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Formal Education, a Blessing or a Curse: The Literate Woman in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* and *Changes*

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Abstract:

*The existing literature on Ama Ata Aidoo's works, especially, on her novels *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) and *Changes* (1999) have not looked at formal education being a double edged sword that brings immense benefit as well as its adverse effects to the African woman. This study intends to fill up this gap. Based on the theory of humanism or existentialism, this study mainly seeks to find out Aidoo's view on the value of formal education to the African woman in her novels, *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) and *Changes* (1999).*

*Ama Ata Aidoo in her recent novels, *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) and *Changes* (1999), seems to argue that formal education is like a double-edged sword which liberates the woman in one way and incapacitate her in another as it empowers the literate African woman economically, socially, and mentally. Because she is independent of her husband and other people in the society financially, she is also respected by the society. She is also able to assert her right and take concrete decisions on her own. However, this same formal education renders the African woman an alien to her own African culture, thereby making her a misfit in her own society. The study finally concludes that education is more of a curse than a blessing to the African literate woman.*

Keywords: Formal Education, Literate, Marriage, empowering, Novel.

1. Introduction

Women form an integral part of every society, and they form majority in almost every nation of the world. Women are also the major contributors to the socio-economic development of many communities in Africa. Among other important responsibilities, women shoulder the vital role of bearing and nurturing children, some of whom ultimately become leaders in their respective societies. In spite of these significant roles women play, they tend to be exploited in many societies. They also suffer prejudice and abuse in many spheres of human endeavour. Indeed, this vital role of bearing and caring for new human life has been used to limit their potential in society. This relegation of women to the background is highlighted by the Nigerian critic, Molaria Ogundipe. She states that many African women are marginalized to the level that, they are conceived by men as mere "phallic receptacles" (Ogundipe, 1983). These African men view women as objects of love in the physical or sexual sense with little acknowledgement of deeper aspect of love like loyalty, care, kindness or nurturing. To Ogundipe, this idea of seeing the woman as "erotic lover" tends to limit the potential of the woman in the society.

Formal education has been seen as the most powerful weapon for empowering women. It enables the woman to assume more independence in decision making. She gains authority in the home as well as self-reliance and emotional freedom. Moreover, formal education makes the woman economically and socially independent. This notwithstanding, women in Ghana are disadvantaged when it comes to education, even though the 1992 Constitution advocates equal opportunities in education, training and development in all sections of the population (The 1992 Constitution of Ghana, Article 25, sub-section 1, p. 27). Many organizations and individuals recommend formal education for women and girls in African countries to enable them become economically, socially and politically independent. Some of them are the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the 31st December Women's Movement in Ghana, and others. As early as the 1920s, Dr. James Kwegyir Aggrey (1875-1927) declared in these words about the universal benefit of female education "The surest way to keep a people down is to educate the men and neglect the women. If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a family" (Tembon and Fort, 2008: xvii).

The suggestions and admonitions from organizations and individuals on women's education notwithstanding, women are sacrificed when choice have to be made due to financial circumstance with regard to formal education in Ghana. Some women in some parts of the world do not go to school, but in my part of the world girl children are sent to school by their parents or guardians without any

legislative pressure. Also, there are situations where parents can afford to send their girl children to school but the girls themselves refuse. Some parents think they can send their girl children to school so they do. Other girls do not go to school because of several reasons; some of which are financial, cultural and so on.

A host of African writers have shown serious concern about the need for formal education of the woman. They range from the field of Sociology to Literature. Kuenyehia and Dolphyne, writing from social and legal perspectives present the illiterate woman in a very pathetic state and therefore advocate strongly for formal education of the woman as the means to a fuller life (Dolphyne, 1991 and Kuenyehia, 2001). A lot of other writers have shown concern for the need for women's education in Ghana. One of the female writers, who has used her works to present the position of literate Ghanaian women, is Efua Sutherland. In her famous play, *The Marriage of Anansewa*, Sutherland uses Anansewa, a strong and assertive literate woman character to educate her audience on greed. Anansewa acquiesces to her father's proposition to cooperate with him to cheat four chiefs so as to improve his financial status. Because she compromises with Anansewa, her father, in the end she gets married to the most sincere husband among the chiefs. Ama Ata Aidoo, another female playwright has also written extensively on the need for formal education of the Ghanaian woman. The focus of this research is on the works of this writer with emphasis on her novels *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) and *Changes* (1999).

Her first novel, *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977), is about a Ghanaian female student called Sissie who is highly educated. She has had her education in Ghana and has another opportunity to further her education in Europe. In her travels and interactions with other people, Sissie "forever carries African's problems on her shoulders" (p. 118). Through her travels to Europe, she is able to point out many of the problems of her society and their relationships to the Western developed world. Due to her high education, Sissie is very sure of herself and not concerned with adapting to please the white folk. She is also not preoccupied with her outsider status but rather walks and talks confidently and takes what is important to her from the experience.

Changes (1999), is Aidoo's second novel. The protagonist, Esi, is a highly educated woman who is married to a common school master. Her husband, Oko is devoted to her and demands more of her time than she is ready to give as a wife and a mother. She is more interested in pursuing her profession. Her husband, Oko, gets frustrated and rapes her one morning. Consequently, Esi divorces him and enters into a polygamous marriage with Ali, against the admonitions of her mother and grandmother. Esi takes this decision with the view that he will give her enough time to pursue her professional ambitions. However, she soon realizes that her new husband is hardly there for her because he has more than one wife.

In her novels of *Our Sister Killjoy* and *Changes*, she seems to argue that formal education is like a double-edged sword which paradoxically liberates the woman in one way and incapacitates her in another. Unlike the illiterate women who find it difficult to get employment because they are handicapped by lack of formal education, the literate woman enjoys a relatively comfortable existence because she is economically resourced by her salary. The literate women are nowadays employed as teachers, police women, soldiers, nurses, medical doctors, statisticians, lawyers, judges, bankers, and so on. Some are in managerial positions like directors, ministers, and even presidents in many of the Scandinavian countries. However, Aidoo suggests that this same formal education that opens opportunities for the women to come to the limelight tends to frustrate them.

Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* has a heroine, Sissie, who has had formal education in Ghana and has another opportunity to further her education in Europe. However, because of Sissie's literacy, she is able to identify many of the problems of her society and its relation to the Western developed world. Because she keeps on criticizing the African men in Europe for refusing to go back home and help in the development of Africa, the men see her to be too extreme and outspoken and so they withdraw from her. This withdrawal of the men makes her remain single and very lonely.

Similarly, Esi the protagonist of Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* is in many ways a symbol of the modern, "emancipated" woman in that she is formally educated, has a career and is therefore in no way dependent on her husband. She is a statistician with a postgraduate degree and earns more than her husband. However, this formal education which has liberated Esi, limits her in another way. Esi's literacy affects her relationship with her husband Oko because he is unwilling to accept this busy career woman as a wife. Despite Esi's independence, she is still constrained by marriage and by her role as a wife whose body belongs to her husband. As a result, she promptly decides to leave Oko, her husband and enters into a relationship which she believes will allow her enough time to pursue her professional ambitions. Marital problems do not pertain to Esi alone in Aidoo's *Changes*. The novelist introduces two other literate women characters, Opokuya and Fusena who have their fair share of these marital problems.

It is generally assumed that formal education brings immense benefits to its recipients; however, the acquisition of this same formal education turns to dissociate the African woman from the African society because of the new culture she has assimilated. This phenomenon is what Ama Ata Aidoo portrays in her two novels, *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) and *Changes* (1999). This is the problem this study investigates. Therefore, the question one may ask is "Is formal education a blessing or a curse to the Ghanaian woman?"

2. Theoretical Framework of the Study

In the analysis of the selected texts, I shall be guided by the philosophical theory of humanism or existentialism which emphasizes human consciousness raising, potentiality, individual uniqueness, enjoyment of autonomy within the constraints of societal rules and regulations that will lead to the achievement of self-actualization and total societal development.

Humanism is derived from the 15th century Italian humanista, meaning teacher of humanities or humanitas which means the development of human virtue, in all its forms, to the fullest. Humanism is a philosophical educational theory that considers the cosmic value to reside in man or in the accomplishments and ideals of human society. Humanists find in the classics their ideal of the individual living well and honourably in this world, happily and naturally enjoying the wholesome goods of human life and passionately interested in the world.

The most important belief of existentialists is the dignity and worth of the individual. Plato is the proponent of this theory. The existentialists believe and recognize the individuality or uniqueness of the individual as well as his potentiality. It is therefore imperative to develop one's individuality by nurturing each person's special talents and skills. The potentiality each person has is inexhaustible (Elias and Merriam, 1995). After the development of the individual's talents and skills, then, they could be used to improve the standard of living of himself and the society as a whole.

Existentialists also believe in the freedom and autonomy of the individual (Costello, 1966; Girling, 1978; Grudin, 1994 and Elias and Merriam, 1995). In other words, existentialists believe in freewill rather than predestination. They state that human beings are not solely or primarily knowers, they also care, desire, manipulate and above all, choose and act. The claim that man exists in this unique sense also means that he is opened to a future which he determines by his choices and actions; he is free. "Man makes himself what he is by his choices, choices of ways of life" (Kierkegaard) or "of particular actions" (Sartre) (New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2003). Elias and Merriam (1995: 118), puts this particular belief thus "A person's behavior is not determined by external forces or internal urges." Behaviour is therefore the consequence of human choice which individuals can freely exercise as this statement of Jean Paul Sartre epitomizes: "The essence of each human person is the freedom to act, to choose, to say "no" or "yes. A person is what he or she chooses to be" (Farah, Karl and Kortepeter, 1986:754, cited in Nketiah-Kyeremeh (2002:19).

As a means of obtaining its goals of developing the individual and promoting the well being of humanity, humanists have placed great value on education. The immediate goal of education as Aristotle felt was "to cultivate the disposition that will lead people to be ready, able, and willing to engage in the excellent activities that constitute or which lead to happiness" (Patterson, 1973: 34). Similarly, contemporary existentialists like Quist and others have the view that education involves procedure and practices that lead to an improvement in the quality of individuals, their living and societal conditions as a whole (Quist et al, 2002). Therefore to both early existentialists like Aristotle and later ones like Quist and others, the main purpose of education is the improvement of the recipient's life and the total development of society.

Simply put, the goal of humanistic education is the development of persons who are open to change and continued learning, persons who strive for self actualization, and persons who can live together as fully functioning individuals. The education also emphasizes the non-intellectual affective aspect of the learner. That is, developing persons who understand themselves, who understand others, and who can relate to others (Elias and Merriam, 1995:112).

The two main texts of Ama Ata Aidoo that the study focuses on, that is, *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) and *Changes* (1999) principally deal with the African women striving to acquire formal education so as to be able to lead meaningful lives in wherever they might find themselves in the world. This strive to acquire formal education by the women characters to enable them enjoy the privileges that go with this new status is in no doubt in consonance with the philosophical educational theory of existentialism which hammer on the development of humans through acquisition of formal education for the ultimate benefit of all people in the society.

3. Review of Related Literature

Since this research centres itself on the formal education of the Ghanaian woman, it is *sine qua non* to look at what various writers see the term education from the earliest times to this day.

According to Shafritz et al (1988:168), education in broad terms, is the life-long process of acquiring new knowledge and skills through both formal and informal exposure to information, ideas, and experiences. Similarly, Bown and Olu Tomori (1979:15) state that "education is consciously facilitated learning, that is lifelong and can affect young and old." These writers, therefore, view education as a continuous activity that the individual goes through from infancy to the time that the individual will die.

Additionally, Farrant (1980:18) describes education "as the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, faculties trained and skills developed". Learning is, therefore, taken to mean a change in behaviour, knowledge, understanding and the capabilities that the learner retains for use in other situations.

Thompson (1984:23) reports the UNESCO International Standard Classification of Education (1975) as also defining education as comprising organized and sustained communication designed to bring about learning. He emphasizes on communication as a basic means of transmission of education. He explains 'communication' that it requires a relationship between two or more people involving the transfer of information. 'Organized' means planned in a sequence with established aims and curricula, and 'sustained' means that the learning experience has duration and continuity and describes 'learning' as any change in behaviour, knowledge, understanding, skills and capabilities which the learner retains and which can not be ascribed simply to physical growth or the development of inherited behaviour patterns. He contends that: what goes on in the institution we call a school is intended to be education in these terms, but equally clearly education may be carried on outside formal schools and that all societies have all times sought to develop appropriate behaviour patterns, spread the possession of knowledge, understanding and skills among their members in ways which possess many of the above characteristics even though the degree of organization and the extend to which aims were articulated tended to be limited (p. 23).

To Thompson, education is therefore a learning process where knowledge, skills, understanding and critical thinking are acquired (Yawkumah et al, 2007).

Schultz et al (1998), refer to education as socialization and enculturation, lifelong processes by which an individual is incorporated into the group and made capable of behaving in the ways accepted by the society for a person of a particular age, sex, or status (p.116).

After analyzing the available literature on the definition of education, one can say that, education is the process of acquiring skills and knowledge through formal or informal way that will make the individual functional in the development of his or her life and society.

Education of women has been of tremendous significance to the development of the recipient as well as in the society in which she finds herself. In view of the significance of women's education to societal development, many writers have studied the phenomenon. The contributions of some of such writers are discussed below:

According to Moghadam (2003), access to education has improved dramatically over the past two decades, and there has been a number of encouraging trends in girls' education and women's education. Nonetheless, great challenges remain to be addressed. He says: 'many people especially girls are still excluded from education, and many more are enrolled in school but learning too little to prepare them for 21st century job market' (p. 2 of 5).

Education's importance has been emphasized by a number of international conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development. The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, recognized that women's literacy is a key to empowering women's participation in decision making in society and to improving families' well-being. Moghadam (1998) affirms the position of the Beijing Conference by outlining the benefit of female education for women's empowerment and gender equality thus:

- Educated women are more politically active and better informed about their legal rights and how to exercise them.
- Increase in girls' secondary school enrollment is associated with increases in women's participation in the labour force and their contributions to household and national income.
- As female education rises, fertility, population growth, and infant and child mortality fall and family health improves (p. 4 of 11).

Jejeebhoy (1995: 37) also states that one of the studies recognizing women's status as a link mediating the relationship between women's education argues that:

Education is the key to transforming women's attitudes and values from traditional to more modern, and their behaviour from constrained to emancipated. Specifically, the study maintains that schooling increases a woman's knowledge and competence in all sectors of contemporary life; broaden her access to information via the mass media and written material; develops her intellectual capacities and exposes her to interpersonal competition and achievement; gives her an opportunity to pursue none-familial roles; raises the image of her potential and that of her children and simultaneously, imparts a sense of efficacy and trust in modern science and technology, which encourages a woman to control her fate and body. It also changes her outlook on the world as being controllable and raises her self-worth. Moreover, it encourages her participation in an egalitarian nuclear family structure with greater conjugal affinity and more equal decision-making, in which her children are socialized to be more independent (and more demanding).

From the submissions that have been made in the available literature, it can be concluded that, education empowers the woman in social, political and economic development. Although many writers have made a lot of laudable contributions to support the numerous benefits women derive from formal education, a host of others have also seriously condemned it. They state among other things that the acquisition of formal education by women has not helped the recipients as well as their respective societies.

Howard (1989:257) argues that formal education frequently conflicts with traditional values of non-Western peoples, and the benefits of such education in some instances may not be sufficient to override the costs. He goes on to say that education patterned on western models often maintains a subtle dependency of emerging nations by creating an elite whose values are oriented toward those of Europeans and Northern Americans and who share more culturally with these peoples than with the majority of their fellow citizens as he states: "such education often leads people to view indigenous segments of their society with disdain as uncivilized barbarians rather than as people with whom they share a common bond". Western-style education may also have undesirable effects at the early stages of childhood as Graves et al (1978) found that Western style teaching designed to promote individualism and competitiveness resulted in a loss of group commitment and cooperation among islanders. This situation undermined the ability of the people to withstand the detrimental effects of their relative poverty and isolation through cooperation and a sense of communalism. Sackett (1982: 39-40) supports this with his observation that because of formal education, many children lose their attachment to their traditional Aboriginal culture. Since they did not fit into White culture either, the result was a group of people with little commitment to any cultural tradition— they became people "in between".

Bhasin (1992) as well criticizes education and knowledge as tools that have been consistently used to disempower women. She advances her argument with the following observation:

Only book knowledge and degrees are considered valuable, respectable, and relevant. This is why mothers who educate the whole world are not considered educators; women who nurse and treat are not considered healers; women who do 60% of agricultural work are not considered farmers. They are wives of farmers. This is why we have today UN Statistics which tells us that women do two-thirds of the total hours of work done in the world but receive only one-tenth of the world's income and own only one-hundredth of the property of the world (p. 16).

In fact, this kind of presentation of women might have come from an extremely feminist viewpoint and might not portray a true reflection of women's universal position because even though experience is essential for women's development, formal education enhances one's experience and progress.

Although, education has a significant impact on the woman's social, political and economic development, she is seen by especially conservative traditionalists as being a tool for cultural alienation.

A critical look at the submissions of the writers who talk about both formal and informal types of education shows glaringly that education of the woman has its merits and its associated demerits. It is this fascinating picture that motivates the study into the works of Ama Ata Aidoo which also discusses the advantages and disadvantages of formal education to the modern African woman.

Mensah (1997) sees Aidoo's presentation of the situation of the married literate woman in contemporary Ghana to have a link with the post colonial moment as events unfolds. He says: "she emphasizes for instance, the colonial legacy of language, of education in general, and above all how colonialism has affected the institution of marriage in Ghana and Africa in general" (p. 34).

According to Cousins (2004:106) the main issue in Ama Ata Aidoo's novel *Changes* (1999) is the impossibility of fulfilling the multiplicity of tasks required from a wife. She says when a man marries he gets the following:

A sexual aid; a wet-nurse and nursemaid for [his] children; a cook steward and a general house keeper; a listening post; an economic and general consultant; field-hand and; if [he is] that way inclined, a punch ball.

Behrent (1997) supports Cousins when he states that as the very foundation of the family, marriage has maintained a chameleon-like capacity to change its nature in time and space and to serve the ignominious aims of every society: slave owning, feudal, or modern bourgeois. Throughout history and among all peoples, marriage has made for women to be owned like property, abused and it possible brutalized like serfs, privately corrected and, like children, publicly scolded, overworked, underpaid, and much more thoroughly exploited than the lowest male worker. Aidoo demonstrates this situation in her novel that despite societal changes which have allowed women such as Esi to gain a higher economic and social status, and achieve a certain degree of independence, the institution of marriage has not changed in that it still relegates women to a subordinate position (1 of 3).

In fact, Cousins' and Behrent's assertion is highly debatable because this gloomy picture they have painted does not pertain in every African society. This is because in many of the urban centres, especially, many of the career women have house-helps who do virtually every household work including taking care of the children. That aside, in Africa, many men consult their wives in taking a lot of decisions that affect their lives. Not only that; in this modern era where democracy is being practised in many African countries, a lot of laws exist that protect the woman from many forms of abuse. For instance, in Ghana, the Judiciary and quasi-judicial institutions like Commission on Human Right and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVSSU) of Ghana Police Service and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) concerned with the protection of human rights like Federation Internationale de Abogadas (FIDA) are wild awake to stand against any injustice that is perpetrated against women. Additionally, nowadays, African women are not necessarily 'field-hands' as Cousins claims because there are thousands of both literate and illiterate African women who are either employed in the government sector or in the private sector. Such women workers are usually protected by international conventions like that of the United Nations Organization (UNO). For instance, the government of Ghana ratified the United Nations Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1985 to protect the rights of women employees (Nketiah-Kyeremeh, 2002: 61). It should also be observed that women in Africa were enjoying political and socio-economic empowerment in their respective countries before the advent of all these international and local organizations. Therefore, the activities of these organizations recently are just serving as a catalyst towards the empowerment of women.

Cousins (2004) also thinks that marriage is often represented in African women's fiction as a way of structuring men's authority over women, not necessarily legally in modern Africa but through social and cultural attitudes. The critic also thinks that Oko's act of rape to Esi is partly to assert his authority over her. In his terms, this is an attempt to save the marriage by restoring the male-female power balance that should pertain and which Esi refuses to recognize. Cousins (2004), advances her argument with the following observation:

Women are only socially acceptable if they are under the jurisdiction of a man; their father, brother or husband and in relation to this Aidoo shows that even a strong independent and well-educated woman, such as she has created in Esi, cannot remain single in the Ghanaian society. Therefore Esi unwillingly remarries and finds herself in another difficult situation (p. 109).

It is unfortunate that Cousins has made such a generalized statement which is not applicable to every African country. Normally, marriage is a choice that one makes but not a compulsion by any society in Africa. There are so many women who are not married in this world and especially in Africa, who have performed excellently in their respective spheres of endeavour. Contrary to Cousins' argument, a woman who is under the jurisdiction of a man might even have her sense of initiative inhibited. But a woman who operates freely can exploit her initiative drive in full to perform wonders in whatever capacity she finds herself. Therefore, in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes*, it is Esi's own choice to get married to Ali but not on the grounds of any character deficiency or insecurity on her part. Granted even that Cousins' assertion is true, the argument even becomes defeated because Ali who is so much attached to his businesses is scarcely available to supervise her or give her the protection she needs. Moreover, Esi leaves Oko to marry Ali basically on the fact that he (Oko) is always demanding more of her time than the nature of her work can offer. Meanwhile, when Ali proves to be an absentee husband, she forgets about him and continues to perform as her work requires.

Cousins (2004), further posits that the strong social pressures which sustain marriage constrain male behaviour as well as that of women and that husbands' actions stem primarily from those ideas of masculinity which insist that to be a "real man" includes the dominating and controlling of wives and that Oko acts as he does partly in response to social expectations of male behaviour as he sincerely believes that raping Esi is an expression of his frustrated love (p.110). Cousins' observation reflects in many of the African writers' works. For instance, in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1986), Okonkwo advises his son Nwoye to behave like a man, especially when it comes to controlling women. Okonkwo frankly tells him (Nwoye) that:

He wanted Nwoye to grow into a tough man capable of ruling his father's household when he was dead and gone to the ancestors. He wanted him to be a prosperous man, having enough in his barn to feed the ancestors with regular sacrifices. And so he was always happy when he heard him grumbling about women. That showed that in time he would be able to control his women. 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. He was like the man in the song who had ten and one wives and not enough soup for his foo-foo (p. 37).

Achebe makes us aware through Okonkwo's aspirations that it is not only literate married women who are controlled by their husbands but also illiterate married African women also suffer same. The kind of orientation that Okonkwo gives to his son Nwoye goes to prove that the domineering behaviour of African married men stems from the socialization process the men go through during their youthful days as evident in Nwoye's case in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (Nketiah-Kyeremeh, 2004).

The argument that Cousins has advanced is at variance with Aidoo's view of the so-called 'marital rape.' This is so because in the first place, Esi herself admits that that expression is not even in the vocabulary of African marriage but sheer foreign ideas which must not be entertained (p. 12). Rather, Aidoo is seriously speaking against the intrusion of a concept which is alien into Africa without considering its implication on the society as a whole.

Reviewing Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes*, Mensah (1997) states that it is a woman's liberationist novel designed to expose what the modern literate woman endures in marriage. He claims that the problem with Esi as well as many literate African women who do not depend on their husbands for financial support is how to get a secured marriage (p. 33). Mensah's argument is not totally justified because there are a lot of literate African women who have successful marriages perhaps because of some sterling qualities they exhibit. Therefore, if any literate African woman finds it difficult in having a secured marriage, then it might be a personal problem among the lot and the individual needs self-examination and behavioural change to make her marriage work. For example, a character like Esi who is an epitome of an irresponsible wife and a mother would barely have a secured marriage. For instance, Esi does not perform any chores at home, rather, the contracted 'Madam' does everything including taking care of her only daughter, Ogyaanowa. Even the daughter seriously feels her usual absence and finally opts to go and stay with her caring father, Oko when the opportunity presents itself (p. 128). So, how can such a literate married African woman like Esi who usually complains that the husband does not allow her have enough time for her work, who abandons her daughter and her entire matrimonial home have a secured marriage? Indeed, it is a personal failure rather than a general problem for literate married African women. Therefore, it is unfortunate that the commentator lumps all literate married African women together and associate them with such a predicament.

Booker (1998:129), and Odamtten (1994: 9) comment on Aidoo's position on women by citing her assertion in the introduction to Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, that: there have been other ridiculous parallels, especially in the areas of what exactly the African woman is, the assumption on the part of Westerners being that the poor African woman was a down trodden wretch until the European missionaries brought her Christianity, civilization, and emancipation. This may apply in certain areas of Africa, but certainly, for most Ghanaian women, the question of their emancipation is not a problem to discuss since it has always been ensured by the system anyway. . . (p. 9).

Booker (1998) commends Aidoo's emphasis on the tradition of feminine independence in Ghana, a tradition that obviously underlies her own work in important ways in an introduction she wrote to an edition of Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. He states that Aidoo argues that Western models of the oppression of women by men are not adequate to describe the situation in Ghana (p. 119). Thus, while it may be true that in Ghana women were traditionally not considered to have fulfilled themselves fully as women unless they were mothers, it is also true that real women were expected to maintain their economic independence from men. Aidoo's works, which often deal with the special problems encountered by literate women in modern Ghana, treat problems in ways that clearly suggest the relevance of the earlier Ghanaian tradition of women's freedom (p. 129).

Clearly, a serious critic will argue that Booker has not studied well the historical background of African women. Even in many of the traditional areas in Ghana, women, especially, queen mothers appoint chiefs. In some few areas in Africa like Ghana, Cameroon, and Nigeria some women are paramount chiefs. For instance, a woman who is the paramount chief of Asipong, a nearby village of Sekondi in the Western Region of Ghana bears a male stool name of Nana Kofi Ebuna. Quite apart, the late Mama Dokua of Tefle in Volta Region is a paramount chief. These two prominent women who granted interview to the hostess of TV Africa's popular programme "Obaa Mbo" are used to showcase the recognized and dignified position of African women. What about Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia who has managed to rebuild Liberia from the ravages of war?

Ama Ata Aidoo's interest in the post-colonial context in which the drama of the modern African woman unfolds, as well as her earlier claims about the liberated state of the Ghanaian woman have led some critics to argue that primarily feminists readings of Aidoo's works are somehow misguided. It is asserted that Aidoo's concern with women's issues somehow is always considered under her major interest in post-colonial reality (Mensah, 1997: 34).

Odamtten (1994) argues that the admission that it is a fact that the only group of women in the country who may not be sure of themselves are the literates, and draws attention to her realistic characterization of literate women like Sissie in *Our Sister Killjoy* and of Ghanaian women in general, formally educated who are illiterates in their own traditions. He writes: For the Ghanaian woman exposed to a Western-oriented that disseminated idealized models of womanhood at variance with indigenous models, the confusion of identity and purpose becomes all the more problematic. The hegemonic influence of British colonialism and Western ideas made the acquisition of education desirable even as its effects on individuals were devastating, particularly on women.... (p. 10).

Reacting to the issue of marital rape in the neocolonial African context, Odamtten (1994: 164 -165) states that readers appear to be encouraged to devalue the issue of marital rape since Aidoo tentatively raises the issue of marital rape... but never dwells on the subject. It is as if both Esi and the author realize that in African society there could not possibly be an 'indigenous word or phrase for it'. Citing profile 593, Odamtten further suggests that readers cannot be convinced by such sophistry and that there are ways to describe such violations of women, married or single, even if, as Aidoo says, "I had to be realistic. In terms of our African background, marital rape isn't one of the hottest topics". She explains that "in African society, sex in marriage is the man's prerogative. And a woman is considered lucky if her husband should take such aggressive interest in her" (p. 165). An African woman who is traditionally married to a man is supposed to be an egg for the man. Moreover, sex is meant to be a mutual enjoyment for both

the man and the woman so the woman must not be seen as an empty receptacle that the man acts upon but rather as someone who has feelings to enjoy sexual intercourse willingly without coercion.

Ndiaye (2002), also supports this stance by saying that Aidoo deplors the fact that, in addition to disintegrating a genuine African economic system, the British Empire corrupted the most important social pillar of Ghanaian society – the wife, mother, educator, citizen. Rape thus assumes symbolic as well as literal value as a means of enhancing people's awareness of the unfavourable effects of colonial interferences with the roles assigned to African women (p. 3).

Nwankwo commenting on *Our Sister Killjoy* compares Aidoo to Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ousmane who equally deal with many problems in their latest novels. He argues that Aidoo has managed to deal with many problems like wa Thiong'o and Ousmane who are fully aware in their works that a campaign for social justice is meaningful only when all disadvantaged people in human society receive indiscriminating attention. It is that same principle which makes Aidoo's works feminist literature with a difference (Odamtten, 1994).

Ndiaye (2002) indicates that Ama Ata Aidoo's novel *Changes*, consists of the status of women in the shifting socio-political landscapes of contemporary Ghana. Post-colonial Ghana now boasts of significant political infrastructure, social and economic improvements that have fostered increasingly independent, mobile, educated upper and middle class women in control of crucial matters such as their reproductive lives. Such changes, however, should not overshadow the fact that the majority of Ghanaians have not benefited from the said improvements and that most 'emancipated' women's freedom and rights keep being seriously subdued by their gender. Ndiaye's assessment about Ghanaian women cannot be taken as a fact because he being a Senegalese does not know much about the conditions of women in traditional Ghanaian societies. Then also, the treatment of women in Muslim dominated societies like Senegal is quite different from traditional Ghanaian societies. Bryce (1999) supports this by saying that Aidoo gives a love story, but never let readers forget the blind alleys of self-delusion into which one can be led by "love" in its romantic aspects. At the same time she dramatizes for the reader the problematics of behaviour and identity in a context of social change where the old certainties are no longer reliable guides. This problematic is framed most explicitly in the section of the novel where Esi goes "home" to her mother's village to consult her grandmother. The view of femininity afforded by Nana Esi is unfitted for by virtue of her education. In this part of Africa, like anywhere else on the continent, women still live in a man's world where traditions are undermined by materialism because, despite the appearances, their underlying principles constantly get sabotaged under the effect of widespread hypocrisy. Almost three decades after the Nkrumah years, during which educational programmes aimed at achieving the balance of power between the sexes were initiated, the Ghanaian woman is left wondering why she has been made to pay so high a price for a situation of dangerous confusion (p. 2).

According to Booker's (1998:119) review of Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy*, the extensive establishment of education by the British in Ghana in the nineteenth century disrupted the already existing cultural practices which granted considerably more social and economic autonomy to women than they had in England. For instance, in traditional Ghanaian society women were expected to be financially independent even when married. But the extensive type of education that the British established gave considerably more educational opportunities to boys than to girls thereby creating chances for men that were denied women. Nonetheless, women continued to pursue economic activities, especially in retail trading. Aidoo stresses the Ghanaian tradition of female independence and argues that Western models for the oppression of women by men are often ridiculous ... especially in the area of exactly what the African woman is, the assumption on the part of most Westerners being that the poor African woman was a downtrodden wretch until the European missionary brought her Christianity, civilization and emancipation. This may apply in certain areas in Africa, but certainly for most Ghanaian women, the question of emancipation is not really a problem to discuss since it has always been ensured by the system anyway. Nor is this an idealized view. It is there for anyone who is prepared to observe a society instead of imposing on it his own prejudice and syndromes (Aidoo 1969, p. x).

Having looked at the various reviews of writers on especially, Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) and *Changes* (1999) which are the main focus of this study, one can make these observations and conclusions: education, be it formal or informal, has a lot of significant impact on the social, political, and economic development of the woman. Nonetheless, education has also had an adverse effect on the woman in both developed and developing countries.

Writers who have written on the works of Ama Ata Aidoo reveal a particular trend with regard to both literate and illiterate married women in the African context. To some of them, the institution of marriage has enslaved both the literate and the illiterate African woman in many ways. To others, it is colonization and its accompanying formal education that has put the woman in an awkward position. All these two arguments cannot be fully accepted because with regard to marriage, both literate and illiterate women in Africa are not being subjected to much inhumane treatment as they are speculating. It can be said that of late, there are a lot of human right protection organizations who are seriously working in most African countries to ensure that women in general are secured in all spheres of life. On the issue of colonial education, making many literate women claim some human rights, writers like Ama Ata Aidoo are using their works to educate them and others that those claims are not feasible in Africa, and that women who abide by African traditions, be they literate or illiterate are sure of having successful marriages. Therefore, one can conclude by saying that, in Africa, both the literate and the illiterate married woman enjoy relative economic, political, social and cultural freedom.

4. The Depiction of Literate Women in Ama Ata Aidoo's Novels

4.1. How Aidoo sees the Literate Woman in Our Sister Killjoy

The author uses her literate character, Sissie in her first novel *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) to show the significant impact that formal

education has on her. In this novel, formal education has tremendous influence on the thoughts and actions of this elite woman. A critical appraisal of the novel reveals that formal education makes the African woman confident, economically sound and respectable; it makes the woman knowledgeable and critical; and it enables her take concrete decisions on matters that affect her life.

Formal education makes the African woman confident, economically sound and respectable in her society. Unlike the illiterate African woman who finds it difficult to live in this changing world, the literate woman enjoys a relatively comfortable existence because she is resourced by her economic and social status. This assertion is evident in Moghadam's (2003) argument that education is a key part of strategies to improve individuals' well-being and societies' economic and social development (Moghadam, 2003:2 of 5, Jejeebhoy, 1995:37). Sissie, the heroine of Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977), has had education in Ghana and is awarded a scholarship to travel to Europe, which her colleagues in the novel see as a great achievement. However, Sissie is not overwhelmed about the scholarship. The Europeans are eager to impress, and wine and dine with her as soon as the embassy finds out she is the chosen one. They come to the campus looking for her in a black Mercedes Benz car (p. 8). The nice reception that the resident German ambassador gives to Sissie before she leaves for Germany makes many Ghanaians including the narrator see the opportunity as a privilege. For instance, Sammy, who has tasted life in Europe, likens her trip to going to heaven (p. 9). Because of Sissie's acquisition of formal education, she feels very comfortable and confident in herself; even when she finds herself as the only black person in a particular place in Bavaria, Germany. Especially, the formal education she has had makes her move about easily without getting lost. Among her black colleagues, it is only Sissie who can go out and fetch fruits like plums, pear and apricots for the other campers (p. 39). She is able to associate easily with the Germans and even becomes a friend to Marija who usually takes her to her house to eat. Even when they are at the station waiting to be taken to their final destination, Sissie takes the opportunity to stroll about and satisfy her curious eyes. Although the station official expresses his fears for Sissie, she assures him that "she would not wonder away" (p. 12). Sissie's ability to move about freely stems from the fact that as a literate woman, she can easily use some landmarks to trace her route back if she gets lost.

Moreover, formal education makes the character Sissie knowledgeable and critical. The formal education that Sissie acquires makes her very broadminded and analytical in the face of issues. When Sissie is in London, she criticizes the Indian and Ghanaian doctors who practise there when the countries they left behind are in greater need of their medical knowledge and services. Africa is plagued with a lot of diseases and it is unwise for the Ghanaian doctors to stay in Britain and serve the British while Ghanaian patients are in dire need of medical attention. Ama Ata Aidoo therefore uses Sissie to criticize the phenomenal exodus of our health personnel overseas for greener pastures.

Sissie's formal education also enables her see and attack the hypocritical nature of the Africans in the diaspora. Sissie utterly criticizes the hypocrisy of those who indulge in nationalistic rhetoric and proffer solutions to the problems in Africa when they themselves have chosen to remain abroad and live a more privileged life in which they can escape many of these problems. Sissie also condemns the students who perpetually extend their studies abroad so as not to be obliged to return to their respective countries and at the same time position themselves as experts in solving the problems of their home countries. For instance, while in London, Sissie attends a students' union meeting where she interrupts proceedings to criticize these intellectuals, "pleading that instead of forever gathering together and virtuously spouting such beautiful radical analyses of the situation at home, we should simply hurry back" (p. 121). The analytical and outspoken nature of Sissie is seen in the displeasure that she expresses on the harmful effect of the incompetence and selfishness of the rulers of the African continent and other third world countries. She becomes unhappy because these rulers do not care about the poor villagers and town dwellers' progress but these villagers are the backbone of the economy. These chiefs are always bent on satisfying their whims and caprices. She condemns the chiefs' bad rule in these words:

Nothing gets done in

Villages or towns, If There are no volunteers, Local and half-hearted. There are some other kinds: Imported, Eager, Sweet foreign aid Eventually to take a Thousand For every horse-power put in (pp. 34-35).

The narrator does not mince words regarding the misbehaviour of the African rulers when she says:

From all around the third world, You hear the same story; Rulers Asleep to all things at All times - Conscious only of Riches, which they gather in a Coma -Intravenously - (p. 34).

Additionally, Sissie's formal education enables her to analyze issues and protest against maltreatments that are meted out to the Africans in the diaspora. She therefore revolts against the European assimilation of Africans as is evident in her protest in the story of a heart transplant in which an African is the donor of the heart. Kunle, an African sees this heart transplant as a kind of apartheid ideology. "Black and White in one"; for Sissie, the use of an African heart implanted into a dying White man, to eke out his life is a kind of neocolonialism where the black is the victim. Besides, the acquisition of formal education that makes Sissie broadminded, it motivates her to disapprove the behaviour of the so called "been to" who return home to take advantage of the privileged status they enjoy in the Ghanaian society. Sissie bemoans "Life 'home' has its own compensations. The aura of having been overseas at all. Belonging to the elites, whatever that is . . ." (p. 107).

Similarly, Aidoo argues that the prestige associated with being a "been to" is a farce. This is seen in the character of Kunle who returns home and attempts to take advantage of his privileged status by flaunting more wealth than he even has. And in his attempt to prove himself deserving of the awe with which he is regarded by virtue of his studies abroad, he brings about his own death. In his attempt to prove himself a man of prestige, Kunle refuses to drive his own car and hires a chauffeur despite the fact that he is a better driver and dies in a car crash (p. 108). In fact, the death of Kunle perhaps might be used by Aidoo to show that the idea of "been toism" is an illusion and therefore must not be entertained in Africa. Rather, characters like Kunle must learn to invest their acquired wealth in ventures that will benefit the Africans at home.

Furthermore, formal education makes the African woman take concrete decisions on matters that affect her life. Because of the formal education Sissie have had, she thoroughly reflects on the criticisms that her Bavarian neighbours make against the illicit kind of lesbian relationship that is assumed to exist between her and Marija Sommer, a German woman she meets and consequently ignores. Sissie becomes sensitive to the gossips of her Bavarian neighbours about this type of relationship to the extent that, they feel it must be made known to Marija's husband. They silently complain in these words: Sommer does not speak English and the African speaks no German. So who interprets for them? asked the manager of a supermarket; What could they be talking about? wondered an insurance broker.

She must not take her to her house everyday!

She must be getting neurotic.

It is perverse.

SOMEONE MUST TELL HER HUSBAND! (p. 44).

Ama Ata Aidoo attaches much importance to this relationship in the novel and makes her readers aware of the social implications of lesbianism. She therefore wants other Africans like Sissie to dissociate themselves from any relationship with the west which may be detrimental to African traditions. The supposedly amorous illicit lesbian relationship between Sissie and Marija is criticized by the Germans because humanistic are against any action which deviates from societal norms (Elias and Merriam, 1995:118-119). Then also, humanistic education relies much on the effective use of intelligence and reasoning. No doubt that Sissie is quickly able to discern the wisdom in the neighbours' criticism on her relationship with Marija and severs it abruptly.

It can be summed up that the literate African woman whom Sissie represents benefits from formal education in *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) by making her mobile, confident, economically sound, and respectable; by making her knowledgeable and critical and by enabling the woman take concrete decisions on her own.

4.2. *The Disadvantages of Formal Education to the African Woman in Our Sister Killjoy*

As compared to the other characters in Ama Ata Aidoo's second novel *Changes* (1999) to whom formal education does much harm to their marital development in life, the adverse effect that formal education has on Sissie in *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) is not so strong. Basically, Sissie's acquisition of formal education which makes her broadminded and analytical tends to isolate her from her own people and also makes it difficult for her to get a partner to call a husband with whom she will share her views. Sissie can easily read between lines in many things that affect the black race.

It is the wish of every human to get enough wealth to enable the one lead a comfortable life. It is this pull factor that motivates many Ghanaian and other African health personnel to move to the advanced countries to render medical services over there. However, when Sissie goes to London she attacks these health personnel who have gone to seek greener pastures abroad and asks them to go back to Africa where their services are needed most. Similarly, Sissie even has the nerves to cut in a students' union meeting to impress upon these students who are not ready to return to help solve problems in Africa, to hurry back to find antidotes to the health problems that are devouring their individual countries. Sissie's constant nagging, attacks and criticisms even on peoples' appearances make her become a bother to them. It is no wonder that in London many of her fellow Africans shun her company and make her lonely. She continuously reminds the Africans about the myriad of problems that beset Africa and makes the narrator complain "There goes Sissie again. Forever carrying Africa's problems on her shoulders as though they have paid her to do it" (p. 118). Therefore, the acquisition of education that makes Sissie so outspoken and critical on the behaviour of her fellow Africans unfortunately makes her become a lonely person.

Eventually, it is the dream of many literate women to get married and have children or have a companion in life whom they might share their joy and sorrow. Unfortunately for Sissie, she does not get this opportunity but rather she becomes a lonely person in her sojourn in United Kingdom. Sissie becomes so much worried about African problems wherever she goes such that she bothers Africans in the diaspora that they become fed up with her. Her concern for the development of Africa provokes her to ask an African intimate friend whom Sissie is interested in to go to Africa and help develop it. Disappointingly, the black gentleman does not only refuse to go back to Africa but worse of it all, he does not reciprocate Sissie's affection. This kind of disappointment makes her become so lonely that it makes her state in a love letter that is never sent that "Loneliness became my room-mate and took the place over" (p. 119). Sissie's inability to get a husband in her wanderings and her inability to be integrated into the Africans in Europe is based on her over critical nature.

4.3. *How Ama Ata Aidoo sees the Literate African Woman in Changes*

The benefits of formal education to African women are very pervasive in Ama Ata Aidoo's novel entitled *Changes* (1999). Nonetheless, the novel also points out negative effects on the social lives of its women characters. In other words, formal education is seen as a double-edged sword which liberates the African woman in one way but incapacitates her in the other. Some of the advantages that Aidoo's literate women characters enjoy are that; formal education empowers the African woman, and makes her independent of her husband; it also makes the woman very much respected in the society; education also makes the woman broadminded; it enables her to compete favourably in the job market. Furthermore, formal education facilitates the African woman's mobility in this world; and also makes her assertive enough to fight for her rights.

Aidoo demonstrates through Esi Sekyi, the protagonist of her novel *Changes* how formal education empowers the woman by making her economically independent of her husband. She is in many ways a representative of the modern "emancipated" women. She is a literate woman who has a career and is therefore in no way dependent on her husband for her financial needs. She is a statistician with

a Master's degree and earns more than her husband. She is also fairly sexually liberated and she is in control of her own reproductive life. For instance, Esi unilaterally decides to plan her family and thereby uses contraceptive methods without consulting her husband. The novelist shows Esi's insistence on adopting family planning method without anybody dissuading her in these words:

... she was on those dreadful birth control things: pills, loops or whatever. She had gone on them soon after the child was born, and no amount of reasoning and pleading had persuaded her to go off them. He wanted other children, at least one more ... a boy if possible. But even one more girl would have been welcome (p. 8).

Moreover, formal education enables the woman to move about easily and she is also respected in the society. Esi has to make a number of trips outside Ghana for official duties. These trips do not only expose her to other parts of the world but also earn her enough money to maintain herself, her daughter, and her bungalow like all other senior officers. Esi's education makes her very much respected by all her friends and other people who know the work she is doing. Esi's husband, Oko, attests to this fact when he states that:

... she was very much respected by her colleagues and other people who knew the work she did. So she should not really be trying so hard to impress: leaving the house virtually at dawn. Returning home at dusk: often bringing work home? Then there were all those conferences. Geneva, Addis Ababa, Dakar one half of the year; Rome, Lusaka, Lagos, the other half (p.8).

It is true that acquisition of formal education brings about respect and recognition for the recipient in her society, however, not all literate women can enjoy such a treatment. It might depend on the kind of society that such a woman finds herself. Moreover, there might be other outstanding qualities that that literate woman possesses which have earned her that treatment because respect is something which is earned but not bestowed on the individual. So, an illiterate woman can also earn such a respect due to a number of social factors. Therefore, formal education per se cannot make Esi be so much respected but perhaps it depends upon the kind of society she lives in and other factors that might be hidden from the readers.

Esi's exposure to the outside world and her interaction with other employees make her broadminded. Esi therefore becomes very critical in any situation she is confronted with. In fulfilling his marital responsibility, Oko, the husband of Esi has to have sex with her. After the sexual act, Esi sits down and ponders over the whole experience and concludes that what Oko has done is rape because he did it without her consent. She realizes that it will be safer to divorce Oko than to be continually abused sexually. Esi goes on to divorce Oko for invading her private part (p.11). Esi's conclusion on the sexual act with Oko as being marital rape is not something that is uncommon because it has been established by many writers that formal education makes the African woman disregard her own culture. For example, Howard (1989:257) had recognized this behaviour earlier on when he categorically states that: "such education often leads people to view indigenous segments of their society with disdain as uncivilized barbarians rather than as people with whom they share common bond." Moreover, when Esi's second husband, Ali shirks his responsibility of keeping her company but rather showers gifts on her, she reads deeper into his behaviour and concludes that those presents cannot be substitutes for his love and companionship. Esi's analytical mind makes her forget about Ali because she is always lonely (p.161). Esi also exhibits her intelligence when she gives a perfect answer to her grandmother's question of whom she will run to when something happens to Ali. She answers the grandmother by stating that she will take any person who accompanies Ali to perform her marriage rite as his relative. The grandmother becomes satisfied with her grand-daughter's level of intelligence as evident in the narrator's comment:

In fact, she was silently pleased at the sharpness of her granddaughter's mind, and deliberately allowed herself to be overcome by the new wisdom of a young woman who had let herself get well into booklearning, (p. 109).

One can conclude by stating that through the role that Esi plays and the sort of character she displays in *Changes* (1999); formal education makes the woman economically independent of her husband; it enhances her mobility, she becomes broadminded and respectable; she competes favourably with males in the job market and she becomes so assertive that she protects her inalienable rights wherever she finds herself.

4. 4. *The Disadvantages of Formal Education to the African Woman in Changes*

Notwithstanding the advantages literate African women enjoy, they are confronted with some drawbacks by virtue of their acquisition of formal education. Some of the drawbacks are that; the literate woman tends to find faults with everything that has to do with her native African traditions. She does not easily accept her domestic role at the expense of her career; relatively, the dynamic lifestyle of the literate African woman conflicts with African institution of marriage therefore she faces the problem of secured marriage.

Apart from formal education being an asset to the African woman, it undoubtedly has a series of drawbacks on her development and satisfaction in her social life. Ama Ata Aidoo uses her novel *Changes* (1999) to show that formal education adversely affects the woman's chance to live a happy married life. In fact, this unhappy situation of literate African women as epitomized in Esi is portrayed in the novel. Esi does not easily accept her domestic role at the expense of her career. The way formal education negatively affects the happiness of African women manifests itself in Esi's marriage with Oko. Oko, her husband resents her for not giving him enough attention but rather devotes much of her attention to her job. The enormity of Esi's work as a statistician is so great that sometimes she is compelled to bring some of her official work home to complete. Oko complains at the kind of independence that educated women like his wife Esi enjoy. He laments "Is Esi too an African woman? She not only is but there are plenty of them around these days . . ." (p. 8).

Similarly, Oko disapproves of Esi and women like her for not conforming to the traditional roles of women as wives and mothers, because Oko, and Ogyaanowa, their daughter need love and attention that is nonexistent. Moreover, there is pressure from Oko's friends as well as his mother and sisters about Esi's negligence of her marital responsibilities. Esi is so tied to her work that she tends to resent her husband's unscheduled sexual advances to know her carnally. In a traditional community where emphasis is laid on

children, Oko's mother and sisters especially, complain and say it is unwise and unsafe to have one child, knowing how unpredictable the ways of nature are. Not only this, Oko's friends will not spare him the mockery, and so Oko says to his wife "My friends are laughing at me. . . They think I am not behaving like a man" (p. 8).

Furthermore, literacy that makes African women assertive to the extent that they will not sit down to allow men especially and social institution like marriage infringe upon their rights with impunity, tend to destroy their marriages as well as their happiness. Although Oko keeps Esi company, he demands much of her time than she can give. In her attempt to enjoy her freedom, Esi blatantly shirks her marital responsibilities by being too much concerned with her professional work. Ama Ata Aidoo attests to how formal education that makes Esi tied to her career also affects her happiness when it comes to discharging her duty as a wife. The novelist comments on Esi's concern with her work thus:

Esi definitely puts her career well above any duties she owed as a wife. She was a great cook, who complained endlessly any time she had to enter the kitchen. Their home was generally run by an elderly house help, whom they both called "Madam" behind her back (p.8).

It is this same acquisition of formal education that makes Esi asserts that her husband's sexual act that he had with her without her consent is tantamount to marital rape. Formal education therefore makes Esi conceive the idea that there is difference between a legal sexual intercourse and an illegal one. Esi becomes unhappy about this "maltreatment" that is meted out to her and so eventually divorces Oko. However, one can argue that, it is Esi's critical mind that makes her come against some of the duties that marriage brings upon the heads of women. But it is interesting to note that, there is nothing like "marital rape" in traditional Ghanaian marriage life that Esi can refer to justify her divorce. Ama Ata Aidoo shows the uncompromising stance of men when it comes to sexual act in these words "Sex is something a husband claims from his wife as a right. Anytime. And at his convenience" (p. 12). However, Cousins (2004) reports that the stance that Esi takes on this issue rather compounds her problem when she writes that "The rape is a symptom of these tensions but only serves to crystallize the marital difficulties for Esi. It is these problems as a whole, and not the rape per se which makes her leave Oko" (p.107). Esi realizes that despite her independence, she is still constrained by marriage and by her role as a wife whose body belongs to her husband.

Additionally, the dynamic lifestyle of the literate African woman usually conflicts with many of the traditional social roles which tend to adversely affect the development of the woman. Esi, the literate African woman protagonist in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* (1999), tries to change the conventional lifestyle of the traditionalists who assign a lot of roles to the woman to the neglect of her career but her efforts rather provokes serious conflicts. In many Ghanaian traditional societies, an institution like marriage becomes an oppressive tool for some literate African women because of their so called enlightenment. The literate African woman does not usually live happily in the traditional setting because her lifestyle comes into conflict with that of the traditionalists when she attempts to change the status quo to suit her newly acquired lifestyle. Human as she is and knowing the essence of male companionship, Esi gets herself into another marriage which does not satisfy her desires but adds to her woes. Ama Ata Aidoo thinks that though educated career women do not depend on their husbands, they still face the problem of securing good and satisfying marriages which will provide them with psychological and emotional satisfaction as Mensah (1997) asserts:

Clearly the problem that confronts Esi as well as many educated African women for whom marriage is no longer a means of financial survival, is how to find a marriage that provides for her natural human need for companionship without requiring her to give up all her personal ambitions and potential (p. 33).

Mensah has made his readers believe that many married African women who are economically sound need only companionship. However, this might not be the case because women in general have different problems with regard to the societies they find themselves. So the problems are relative and therefore cannot be generalized like that of Esi, Opokuya and Fusena.

Esi leaves Oko simply because he is demanding too much of her attention than the nature of her work will allow. Unfortunately, Esi enters into another marital relationship with Ali who rarely stays at home to keep her company thereby making her feel very lonely. Mensah (1997) supports Esi's position when he concludes that: she, therefore, leaves him in search of a relationship that will allow her enough space to pursue her professional ambitions.

... she discovers soon enough that the new husband is hardly ever there for her. She has exchanged a husband who demands too much of her time for one who has too little time for her" (p.33).

Esi's unhappiness in her two marriages is therefore the result of the oppressive nature of the institution of marriage as a whole in terms of the role it assigns women. Nana's piece of advice to her grand-daughter, Esi clearly shows that marriage is not beneficial to women, and is in no way related to love but rather a means by which a woman whether educated or not, is made the property of her husband. This surrenders her freedom and independence as well as the totality of her being. Nana puts the disadvantage position of women in marriage thus:

My lady silk, remember a man always gained in stature through the way he chose to associate with a woman . . . a woman has always been diminished in her association with a man . . . My lady silk, it was not a question of this type of marriage or that type of marriage . . . it was just being a wife. It is being a woman . . . (pp. 107-108).

Similarly, Cousins (2004), empathizes with Ghanaian women in general on traditional institutional structures like marriage that adversely affects the joy of women. She states that even Ama Ata Aidoo who usually uses her many of her writings to champion the course of women's liberation in marriage is even in a state of dilemma. Cousins candidly reports that:

Aidoo insists that individually women may try to change their lives but this remains impossible to sustain if social structures remain the same.

Esi's defiantly single stance is quickly undermined by the strong social expectation that she will remarry. Within a realistic setting, Aidoo cannot offer a paradigm for women to operate outside of marriage, yet, neither can she depict a way for men and women to operate happily within it (p. 112).

Compared to the other women in the novel and in Aidoo's previous works, Esi has a higher degree of independence, and freedom of movement; yet, her status as a woman in many ways creates conflicts as she is unable to fully exercise her freedom and independence because of the constraints that her gender imposes on her. Aidoo associates the situation of the married woman in contemporary Ghana with the post colonial period in which the events of the novel happen. She argues that the legacy of education has affected the institution of marriage and for that matter, the fate of educated married women. Education is therefore seen as a contributory factor to the oppression of the African women.

Ama Ata Aidoo indicates that frustrations in marriage are not peculiar to one woman. She shows this by presenting Opokuya and Fusena who are also literate African married women and also experience similar problems. However, these two women are presented in the novel as foils to enable the audience see the strengths and weaknesses of Esi, the main character. But contrary to Esi who is not prepared to surrender to the traditional systems that adversely affect her progress; Opokuya is prepared to do anything to make her marriage work. She advises Esi that "Our people have said that for any marriage to work, one party has to be a fool. In the case of Opokuya, she is prepared to be the fool because, she is the woman" (p. 48). Although Opokuya is a literate African woman like Esi, she does all the traditional duties that marriage assigns her as a wife in addition to her career as a nurse. Unfortunately for Opokuya, her husband, Kubi forgets that she is also a government employee. Kubi does not stay at home to either assist her in doing her household work or keep her company. Moreover, Kubi is not prepared to allow Opokuya use his car that will facilitate her movement to and from the hospital. As she runs the affairs of the home in addition to her official work, she thinks she has more need of the car to make her more mobile. Kubi's worry on the other hand is that, since he earns allowances for maintenance of the car, he must use it. For instance, Cousins (2004) contrasts the characters of Esi and Opokuya thus:

Opokuya is labeled a traditional woman who puts caring for her family first, fitting her career round this; Esi kicks against 'tradition', blatantly prioritizing her career over traditional wifely duties. Yet neither woman finds her position satisfactory. Whilst Esi admires Opokuya's 'full time life', Opokuya is jealous of 'Esi's freedom of movement' (p. 105).

Society thinks that because of the role that marriage assigns women, the woman must always play the fool. Opokuya is the easy going type of literate African woman who sees her marriage as a good one. She tolerates her husband's reluctance to help her in any way with household chores as she is also a government employee, a professional nurse and a midwife. She also does not complain about her husband's lateness to the house after work. Unlike Esi, who decides on her own to use contraceptives to plan her family, when Opokuya decides to have four children she discusses it with her husband. It can therefore be argued that, in spite of Opokuya's literacy and career that make her economically sound, she does everything possible to accommodate the husband's unco-operative attitude in order to maintain her marriage because she needs a companion whom she can rely on in times of need.

Fusena is the third literate African married woman who faces marital problems in Aidoo's *Changes*. She meets Ali while they are both teachers in Tamale. Both of them are Muslims from the northern part of Ghana. They become attracted to each other and decide to marry because of their mutual love and respect for each other.

While Ali continues his formal education and his career in England, Fusena is made to abandon her formal education and career so as to be able to fulfil her role as a wife and a mother. Ali, her husband objects to her desire to pursue her career as a teacher and instead gives her a kiosk to run in Accra, which is not the career she had chosen and been educated to pursue. Moreover, Ali takes Esi, who has higher education than Fusena, as his second wife without even seeking the consent of Fusena. The fact that Esi's educational background is higher than hers makes Fusena feel cheated and she is deeply hurt because it is this same Ali, who stops her from pursuing her education to a higher level and also makes her forget about her career of becoming a professional teacher. Some of the older women she complains to are themselves second, third and fourth wives and those who are first wives are valued and respected in their Muslim community because polygamy is their tradition (p.104). Nonetheless, Fusena hides her anger and frustration on the situation and conforms to the role expected of her as a wife and mother, thereby sacrificing her ambitions and independence for marital security.

Both Fusena and Esi never achieve happiness or fulfillment in their marriages to Ali. By this, Aidoo seems to suggest indirectly that the position of women is such that emotional or psychological fulfilment and total independence is impossible in marriage no matter the level of their education and status in the society because the Ghanaian society is still dominated by men who refuse to compromise their positions with the ambition and aspirations of the new women.

One can state that Ama Ata Aidoo sees formal education as a tool for "emancipation" of the African woman as it enables her to assert her ambition as Esi's literacy equips her with a good career that somewhat liberates her from male subjugation since she is financially independent. For this reason, she thinks she is not bound by one decision and that she can change at anytime if any decision she takes does not favour her. In spite of all the good education, she never sees happiness in any of her marriages. She becomes a victim of unsuccessful marriages because she thinks Oko takes too much of her time and Ali is never at home to give her companionship and security that she expects in the relationship. On the other hand, in spite of her education, Opokuya with four growing children and many ethnic differences between her and her husband, she decides that her marital home is all that she has and does everything to make her marriage work. Despite all the problems Opokuya goes through, she is not assertive as a typical intellectual woman but endures her problems because she wants to save her marriage. Opokuya's strategy seems to be effective in the Ghanaian cultural setting because Fusena adopts a similar method to maintain her marriage with Ali by keeping mute over issues that bother her. Ama

Ata Aidoo therefore uses her novel to demonstrate how the educated and economically secured woman is constrained by marital roles that prevent the woman from enjoying her marriage because the Ghanaian society does not favour such a freedom.

5. Summary of Ideas Expressed in Ama Ata Aidoo's Recent Novels

In Ama Ata Aidoo's first novel *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977), she succeeds in presenting to the world the benefits of formal education to the woman in contemporary Ghana. The heroine, Sissie's acquisition of formal education enables her get a scholarship to travel to Europe which her colleagues see as a great achievement as it boosts her image in the society. Sissie's literacy makes her very broadminded and analytical on issues concerning Africans in the diaspora and also protests against maltreatments that are meted out to them. She also disapproves of the behaviour of the "been tos" who return home to take advantage of the privilege they enjoy in the Ghanaian society. Furthermore, Sissie's education makes her take concrete decisions on matters that affect her life as she thoroughly reflects on the criticisms that her Bavarian neighbours make about her friendship with Marija Sommer, a German woman she meets and consequently abandons.

In spite of Sissie's acquisition of formal education which makes her broadminded and analytical, her own people desert her and so makes it difficult for her to get a partner to call a husband with whom she will share her views, happiness as well as worries. In London, many of her African fellows turned away from her because of her constant nagging, criticisms and attacks even on peoples' appearances. Therefore, the education that makes Sissie so bold, outspoken and critical on the behaviour of her fellow Africans, disappointingly, makes her become a lonely woman in her sojourn in United Kingdom. Sissie's critical nature does not make her well integrated with the Africans in Europe.

In Ama Ata Aidoo's second novel, *Changes* (1999), formal education somehow enables the African woman acquire a career; it therefore becomes a tool of "emancipation" from male subjugation and financial reliance. This notwithstanding, the women characters are not able to assert their full independence when it comes to marriage as a social institution where male sovereignty holds sway. The three main women characters of Esi, Opokuya and Fusena do not enjoy their marriages because marriage as a traditional institution does not give them the chance to assert themselves.

Esi, the heroine in *Changes* has to leave her first husband, Oko because she thinks the husband demands too much from her than she can offer. Unfortunately, Ali whom Esi goes to marry later on does not keep her company, so Esi ends the relationship with him. Ama Ata Aidoo's presentation of Esi in this manner is ironical because the man whom she goes to marry is not even there for her at all.

Similarly, Fusena who is trained as a teacher is neither allowed to practise her career as a teacher nor allowed to further her education. Fusena becomes so much hurt when Ali, who prevents her from pursuing further education, goes to marry Esi who has continued her formal education to the postgraduate level. Opokuya who is a nurse has to fulfil all her responsibilities as a wife, as well as working at the hospital. Apart from not helping Opokuya in her household work, her husband, Kubi is not prepared to surrender his car to run her errands to support the family.

From the discussion so far done, one sees that formal education has warped the perception of the literate African women's cultural milieu. For African literate women to have successful marriage, they must be less outspoken and tolerant, especially to masculine views and more importantly, African literate married women must abide by African marriage traditions than alien ones which tend to be impracticable in African setting.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, one can state that Ama Ata Aidoo portrays in her works that the African woman's acquisition of formal education does not bring about any change in what is expected of her in the marital home. It rather frustrates and compounds her situation; since she confuses herself with the culture of the colonial master without considering that she is an African wife and a woman in general. According to Ama Ata Aidoo, so long as African men keep to their traditional attitudes and refuse to side with the new woman formal education brings about in the post colonial era; the education that the woman acquires relatively becomes a disincentive in marriage. Therefore, all African literate married women should be less critical, submissive and must endeavour to conform to marital traditions of Africa than making claims of rights that are foreign and do not exist in their cultural milieu.

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