
Power, Ideology and Political Vision in Achebe's Novel "Anthills of The Savannah"

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ABSTRACT

More than a century ago, Bertrand Russell rightly stated, "The fundamental concept in social science is power in the same sense in which energy is the basic concept in physics" (Bertrand Russell, p. 9). Power in the post-war period has truly become the source and goal of all human enterprise, epicentre of all experience and the monitoring of the destiny of millions. Literature has always been implicated issues related to power as the reading of life. Satre was only observed at it from a different angle when he defined, "As a freedom the author addresses free men, with only one subject- freedom" (Jean Paul Sartre, p. 58). What is freedom, freedom from what and freedom to do what- is the burning issue in question. Today, perhaps people cannot explain to write about people without saying about power.

Keywords:- Power, Ideology, Politics, Society, Tradition.

INTRODUCTION:

While trying to consider Achebe's ideology, I would like to suggests in this paper that it is impossible for a author not to have an ideology, Achebe has his own ideology, with all suspicious of hostility towards his ideology. It can be argued that while the presence of ideology in literary texts is unavoidable and indisputable, such presence is more pronounced in cultures that have been adversely affected by the colonial process. If texts emanating from such cultures are being seen as the formation sites of ideological competition, which conceptual position are created to confirm or counter existing views of the world, then it is because such a function has a more urgent need for self-emphasis and self definition. Hence in much of African's literature and the Black Diaspora, ideology manifests itself as the agency that serves to remove hegemonic situation that engage in imperialist discourses. Therefore he really advocates a form of philosophic conservatism, however this conservatism is based on an idealistic interpretation of reality and history, is incapable either of understanding the power which hold in the international field today or coping with the problems of modern post-colonial societies. I would also like to consider whether Achebe's antipathy to ideology is misplaced and whether, inspite of the genuineness of his views, it limits, compromises and confuses his position as a social life.

Ideology is a very wrong term and we can clarify the meaning in which we are going to use it. Though the term ideology was first coined by the French Philosopher Desutt De Tracy at the end of the eighteenth century, it is the left Hegelians who valued it as a way of translating ideas into action. According to Desutt De Tracy, "The word ideology meant different things to different

thinkers. No other word has perhaps caused as much bewilderment as “ideology” in literary theory in present times. Ideology is used here in the wide sense of the term to mean “the ways in which what we say and believe connect with power structure and power relationships of the society in which we live in.” However it is with Marx that the term has acquired its present importance. In the Marxist sense, ideology is defined as the “sum of concepts” that enable a social group to organize values that include mystical consciousness and this group includes activity which are expressed” (Kolakowski in Bottomore, p. 119). Thus ideology is an artificial construct separate from the material condensed associations of people's existence, and its function is to legitimize the power of society of the ruling class, as in the final analysis any dominant views of a society are the views of its ruling class. As Terry Eagleton explains it “Stands or falls by the claim that it is not only an ideology, but it contains a scientific theory of the origins, structure and decline of ideology” (Terry Eagleton, p. 16). There has been a difference in the minds of Marxists that historical materialism is pure ideology or science while others such as bourgeois economics, politics, law and religion are false ideologies. I have plan to apply the term “ideology” to both Marxism as well as ideas and representations of other systems that dominate the minds of an individual or social group, which are used to interpret or explain reality of the world.

The present theme of Chinua Achebe's novels is about the rapid change in tragic consequences in the power structures of Africa. This is the subject, he had made informally his own. Starting with the advent of colonial power, his works sparked a series of political crises that led to collapse of the original power structures in Nigeria in first novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958), the entire subjugation of the natives and the establishment of European power in the *Arrow of God* (1964), the transfer of power of the native aristocracy in *No Longer at Ease* (1960), the downfall of the first republic in *A Man of the People* (1966), and the failure of the military rule found in the *Anthills of the Savannah* (1988).

Anthills of the Savannah, coming after along gap of twenty-one years, still remains a part of the project that Achebe launched years ago. In 1967, Achebe emphatically announced, “Right now, I am interested in politics or my interest in the novels is politics. A man of the people was not a flash in the pan. This is the beginning of phase for me, in which I intend to take a hard look at what we in Africa are making of independence but taking Nigeria which I know best” (Chinua Achebe, p. 12)

Achebe writes out of an intense social consciousness, which deals with politics and society, and focuses his mind on the function of power in contemporary society, which closely effects on the moral, social, cultural and even aesthetic values of the people.

Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* is a very serious indictment of military rule, which becomes leader-centered and eventually evolves into a career of presidency. Here the novelist is no longer a historian but has transformed into an ideology. He is not only evaluating, but also clearly understand some events in Africa in the end of two century. He is also suggesting positive values to replace the old ones. He makes explicitly comprehensive critical statements on contemporary political situations, showing that any form of government that is conscious to the needs of the aggrieved public is doomed to fail. The novel provides a critical assessment of the power existing structures in Africa, largely a legacy of their colonial past and rejecting their obsessive

drive toward centralization. Power is the central issue motif in the text and what is the important significance of Achebe in the approach to power held by different sections of society.

Achebe's *Anthills* is not ideological in which the author uses it to make a political point. Ideology becomes a truly complex form involving individuals into history in many ways and providing many types and degrees of use to history. The text has all such changes in history and for multiple perspectives as it creates a broader frame of explanation that includes many, not just a single critical character's career. Therefore, the novel is melded into the image of logical ideology in many structural and formal ways. Achebe's views with the form of power and how it attracts the man and society has an open bearing not only on the subjects of the novel, but also on its structure and particular imaginary elements employed in the book-setting, characters, plot, point of view and visual narrative techniques.

Anthills is located in the fictional West African state of Kangan. Unlike the previous novels, here Achebe selects a fictional setting which has provided him the benefit of different from history. The absence of a particular historical fact gives the action an air of freedom, and it refers not to a concrete state, but not an ideological formation that concrete conditions have actually produced. The textual form encompasses practically the entire society, with its marble corridors and mahogany furniture ranging from spacious and luxurious presidential spaces to one-room huts of the urban poor.

However, Achebe's contemptuous dismissal of ideology does not make him free from ideology. As Louis Althusser has remarked, "Man is by nature an ideological creature" (p. 160), "Ideology slides into all human activity...it is identical with the 'lived' experience of human existence itself" (Louis Althusser, p. 204). Since the artist is a human being, he must have an ideology.

We see a similar activity at work in *Anthills of the Savannah*. So, it would be worthwhile exploring the ideology out of which Achebe's novel has emerged, in which it is held. The plot of the novel is at his will, based on His Excellency, the North Western region, which has been in the grip of severe drought for the last two years, and where the people are going through great pain, the president of the country travel Abazon, people is towards the problems of the elite, the sensitivity of whether the rulers are willing to identify themselves with the people, or like their former colonial masters, they are more by questions of their own dignity and status as shown in their determination to maintain their distance from the rabble. They choose the latter course because, in their view, it is only the gap that can protect the secret of power, some things are absolutely important to maintain law and order in the country. Nothing is more perhaps the Western orientation of the ruling elite more explicit reflected than this belief. This is how their colonial masters preserved their power and glory and that is what their successor set out for. The current president is also angry with the Abozonians because they did not favour him in practice for life presidency, but the contempt for the mass of people is the only reason for his refusal to visit then or to listen to their grievances.

This large Canvas is crowded by many characters derived from various social classes ranging from the head of the state and his cabinet colleagues to students, taxi drivers and slum dwellers. They are easily divided into the good guys and the bad guys those who support closer contact with the people, are sympathetic to their problems and responsive to their needs are well; those who are lacking in these features or against to this approach are evil. His Excellency furnishes the most glaring example. Like Chris, Ikem and Same were a product of Lord Lugard College in

Nigeria. However, “it was his training at Sandhurst and his stay in England that was the strongest early influence on his personality. He praised the English for the “talk of stupidity” and his major flaw was that all he ever wanted was to do what was expected to him especially by the English” (Anthills, p. 49), “As well as by the Americans, a nightmare appeared on the cover of Time Magazine with a big mouth and a small head” (p. 15). No wonder the six men, they visit Abazon delegation to Bassa should received H.E. of the Israeli raid on Entebbe airport in Uganda (p. 15). However, the focus is hypothetically on a trio of friends at the helm of power following a military coup in the fictional state of Kanga. This enables the author to provide an inside view of the political manoeuvre. The Sandhurst trained army officer, Sam, who finds himself transcending to his majesty is eager to guard the supreme political power, then he has come into possession, much more than the destiny of the nation. It is natural for him to be transformed into a dictator that given the political atmosphere of the corrupt leaders, indifferent intellectuals and indifferent masses of this pre-colonial state. The book takes into account the contrasts of military power. The presidents' ultimate authority is suggested through a repetition of his pet expression, “Finish!” and “Kabiso”. The dull subjugation of the cabinet includes lawyers, professors, university students who are briefly disappointed by the “hop of the black race.” They are like mice crawling in and out of holes sniffing their masters moods; a swarm of “court jesters” carry out the ritual of sycophancy and the “semi-contemplative idiots” easily find their tyrannical “Jesus”. The man of Desting fear appears to be an inseparable twin of power. The powerless fear “power”, while those in power suffer it.

Chris, the commissioner of information, is in the world of politics, but not it. He initially supports the grand projects of his former cell of the great depression, but when the latter transforms into “a baby monster”, Chris transforms into a cynical observer of ridiculous developments. He represent a well class of intellectual intelligence who slips out of hatred in inertia with advancing in the world of politics. As the political crisis deepens, it arises over the need for active intervention, but by then the dictatorship has already taken effect. On the other hand, Ikem, the editor of the National Gazette, poet, novelist and a revolutionary is a “man of action.” He boils down angrily at the military government's abuses and launches the editorial crusade against the government's policies. He protests against every form of authority political, social or sexual. Through the events of the novel he moves towards martyrdom.

The incidents of the novel must explore the necessary redesign Intel lectures to enable them to assume their roles as builders of modern Africa. The need to “re-establish”, in essence, the “world of the people”, “the ways of their culture”, “the real Kangan.” the philosophers and artist are still at the point as thinkers and keepers of ideology. The responsibility of the intellectual, as the developments in the novel stem from, it is more appropriate for emancipation and equality with new ones to replace old hegemonic forms. For this, they should be able to go the core of their indigenous tradition and rebuild their society, “around the core of their reality, not about any intellectual abstraction” (p. 100).

The novel underscores the need to identify intellectuals with the suffering public. Ikem, opening the scope of his revolution of women; Chris, growing knowledge about the power of the poor; Beaurice breaking the barriers of bureaucracy to accept Agatha, her servant, on an equal footing, are all going through this process of “rededibility.” Controversial ideological passages, Chris, Ikem and Beaurice almost follow the merge when they become aware of the trio. There is an

urgent need to feel yourself with the suffering millions, “as it is all for the people of the world no matter how talented” (p. 232).

This novel not only questions the approval of the authority of the military rulers, who come to power through force and not by popular consensus, by the very notion of “centrality.” It is about the control of power, is opposed to “centre” the lives of a model of power connection and a plea for the resurrection of the community based indigenous power forms. Achebe uses the myth of Idemili to bring traditional tribal attitudes to power. The weight of the novel's argument actually lies in the continuing symbolism surrounding the myth of Idemili. As the legend has it, “In the beginning, the world came out naked and lost power. So the Almighty, seeing his creation through the sun's round eyes, saw and pondered and finally decided to send his daughter, Idemili, wrapped around the rigid waist of power to witness the author's moral nature of peace and modesty” (p. 102).

Achebe's vision of harmony transcends myth and embraces symbolism, ritual and mysticism. The meeting of the elite and the people Ikem and Elewa brings about a new birth, and the child Amacchina-May the path never-close, the bright path of Ikem-Symbolise the new Nigeria, free from social cleavage and bound by the ties of brotherhood and friendship. This is the “primitive integrity of the earth” (p. 142), which was violated when his favorite children were humiliated and insulted by the famine-stricken peasant of Abazon, now restored. Religious cleavage is overcome in the “ecumenical fraternization” (p. 224) of the ritual dance celebrating signifies the birth of a new nation. However, the earth is not only divinity to be happy; there is also a separate and emboldened history “that programs keeping in mind the fate of individuals and nations in advance” (p. 220) and who would have to sacrifice with blood is sacrifice with blood of angels like Ikem and Chris.

Achebe's vision of harmony and happiness may seem too optimistic for some, yet it has deterministic tension that we have just noted. Here, we are confronted with two moral and spiritual concepts of history and social reality. One in the world, for exploitation and injustice are the result of human wickedness and stupidity and can be removed by moral improvement of the individual, “society is an extension of the individual” (Anthills, p. 99). This idea assumes a created conflict between rich and poor has and knots based on a plot by the rich to rob and poor. Achebe rejects the latter approach and has no patience with those a partisans, patriots and party 'Linear' who are thinking in terms of class, “that there will be no speak of villainy in the dear oppressed nor note would provide a vivid glimpse of humanity” (Anthills, p. 100).

CONCLUSION:

It is difficult to avoid the notion that allergy to Achebe's ideology, about which it is predominantly leftist ideology that largely hates the behavior of self-proclaimed revolutionaries in his country and as in the idealistic interpretation of reality is seen, reduces his social criticism in Anthills. It can also be argued that he sees the same weakness in his social and political views. This argument will not be fully determined because Achebe, as we have seen, has an ideology of his own that relates to a rich and re-spreading tradition-the tradition of philosophic conservatism. Slightly ambiguous and paternalistic and not adequately equipped to deal with the problems of the modern post-industrial society, it is solidly built on humanistic qualities of freedom and

dignity of the individual. The ideological opposition to the existing system and structure of power, thus not only occasions Achebe's *Anthills* but also its imaginary form. Consequently, the text, through its formal devices, establishes a transformation relationship between self and ideology allowing us to see commonly concealed views of ideology. Moreover, Achebe is an artist, not a metaphysician or theorist. His politics, in the tradition of poet and novelists is unique.

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