

**The Image of Woman in Nation Building:
A Reading of Achebe's *Arrow of God***

Grace Itoro Ibanga Ph.D

Department of English

Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria.

graceibanga@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng

Abstract

This study explores the pivotal role of women in society, particularly in the Twenty-first century, emphasising their productivity, empowerment, dynamism, and sustainability. Drawing inspiration from Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1964), the analysis centers on characters like Matefi, exemplifying women's ingenuity in overcoming patriarchal limitations embodied by figures like Ezeulu. The study delves into the multifaceted nature of "mothering," encompassing child-rearing, spousal support, and nurturing, contributing to national unity. Despite women's remarkable skills and contributions, pervasive patriarchy continues to impede their happiness and progress. This research underscores the dichotomy between women's potential for industry, care, and affection and the persisting challenges hindering their fulfillment and advancement.

Keywords: Women, Patriarchy, Mothering, Nation-building, *Arrow of God*

Introduction

The investigation of the role of women is to achieve consciousness-raising generally. Stories employed to educate and entertain younger girl children are often carefully selected. They are arrogated for their age in terms of subject matter and must be didactic. Trickster stories and folklores that have girl child-characters projected in various life situations among Africans such as in the families and the farm are preferable. The essence is to select narratives, that inculcate in children such vital values and worth as industry, courage, love, honesty, tolerance, loyalty, perseverance, and forgiveness. A close look at such portrayed virtues and values, would motivate in girl children the desire towards marriage and mothering. The universal notion and traditional assumptions about motherhood and wifehood are exclusive to the African woman. To confirm the above assertion Laretta Ngcobo (2007, p. 533) succinctly posits: "... motherhood is beautiful and joyous...African motherhood is about children." The same could still be said that husband-nursing as well as mothering make an African woman's life joyous and beautiful; which directly or indirectly are essentially approved of by her society. Despite the so many responsibilities of the woman in society, the entire history of mankind ensure that she is dis-empowered, apparently for easier control in accordance with patriarchal aspirations.

Accordingly, Micere Mugo (1991, p. 34) expresses disappointment similar to rage and resentment, that women do all the works while men stay idle and sleep. Since a woman's final destination is her marital home, marriage and motherhood for a girl-child in the patriarchal setup is primarily defining moment. This is due to the fact that, the society has all along been grooming her for such tasks as Ngcobo (2007, p. 533) ascertains "marriage amongst Africans is mainly an institution for the control of procreation...every woman is encouraged to marry and get children in order to express her womanhood to the full." The bases of marriage and motherhood for the Africans symbolise the transmission of a woman's fruitfulness to the husband's family posterity.

The woman is, in the reckoning of the society, an inferior being, whether the basic rights of citizenship and suffrage had been extended to her or not; she remains undermined, marginalised, oppressed and subordinated. The fact of the relegation of the woman is made more intriguing in the sense which portrays women as sparingly involved in governance; and when they seldom do, it is at the mercy of men. A close look at the human society reveals that every avenue of power

and domination, including the violent and coercive forces of the police, de-facto; as well as the de-jure governance, men are found to be in their control. The controls of money, guns, authority, are also concentrated in the hands of men. Chodorow (1999, p.117)) confirms the above premise by positing that, “male dominance crossed all different kinds of society”. Therefore, one is no longer left in doubt about the overwhelming and pervasive nature of male dominance. Indeed, this is appropriately summed up in Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (2000, p.120): “...Even God is male - and a white male at that.”

Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, though written more than fifty years ago, has drawn more than its own fair share of criticism, and exploration can only be an understatement. Regarding the gender inclination for which the book is so remarkable, there seems to be the general consensus that Achebe is not fair in his portrayal of the image of the woman. Specifically, Abdalatif Hassan (2016, p. 4) clearly states inter-alia that “...Achebe belittles, scorns, undervalues, marginalises, women in his early and modern novels”. This means that, the image of men projected in the book is such that terrifies the woman to the extent of feeling almost being swallowed alive. In like manner, Juliet Okonkwo (1988, p. 36) asserts: “Achebe's cultural universe... is one in which women [are] to be seen not heard, coming and going, with mounds of foo-foo, pots of water, market basket, fetching kola, being scolded and beaten before they disappear behind the huts of their compound.” It is natural for Achebe to treat women spitefully despite, their sterling qualities. Given the unavailability of a known study that examines the nation-building efforts of women in Achebe's *Arrow of God*, this paper elects to take the advantage of prying deeper into the involvement of women in the text from that positive perspective.

Theoretical Framework

The male hegemony surrounds itself with certain myths that prevent the exposure of its control. The myths confront the target with some feeling of fear and trepidation such that the patriarchy is secured. This is adequately captured by Gideon *et al* (2022, p.77) when they advocate that: “in recent years, “Man Laws” and similar masculinist manifestos have been published as a way for men to reaffirm their masculinity.” A close observation of the above indicates that, men as usual, have increased high reputation in their culture to continue to propagate women marginalisation. Another strategy used to perpetrate male dominance is by

engaging in buck passing or diverting attention away from the self. This is achieved either through some protective legislations or act of force. The notion of infertility or impotence is not often associated with the man, as the woman is heaped with all the blames by patriarchy and its agents. Ngcobo earlier mentioned sums it thus: "For a man ...Failure to immortalize the ancestors is a taboo and shame that a man cannot bear. As a result, childlessness is associated with women, for the alternative is unthinkable" (Ngcobo 2007, p.534). In a similar vein, men are hardly ever dubbed as promiscuous, accused of witchery, classified as inferiors compared with how the woman is regarded; they are instead decent, perfect masters, who are free from common human imperfections. This is confirmed by Lois Tyson (2006, p. 85) as she advocates:

...traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; and ... such as excluding women from equal access to leadership and decision-making positions (in the family as well as in politics, academia, and the corporate world); paying men higher wages than women for doing the same job... they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive

To worsen the already bad situation, every discussion pertaining to sexuality takes a different look as soon as men appear on the scene. In fact, they will pontificate and take pride in wrongdoings whereas women will withdraw, and direct their focus on their children. In such situation, any woman who may be anxious and bold to carry on with such 'adult' dialogue is urgently bullied back as Shoneyin (1998, p.13) claims, "to her domestic cares: the kitchens, the gardens, ... and the bed".

Another tactic of keeping the woman perpetually under, is the projection of a negative image of the woman by the patriarchy. One of such negative projections is that which links the woman to certain Aphrodite characteristics by which she is attributed with the capability to destroy of her own. She is condemned as one possessing some damaging and destructive attributes, which she, as a mother, and wife, wreaks upon her sons and husband. Tolstoy (1898), one of the literary ogres, though he out rightly rejected the carnages committed by the bourgeois and feudal society in Russian; still had the guts to ensue evil against women when he claims: "Woman is the instrument of the devil. In most of her states she is stupid. But Satan lends her his head when she acts under his orders." (El Saadawi 2007, p. 520). The implication of Tolstoy's claim is as usual: men's jokey way of insulting women, whenever they accuse a woman of being

stupid; because they believe the woman is acting under Satan's influence. The following questions might be raised, to examine Tolstoy position about women. Are the male children given birth to by the same woman stupid? Are the males discriminating and subjugating the woman in their various locations, because they too are carrying Satan's head whenever they act under his orders? A close assessment of the human society, where men and women are active participants, is not to be gender imbalance. The reason being that, there is an interface of relationship at all human levels or endeavours. When the menfolk ascertain that the woman is permeated with the capability of all the ruses of deceits and conspiracy of the devil; it therefore means that men themselves are the devil, since them- the devil- are often represented by the male 'he' pronoun.

Today, some women are fated for being overbearing, using natural evil power to achieve desired purposes on the other hand; their male counterparts are celebrated as precursors of virtue, development and sanity, and above all, as givers of essence to reality, even when known to do worst things. Patriarchy projects the self as an innocent category even when the fear of being dethroned looms large in its sub-consciousness. For this, it engages the woman in eternally struggle to affirm its dominance and perfection. Achebe (1958, p.37) portrays the archetypal-husband-hegemony as embodying dread, authority and domination. Okonkwo the protagonist rules and controls his family- wives, children and other dependants "with iron-strong hand". He further posits that no matter how prosperous a man is, if he is unable to rule his household, especially women, he will remain unfulfilled as a man.

Taking a deep penetration into the chauvinist recess shows that, the woman's effort to build a dynamic society does not only go unacknowledged, it is entirely rejected. The refusal to acknowledge the woman's sterling contributions is due to some feeling of complex by the patriarchy. Adrienne Rich (1977, pp.56-57) succinctly captures the mores and nuances of Africa and its traditional social milieu when she describes patriarchy as:

the power of the fathers: a familial, social, ideological, and political system in which, by direct pressure...or through tradition, law ... men determine what parts women shall or shall not play, and the female is everywhere subsumed by the male.

The woman has however, despite the so many distractions retarding her progress positioned herself for the task of arranging the life of the man (husband) both in real life and fictional

existence. She stands by her man in matters involving his development. She polishes the man's life by creating an enabling environment for him to operate. She acts as the man's -husband-psycho-therapist in all areas of his life. She creates his vision for him and his posterity. It would be noted having said so much that male oppression and subjugation over women is probably as old as patriarchy itself, and certainly predated the various types of cultural politics.

In the observation of the African/ Third World women and their guiding principles, Feminist movements in the Western world have condemned the former as silent voices growing up under the whims and caprices of macho institutions. Roberta Sigel (1996, p.167) attests to this when she states: "Most men are aware of women's second shift and its unfairness, but are uninterested in change." There is an alarming objection among the western women at why the African women are being confined to the rural home, imprisoned and exposed to manipulation of some sort by the nuclear family unit. Whatever the woman might have contributed in any of the above regards, is taken for granted and is seldom appreciated or rewarded. Women in most places in Africa are confined into seeing baby making and husband nursing as uniquely feminine functions. While these are aptly within the domain of the woman, the exploitations and seeming enslavement of the woman remain constant challenges against which women must relentlessly seek equality of opportunities such as are enjoyed by men. In the discussion of the male domination and subjugation, some people would want others to believe that it is a recent development backing their claims with examples of great women as the legendary Moremi of Ile-Ife, Efunsetan Aniwura of Ibadan, Queen Idia of Benin, Queen Amina of Zaria, etc. These women were believed to be prominent especially, as they exerted of a great deal of political control during their times. And that, it is only in recent times that women's status has declined. This is the crux of Ogbomo (2005, p.368) as he affirms:

Women in Pre-colonial Africa played significant economic roles within their societies, especially as traders, their involvement in such economic enterprises meant they could accumulate wealth and establish a notable degree of independence for themselves. Since wealth and economic independence guaranteed increased socio-political status, women were quick to exploit such avenues of advancement. Societies abounded in pre-colonial Africa, where women rode on the back of their economic fortune to political acceptance.

But in spite of the claims above, questioning the numerical proportion of women in Africa who in history, were known to such prominence, should not be allowed to be entirely lost on us. This is bearing in mind that women constitute the greater percentage of the population of any given community or nation.

The relationship of gender discourse and the study of the African novel should not utterly be dismissed as mere fictional contraption; it should instead be seen as an embodiment of ideas and reasons. The African novel is remarkable for helping to advance the course of women, and at the same time motivating, encouraging, whipping up their interests and making them believing in their abilities to achieve their goals. Moreover, the ideological thrust of the African novel as this subject-matter is concerned, emphasises that women are co-builders of nations, and, that their contributions to the particular society are invaluable. In this very connection, Nancy Chodorow (1999, p.45) asserts: "...women participation in nation building is inexplicable. Mothers share lively interactions... play when they are with children". She furthermore posits that the mothers, even when they are off at work and their husbands are assisting them to take care of the children, half of their minds think about their children. In consonance with this, Dobie (2009, p.109) confirms that "women are more likely to think in terms of caring and relationships".

In bringing to reality the timeless nature of men's imposition of their will on women, Buchi Emecheta (1981, p.8) in her fictional and non-fictional writings depicts the tyrannical and unwholesome injustice of African men over women. The ruling class in West African societies, she argues, consists of men,

[who]...regard women as inferior. As a result, the work women do, though valued and regarded as very necessary, is like the women who do it, are not expected to be taken on the same level as the work done by men. Women's works are looked down on. In cognizance with this women's job is not highly valued, because according to the rating of the society their work are low jobs.

These men have gone as far as institutionalising their holds on women such that trado-culturally, they are excluded from carrying out certain responsibilities most of which are strictly reserved for men. Commenting on the societal opinion about housework which women do often and to which they are condemned as those works are unimportant, Sergeant (2009, p.163) states emphatically:

Housework is the largest sector of unwaged labour in the economy, and anyone attempting to replace the unpaid labour with paid labour finds that certain aspects of it command substantial wages because, although the work is not well paid, long hours are required. Cooking and child care can be very expensive regular cleaning is not cheap. Housework is also repetitive and not particularly exciting work.

At this point it may be necessary to throw certain moral questions regarding when women, despite their attribute within the home and in the society at large, will break the yoke of confinement that traditions have put around their necks?

Ideologically, Buchi Emecheta identifies two forms of limitations working against actualising self-worth for the woman, in spite of the ability to represent themselves today. The first is her connivance with chauvinist institutions to present a pejorative image of African womanhood, where at all times the woman remains the victim. And the second, has to do with lack of clear-cut Africa-based principles that are not fall-outs Western Feminist positions. Emecheta herself seems to be culpable in respect of this second factor because, having sojourned in Europe for a fairly long time her perception of the African woman has been constrained by certain “superimposition of western radical Feminist theories...” (Emecheta 1981, p.127).

The magnitudes of applying a pure set of African Feminist principles to the textual complexion of some women's writings are clearly obvious. For example, even when the woman-figures in early Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo novels are “non-literates, slaves and appendages” to their husbands who afflict them with all form of oppressions; they are variously portrayed as resilient and courageous. In *Mgbeke*, is seen the spirit of resilience which spur her to “redouble her efforts to provide all the needs of the family” (Adimora-Ezeigbo 1996, p. 70). This is after Okorie, the worthless betrayer- husband- abandons his supposed responsibilities of providing the basic needs for his family (Adimora-Ezeigbo 1996, pp. 68-70). Also, the pathetic case of Chieme, whose husband (Iwuchukwu), subjected her through psychological trauma; simply because she could not menstruate at the time her age-mates are still menstruating (Adimora-Ezeigbo 1996, pp.73-78).

All these highlighted experiences of taking the abdicated posts in which men are naturally found, is indicative of women's sense of determination and self-confidence. It is a clear evidence

that the modern woman is no longer a dependant and that she is ready to go beyond mothering and nursing to providing for the family in its entirety.

Textual Analysis

Although men activists in the women's movement are not so many, men have contributed in some ways to literature about women. They have worked in several capacities as active commentators, positive observers, sometimes engaging the status-quo in order to bridge the gap of development between the sexes. Found among African writers who have taken it duty bound to always create window through which sentiments of women in society could be felt is Chinua Achebe. His delineation of women character in *Arrow of God* (1964) proffers a glimpse of the values embodied by the woman in a typical pre-colonial African setting.

Women's roles in Achebe's *Arrow of God* are up to a point, peripheral. The image of the woman projected is that of a character that is incapable of taking vital family decisions, quarrelsome, and a person whose perfection is revealed only in taking and carrying out specific instructions. Women are also made to operate as strikingly inferior or weaker persons, who are not actually reckoned with as important political agents in decisions making and execution in the societies, although they compliment the men in societal roles and mores.

Attributes given to women in Achebe's *Arrow of God* also reflect African attitudes toward sex, marriage, family, etc. The novel brings to the reader the conditions under which women work, their interpersonal relationship, their self worth and appeal. Whether as a growing child or married person, women characters in Achebe's *Arrow of God* are figures of glorified achievements who are remarkable for being industrious and resourceful.

Achebe's *Arrow of God* offers a penetrating insight into the industrious nature of the African woman through Matefi. Although, this character comes across to the reader disparagingly quite early in the novel, she is able to rise above the initial scorn at the end of the narrative. This is because she seems so responsible to the extent of being the one carrying the bulk of responding to every demand of duty of her husband; as well as that of the polygamous home at large. Her largeness of heart makes her cater for the increasing needs of all, and this makes the children display respect towards her and laud her hospitality to her very face:

Matefi's daughter, Ojiugo, brought in a bowl

of foofoo and a bowl of soup, saluted her father
and set them before him... when Ojiugo came to
collect the bowls she found Nwafo polishing off
the soup (*Arrow of God*, pp. 9 - 10).

A close look at Matefi's smartness in getting food ready against Ezeulu's aggressive proposal: "...he would speak his mind to whoever brought him late supper tonight...he was tired of having his meal sent to him when other men had eaten and forgotten" (Achebe 1964, p.7), reveals that women are all positively embracive- economically, socially and otherwise. Ezeulu, the representation of patriarchy is planning to stage a show down for the women if they fail to give him supper on time. There has never been an occasion where it had been indicated that the so-called head of the family had provided feeding allowance to the former, neither to his younger wife, Ugoye; so that nature would support him for his grand impending action

As prominent as Ezeulu is, as rich as he is acclaimed to be, the responsibility of managing the home front is heaped on Matefi and Ugoye who are his younger co-wives. Both Matefi and Ugoye are distinct women on whom Ezeulu rests the domestic burdens of his family. They work hard in order to provide most of the feeding responsibilities of their husband's family. For example, Ezeulu orders: "[Oduche]Go and call your mother for me. I think it is her turn to cook tomorrow" (AOG 1964, p. 14). These women do not only show hospitality to members of their family alone, but to everyone in need (AOG 1964, p. 61)). Their provision of hospitality is comparable to an infectious disease that spreads to anyone that comes in contact with it. So, the foundation of Ezeulu's fame of generosity is laid by these two unsung women whose fate according to the people's culture, must remain in a passive position forever

Moreover, women by their nature represent the endearing face of hospitality; they know how to dispense it and only they provide it. In the traditional African setting, a certain day- "Afo"- (AOG, p.13), of the week is often observed as the head of the family's day, where women and children work for him. On such a day; it is the duty of the husband- man- to choose amongst his wives who should cook for all. Ezeulu speaks to Oduche: "Go and call your mother for me. I think it is her turn to cook tomorrow." Again, during one of Ezeulu's visit to his friend Akuebue in his house following the celebration of the Pumpkin Festival, it is Obielue's mother- the wife of

Ezeulu's friend that takes up the duty of showing the visitor some hospitality through the presentation of kolanut. (AOG 1964, pp. 14, 111). In both instances above, the woman acts as the agent that fosters filial cohesion and maintains the bond of friendship for the purpose of sustaining peaceful co-existence among people.

The culture of women projecting the positive image of their families both in real life and in fiction, reaches its climax at marriage ceremonies. African women are saddled with the responsibility of preparing the daughters of the family for the impending tasks of getting joined to another family. This task of womanhood as demanded by the custom since period immemorial, involves the mother and other women, not only preparing the wares that the bride would carry to the husband's place on the day of betrothal; but to also help to take the wares to her next destination. For example, the day Obika's bride arrives her husband's (new) homestead, she displays the wealth of wares she received from her mother and other women of the extended families; and which other women assist to carry in small head loads as the bride's dowry. These include "cooking-pots, wooden bowls, brooms, mortar, pestle, pots of palm oil, baskets of cocoyam, locust beans, heads of salts and pepper" (AOG, p. 115). This also points to the importance of the woman in society as she helps facilitate inter-societal relationships. This is because possible relationship such as inter-societal marriage could help in establishing mutual understanding. Besides, African women values could be appreciated at the point they perform the role of image laundering for their families.

The ability to resist and reject some of the age-long "stereotypical perception of the woman as passive, acquiescent and emotional" (Dobie 2009, p. 165), is another indication that; women have decided to take the bold step towards playing the leading role rather than being an appendage in contributing to nation-building. To this effect, every norm and cultural practice accentuating gender should be fair and balanced. Although the tradition of women resistance is not new, several examples could be seen across cultures, climes and times, the engagement has however become renewed today because of women's enlightenment and the availability of legal support. Ciarunji Chesaina (2013, p. 213) confirms this when she asserts: "... African women have used the pen to have their voices heard...to examine the status of women in society and the challenges with which they are confronted in their relation with their male counterpart."

Matefi in Achebe's *Arrow of God* represents such a strong force of resistance rejecting the age long limitation of the woman. Ezeulu apporitions "his head wife, Matefi and told her to get ready to cook for his in-law (Akueke's husband and his people) tomorrow." But she rejects the order from her husband on the excuse that: "There is no cassava in my hut, and today is not a market" (*Arrow of God* 1964, p. 62). The fact that Matefi refuses to continuously sacrifice her preferences to provide the domestic needs for her husband's other wife and daughter always, is an indication of the rejection of inconvenience in the name of "sister's keeping". This may however elicit some allegation of self-centredness against the woman. Ezeulu, condemns:

This madness which they say you have must now begin to know its bound. You are telling me to go and find cassava for you. What has Akueke to do with it; is she my wife? I have told you many times that you are a wicked woman. I have noticed that you will not do anything happily unless it is for yourself or your children. Don't let me speak my mind to you today...If you want this compound to contain the two of us, go and do what I told you... (*Arrow of God* 1964, p. 62).

It could be argued that playing such a role should come voluntarily rather than by compulsion. After all, Matefi has undertaken greater responsibilities in the past. The fact that she is not able to undertake the present assignment does not call for Ezeulu, her husband to think of letting loose his wrath on the woman, that is the pillar of his homestead. Matefi in the hands of Achebe is a calculating and conscious woman who is aware of the opportunities a polygamous marriage holds as the immediate elderly wife, a position she assumes directly after the demise of Edogo's mother- Ezeulu's first wife. She is determined to use every means available to carry out her resolve.

Beyond the acquisition of materials property, Achebe uses Matefi to expand the frontiers of women responsibilities by insisting that they go beyond ordinarily cooking of "soups with locust beans for fish" and saving of "money to buy ivory bracelets" (*Arrow of God* 1964, pp. 9-10). The woman is also asserting her right of owning properties, for instance, "...one of Akuebue's two wives...the senior wife had gone to inspect her palm oil plantation trees for ripe fruit." (*Arrow of God* 1964, p.111). This looks like an awakening moment for women in term of the consciousness of the need for empowerment through ownership of money and material acquisition. In some female novels, (Nwapa 1964; Adimora-Ezeigbo 2002; Adiechie 2017; etc),

the character who bears the image of the “new woman” is sometimes approached by men to borrow money to run families and/or cultivate farmlands. Apart from engaging in commerce and owning of property for the purpose of improving national economy, women secretly provide for men, the national economic driving force- money, which is a factor which men use to sustain their authority on the society.

Closely relate to the above is, the recognition accorded the woman for her sense of industry in *Arrow of God*. Her wealth and virtues accord her the respect from the male world, and as well present her as a voice to reckon with in the human society. Akuebue's senior wife is a typical example of a woman who enters into the world of the wealthy because of her achievements. Akuebue's senior wife is an evolving affluent woman who is also competing in the class of the wealthy men. As it is, women have begun to contribute to societal development since time immemorial, and they are equally participating aggressively in today's national development. Therefore, the passive Edenic image of the woman is no longer tenable as today's women have been found to engage in productive activities that were once the prerogative of men. Achebe uses Okeke Onenyi specifically, to sight reasons while women are married by their husbands apart from children, to include “cook[ing] their meals, some want a woman to help on the farm...” (*Arrow of God* 1964, p. 63). [Parenthesis mine]

Though women are largely excluded from taking part in the judiciary system, but due to their productivity they promote national development in ensuring that the nation itself is populated through child-bearing. On the day Obika brought home his virgin bride, Aniegboka, the village diviner, “...turning to Obika he said: I have done as you asked me to do. Your wife will bear you nine sons” (*Arrow of God* 1964, p. 120). It may however be argued that this natural role of the woman is not entirely that of hers alone, but the fact that the responsibility of child-rearing is also naturally added to the woman's who; in the first instance, had carry pregnancy for nine months (*Arrow of God* 1964, p. 9), makes the entire task weighs much more to her advantage. All female characters in Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1964) bear and rear children only to prolong the progeny of patriarchy, as men are the ones who could lay claim to owning the children. Matefi is the mother of Ojiugo and Obika (AOG 1964, pp. 9-10); the deceased Okuata was the mother of Adeze, Edogo, and Akueke (AOG 1964, p. 10). Ugoye gives birth to Oduche,

Nwafo, and Obiageli ((AOG 1964, p. 43). Akueke, Edogo's wife and many other women, give birth to their children respectively, but Ezeulu is the only father the children all have.

Finally, women help to provide check mechanism to the over-bloated and destructive ego of men and by so doing ensuring and promoting national peace and tranquility. In the case of Obika, when he wants to express some doubts in him concerning 'if it was the custom which for the diviner to take the [ritual] hen home'; immediately his mother, Matefi stands in proxy for him to avert the consequence of custom, and perhaps the wrath of the village diviner. She declares: "Our part was to provide the hen...and we have done it" (*Arrow of God* 1964, p. 121). Even when this is not expressly stated in Achebe's *Arrow of God*, it could hardly be disputed that men in history have either been victims of women's love or saved by women's love, just as men have declared war on another country for the sake of ego and the love of women. The Womanist thrust of African Feminism which is aimed at achieving gender integration, cohesion, and cooperation for the purpose of moving the society forward; has helped to douse what should have become social tension in Africa today. Many men have forgotten the idea of concentrating their resources on the girl child at the expense their male children. Today, both the male and the female children have equal access to good education and the society has been better for it. This could not have been obtainable without several engagements of men by women.

Conclusion

The study solicits that if there are discourses woven around men who engage in nation building, it could never be out of place to begin a discourse around women, who also either directly engage in nation building or who provide the enablement for men to carry out their functions effectively. The study concludes that women have always been wonderful participants in nation building through the process of child productivity, child-nurturing, and child-education; more so, women are strong supporters and visioners for their husbands, children in particular and the nation at large.

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