



## AN ANALYSIS ON ACHEBE'S A MAN OF THE PEOPLE AND ANTHILLS OF SAVANNAH

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### Abstract:

*Both A Man of the People (1966) and Anthills of the Savannah (1987) by Chinua Achebe are literary works that provide insightful criticisms of post-colonial African nations. These works investigate topics such as power, corruption, and the intricate interaction that exists between those who are governed and those who are dominated. In the novel A Man of the People, the story takes place in an African nation that is not named, although it is similar to Nigeria. The novel concentrates on the political disillusionment that occurs after independence. Achebe offers a critique of the emerging political class, which is exemplified by Chief Nanga, who is both corrupt and opportunistic, via the character of Odili, the protagonist. The novel is a satirical representation of the decline of conventional values and the moral degeneration that comes along with the development of a leadership that is motivated just by self-interest. The novel Anthills of the Savannah, which is set in the fictitious nation of Kangan, which is located in West Africa, expands upon this critique by investigating the power dynamics and resistance dynamics that exist inside a military dictatorship. Achebe creates a tale that is multi-faceted by utilizing the views of several characters, such as a journalist, a government official, and a woman activist. Each of these characters reflects on the shortcomings of leadership and the battle for democratic values. Additionally, the novel explores the role that women and other oppressed groups have in the formation of the political landscape, in addition to highlighting the significance of inclusive government. Both of Achebe's works highlight his pessimism over the post-colonial state, but they also highlight his desire for rebirth via communal action and ethical leadership. Achebe's sophisticated grasp of African communities, the difficulties of power, and the necessity of a moral and political awakening in the face of systematic corruption and authoritarianism are all brought to light by the examination.*

**Keywords:** Achebe's, Anthills , Savannah

### Introduction:

One of the most influential figures in the process of expressing the intricacies of post-colonial African communities is Chinua Achebe, who is sometimes referred to as the "father" of African literature written in English. The cultural, political, and social upheavals that have characterized the transition of the continent from colonial authority to independence are explored in depth in his writings. A Man of the People (1966) and Anthills of the Savannah (1987) are two of his most important contributions to African literature. Both of these works investigate the difficulties of leadership, the corrosive nature of power, and the widespread

effect of corruption in newly established African states. Both of these publications are considered to be among his most significant contributions.

One of the most sarcastic novels ever written, *A Man of the People* conveys the disillusionment of a society that has been misled by its leaders. A fictional African nation that has a striking resemblance to Nigeria serves as the backdrop for this novel, which investigates the moral deterioration and political corruption that occur after independence. One of the ways in which Achebe attacks the emerging political elite is through the eyes of the youthful and idealistic Odili Samalu. Chief Nanga, who is charming yet corrupt, is the personification of this elite. Despite the fact that the novel was released not long before the Nigerian Civil War, its prophetic story of a military coup struck a chord with the political milieu of the time.

A more nuanced and mature view on power and governance in post-colonial Africa may be found in *Anthills of the Savannah*, which was written twenty years after the original work. Through the intersecting lives of its three main characters—Chris Oriko, the Commissioner for Information; Ikem Osodi, a journalist and poet; and Beatrice Okoh, a senior government official—the novel investigates the dynamics of a military dictatorship. The novel is set in the fictional nation of Kangan, which is located in West Africa. Achebe depicts the battles for justice, democracy, and representation in a society that is constrained by authoritarian leadership through the use of various narrative voices. In addition to this, the novel highlights the role that women and other oppressed groups play in fighting repressive governments and working for a society that is more inclusive and equal among its members.

The purpose of this research is to investigate how Achebe depicts power, corruption, and resistance in both of his books, with the goal of determining how these themes represent the larger sociopolitical reality of post-colonial Africa. The purpose of this research is to shed light on Achebe's growing viewpoint on the potential and difficulties of leadership on a continent that is wrestling with the legacy of colonialism and the demands of modern nationhood. This will be accomplished by comparing and contrasting *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*.

### **Historical and Political Context**

Understanding Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah* requires a grasp of the historical and political contexts in which these novels were written. Achebe's Nigeria, like many African nations in the mid-20th century, was navigating the turbulent waters of post-colonialism. The optimism that accompanied independence quickly gave way to disillusionment as newly formed governments struggled with corruption, ethnic conflicts, and economic challenges. The political instability often resulted in military coups and authoritarian regimes, which became central themes in Achebe's later works.

*A Man of the People*, written in 1966, captures the early years of Nigeria's independence. The novel's depiction of political corruption and the eventual military coup eerily anticipated the actual coup that occurred in Nigeria shortly after its publication. Achebe's portrayal of a society where traditional values are eroded by greed and power plays reflected the disillusionment felt by many Nigerians as they watched their leaders betray the ideals of independence. The novel serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked power and the moral compromises that often accompany political success.

*Anthills of the Savannah*, published in 1987, reflects a more mature and nuanced understanding of the political dynamics in post-colonial Africa. By this time, Nigeria had experienced several coups, a civil war,

and years of military dictatorship. The novel is set in the fictional nation of Kangan, a thinly veiled representation of Nigeria, and explores the complexities of governance under a military regime. Unlike *A Man of the People*, which focuses on the moral failings of individual leaders, *Anthills of the Savannah* delves into the systemic nature of corruption and the ways in which power corrupts not just individuals, but entire societies. Achebe also broadens his focus to include the voices of women and the marginalized, highlighting the importance of inclusive governance and the potential for collective resistance against authoritarianism.

Achebe's critique of post-colonial leadership in these novels is not just a commentary on Nigerian politics but resonates with the broader African experience. The struggles depicted in *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah* reflect the challenges faced by many African nations as they sought to build new identities and systems of governance after the end of colonial rule. Achebe's works underscore the importance of ethical leadership, the dangers of political apathy, and the need for vigilance in the face of power.

### Thematic Exploration

Achebe's exploration of themes such as power, corruption, and resistance forms the core of both *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*. These themes are intricately woven into the narrative structure, character development, and symbolic elements of the novels, offering a profound commentary on the post-colonial condition.

**Power and Corruption:** In *A Man of the People*, Achebe presents a satirical but realistic depiction of the corrupt political elite. Chief Nanga, the central figure of corruption, embodies the betrayal of independence ideals. His transformation from a seemingly charming leader into a self-serving politician illustrates how power can corrupt and lead to the moral decay of society. Odili, the protagonist, represents the disillusionment of the younger generation, who initially believe in the possibility of change but become disenchanted with the pervasive corruption.

In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe takes this exploration further by examining the nature of power within a military dictatorship. The character of Sam, the dictator, is portrayed as a once-idealistic leader who becomes increasingly tyrannical and paranoid. The novel highlights how power can isolate leaders from the people they govern and lead to an environment of fear and repression. Achebe also explores the idea of systemic corruption, where the entire political and social structure becomes complicit in maintaining the status quo.

**Resistance and Collective Action:** While *A Man of the People* ends on a somewhat pessimistic note with a military coup that promises little change, *Anthills of the Savannah* offers a more complex view of resistance. The characters in *Anthills*—Chris, Ikem, and Beatrice—each represent different facets of resistance against authoritarianism. Chris's moral struggle, Ikem's intellectual defiance, and Beatrice's emerging feminist consciousness illustrate the diverse ways in which individuals and communities can resist oppression.

Achebe also emphasizes the importance of storytelling and the role of the artist in political resistance. Ikem, the journalist and poet in *Anthills of the Savannah*, argues that stories have the power to inspire change and challenge oppressive systems. This reflects Achebe's own belief in the power of literature to shape social and political consciousness.

Role of Women and the Marginalized: One of the significant developments in *Anthills of the Savannah* is Achebe's focus on the role of women and the marginalized in the political process. While women are largely absent from the political sphere in *A Man of the People*, *Anthills* portrays women like Beatrice as central figures in the struggle for justice and equality. Achebe presents Beatrice not only as a companion to the male protagonists but as a leader in her own right, representing a shift in the portrayal of gender roles in African literature. The novel also addresses the need for a more inclusive and representative political system, one that gives voice to all members of society, particularly those who have been historically marginalized.

## COLONIAL PRODUCTIONS

After gaining political independence from European colonial powers during the second half of the twentieth century, Nigeria and the majority of sub-Saharan Africa continued with the process of nation-building along the paths that were established by the departed colonists. However, they never stopped to examine the premises of their political cultures. Many different cultural, religious, educational, social, political, and administrative institutions had been established throughout the time of colonial rule, and these institutions had been bringing about changes in the lives, attitudes, and worldviews of the people who lived in the area. Different from the much more open world of the twenty-first century, in which many technologies are trying to overcome space and isolation in all areas, this transformation was taking place in a world that was quite different from the world that we live in today. Colonialism thrived in an atmosphere that was relatively walled off, characterized by stark contrasts and a straightforward presentation of concepts in black and white. The difference is brought into sharp perspective in a comment made by Obierika in *Things fall apart*. In this comment, she discusses with Okonkwo the decision that a colonial court made about a property dispute. Okonkwo is taken aback by the fact that this court would assert that it has jurisdiction over the subject, given that the judge is unable to be familiar with the tribal norms that pertain to land:

" Would the white guy be able to comprehend our traditions about land?"

*"For the life of him, he can't even speak our language! However, he claims that our traditions are evil, and even our own brothers who have converted to his faith share this view. Given that some of our own brothers have betrayed us, what hope do you have for our fight? White people are incredibly intelligent. With his religion, he arrived in a peaceful and gentle manner. We let him remain because we found his naiveté entertaining. Our clan can no longer function as a unit now that he has won over our brothers. He sliced apart the bonds that bound us, and now we're all broken"(p. 57).*

Obierika is concerned that the local people who have joined the religion of the white man are also saying the same thing. Although the unfavorable judgment that the white man has about the local customs may be disregarded as presumptuous, Obierika is concerned about this development. Okonkwo would rather have liked „to take up his machete, go to the church and wipe out the entire vile and miscreant gang“ (50), but Obierika is worried about the possibility of blood guilt; and since his confidence is already shaken on the question of the rationality of some of the customs (p. 41), he is not ready to dismiss the negative judgement of the locals out of hand. Furthermore, he has seen that the "clan" is no longer able to behave in a unified manner. The mere presence of the white guy has the impact of a dagger being thrust into the things that have been holding us closer together. Without a doubt, some of these items are the traditions and rituals of the tribe, as well as the religion. It seems likely that Obierika's evaluation of the impact of being exposed to colonization is applicable to any circumstance in which an external force is in charge and has provided its

agents with the ability to wield power in a direct manner. After the old links have been severed and the people are reacting to this outsider in their own unique ways, the identity of the group starts to disintegrate. It may appear that the individual's identity is still intact, but there are subtle changes that are taking place. These changes may be influenced by the emotions that have been awakened at the level of the "prereflective unconscious." According to Stolorow, the "prereflective unconscious" refers to psychological structures that operate outside of conscious awareness. These structures include organizing principles, meanings, schemas, and thematic patterns. Obierika, in his evaluation, defines a certain type of individuals: those who embrace the viewpoint of the colonizer regarding themselves and their culture, and who strive to escape the condemning gaze of the colonizer by identifying with the colonizer, embracing his value systems, worldview, and cognitive processes. These individuals are the source of the most devoted slaves that the colonists will employ. The enthusiasm with which they serve their master in Things fall apart is sometimes extreme, which results in difficulties that are not ideal for the master. On the day of the retribution for the murder of a white explorer, however, in Abame, it seems as though they are carrying out the master's instructions, since he is there among them:

*"In any case," Obierika said, "they were the ones who killed him and tied up his iron horse." This occurred before to the beginning of the planting season. Nothing took place for a considerable amount of time. Yams had been planted, and the rains had finally arrived. There was still a connection between the mystical silkcotton tree and the iron horse. On a certain morning, three white males, who were accompanied by a group of regular men who were similar to us, arrived to the clan. When they spotted the iron horse, they immediately left the area. Every single one of Abame's males and females had gone to their own farms. A couple of them were able to see these white men and the others that followed them. Over the course of many trading weeks, nothing else occurred. They have a large market in Abame on every other day of the Afo festival, and as you are aware, the entire clan congregates there together. Yes, it was the day when it took place. They encircled the market with a big number of other guys, including the three white males who were there. It is likely that they employed a potent kind of medication in order to conceal themselves until the market was completely saturated. They started firing their weapons. Everyone was slain, with the exception of the elderly and the sick who were at home, as well as a few men and women whose chi was wide awake and brought them out of that market. He hesitated for a moment.*

"Their clan is now completely empty".

As Obierika notes, the enormous killing that took place at Abame was carried out by forces consisting of "ordinary men like us." It is because of their attachment to the colonist that they have the authority to use direct and fatal force against other people. As a result of this, the local people will have learnt to dread the colonist's servants even more than they fear the colonist himself. To put it another way, the colonists have established their system of indirect authority and their use of indirect violence. It is paradoxical because Okonkwo is the one who, at the level of pre-reflective unconsciousness, is the one who awakens dread. The fact that he is "one of the lords of the clan" is not something that should be ignored, since he worked his way up "from great poverty and misfortune" in order to accomplish this on page 8. It is possible that he had a perception that the effective imposition of colonies would come at the price of his prerogatives as "one of the lords of the clan." Therefore, he is unable to discover any grounds for reaching an agreement with the outsider. As time goes on, the colonists ultimately make their debut in Mbanta, which is where he has found sanctuary after the unfortunate death of a relative. Discord is taking place as a result of the establishment of

a church. Okonkwo makes a contribution to the public meeting that is being held in an effort to find a solution to the crisis; yet, he is smart enough to keep a lot of information to himself:

*"We must not act like cowards when we reason," Okonkwo stated. What am I to do if someone enters my shack and pees on the floor? Am I to close my eyes? No way! With a stick in my hand, I sever his skull. Doing that is the mark of a man. On a regular basis, these individuals defile us, and according to Okeke, we should act as if we do not notice. A monstrous snarl escaped Okonkwo. He assumed this clan belonged to women. Nothing like that could ever happen in his home country, Uncle Umuofia*

According to Young (2003), Okonkwo is the type of colonized person who actively resists this dominance in order to express their opposition. However, when the despicable outsider was found at home in Umuofia at the conclusion of his period of exile, it became clear that his metaphor of a man defecating on his floor who would have his head broken for him is rather difficult to put into practice. This is due to the fact that a decision needs to be made, not by the individual alone, but by the entire community. It would appear that the two opposing views toward the outsider are typically driven by the same thing: power. On the one hand, the (hope of) access is the motivation, and on the other hand, the (fear of) loss is the motivation (Grant, 2009, p. 168). People like Obierika are examples of those who experience psychological distress as a result of colonialism. These individuals are thrown into a state of uncertainty regarding themselves and their history as a result of these firmly held beliefs being disturbed. Things break apart is a story in which the shaking of Obierika's world really occurs before she is put in contact with colonialism. According to Marx, all social systems have contradictions, but they are possible to continue provided there is established "a modus vivendi, a form in which they can exist side by side." He has witnessed the contradictions that are present in the old system. Generally speaking, this is the method that is utilized to reconcile genuine inconsistencies. Okonkwo, for instance, has a difficult time figuring out a modus vivendi because of the inherent contradiction that is involved in killing a child who calls him father. However, he manages to justify his actions by citing the fact that he had previously killed five men in combat. If he is able to tolerate this, then adding "a boy to their number" should not be sufficient to completely transform his world (Things fall apart). While he is having a conversation with Obierika, who is unable to find a solution to the problem and is displaying his concern about it, he discovers that:

"You give the impression that you are questioning the authority and the decision of the Oracle, who stated that he ought to be put to death. "No, I not do. How come I should? However, the Oracle did not consult with me in order to carry out its selection. "However, it was necessary for someone to carry it out. There would be no way to carry it out if we were all terrified of blood. If such were the case, what do you suppose the Oracle would suggest?"

Through this discourse, Obierika's perception of the conflict that exists within Umuofia's traditions is brought into the broad spotlight. Real upheaval may be found inside the confines of his own awareness, with the inconsistencies being laid forth in a clear and concise manner:

*As a guy, Obierika gave things a lot of thought. Seated in his obi, he lamented his friend's misfortune after the goddess's desire had been fulfilled. For what reason should a guy endure such unjust punishment for a transgression he had made unknowingly? He pondered the matter for quite some time, but came up empty-handed. He was just guided into more intricate situations. He thought back on the two children he had abandoned with his wife. What kind of wrongdoing did they do? The planet had already decided they were*

*a curse and needed to be extinguished. As a result, the entire land would be punished by the great goddess's anger if the clan failed to exact justice for an offense against her. If one finger delivered oil, it ruined the others, as the wise men stated.*

Therefore, in Obierika, we have a third type of colonial subject who has lost his footing and ends up with an unsettled existence. This individual is neither at home in the old community nor in the new society that is growing under the supervision of the colonist. On the part of the colonial government, measures are being carried out that have an effect on the people living in the area; these acts are based on the concept of "knowledge." Regarding the trial, condemnation, and hanging of Aneto, for example, the colonists appear to be aware of the fact that the Umuofia customs are poor, and as a result, they are not permitted to be used while deciding a case in court. One of the factors that contributes to the tensions and crises that occur in Things fall apart is the attitude of the white man towards the information that is available. As an illustration, we have heard that one of the accomplishments of the colonists in Umuofia is the construction of a church inside the region.

*A government was also brought by the white men, in addition to the church that they had brought. They had constructed a court in which the District Commissioner made decisions regardless of the facts of the cases. For the purpose of the trial, he had messengers who brought the defendants before him. In Umuru, which is located on the bank of the Great River, many of these messengers originated. This is the place where the white men had first arrived many years before, and it was also the location where they had constructed the center of their religion, trade, and governance. These court messengers were regarded with tremendous disdain in Umuofia due to the fact that they were not only outsiders but also considered to be arrogant and imperious.*

As the District Commissioner makes decisions about cases "in ignorance," he exhibits the same characteristics as his court messengers, namely, arrogance and high-handedness. According to Loomba (p.43), the decisions that an individual makes about the utilization of accessible knowledge are not only innocuous but are intricately linked to the functioning of power itself. There is a connection between the colonialist mentality, which was racist, superior, and Eurocentric, and the decision to disregard the information that is present inside the community. He believed that nothing that was produced by the indigenous people could possibly be of any value. This was the reason why he considered colonization to be a favor that was being done to them, rather than an imposition that was accomplished via the use of violence on a massive and international scale. A particular type of information that is accessible within the colony is worthy of being mentioned: anything that has the potential to pique the interest of the individual who is a student of primitive traditions (Things break apart). In this particular instance, we observe the colonialist's "fetishistic attention to the fascinating bit" (Rooney 2005 As a result, colonialism "locked the original inhabitants and the newcomers into the most complex and traumatic relationships in the history of humanity" (Loomba, p.2). A figure like Okonkwo, for whom the mere existence of the colonist is an offense, is a prime example of how the tensions that are building up in Things fall apart might become hazardous. When he begins to experience the arrogance and high-handedness of the Administration on a personal level, he is more tempted to consider the possibility of exacting personal retribution. Colonialism in Africa also resulted in the formation of new political realities, which included the consolidation of various linguistic, cultural, and religious groups into a single political entity. As a consequence, the end of colonial rule did not permit a period of healing and rehabilitation, but rather it only introduced additional pressures and stress factors that further complicated identity issues. Not only did the

mass societies that emerged as a consequence of these amalgamations have an effect on the identities of the linguistic and cultural groups, but they also had an effect on the individuals who were laboring under numerous loyalties. According to Kokot, Trololyan, and Alfonso (2004), hybridity and multiple belonging are inescapable in postcolonial situations. It is worth noting that, contrary to what Young has observed, hybridity is not a singular process. Instead, it is a phenomenon that creates new social spaces that enable the articulation of experiences of change and subsequent demands for social transformation. However, it is important to note that hybridity is not a singular process.

## Conclusion

The novels "A Man of the People" and "Anthills of the Savannah" written by Chinua Achebe are both considered to be forceful criticisms of the post-colonial African state. These works investigate the complexity of power, corruption, and resistance. Not only does Achebe use these books to reflect on the difficulties that newly independent African nations are encountering, but he also uses them to call for a moral and political awakening by expressing his thoughts. In his books, he draws attention to the perils of unbridled authority and the significance of ethical leadership. At the same time, he acknowledges the possibilities for collective action and the role that the disadvantaged play in pushing social and political change. Despite the fact that many African nations are still struggling to overcome the legacy of colonialism, the difficulties of governance, and the requirement for more inclusive and just societies, Achebe's critique of post-colonial leadership is still relevant today. Achebe makes a significant contribution to a more in-depth comprehension of the history of Africa as well as the continent's current fight for a brighter future through his nuanced and critical representation of African politics.

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