulated programme of action.

Achebe in his essay titled Africa’s Tarnished Name (1998) wonders why the Westerners represented Africa in a bad light, he continues saying that they fail to see Africans as human beings as a side effect of slave trade and colonialism. Achebe goes on to say that it is not the difference in their skin colour or appearance but their Western ideology that prevented them from accepting Africans as equal to them. Westerners represented Africa as a land of strange customs, unspeakable rites and rituals and totally denied human identity to the Africans. Achebe here wants to represent Africa to the whole world telling them that Africa is not the land of cannibals or man-eaters but of pristine cultures which are totally tampered with by the western invasion. Achebe’s role here is to revamp his old traditional pristine culture to his society and to make the new generation aware of the importance of African culture, its values and the trials and tribulations suffered by the People of his tribe so as to revive it.

In Anthills, however, Achebe realizes, it is the failure of the national and political leaders of the imaginary Kangan that gives rise to the social problems. The common people, such as the elders from Abazon and the student leaders gain respect, as they are portrayed as brave and honest. It is the corrupt leadership that makes their lives miserable. Achebe still believes that the problem stems from neo-colonialism. However, in this novel, Achebe emphasises the need for Africans, particularly those in
power, to rethink the process of decolonisation, to find out what distances them from
the masses and prevents them from identifying with the people. Achebe thinks that what
they lack in their identity is the concept of equality. Achebe stresses the importance of
mass participation. He points out the danger of concentrating all power in one man
through the character Sam and the myth of Idemili and the benefits of including more
people in the government. This structure seems similar to the one in Okonkwo's time
mentioned in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, in which they have no chiefs and kings. Then
the Igbo can speak for themselves. Of course, it is in the past and Achebe knows that
we cannot go back to this system. However, Achebe hopes to put this old value to new
use: we have to find a way of dealing with the problems created by the fact that
somebody says he's speaking on your behalf, but you don't know who he is. (Lindfors 78)

The values Achebe stresses for constructing African identity in *Anthills* is different
from the need of the society at a particular time. His view of identity revealed here
exemplifies the notions of identity defined in the first chapter of the novel that identity
can be invented and identity is not fixed, but fluid. He can celebrate the depth and value
of Igbo culture, pointing out the adverse effect of the colonial legacy on the society, as
well as modifying the traditional values for the present world. However, he must do all
these with the colonizers' tool - English language - which once destroyed his culture and
tradition. Achebe seems to have admitted that language is impossible to decolonize.
This seems to illustrate Stuart Hall's notion that 'after the break', there is no absolute
return. This form of Imperialism is inescapable. Achebe is 'perfectly bilingual' (Achebe 98)
and he does have a choice to use his native language in his writings. However, Achebe
co-opts for English' (Achebe 83), aiming at communicating with as many Nigerian as
possible. Also, Achebe considers writing to be a kind of teaching. Besides Nigerians
and Africans, readers in other countries too are his targets. Achebe attempts to change
his people's view of seeing their own culture, which affects the ways they perceive
themselves. What is more, Achebe also hopes to change the objective view of identity:
how others see Africans.