

THE IMAGE OF WOMEN IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S NOVELS THINGS FALL APART, NO LONGER AT EASE AND ARROW OF GOD

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ABSTRACT: *This paper explores and discusses the image of women in Chinua Achebe's novels: Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease and Arrow of God. In Things Fall Apart (TFA), there is a great marginalization of women in Nigerian society. Although there are many tasks undertaken by women such as educating the children by narrating folk stories to them, upbringing their daughters, and serving as priestesses of gods (e.g. Chillo). The reader of such novels can effortlessly internalize the image of women in Chinua Achebe because it is very obvious. This Image has been improved-through the development of the society in TFA. The citizens are ignorant, but are educated in the second novel No Longer at Ease. When a girl was asked to fulfill an application form and reaching to sex activities item, she wrote twice a week. It is the same case in Arrow of God, when Ezulu wants to send his son to the church in order to enable him to learn the lifestyle of the white This was evident when his mother asked him "Why do you send my son ?" and his a answer is that " How does it concern you while I do with my son". Regardless of his changeable Image from time to time, we have to acknowledge that Chinua Achebe, belittles, scorns, and underestimates women in his early and modern novels.*

KEYWORDS: image, women, belittle, Scorn, Achebe, nigerian

INTRODUCTION

My aspiration of writing this paper arose after reading Chinua Achebe's novels--as I was really astonished by the image of Chinua Achebe in his novels, mainly those in his early ones.. When reading these novels, one can immediately realize Chinua Achebe's views towards women. In other words, It was noticed that in his early novels, Chinua Achebe tends to, belittles women substantially in addition to being very gendered-sarcastic. His views on women however had changed gradually in his subsequent novels. For example, in some of his recent novels, Chinua Achebe describes women differently than he used to do in the early novels. This was due to the feminist movements taking place in the society in where he lived in addition to the influence of the White who had diverted their attention from women to his deeds as well. This paper hence summarizes the image of Women in three of his,; Additionally this critique gives the reader an idea about this sarcastic writer in general.

There are some writers who wrote about women in Chinua Achebe' s novels as follow:

- 1- Linda Strong Leek wrote a paper entitled: *Reading as Woman: Chinua Achebe' s Things fall Apart and Feminist Criticism.*

In her paper she said:

"Most readings of the novel don't address

the brutal beating Ekwefi receives at the hands of Okonkwo . The novel continued with a brief discussion of this continues abuse later when Okonkwo threatens Ekweifi with a gun after hearing her murmurs under her breath "(Linda.2011: 5)

- 2- Kim Piper Hiatt: wrote in an essay entitled: *The Role of Women in Things Fall Apart. 2013*. He mentioned that:

" Discerning The Role of Women in Things Fall Apart requires an attentive and unbiased reading of the novel at , first glance the women in TFA may seem to be an oppressed group with little power and this characterization is true to some extent "(Kim. 2013. P. 1)

The Image of Women in Things Fall Apart

In 1930, Chinua Achebe was born in Nigeria, in a small village, Ogidi, and died in 2013. He was a son of a Christian man. He decided to study medicine; however, he changed his major into languages studies.

The protagonist of his first novel *Things Fall Apart* was Okwonkwo, He was a huge strong man with red eyes, flat wide nose and cursed hair. He had three wives whom he treated with a heavy hand. He asked his senior wife to look after a lad when she asked about the time of his stay with them. He shouted at her and ordered her not to ask about what he had said:

*" He belongs to the clan : he told her , so look after him " Is he staying along with us She asked
" Do what you are told woman "(Achebe.1969:18).*

Okwonkwo thundered and stammered, "When do you become one of the elder of A mofia". He didn't only shout on her, but also despised her by saying, "When do you become one of the elders of Amofia" so as to ask him about the length of his stay. If a man has four wives, they should drink in order: the senior wife first and then the others. Okwonkwo asked his first wife to drink first, then the second one and at last the third one. This is the only situation in which Chinua Achebe gives a woman her right:

" A Nasi is the first wife and the others couldn't drink before her , and so they stood waiting " (Achebe.1969: 22)

The Image of Women in No Longer At Ease

This section discusses the image of women in Chinua Achebe's second novel *No Longer At Ease*. In the Nigerian society it is very normal to describe a girl as foolish. This is evident in the conversation that took place between Obi and Joseph, even though this took place in a novel, but the literature reflected a typical situation of a society.

A man was proud when he was accepted by a girl to dance with. This is very clear when Joseph said:

*" Dancing is very important now days .
No girl will look at you when , when
you can 't dance " .(Achebe 1960:16).*

From this situation, it seems that a girl has the a-right to evaluate a man, which was it contradicted by another scene when Joseph himself says :

*" She was a nice girl , but sometimes
foolish, sometimes though , I wish
we hadn't broken up , she was simply
mad about me , and she was virgin
when I met her , which is very rare" Ibid.*

She was foolish, but nice when he performed sexual intercourse with her and he was surprised to find her a virgin. Chinua Achebe was despising girls. He talked about a woman whom was brought by Joseph and said: "Her lips and finger nails were brilliant redalthough she left a nasty taste on Obi's mouth". Chinua Achebe views girls as not being stable creatures, as they change their minds suddenly (i.e. their personality are contradicting). This is very clear when Clara talked and kissed Obi:

*" She was trebling as he kissed her over
and over again .Let me she whispered .
I love you , she was silent for a while
seeming to melt on his arms . You don't
she said suddenly " We are only being
silly .You will forget it in the morning ,
she looked at him and he kissed her
violently " (Achebe .1960: 33).*

According to Chinua Achebe, a woman is valueless unless she gains money. In describing the conversation between Joseph and Obi, he said:

*" I t is pity my three elder sisters got
married too early for us to make money
for them . We will try to make upon
others " (Achebe .1960: 47) .*

He wants to make money from his sisters when their husbands paid the pride price. They treated their sisters as animals sold for money.

*"When Obi travel to see his relatives in
a village he shared a seat in a lorry with
a young woman with a woman sitting
his left was no asleep clasping her baby
tidily to her breast he shut his eyes
and imagine her to be Clara "(Achebe .1960: 51).*

Women are sensitive and vulnerable by nature. Chinua Achebe changed their nature by describing one of his women character as stronger than an iron:

" She was stronger than an iron and was feared by other children in the neighborhood even the boys "(Achebe .1960:69) .

Based on the abovementioned scenario, it seems that he despises women very much. This description does not only reveal that she is only strong, but she is senseless too. It is very normal to describe a girl as foolish and idiot when Obi talk to his mother he says that:

" That is why father class them the foolish virgin " (Achebe .1960:71) .

Obi used to cheat girls mainly when he kissed one of them: "The result is that one have of Obi might kiss a girl and murmur". I love you " NLE .P.80.

According to Achebe, girls are not only silly but they also have no coyness. When women lose their coyness, they are not going to be women because coyness is the most important characteristic of a woman. This is very clear when he described Clara:

" She has no coyness in her "
(Achebe .1960:80).

Chinua Achebe thinks that girls are unaware of the consequences of their deeds, which makes them blame themselves on things that they have already done. This is very clear in Mr. Tomlinson's quote:

"That was short and sweet."
she said. (Achebe .1960:99).

."Oh yes he is nuisance "He did not look and the conversation lapsed."

During that morning, Obi felt strongly elated in a way that was unlike the feeling he had a few years ago in England when his first woman—said almost in so many words that she was coming for when she agreed to visit Obi in his loadings

"I will teach you the how to dance the high - life when you come".

He had said: "That would be grand "She replied eagerly " and perhaps a little life too

" and she had smiled mischievously "
When the day arrived Obi was scared he had heard that it was possible to disappoint a woman , but he didn't disappointed her , and when it was over he felt strongly elated . she said she thought she had been attached by a tiger".
(Achebe .1960:100).

Chinua Achebe was very sarcastic, in addition to despising girls. When Obi and Christopher talked about girls, Christopher told a story saying that:

"a girl who was given an application form to fill in, she put down her name, and her age, but when she came to sex she wrote "twice a week": Obi could not help laughing". (Achebe .1960:137)

Chinua Achebe considers women as prostitutes. This is very obvious in describing his character Clara. Obi went to see his friend so as to help him to find a doctor. He said

"I think she is pregnant his friend blame him" and said "But my attitudes for these things is quite different when I am in the East a girl came to me and said I didn't find my period. I said to her go and look for it". (Achebe .1960:165).

Throughout the novel, Chinua Achebe never praises women or girls. He looked at them with a very gloomy eyes. He always depreciates and treated them as creatures that are just created for prostitutions. In his previous novel; however, he didn't talk about prostitution. This reflects the impact of colonist on the Nigerian society. In the past,. In *No Longer at Ease*, women characters are completely different from those in *Things Fall Apart* in terms of moralities.

The Image of Women in Arrow of God

One may notice that women being kind to children in this novel certainly contradicts Chinua Achebe's attitudes towards women:

"The moon he saw that day was as thin as an orphan fed by grudgingly by a cruel mother foster". (2008:1)

For Achebe treating women cruelly is very natural. Ezulu said to one of his wives

"What I am saying is that if you want the madness of yours to be crude bring my supper at this time another day". (Achebe.2008: 9).

One of the daily activities of the Nigerian community is beating wives:

"Akewe, often came home to say that that her husband has beaten her. One early morning she came a gain with her face all swollen". (Achebe.2008:11).

Chinua Achebe views women as animals: "Everyone carrying a towering load of five or six pots held together with a net of ropes on along basket, and seemed in a half light like a sprit in a fantastic head" (Achebe.2008: 19).

Although this load is considered very heavy for a donkey, a woman can and should do it not because she is strong, but because Chinua Achebe wants to despise women. Ezulu wants to send his son to the church in order to make him learn the way of the lifestyle of the White. When his mother asked him: "Why do you send my son? His answer was:

*" How does it concern you while I do with
my son "(Achebe.2008: 47)*

This suggests that he treats him if he is not her child and she hasn't the right to even talk about his fate. In the Nigerian society, a woman is not respected at all. This is clear when:

*" Unfortunately Oiuugo was one of those people
who could never whisper and what she said
reached Oduche's ears he immediately rushed at
Ojiugo and in the words of Nwafa when he
recount the incident later , gave her a thunder
on the face.....Matefi examined her daughter's
face and saw what look like the wed left by
Oduche's five fingers"(Achebe.2008: 130).*

Chinua Achebe views women as slaves too. This is clear when Ezulu said: "What I do myself if I need something like that is to call one of my wives and say to her. I need such and such a thing for sacrifice go and get it for me I know I can take it, but I ask her to go and bring it herself" (Achebe.2008: 175).

CONCLUSION

This paper describes the Image of women in Achebe's three novels: *Things Fall Apart, No Longer At Ease, and Arrow of God*. It is an attempt to draw readers' attention to African Literature which was neglected nowadays even though it is fruitful, rich, and astonishing. The paper sheds some light on the Image of women in Achebe's novels so as to provide an idea of the writer and his sarcasm. The author was gifted and had a great ability to portrait views and comments about his characters.

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