

**Women in African society: Analysis of Achebe's novels *Things Fall Apart* and
*A Man of the People***

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Abstract

This paper explores an image of women in Chinua Achebe's novels *A Man of the People* and *Things Fall Apart*. Achebe has a vivid expression describing the social cultural values in Nigeria of Africa, as a prominent postcolonial writer. I have analyzed the novels through the perspective of post-colonial feminism. Post-colonial feminism finds the intersection and relation between feminism and post colonialism. From the findings in *Things Fall Apart*, we can observe that women are portrayed to be happy in traditional patriarchal cultures, they are described to be harmonious members of the community even though they have to be beaten and barren continuously from any kind of decision making process and constantly reviled in proverbs and sayings. Also, I found something interesting about women that they have a big role in belief system. Again, in *A Man of the People* Achebe portrayed male dominated political and aesthetic society. This novel explores obstruction to sexual politics and African feminism. However, feminism is a very recent movement for women which encourages them every sectors of their lives. It is not about being women. It's about beliefs, political movements and ideologies which establish every rights for women. Also, it seeks equal opportunities.

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Table of Contents

Declaration	2
Approval	3
Abstract	4
Acknowledgement	5
Chapter1: Introduction	8
1.1 <i>Things Fall Apart</i>	9
1.2 <i>A Man of the People</i>	11
1.3 Purpose of thesis.....	12
Chapter2: Literature Review	13
2.1 Colonial effect on feminism.....	14
Chapter3: Theoretical Framework	18
3.1 History of feminism, Western and Black feminist theory.....	21
3.2 Waves of Western feminism.....	22
Chapter4: Textual Analysis	24
4.1 Women in <i>Things Fall Apart</i> : Relationship between men and women.....	24
4.2 <i>A Man of the People</i> : Political Relationship between Men and Women.....	25
4.3 Role of women.....	27
Chapter5: Conclusion	28

Work cited.....32

Chapter 1: Introduction

Women and girls have to tolerate most of the negative things in a society. For example: they have to face restrictions of their freedom and mobility, they get fewer opportunities to choose how they want to live their lives, they experience epidemic levels of violence and harassment across the globe and also they have to face rigid gender norms and roles. So, feminism is a belief where all women should have the equal rights as men. In the meantime, the feminists think for women to ensure for them equal rights and equal opportunities is really important. The core concepts of feminist theory are choice, difference, equality, discrimination, race, gender and sex. *A Man of the People* and *Things Fall Apart* in these two novels Chinua Achebe highlighted about many things but I will talk about women and their struggles in this paper. Feminist theory helps us to understand properly the oppressive and unequal gender relations. Feminist theory talks about gender stratification through the intersection of class, gender and race. According to Rosser, "Scholars exploring gender and technology interaction have tended to concentrate on gender and technology in the workforce and somewhat less on women as users of technology. Limited studies explored how technological designs, especially for information technologies (IT), might differ depending on the gender of the designer and user"(1). So, feminist theory aims to understand gender inequality and focuses on sexuality, gender politics and power relations. *A Man of the People* and *Things Fall Apart* are two fictional novel of Chinua Achebe. In this novels we can see that how women are neglected by the male dominant society. For example: In *Things Fall Apart* we can see that three wives of Okonkwo have to do their domestic works and they have to raise children of him as well. But he sees his wives to be a subject so that he can justify his brutal and cruel behavior against his three wives. They are the people who help men in certain tasks, the makers of a home and the prospecting mothers. Okonkwo used to beat his wives

also he nearly tries to shoot his wives for his own anxiousness and insecurities. Again, in the opening paragraph of novel, *A Man of the People* introduces us Chief M.A Nanga. In this novel chief Nanga represents the politician and Odili represents an intellectual movement. Here the main female characters of this novel are Edna and Elsie. These two ladies are the main focus of my paper. In the novel Odili got sympathized for Edna. On the other side, Nanga is a powerful politician Edna was his fiancé. He wanted to marry her but it does not mean he loves her. He gave a lot of money to her family and he already had a wife as well. Also Nanga seduced Elsie but Odili used to love Elsie. But after that Odili wanted to take revenge but he fall in love with the fiancé of Nanga named Edna at that time.

1.1 *Things Fall Apart:*

Since a long time ago women have to face violence and domination. Still they have to be discriminated in our society. Additionally, Achebe portrays in his novel *Things Fall Apart* about Igbo society and from an African perspective the writer examines masculinity. In this novel we can see the reflection of those women of African culture and society who had to remain voiceless against injustice. This time was such kind of period of history which highlights the inequalities between males and females. By the male characters of the novel authorization and domination over women are reflected through the protagonist of the novel. The protagonist of the novel named Okonwo he has three wives and he oppresses them also he used to abuse them. As a male dominator he abuse his power on his wives. Okonwo displayed this kind of trait as the monarch of the household at the very beginning of the novel. "He ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children" (Achebe, 10). In the Igbo culture men ruled over their families especially they used to

rule over their wives. People like Okonwo used to treat their wives like do not exist in the society. These women had to live in the society with disrespect and continuously the women had to live in fear of male dominant society. Women were less powerful than men. Men were more powerful than women capabilities and their limits. And the male society let women fear their husbands. The author gives a clear idea throughout the novel about African and Igbo culture people, their traditions and rules. So in my research paper I will mention, what are the gender issues in *Things Fall Apart*?

Things Fall Apart is novel which introduce us Igbo village in Nigeria and the protagonist who was the most powerful figure in the tribe but suddenly he started to loss his influence in the tribe. When Cristian missionaries came and colonized there he began to loss his influence as Nigerian. According to Feminist critics and their deep point of view this novel reveals author's thoughts about women and tells a lot about Igbo people. Feminist critics look at female characters, female authors, women issues and their treatment. Moreover, the author is a male writer, and in this novel the main focus of Feminist criticism is women and also about the issues of women and also Igbo perspective of gender identity. One man can get married at a same time more than one woman is called polygyny. This kind of marriage structure is shown in the families of Okonwo's village. A man looked upon in a better light with so many wives than a man with no wife or one wife. At that time, men used to get married with a lot women because their views were women are means to get respect and titles and also means of extra labor power. Women can bring a lot of benefits for men according to Igbo African culture of that time. For example: in-laws with livestock, land, goods, farms for women's crop, labor, reproductive power, sexual services. But if a woman gets marry so many times or involve in polygyny she will get divorced by her husband.

In this way, female were dominated by the male society. In my research paper I will be discussing about in this novel how is the relationship between women and men are narrated?

1.2 *A Man of the People:*

Generally Chinua Achebe does not highlight women to be an active participant in his fictional novel as usual. This novel is about obstruction to sexual politics and African feminism. This novel discusses about the different perceptions of women and also the writer portrays the role of the woman in this novel. Again, Chief Nanga is a political figure and he wanted to keep Edna as his parlor wife. And she also agreed to be his second wife as her family was debt to him. In this way we can understand that women are bound to the authoritative customs of male dominating society. But according to the narrator of the novel Odili, Edna is a loose woman and also a convert girl. However, the writer provides some good advices to the women in the novel *A Man of the People*. In this novel, according to the writer women are portrayed to be weak. Achebe indicated the women to be oppressed and humiliated person in the society. The writer mainly focuses to the characters of Mrs. Nanga and Edna. Mrs. Nanga who was the wife of the Nanga was focused to get married to Mr. Nanga by ending her education. However, she is oppressed and humiliated by Chief Nanga who was her husband. Being a womanizer his wife has nothing to say and she had to endure his misbehavior. Elsie, Jean, and Agnes are easily convinced to make love with Chief Nanga (38). Additionally, women are highlighted to be object in this novel which is beyond description. The wife of Nanga is a simple character who becomes complex thoroughly at the end of the novel. In this novel, education system is criticized by Nanga and Edna exploits it. By playing damsel Edna keep manipulating Odili with the men around her. In the several scenes of this novel, Edna's movement between rejection and placement of female

child appeared to be vulnerable. For example: Edna was warned by Odili against her polygamous marriage while Edna supports polygamous marriage. According to Powell, "polygyny is represented in Chinua Achebe's historical novels and as it exists in the world is however, a multidimensional custom" (166). Also, the main concept of this novel is political leadership. The satire of political culture is that the men engage women in politics in and take advantage of them. Also, women can play a significant role in every sector individually, this reality cannot even imagined by men. In this novel *A Man of the People* Chinua Achebe talks about how women were being used for emotional energy. So there in my research paper I will be researching what are political relationship between women and men?

1.3 Purpose of thesis:

The purpose of thesis is to analyses the traumatic lives of the women in *Things Fall Apart* and *A Man of the People*. This paper will be divided into distinct chapters including introduction, literature review, methodology and the textual analysis which will be about the feminist perspective of the two novels *Things Fall Apart* and *A Man of the People* focusing on the lives of Okonwo's wives and Mrs. Odili and Edna's suffer in their lives and finally there will be a conclusion. This paper will examine the feminist perspective from both *Things Fall Apart* and *A Man of the People* novel which will reflect the traumatic painful and oppressive lives of the women. Also, in this paper I will be analyzing about how women were overlooked. Feminist perspective highlights the social issues. All these are the main purposes of writing this paper.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Generally black women have to face racism and sexism in their regular and daily life. Moreover, during 1980s feminism only talked about rape, abortion and male violence but when black women started to marry the Whites, then situation turned into more problematic phenomenon.

For example:- Black women has to face more domestic violence than the white women and at the end of the day they do not get justice as well for their being tortured which we can see in *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. According to Wang, “Black women suffer from double oppression, both from gender and race. Through her writings, Morrison endowed black women ways of expressing their pains and sufferings. By releasing their painful past, they can gain their identity and subjectivity” (Morrison’s Black Feminist Discourse in A Mercy). In the modern world, sometimes police do not take the complaints of the black women seriously. At the same time, when Black women get raped, police do not use any legal action usually so facing any kind of accidents black women did not get justice because they face crimes which are not justified as crime most of the time. Not only black women black people are still neglected in all sectors and sometimes things happen like, white people directly oppose working with Blacks in any kind of sector. Additionally, Society enforced Black women to remain the slaves of the Whites. In *Things Fall Apart* Okonkwo's thinking is, "No matter how prosperous a man was, if he was unable to rule his women and his children (and especially his women) he was not really a man" (45). In this way, women were neglected in their own society. Again, in another novel *A Man of the People* Odili says that, "As long as a man confined himself to preparing foreign concoctions he could still maintain the comfortable illusion that he wasn't really doing such an unmanly thing as cooking" (47). Throughout the novel, this line addresses two important themes. First of all it indicates to the fragility of masculinity and the subordination of women. Secondly, it comments

on the persistent influence of colonialism. In order for a "feminine activity" to be considered more masculine, it is important that it is removed from the Nigerian societal context. This asserts that the Western imperialist view has been internalized by Nigerian society. Achebe mainly focuses on Black people in his writings. Also, some writers like Joseph Conrad highlighted Blacks into their writings like they are savages who are enemies, criminals and heinous. In *Heart of Darkness* the writer describes women like they are greedy and they are second class citizens. Also, they have no power and for men they seem nothing more than trophies. As Conrad is a British writer he tried to criticize the Blacks in his novel *Heart of Darkness*. Not only did he criticize the Black women but also he humiliated the whole Black community in his novel. He represented African women, people and their culture in a biased way because of the color of their skin. But Achebe tried to respond to this writer through his writings. Again, "The "black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet" is amongst many writers who have become part of the voices in the Black Lives Matter movement as their words seem to strike a nerve. The words written some time ago are able to describe what others cannot" (Audre Lorde: Intersectional Feminist). In this novel we can also see the fact of colonialism. Posey states that, "Colonialism in the novel involves establishing permanent outposts and setting up rules and laws, but the main reason for it is to make money". In *Things Fall Apart* Achebe mainly highlighted about colonialism.

2.1 Colonial effect on feminism:

Things Fall Apart in this novel, the effects of colonialism were extremely evident in the Igbo society. The British entered the native's land and then they changed their cultural values. Examples of these changes were evident in all aspects of the Igbo people's lives, in their family life, religion, the dead and children. At the end they were completely incapable of doing anything

to reverse the changes that had already taken place in their society and many of the Igboians were upset by the colonialism into their society and women were also stuck into it. The colonial era, depicted in *Things Fall Apart*, may have tried to show the changes in the Nigerian society. Moreover, it also highlights the fact that British people robbed the natives from their traditional practices, political, religion and economic supremacy. Representations of Nigeria are ambiguous and ambivalent in the writings of post-colonial writers. Chinua Achebe, V. S. J. M. Coetzee and Naipaul are the most renowned of the writers as they are most vibrant in their depiction of post-colonial identity, racism, hegemony, resistance, violence. Post-colonialism and post-modernism are literary movements that can be viewed together. In this context post-colonial Anglo-phone literature about Nigeria is written from different points of view by post-colonial writers like them. All of them represent Nigeria as a complex and hybrid society. Their treatment of Nigeria is different from each other. Naipaul carries on traditional orientalist discourse while Achebe propagates a counter discourse in representing colonialism. In both writers periphery becomes the focus of their representation, however they portray different concepts of the colonialism. J. M. Coetzee opens a new face of representation where he blends post-colonial phenomena with the techniques of post-modern writing. He renounces the authorial point of view to empower the language of narrative, showing that language is autonomous and rather than using it as a means to establish any particular ideology and it is interpreted by the reader to resolve the question of interpretation. However, Burney emphasizes this by quoting Edward Said saying that, “opposite (contrapuntal) practices, or “secular impurities” such as “mixed genres, unexpected combinations of tradition and novelty, political experiences based on communities of effort and interpretation” (106). Through that Said found a profound and lasting effect of the combination of cultures of the East and West as an unexpected mixture of tradition and novelty, where the desire of the

'other' and the political motif of the West and tradition was through oppositions. When this opposition resettled in an unexpected combination of genres, the sense of resistance was created in the form of cultural resistance. This deep sense of cultural resistance was used as a narrative tool by Chinua Achebe in his novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) to portray the sufferings of the Igbos under colonial rule in order to reconstruct their identity against the term 'other', or as a foil to the 'self' of the white colonizers. Readers will get the point of view of the 'other's from their cultural perspectives, through this narrative of cultural resistance. So, Achebe basically focused on colonialism in his novel *Things Fall Apart*. Another theme is, women were oppressed by both the colonial and patriarchy power. The effect of colonialism is colonization was not only limited to their religion, but even in the social aspect of their community. Okonkwo remarked upon the tribe's growing weakness, calling them 'women' because they hesitated to fight when in the past, the warriors of Umuofia were feared. However, this is the source of their inability to start a war, the missionaries were not instigating a fight and they were unarmed. This was not just war, and as such, they could not fight. The same religion that they clung to, disallowed them from fighting for it. Thus, "the colonization trapped the Nigerians into two choices: assert their dominance, avoid getting colonized, but break the rules of their religion, or stand down, let Christianity slowly take root into their society, but abide by their moral codes. Either way, the Europeans won" (Of Men and Struggles: A Postcolonial and Feministic Analysis of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*). Again, in *A man of the people*, "We had all accepted things from white skins that none of us would have brooked from our own people"(41). This line explains how white colonizers were able to get away with more than anyone else, because of the difference between in the races and power. Because independence is so fresh, the main

characters of *A Man of the People* often compare their present situation to before the nation was made independent and to the racial inequality that resulted from subjugation to Britain.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

It is a fact that women were generally disadvantaged social categories than men. Nowadays, it is though that woman must have economic, political and social rights with men. However, women have to take double load of work. Like, they have to work outside and inside as well those who are keeping their contribution economically. But previously in Nigeria men were occasionally polygamous so that they can make women keep their contribution on household chores. But although they may have so many wives but it is not possible for a man satisfy all of their wives. Feminism is a belief where women may have equal opportunities and rights like men. It is about sexual equality and liberation between men and women that have same privileges and responsibilities in society against children and women violence, pillage a women's emotion and body, rape. Also, married women had to remain in higher stress than men. Moreover, feminism is concerned with dimensions of social life, social transformation, and social inequality. Rahayu states that “Domestically, women belong to the man. The men will do anything to keep his prestige and dignity as the head of the family” (42). However, from the novels or history we can see that women had to be stuck in their domestic sphere and men reserved public lives for themselves which Achebe tried to highlight in his novel *Things Fall Apart*. Women were neither allowed to study nor could they own any properties in some parts of the world, which was totally unfair to them. Now, such kind of perspective towards women have lessened but still they have to suffer a lot. Also, they were restricted from participating in any kind of public life. The meaning of their life is only to raise their child, serve their husband and do household chores. For example: In *Things Fall Apart* Okonkwo's wives have to do all these and sometimes they are also beaten by their husband. Women were like domestic servants and they had to remain as a maid. *Things Fall Apart* and *A Man of the People*, these are fictional novel of Achebe. Lipman states that, “Though women may seem to hold their own in the society and be abused by their

own merits or flaws it may be seen how this is an illusion because in a constructive presentation of women there lies paradoxically the presentation of women as it relates to their inferiority or submissiveness to men in the society”(1). So, in the first novel we get to know housewife women and second one gives us perception of political sectors women and their struggles.

Feminist theory is lived experience of people and also it emphasizes on women's life and rights.

Also, for feminist theory socialism and Marxism are the root components. Feminist research is something like which focuses on the experiences how women have to live in natural social setting. However, women do domestic labor which is unpaid which is not valued by men.

According to Verma, "The Marxist, Socialist, and even Capitalist feminist theories aim to achieve the same outcome but following different paths. While Marxist feminism aims to liberate women by preventing them from being oppressed through same radical utopian demands, socialist feminism focused on liberating women by removing the patriarchy in society" ("Marxist Feminism"). So Marxist feminists argue that a woman produces child and bears them as a future worker without any cost. Also, a wife can support her partner by giving her best which are unpayable. These contributions of women were not valuable previously to men. However, Marxist feminism States that political confusion, economic inequality, dependence and unhealthy relationship between women and men for all these the main reason is oppression of women.

This image illustrates a feminist theoretical framework that starts with the idea that there are oppressive and anti-human structures in place. The model then demonstrates how overlapping identities can lead to prejudice and exclusion by supporting oppression. The model illustrates the notion that oppressive regimes can be overthrown to promote change and understanding via knowledge and action.

According to S. Pfeiffer, "there have no doubt been some men who have consciously and actively sought to oppress women, and some who have done so in order to promote their own social position"(217). In order to make a difference, feminist research is concerned in uprooting oppressive structures or the barriers that result from several systems. Feminist theory can be used in any research as long as it contributes to attempts to combat and advocate for the elimination of the power and oppression found in systems or structures that, specifically, oppress women.

The fundamental ideas of feminist theory are sex, gender, racism, discrimination, equality, difference, and choice. There are several policies and mechanisms in place that discriminate against people based on these characteristics as well as against equality and equity. Research in critical paradigms involves the conviction that truths can be discovered by analyzing these conditions in the present social order. More significantly, this investigation can raise awareness of repressive institutions while also fostering platforms for other perspectives to be heard.

The concepts of intersectionality, social life's dimensions, social inequity, and social change are all important to define feminism. Understanding the complexities and changes in the gendered division of labor has benefited greatly from feminist studies and researches. Politically, economically, and socially, both genders should be on an equal level. This ideology does not acknowledge the distinctions or similarities amongst males, nor does it advocate excluding men or just advancing women's concerns. In order to promote awareness and change, feminist theory recognizes and challenges oppression and power structures.

According to Ekaney, " Many African writers have argued and perhaps rightly so the attainment of independence by many African countries since the late 1950's has created new problems of nation building for the latter which are undergoing a transformation traditional to modern modes

of life" (144). Feminist theory suggests that, when oppression and power are identified and challenged, understanding, advocacy, and changes can arise.

Feminism might be difficult to include in research or practice in places due to pre-existing assumptions about what it means. This difficulty can be lessened by acknowledging that feminism is about removing oppression for everyone by expressing the following definition. According to hooks, "A male who has divested of male privilege, who has embraced feminist politics, is a worthy comrade in struggle, in no way a threat to feminism, whereas a female who remains wedded to sexist thinking and behavior infiltrating feminist movement is a dangerous threat" (12). Everything is a feminist issue, as Angela Davis stated in a speech she gave at Western Washington University in 2017. Questioning current arrangements and whether they are putting anyone at a disadvantage is a key component of feminist thought. Feminists have an interest in removing barriers. Anyone who believes that oppression must end, might work as a teacher or researcher to actively dismantle oppressive structures.

3.1 History of feminism, Western and Black feminist theory:

There have been many extraordinary women who have played an important role in world history or local. The women's movement is made up of men and women who fight and work So that they can achieve equality and improve the lives of women as a social group. In most societies traditionally women were confined to the home as mothers, daughters and wives but in history we only know about those women who had relationships with famous men. Throughout history of course many women played an important role in political and cultural life but they tend to be invisible. According to Burkett, "In medieval Europe, women were denied the right to own property, to study, or to participate in public life. At the end of the 19th century in France, they

were still compelled to cover their heads in public, and, in parts of Germany, a husband still had the right to sell his wife” (feminism). Also, In the 19th century an organized women’s movement only really started, even though the struggle for equality and women's activities have always been part of all human societies. The term women's liberation can be utilized to portray financial, political and social development pointed toward ligament security and equivalent rights for ladies. Women liberation is about the issues of gender equality and also includes sociological and political speculations. In the western history women's lives were fully reserved for men. So, western feminist theory represents women's struggle in their search for gender equality and equal opportunities. Then, from an understanding of intersecting patterns of discrimination, Black feminist consciousness arises. Examines Black feminist theory through the lens of key Black feminist such as Alice Walker, Audre Lorde, Patricia Hill Collins and bell hooks. Relying primarily on a guiding principle of Black feminism, the idea that class oppression, racism and sexism are inextricably linked.

3.2 Waves of Western feminism:

In the western world during the 19th and 20th centuries, the first wave of feminism refers to some feminist activities. This term, especially focused on the security of women's rights to vote and other legal issues of women. Feminist movements were inspired by this movement. It was a movement for getting equal rights for women. At that time it was believed that women's jobs are only to tend their children and husbands. Three hundred men and women assembled for the equality of the women but later on this movement opposed those ideas of changing the prevailing social beliefs. The second wave began in the early 1960s. It lasted for two decades and took place in the western world. Practicing male dominant culture is criticized by the second wave of

feminism. Through this movement several victories were gained. For example: Giving unmarried and married women the right to use birth control, The equal pay act which prohibited the gender pay gap and this movement gave women rights to educational equality. The third wave started in the 1990s and continued till the fourth wave in 2010. In Europe this movement is identified as "new feminism", in America this movement is known as "girl feminism". Females were more strong and capable social agents by the third wave. This movement was influenced by post-modern and post-colonial thinking patterns. This movement weakened the notion of 'universal womanhood'. This term of the wave valued individualism in women and their diversity. Because of this movement new feminist theories like postmodern feminism arose. The third wave alludes to a contamination of, and a response to the apparent disappointments of, second wave women's liberation, starting during the 1990s. Second and third wave can be applied to these two novels *Things Fall Apart* and *A Man of the People*.

Chapter 4: Textual Analysis

4.1 Women in *Things Fall Apart*: Relationship between men and women

This novel is about a strong man named Umoufia in the 1900s and there was a small village named Igbo. The name of the strong man is Okonkwo and he was a very hard worker. He used to work hard because he wanted a prosperous life. However, this Igbo was a patriarchal society where Okonkwo used to live with pride with his three wives, children and other members of the family. His thinking was that a man must be able to control women in his possession. So, it is clear that women have been the parts of discrimination and oppression for centuries. In *Things Fall Apart* we can see that the protagonist is physically strong enough but he married off the three women so that they can help in his domestic works. And also he used to beat them up. Because of men being physically stronger than women and also they have social, political and economic power more than women so they think they can torture the women and do whatever with them they want to. Here, we can see that Black women are also not safe to their own community. According to traditionalists, this type of power difference has existed always and because of the natural biological differences, the gender roles are assumedly assigned to be different from one another. Women cannot make any kind of decision in this male dominant society because men feel themselves to be the superior ones and women are the inferior ones. According to Rahayu, "The findings show that in traditional patriarchal culture as in the novel, women are portrayed happy, harmonious members of the community, even when they are repeatedly beaten and barren from any say in the communal decision-making process and constantly reviled in sayings and proverbs"(pg.36). In such a type of society women are the only means of reproduction and expected to care for their family and household. Women were treated to be male's property. According to Clerk, "Feminism was a response to the prevailing

patriarchal structure of Western society, where public spheres of power and politics were controlled by men, and a woman's role was restricted to the private sphere of home and family"(Women in Crisis: The Colonial Roots of Epidemic Violence and Oppression). So previously men were responsible for taking the decision and taking care of household finances and women's duty were raising children, cooking and doing household chores and also their duties were to fulfill the needs of their husbands. Moreover, their children were taught to respect the patriarch so that the upcoming generation may keep in the root of their minds how important patriarchy is. Also, Women did not have rights on their own property especially those who were widows. But as time passed women started to contribute in writing by using their pseudo name. Through writings they used to express their thoughts and opinions.

4.2 *A Man of the People*: Political Relationship between Men and Women

This novel was published in 1966. In this novel, the writer basically talks about the psychological journey of the protagonist. A fictional society is created by Achebe in this novel. Additionally, each portrayal adds to a complex analysis here. Basically this text focuses on the humble and professional women who are becoming the prey to men's supposed superiority. Also, there is a presentation of active, hardworking, multiple and willful women as well. So in this novel the writer talks about the hard working nature women tool. However, it is claimed by most of the critics of the world that Achebe does not represent women to be the active participants in his fictional writings but through the side roles he tries to highlight about women perfectly. Again, According to E. Stets and J.Burke, "Gender as status comes from the viewpoint of society; gender as identity comes from the viewpoint of individuals" (pg.193). So, it is clear that women are oppressed all the time, they are thought to be weak and humiliated in the society in

his novel *A Man of the People*. In this way, the Achebe tries to represent the dominant social behavior towards the women. For example: Mrs Nanga was forced quickly to end her education so that she could marry Chief Nanga. She is also oppressed and humiliated by Chief Nanga who is her husband. Her husband is a womanizer and she knew it but she could not say no over her husband's behavior. He could easily convince girls to make love with him. Agnes, Elsie and Jeans were easily convinced by him. Moreover, the writer has tried to highlight the actual situation of women; they are indicated like objects because they cannot communicate with others by using the English language. Again, we can see that Mrs Nanga the first wife of Chief Nanga became complex in her conversational closure but actually she is a simple character. Also, as Chief Nanga wanted to get another marriage with Edna and Odili warned Edna against polygamous marriage. But she said, "Polygamous marriage is a way of a woman, but Odili sadly told her that an educated girl should not say such rubbish"(pg.27). Additionally, we get to know that Edna was bound to get married to Chief Nanga because her family's economic background was not that stable and they borrowed money from him in order to continue Edna's study and family. On the contrary, Nanga had relationships with multiple women as he had power and economic stability. In this way, the value of women is portrayed in this novel by Achebe.

According to Bunch, "Many violations of women's rights are distinctly connected to being female that is, women are discriminated against and abused on the basis of gender"(pg. 486).

Also, in multiple books, history and novels women are portrayed to be vain objects, weak, subservient, epitome of etiquettes and elegance, chaste, soft hearted, mostly pitied and ridiculed women. Further, in the Victorian period in the nineteenth century women only used to get work at only some lower ranks like receptionist and secretary. In the workplace, there was devaluation of women. Furthermore, in terms of household works men did not value them as well because

their works do not bring economic outcomes. In this way women were treated very badly in male dominant society which Achebe has highlighted through his novel's female characters.

4.3 Role of women:

"The woman is seen as a powerful object that is able to encourage people when feeling low and demotivated. When the men face some social problems like neglect, the woman acts to encourage them". (Role of women in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*). These lines indicate that a woman has a lot of power to motivate other people surrounding them. They are respectful, powerful and honorable members of society and these are also beneficial to the society. They must be respected in order for something good to happen like plenty of harvests. They were also supposed to entertain the children at all times and make them grow in an artistic manner (Emenyonu and Uko 178).

Again, in another novel *A Man of the People*, the three most prominent women in the novel are Edna, Elsie, and Mrs. Nanga. Both Elsie and Edna serve as objects of conquest for Chief Nanga and Odili, respectively. While these women have families and careers, the story fails to delve into their interior lives (The Marginalization of Women). Here, women have faced a variety of structural and political problems. And these kinds of problems directly affect the nation's poor and rural population. Additionally, women are often blamed or made the scapegoats for the unfortunate circumstances in which many of the men find themselves. Odili witnesses this firsthand when he comments on Edna's passivity regarding her engagement. He sees the engagement as her fault, and he fails to consider how her social class and gender render her unable to oppose this decision (The Marginalization of Women).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Through gender and racial discrimination Nigerian women had to tolerate a lot of pain of their white counterpart. While they were oppressed and dominated by the men inside or outside their community, they were being sexually dominated against as well. However, we can see in *Things Fall Apart* various strategies were used to dominate the Igbo community by the British and women were dominated most of by their own society. Again in another novel, according to Kareem, "Chinua Achebe, who could really depict the real situation of his country, Nigeria, in terms of political instability and corruption. Especially, in his fourth produced novel entitled, *A Man of the People* in which he portrays his birthplace as one of the most corrupt countries around the world during the post-independence era"(59). Also, the novel forbids women from holding political leadership, which indicates that Achebe's criticism should be repositioned. It is a political cultural satire that points the finger at men's unwillingness to support women's participation in politics. Furthermore, people do not think that women can have a big impact on policy, thus they only consider politics as a career option. The many representations of sexualized women and political women contextualized the evidence that disturbed Achebe, who varied the representations of women and the conflict that emerged between globally disseminated and locally generated ideologies. In *A Man of the People*, "As long as a man confined himself to preparing foreign concoctions he could still maintain the comfortable illusion that he wasn't really doing such an unmanly thing as cooking" (47). This line indicates that throughout the novel there are two important things. First of all, it talks about the fragility of masculinity and the subordination of women. Another one is that it points to the persistent influence of colonialism. So it is important to remove it from the Nigerian societal context because for a "famine activity" it is considered to be more masculine. From this we understand that the western imperialist has been internalized by the Nigerian society.

Things Fall Apart is written in the colonial period, violence is a natural outcome of this time and *A Man of the People* is written in the post-colonial period, where political violence is highlighted. In *Things Fall Apart* and in *A Man of the People* both novels are told through a male protagonist point of view. In 19th century Nigeria, while it is a country where women wield heavy influence over the leaders of the clan and they had no civil rights. We can see that women in patriarchal traditional communities are known as "others". Also, the birth of female children is not as happily accepted as male children. Because, their thinking is that a female child will marry into another family but a male child eventually will do the harder labor, they will go to war and they carry on the name of their family. Okonkwo, the protagonist of the *Things Fall Apart* clearly illustrates resentment toward his daughter Ezinma because if she would have born as a boy, however she is his favorite daughter. But women are completely in men's possession politically and domestically. We can see that any kind of political decision is in the hands of men although women carry a big role into society. They don't have any kind of position in public places. The writer portrayed women to be harmonious and happy members of the community. Although they are barren and beaten repeatedly in the communal decision making process and constantly reviled proverbs and sayings. Another interesting thing is that they get respected into their belief system which we can see in *Things Fall Apart* because they wanted to follow the path the way their priest suggested. Women belong to men domestically. And the man could do anything to protect his dignity and prestige as the head of the society. Women could say nothing against their men. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo's thinking is that men must be hard workers, strong and violent. He had sons and he wanted to see these characters in his sons as well from their childhood. It is his thinking that violence ensures a man's power. For centuries Nigerian women languished on the fringe of their universe degenerated, neglected and exploited and men

used to feel them like outsiders. Reading the two novels of Achebe I found that male society is more respected than mother's society. The male centered society is highly patriarchal. Another thing is, in *Things Fall Apart* we can see that growing yam the people of agrarian make a living. This is a prestigious plant which brings owners dignity and respect. This is why this plant is known as a plant for men and this tree stands for manliness. From here we can understand the self-obsession of men in their society. The primary work of women highlighted in the novel is nurturing children, farming and tending animals. For example: Okonkwo's first wife gave birth to three sons and there is a custom that if a woman gives birth to three boys altogether, a goat should be slaughtered by their father and Okonkwo celebrated this custom of slaughtering goats. Then, his second wife gave birth to ten children but all of them died except one. Another thing is giving birth to a female child is not seen as a good sign. So we also understand that a woman is only valued at the time of giving birth to male child in such a patriarchal society. However, a traditional farmer was important for a workforce to produce an abundant harvest and women had to work in this farming sector as well. Moreover, in preparing for celebrating festivals women had to remain busy preparing a lot of food for their relatives and villagers. They have to work hard in any kind of ceremony. So they really play an important role in society which should be valued but they never get honored for their sacrifice and hard work. In the novel *Things Fall Apart* at that time, as the mirror of society the protagonist believes that a woman's place is only at their home. Although in public spheres, many economic activities are held by women. For men, women were only the outsiders. Socially women are constructed to be unimportant, anything that happens connotation with bad characteristics or bad things will refer to femininity. So we understand that in most African countries of Nigerian society there is a strong sense of gender inequality. People who were raised in a typical Nigerian society must encounter this

disparity in genders. In Achebe's novel, *Things Fall Apart* and *A Man of the People* Women are shown to be the victims of men's tyranny and rage. The writer has dehumanized Nigerian men's behavior directly or indirectly through the characters Okonkwo, Odili Samuel and Mr. Nanga in his novels. In *A Man of the People* the writer has displayed significantly women as a person with good advice. Achebe portrays women to be oppressed, weak and humiliated in the society. Men and women have always lived different lives in every classic literary work. But feminism is a theory that supports women and men should be equal socially, politically and economically. So, from these two novels of Chinua Achebe we get understood the value of a women in Nigerian society. It is important for men to change their perception against women because without them a family life is impossible.

At the last, I think feminism is not only important for women but also it's important for every creed, caste, gender and sex. It empowers the society and people as a whole. There is a misconception that women can be feminist only. But this type of thinking is totally wrong, it does not only strive for the superiority of the women, it strives for equality of all the sexes. This allows people to live independently, empower and freely live without getting tied down by any type of traditional restrictions. In simple words, it's beneficial for both men and women. It advocates why men should be the only sole breadwinner of the family and it also advocates that women must be free to earn. It tries to give freedom to all. Feminism can bring life changing impact on everyone but especially for women. It may help women to get their equal rights.

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