



Research Paper

Manifestation of Social Exclusion from Caste to Colonialism: A Comparative Study of Sharankumar Limbale's *the Outcaste* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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Abstract

The current research paper investigates social exclusion in relation to Nigerian author Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Marathi author Sharankumar Limbale's *The Outcaste* (Akkarmashi). While Achebe's book reveals the upheaval of Igbo social, cultural, and political life under European colonialism, Limbale's autobiographical story unleashes the structural brutality of caste in Indian culture. The study makes the case that, while being historically distinct systems of dominance, caste and colonialism both result in forms of marginalisation, cultural relocation, othering, and shattered identity. The study looks at caste-based shame, economic hardship, colonial cultural influence, religious change, and the loss of social autonomy using postcolonial theory and subaltern studies. It investigates further into how Achebe and Limbale subvert prevailing portrayals by centring disadvantaged perspectives in literary discourse. The comparison shows how both books serve as counter-narratives that challenge established power structures and recover the agency, history, and dignity of marginalised populations.

Keywords: Caste; Colonialism; Social Exclusion; Othering; Dalit Literature; African Literature; Postcolonialism; Subalternity; Identity; Resistance

I. Introduction

Literature created by cultural and historical subaltern communities provides a comprehensive detail of study to understanding the relationship between power, identity, and social exclusion. Dominant social systems have portrayed certain people and communities as inferior, impure, uncivilised, or outside the bounds of social belonging in a variety of historical and geographical situations. Two important literary depictions of such isolation are found in *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and *The Outcaste* (Akkarmashi) by Sharankumar Limbale. The books' depictions of social hierarchy, cultural displacement, identity, and resistance allow for fruitful comparisons despite their disparate historical contexts.

The Outcaste, a Dalit autobiographical story by Limbale, examines the agonising experience of growing up in a caste-based society. Poverty, caste stigma, and issues of parenthood and belonging exacerbate the narrator's situation. His story illustrates how caste functions not only via official organisations but also through commonplace customs. Social exclusion affects how people are treated, where they live, what they do for a living, and whether they are accepted as full members of society.

In contrast, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* explores Igbo civilisation both prior to and during European colonial occupation. Before showing the entrance and spread of Christianity and colonial rule, the novel first illustrates the complexity of Igbo cultural, religious, political, and economic life. Colonial depictions of Africa as a continent devoid of civilisation and history are contested by Achebe's account. Indigenous institutions face increasing challenges as colonialism grows, leading to political and cultural disintegration.

Comparing these pieces shouldn't imply that colonialism and caste are the same thing. In the Indian subcontinent, caste has a lengthy and complicated history that defies easy categorisation as a by-product of European colonisation. Similar to this, European political conquest and the reconstruction of native civilisations were aspects of colonialism in Africa. Instead, the importance of comparison resides in analysing how various

power structures lead to social exclusion and how literature gives excluded populations a way to regain agency and voice.

II. Theoretical Structure: Othering and Social Exclusion

A suitable theoretical framework for analysing both texts is provided by the idea of “othering.” *Orientalism* (1978) by Edward Said shows how colonial rhetoric portrayed the East as essentially inferior to and distinct from the West. The “Other” is not just someone who is different; rather, difference is structured by power and knowledge systems. The dominating group portrays the other as inferior and defines itself as normal.

In a similar vein, Homi K. Bhabha (1994) investigates how colonial identity is produced through representation, ambivalence, and difference. Stereotypes that support dominance are used in colonial discourse to construct the colonised person. The question of whether marginalised persons can access systems of representation controlled by dominant groups is further raised by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s (1988) study of the subaltern.

Although caste should not be reduced to a colonial category, these concepts can also be applied to caste literature. The Dalit experience serves as an example of how social hierarchy can perpetually paint some communities as inferior. Caste serves as a means of social identity inheritance and reproduction in *The Outcaste*. In *Things Fall Apart*, colonialism produces a political and cultural hierarchy between the coloniser and the colonised. Thus, both texts allow us to study how social exclusion is formed through institutions that define who belongs to the centre and who remains at the periphery.

III. Caste and Being an Outcaste: An Overview

A compelling description of caste-based exclusion may be found in Limbale’s *The Outcaste*. The main issue of belonging is established by the title alone. Due to the intersections of caste, poverty, and family circumstances that prevent him from having a permanent identity, the narrator holds an unclear social position. In the literature, caste discrimination is not limited to personal prejudice. It is a part of social structures. Access to resources, education, social connections, and dignity are all influenced by caste. As a result, the Dalit topic is both literally and figuratively excluded.

The connection between caste and the body is one of the most important aspects in Limbale’s story. Dalit bodies have always been associated with ideas of contamination and cleanliness. Caste distinctions regulate physical proximity, food, occupation, and place of dwelling. As a result, caste is encountered in daily life. A broader social framework is reflected in the humiliation of the individual. This exclusion is exacerbated by poverty. Caste discrimination and economic hardship are mutually reinforcing. After being denied opportunities, the marginalised person is held accountable for having a lower social status. By portraying poverty as a component of a system of social exclusion rather than as an individual failure, Limbale reveals this circular structure of inequality.

The autobiographical form is important in and of itself. Limbale opposes the conventional literary inclination to depict Dalits from the viewpoint of socially dominant groups by sharing his own experience. His story turns human pain into a critique of society. As a result, the personal narrative serves as evidence of a larger historical event.

IV. *Things Fall Apart*: Colonialism and Cultural Displacement

Things Fall Apart by Achebe explores colonial disruption, whereas *The Outcaste* concentrates on caste-based exclusion. Because Achebe presents readers with Igbo life before to the establishment of colonial dominance, the novel's opening portions are especially significant. Achebe depicts a society with its own governmental systems, religious convictions, farming methods, familial ties, and justice systems. Colonial presumptions about African society are strongly challenged by this portrayal. Africa is portrayed as a historically formed cultural realm rather than as a blank canvas awaiting European civilisation.

This world is gradually changed by the entrance of European missionaries. Some members of the community, notably those who feel excluded by the current social institutions, are drawn to Christianity because it provides an alternative belief system. Achebe takes a complicated approach to this process. Colonialism takes use of the conflicts and divisions that exist inside indigenous society in addition to imposing itself through external force.

The transition is accelerated by the installation of colonial government. As foreign legal and governmental institutions gain clout, indigenous political authority is undermined. Therefore, the colonial system results in both political dominance and cultural and epistemic displacement.

This fragmentation is symbolically captured in the title *Things Fall Apart*. Both the person and the group are “falling apart.” The shifting social structure that has given Okonkwo his identity causes him to go

through a crisis. The community itself becomes split between those who support and oppose the new political and religious systems. Thus, Achebe shows that colonialism has an impact beyond geography. It changes systems of identity, authority, knowledge, and belief.

V. The Construction of the Other and Social Exclusion

The way the two texts depict the “Other” is where they most closely relate to one another. Caste hierarchy places Limbale’s Dalit subject outside of the socially privileged center. Through European colonial discourse and institutions, Achebe’s African subjects are positioned as colonised Others.

Othering is mostly a part of the social system in *The Outcaste*. Dalits are viewed as socially inferior by the prevailing caste system. In *Things Fall Apart*, othering is associated with an outside colonial force that uses European classifications to describe African society.

As a result, the mechanisms are different. Caste functions through social division, ritual hierarchy, and inherited rank. Conquest, governance, Christianity, education, and knowledge systems are all ways that colonialism functions. However, a person’s feeling of dignity and belonging is impacted by both systems. Additionally, the contrast shows that exclusion is more than just physical. It is both epistemological and psychological. Because dominant organisations constantly define what is human and respectable, the oppressed subject may start to doubt who they are.

While Okonkwo faces the disintegration of the cultural order that has allowed him to understand himself, Limbale’s narrator grapples with issues of belonging. Although their experiences differ, both novels highlight the psychological effects of residing in societies that are experiencing or creating severe social exclusion.

VI. Cultural Displacement, Identity, and Community

Another significant issue that Limbale and Achebe have in common is identity. Caste and social legitimacy issues shatter identity in *The Outcaste*. The categories that society imposes define the narrator’s existence. As a result, he is fighting to create an identity that goes beyond the labels that have been placed on him.

Okonkwo in Achebe’s novel faces a distinct kind of identity dilemma. His identity is strongly associated with traditional Igbo ideals, particularly social authority, masculinity, and achievement. The foundations Okonkwo has built himself upon become unsustainable when colonisation change the village.

Cultural displacement also affects the Igbo community collectively. Families and communities become divided when Christianity arrives. Indigenous systems of meaning lose institutional power as traditional authority is increasingly contested.

Thus, the two pieces demonstrate how identity may be shattered by cultural dominance and social marginalisation. Additionally, they show that identity is not just personal; it is shaped by social recognition, community, history, language, and cultural traditions.

VII. Literature as Resistance

The use of literature to subvert prevailing stereotypes is arguably the most notable resemblance between Achebe and Limbale. The Dalit experience is directly expressed in literature through Limbale’s autobiographical story. Hunger, poverty, shame, and isolation become acceptable literary themes. His writing questions literary conventions that disregarded Dalit perspectives.

In a similar vein, Achebe questions colonial depictions of Africa. He gives the Igbo people, who were frequently portrayed in colonial literature as savage or ahistorical, historical depth and cultural richness by depicting their civilisation before to colonial interference. As a result, both authors participate in a counter-representation process. They forbid dominant entities from having the last say on what their communities mean. This is especially crucial when it comes to postcolonial studies. In addition to political opposition, control over representation also plays a role in the fight against dominance. Narrating one’s own history is a challenge to the authority of those who have historically told it from the outside.

This topic is further clarified by Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s (1986) discussion of language and cultural control. Language influences how communities perceive themselves and carries cultural memory. A colonial language can be adopted and transformed for African self-representation, as seen by Achebe’s use of English to convey Igbo reality. Similar to this, Limbale’s Dalit literary intervention uses literary language as a means of expressing realities that are not included in prevailing literary traditions.

VIII. Conclusion

A comparison of *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and *The Outcaste* by Sharankumar Limbale shows how historically distinct power structures can give rise to social exclusion. Achebe illustrates the

political, cultural, and intellectual upheaval brought about by European colonialism, whereas Limbale reveals the systemic and daily cruelty of caste.

It is important to distinguish between the two systems. Colonialism and caste have distinct institutional forms, mechanisms, and histories. However, because both create barriers between those in positions of social power and those who are marginalised, they may both be examined using the more general idea of othering.

The comparison highlights the significance of representation, identity, and dignity. Achebe's characters face a colonial system that undermines indigenous cultural and political authority, while Limbale's Dalit narrator fights against a caste structure that prevents full social belonging. Exclusion has both material and psychological repercussions in both texts.

Most significantly, both writers use literature as a tool for resistance. *Things Fall Apart* questions colonial portrayals by centring the story around Igbo history and culture, while *The Outcaste* introduces Dalit experience from the social periphery into literary discourse. Their writings show how literature may serve as a counternarrative that helps marginalised groups recover their identity, history, and agency.

Therefore, the shift "from caste to colonialism" does not imply that these systems are the same. Instead, it offers a comparative framework for comprehending how various power structures create otherness, control belonging, and mould human identity and how literature can subvert these structures by reclaiming representation and voice.

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