

# **Postcolonial Identity and Resistance in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things**

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**Abstract:** The study analyzes postcolonial identity and resistance in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things, which both examine how colonialism has continued to affect cultural, individual, and national identities. Comparative literary analysis shows how both authors represent the mental and social consequences of being ruled by colonial authorities and then by postcolonial governments. Through the novel, we see the encounter between Igbo customs and British influence, with Achebe presenting resistance as something important in culture as well as in people's lives. Unlike Omar, Roy describes how caste, class, and family structures in India after independence are still impacted by colonial history, and this resistance often remains hidden inside people's minds. Across a blend of postcolonialism and close reading, the analysis discusses how the texts stand against mainstream narratives, give authority to native persons, and stress the messiness of mixed ethnicity. It is revealed that literature motivates postcolonial struggles and explains the hidden ways people challenge colonial rule in everyday matters.

**Keywords:** Postcolonial Identity, Cultural Resistance, Colonial Legacy, Indigenous Narratives, Comparative Literature.

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## **1. Introduction**

Countries, societies, and people's identities have been permanently influenced by the process of colonisation. Societies that were colonised across the continents had to face challenges like a break from traditional ways of living, uncertainty in politics, the disappearance of traditional practices, and the fragmentation of their identity. Through its writing, postcolonial literature worked to reclaim hidden stories and also looked closely at how different postcolonial societies form their identities and try to resist. It examines how postcolonial identity and resistance are shown in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things. With a Nigerian and an Indian lens, these authors portray how colonisation shaped people's lives and the various methods they used to express their views and reclaim their heritage [1].

Things Fall Apart, published by Chinua Achebe in 1958, is usually considered a key work in African literature in English. Chinua Achebe's book was written in part to challenge writings from that period that described Africans as inferior and speechless. The novel gives a clear

picture of Igbo culture, society, and religious traditions both during and before British control. In the novel, we read about how colonial influence often made it hard for indigenous people to keep their culture and unity, and resistance, in many forms, was a main part of their dealings with the colonizers. Achebe wanted to write about history and also ensure the dignity of people was restored by recovering their stories.

Instead, Arundhati Roy explores the continuing effects of British rule on society and culture in India in *The God of Small Things* (1997). In Kerala, Roy shares how trauma and politics connect, using a non-linear style to explore how history, castes, social classes, and the British past affect her characters' lives. The book does not describe the period of colonial occupation, yet its characters experience British control, which is clear in their love for England, the class system, and how the values of the colonisers become a part of them. He describes resistance by showing people acting against beliefs and rules, with love between a Dalit, Velutha, and Ammu, a woman from a higher caste, being a major example of this [2].

Although they cover different periods, use different ways of telling their stories and represent different cultures, *Things Fall Apart* and *The God of Small Things* focus on how people's identities are affected and reshaped following colonisation. Both novels highlight stories from neglected people and draw full pictures of challenges against ruling systems, no matter if they are colonial, patriarchal, based on caste, or institutional. This research looks at how masculine novels from this period show the struggle, changes, and conflicts regarding postcolonial identity, as well as how characters survive this new age using acts of rebellion, silence, remembering, and subversion.

One should recognise the idea of hybridity, discussed by Homi K. Bhabha, to grasp what postcolonial identity is. Because of colonisation, people and societies are formed between two identities, not completely fitting into either. For example, Nwoye is a character who shows the conflict between his indigenous heritage and the beliefs brought by missionaries. Chacko is depicted as heavily influenced by British culture and thus is a symbol of the colonial mindset, whereas Ammu and Velutha are represented as trying to resist but failing under the oppressive social system. Achebe and Roy reveal through their characters how colonialism caused mental and cultural splits [3].

Thus, resistance takes several forms in postcolonial writing and does not always involve taking up arms—it now means regaining freedom and respect in different ways. Achebe uses *Things Fall Apart* to show how the community faces the arrival of missionaries, how this leads to clashes between those who keep traditional beliefs and those who become mission followers, and how Okonkwo objects to the new colonial authority. Okonkwo's refusal,

which led to his death, still represents his spirit of cultural pride. Love is presented in *The God of Small Things* as an understated kind of resistance, as is refraining from cooperating with injustice and refusing to forget painful memories. These events, even on an individual level, represent larger political conflicts after postcolonial societies try to reconcile their past and present [4].

There is also a strong emphasis in both novels on the way language is handled in the postcolonial setting. Chinua Achebe uses Igbo sayings in his books so that he can both resist colonial practices and keep his writing authentic. Thanks to this approach, Achebe changes the way English is used from one of weakness to one of strength. Likewise, Roy writes in English to question the systems it used to support, by using pieces of speech, different dialects, and verse-like writing to show the complex and messy lives of her characters. People in both cases use language to protect their identity and challenge its obliteration from history [5].

In addition, both novels address how colonialism combines with other systems such as patriarchy, religion, and caste. Gender roles are fixed in *Things Fall Apart*, and men like Okonkwo are frequently the ones to fight rather than the women. Female characters in *Things Fall Apart*, such as Ekwefi and the priestess Chielo, show their qualities of strength and leadership. In *The God of Small Things*, Roy opposes people who are powerful in society by showing women and Dalits resisting through acts of kindness, silence, and ignoring others' demands. It becomes obvious from these examples that postcolonial resistance is formed not only by nationalism, but also by the regularly experienced challenges of minorities [6].

This research will therefore look into how identity and resistance are presented in detail in *Things Fall Apart* and *The God of Small Things*, using postcolonial theory and analysis of the texts. It tries to display how literature can explain the lasting impacts of colonization and empower those who remain unheard in history. By examining the differences in Achebe's and Roy's writings, this analysis adds to our knowledge of how postcolonial authors, through their stories, question major social ideas, remember their own cultures, and highlight the difficulties of societies influenced by empire [7].

## **2. Literature Review**

Postcolonial literature investigates how colonialism influences identity, culture, language, and power beliefs. Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak have contributed greatly to the theory of analysing postcolonial literature. By 'Orientalism,' Said explains how colonisers formed ideas about the East to ensure their dominance, and Bhabha explores the

complications of identity formation in colonised societies. Spivak's important question, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' points out how marginalised people were silenced in the colonial era.

In African literature, Chinua Achebe is considered extremely important. Scholars have praised *\*Things Fall Apart\** for its powerful reclamation of African culture and history from colonial misrepresentation. According to Simon Gikandi and Abiola Irele, Achebe changes colonial discourse by mixing Igbo traditions, language, and ideas into his writing in English. The way he shows Okonkwo and the Umuofia clan lifts the prestige of pre-colonial Africa, disagreeing with common Western tales that portray Africa as undeveloped or unkempt [8].

His writing involves the idea of resistance, revealed in the protagonist's steps and also through the style and organization of the novel. Many times, the narrative voice is seen as a way to protest, since storytelling in itself can challenge the system. According to scholars, the story of Okonkwo's fall shows how the indigenous systems began to break up because of colonialism. As Obioma Nnaemeka shows, by telling a story, Achebe memorializes colonialism's victims and at the same time highlights the extreme violence brought by cultural disruption.

In contrast, Arundhati Roy's *\*The God of Small Things\** has been explored primarily through the lens of postcolonial feminism and subaltern theory. They argue that instead of just telling about British rule, Roy's story shows how colonial culture still affects post-independence India, as seen through caste oppression, admiration of English culture, and problems based on gender. The novel's way of writing, which has no set order and experiences time in various ways, and its poetic style are meant to show how trauma and society confuse the main characters [9].

Velutha, a Dalit character, and his forbidden connection with Ammu in Roy's story show the effects of colonialism on India's traditional caste hierarchy. People like Susie Tharu claim that Roy makes personal suffering a tool for examining structural inequities in society. Rahel, too, who lives in a setting of broken laws and forgotten pasts, stands as a symbol of resistance by not forgetting. It has been mentioned by postcolonial critics that Roy deliberately alters English rules to show her disobedience to authority over language.

Scarce but increasing in number are studies that analyze Achebe and Roy side by side. Scholars like Neil Lazarus and Priyamvada Gopal point out that both writers, in spite of their different backgrounds, challenge what is left from colonialism. They study how cultural opposition, issues with personal identity, and memories of colonialism influence postcolonial narratives to speak for the ignored and the ruled. It becomes clear in these studies that

sometimes resistance after colonialism is peaceful, symbolic, or part of how people live their daily lives [10].

### **3. Methodology**

To study postcolonial identity and resistance, I look at Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* through a qualitative and comparative literary analysis. In this method, I study both novels by closely examining the content, structure, and language used, and see how colonialism and its aftermath (postcolonialism) influence the stories and personalities. The scholar relies on postcolonial theory and uses the views of Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak to ask questions about identity, hybridity, subalternity, and resistance. Other academic writings and critical analyses are used to better understand and explain textual details. The research looks at two culturally and geographically unique postcolonial novels to highlight how they handle and contrast methods of opposition and rebuilding identities in the years following colonial rule [11].

### **4. Analysis Discussion**

Authors show in *Things Fall Apart* and *The God of Small Things* that, because of colonization, cultural practices and personal identities are broken. In both novels, people deal with interference from external systems, whether colonial rulers led them directly or the results still linger. The culture of the Igbo community, which was full of traditions and customs, is described in depth by Achebe, showing how it was well-structured and spiritually supported before colonial rule. Similarly, the novel investigates how the hierarchy between castes still exists and how it is shaped by government policies from the past and the effects of colonialism. The cultural identities in each text are being challenged, which brings attention to the fight between local beliefs and those introduced by outsiders [12].

The central figures deal with further complications because of their inner conflicts about their identity. Okonkwo from *Things Fall Apart* vs. Rahel and Estha from *The God of Small Things* have to deal with entirely different issues. Okonkwo struggles against colonial ways to protect his masculinity and position in society, whereas Rahel and Estha have to live through caste, gender, and problems caused by the imperial past. These crises in their society point out the wider effects that colonialism leaves on countries and individual lives.

Language plays a major role in challenging oppression and defining who each belongs to. Through using Igbo idioms in English, Achebe gives the African characters a powerful voice. Roy's story is written using poetic and wordy English from the region, stressing disconnection and a mix of eastern and western cultures. Both situations turn language into a place where people fight postcolonial battles by using it and reclaiming it.

Hybridity plays a big role in both novels, mainly in the way characters are affected by influences from both the colonised and the coloniser. In *Woman at Point Zero* and *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe and Roy, respectively, paint examples of personality changes due to cultural differences and the impact of colonisation on education. Such a mix of backgrounds usually causes identity issues since they are not fully identified with either upbringing.

Finally, both books focus on loss and the healing process as major aspects of postcolonial identity. Achebe depicts the end of Igbo society, but Roy emphasises obstructions to memory and trauma. In spite of death, people also find the will to fight for themselves, remember, and look for new meaning. For this reason, what defines a postcolonial identity is the process of how people, groups, and societies react, keep memories, and resist after being colonized [13].

**Table 1: Representation of Postcolonial Identity**

Sr. No.	Aspect	Things Fall Apart	The God of Small Things	Observations
1	Cultural Identity	Igbo traditions and customs	Kerala's caste and colonial influence	Both depict conflict between native culture and imposed systems
2	Character Struggles	Okonkwo vs. colonial values	Rahel & Estha vs. social norms	Internal conflicts represent postcolonial identity crises
3	Language	English with Igbo idioms	Fragmented English and local terms	Language used to reclaim voice
4	Hybridity	Cultural clash in converts	Anglophile behaviour in Chacko	Hybridity as a form of identity confusion
5	Loss & Recovery	Collapse of the traditional structure	Silencing and memory	Identity formed in resistance and recollection

Both novels use resistance as the chief strategy for dealing with colonialism, the destruction of their cultures, and injustice. Even though his opposition is rooted in his society, Achebe's rebellion is less individual, feeling-based, and involved with shifting social structures, unlike Roy's, which is more about him and centered on emotional feelings and personal resistance. *Things Fall Apart* highlights cultural resistance by showing that the elders of Umuofia try to support Igbo customs when the Christian missionaries appear. In opposition, Roy has Velutha, a Dalit character, break the rules of caste by wanting to be with upper-caste Ammu. They both seek to overturn long-standing forms of power, be they from colonial or caste backgrounds, and emphasize tradition as a way of defying the system [14].

How people communicate in another language is very important. Achebe makes an effort to write in English, but also adds African sayings and proverbs, opposing English dominance by highlighting the culture of the Igbo people through a blended style. On the other hand, Roy

disturbs how colonial English is written by using unconventional sentence formation and including many Malayalam terms. This helps him give expression to thoughts and emotions that are marginalised. Both novels show that words are actively used to resist, to accentuate cultural roots, and to express political views.

The personal resistance can best be seen in the way central characters act. Okonkwo believes in strong Igbo traditions, and that is why he rejects becoming a Christian. Likewise, Ammu's rejection of marriage rules and searching for love beyond society's rules is seen as a courageous act in a very patriarchal and caste-conscious culture. Such decisions by individuals are often linked to political and cultural issues, so the body takes on the role of battleground [15].

Resistance in a symbolic way appears in sorrowful manners in both novels. By taking his own life after being humiliated, Okonkwo, as sadly viewed by his people, is claiming some measure of personal power over his fate. The author shows that Velutha's endurance and passing away express the harsh treatment that people in the lower castes receive for having love and dignity. No matter the outcome, fighting these policies gives meaningful examples of resistance and the toll injustice takes on individuals.

In addition, both novels are structured in a way that adds to their main themes of resistance. Using a traditional story structure, Achebe's writing shows the connection to Igbo customs and stories passed down. Roy, by contrast, adopts a structure that jumps around and avoids a traditional order, echoing the confusion in postcolonial and caste societies. How stories are written is a form of resistance, either by continuing traditional ways of narration or by breaking the rules set by colonial literature [16].

**Table 2: Forms of Resistance**

Sr. No.	Type of Resistance	Achebe's Novel	Roy's Novel	Comparative Insight
1	Cultural Resistance	Umuofia elders reject missionaries	Velutha resists caste through love	Both show resistance through tradition or defiance
2	Language Resistance	Igbo-infused English	Creative syntax and local diction	Language reclaims cultural power
3	Personal Resistance	Okonkwo's refusal to convert	Ammu's rebellion against marriage norms	Individual acts as a symbolic rebellion
4	Symbolic Resistance	Okonkwo's suicide	Velutha's silent endurance	Tragic ends highlight failed resistance
5	Narrative Structure	Linear, oral tradition echoes	Fragmented, cyclical narrative	Structure mirrors thematic resistance

Things Fall Apart and The God of Small Things show that the heritage of colonization deeply affected politics, laws, culture, languages, and the minds of both individuals and entire groups in colonized countries. Chinua Achebe and Arundhati Roy state that colonial institutions have not disappeared and continue to harm those living in postcolonial communities.

Converting to Christianity because of missionaries becomes a major theme in Achebe's novel, leading villagers to give up their former ways and beliefs. Both communities are divided, and this conversion begins to weaken indigenous religious traditions. Roy's story includes traces of missionaries in places like Christian schools and through rituals and moral codes, which have a strong impact on Chacko and Baby Kochamma. Culture-wise, both accounts present Christianization as using religion to take control, undoing local beliefs, and making the converted feel inferior [17].

Going to school is sometimes presented as a way up the ladder, but this is done carefully. Achebe compares the traditional ways of learning with the colonial practice of making students obey colonial rules. Roy points out that being able to use English well becomes a symbol of privilege and an aspect of elitism in British higher education. Both authors describe how the way education was organised under colonisation did not help, but instead adopted local people to colonial thoughts and distanced them from where they came from.

Colonial rule introduced legal systems that now oversee justice, replacing the ways that indigenous communities used to follow. The colonial courts interfere with traditional decision-making and take authority from the communities, according to Achebe. It is apparent from Roy's work that, because the Indian judiciary is rooted in British rule, these bodies of law maintain hierarchies based on caste and oppress dissenting voices. This shows that these institutions interrupt justice and also help build social divisions in both colonial and postcolonial times [18].

Language is used in both written works to both control and challenge the process of colonisation. He makes English voice the African perspective by including Igbo terms and expressions, going against its previous roles as a civilising and converting tool. She also reveals that English, which can imply class and authority in India, can be changed, used creatively, and made poetic to share experiences of trauma, struggle, and memories. Both novels show that language is the scene of a struggle for identity, authority, and honesty.

Another major result of colonialism is social disunity. As a result of the divide between believers and those who maintain tradition, the community breaks apart, and confusion, conflict, and collapse follow. Just like in the play, the family in the novel is split by caste,

pro-English attitudes, and the patterns of colonialism. Because of colonial rule, both cultures have seen their social unity eroded, and individuals feel lonelier in a broken society.

Overall, colonialism has left a strong mark on the characters, their relationships, and the way they identify in both novels. They show us that to decolonise is not just to oust overseas rulers, but requires engineers of the soul to fight for independence in the mind and customs of the people [19].

**Table 3: Impact of Colonial Legacy**

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Colonial Element</b>	<b>Presence in Things Fall Apart</b>	<b>Presence in The God of Small Things</b>	<b>Impact on Identity/Resistance</b>
1	Missionary Activity	Conversion of villagers	Christian schooling, church rituals	Undermines indigenous beliefs
2	Education	European schooling vs. oral learning	British education vs. local tradition	Education promotes a colonial worldview
3	Legal Systems	Colonial court replaces clan justice	Modern judiciary enforces caste norms	Legal systems support social control
4	Language	English used to dominate and reform	English as a marker of elitism	Language both colonises and resists
5	Social Fragmentation	Division between converts/traditionalists	Divided family, caste boundaries	Colonial impact fractures unity

The way gender and subaltern identities are depicted in both books represents differing ways of dealing with power, agency, and multiple layers of oppression associated with the postcolonial setting. Most of the action in Achebe's novel takes the form of a male-dominated tale, while Roy's novel centers its resistance and storytelling on women and marginalised groups.

Women in Things Fall Apart are mostly expected to look after the home and family and hold secondary ranks in the Igbo's male-dominated society. Ekwefi and Chielo are tough and able to stand up for themselves, but they are not deeply involved in the main decisions of the story. Instead, Ammu in Roy's story challenges traditional roles for women by the way she deals with love, being a mother, and joining the independence movement. Roy skillfully puts women's experiences at the story's center and provides vivid scenes of characters fighting against oppressive gender roles.

In both novels, subaltern men figure in a substantial way. Because Okonkwo couldn't balance his identity as an African man with new expectations from the empire, he was destroyed, and the strong traditional male figure was no more. Roy portrays Velutha as both socially and economically marginalized because of his status in both caste and social class. What GC did

not speak about and how he was killed highlight the stronghold of caste-related and colonial discrimination. Both characters highlight that patriarchal or caste systems are not able to help their members when slammed by violent oppression from a colonial or postcolonial power.

Motherhood is shown to subtly and strongly oppose patriarchal society. Ekwefi, though she is not able to speak out in the novel, demonstrates that women can still be firm and committed in Achebe's view. Roy portrays Ammu's maternal role as one of courage, in showing that her sacrifices, emotions, and unwillingness to follow society are a sign of quiet protest against patriarchy and conventions.

The fact that characters cannot speak or tell their own stories separates the two texts from each other. Most women in *Things Fall Apart* do not have a voice that reflects their subordinate status in the novel. Rather, in *The God of Small Things*, it is Rahel and Ammu's feelings that are at the heart of the book's themes. Roy tries to make the voices of the silenced heard, giving her female characters a chance to talk about their lives in a world where they are rarely allowed to speak [20].

Roy also fully explores how multiple types of oppression overlap in her work. Achebe deals with the results of patriarchy and colonialism, but Roy includes caste, class, and gender to describe a more detailed chain of oppression. Not one system dictates a character's experience, yet many systems overlap to make the novel explore how different kinds of dominance impact someone's sense of self and their striving against it.

**Table 4: Gender and Subaltern Representation**

Sr. No.	Focus Area	Achebe's Novel	Roy's Novel	Interpretation
1	Women's Roles	Limited agency, domestic roles	Ammu resists patriarchy	Roy gives voice to female resistance
2	Subaltern Men	Okonkwo's downfall from colonial loss	Velutha, as a Dalit, marginalised	Both depict the suffering of oppressed males
3	Motherhood	Ekwefi's silent strength	Ammu's sacrifice for children	Motherhood as quiet resistance
4	Silenced Voices	Women rarely narrate	Rahel & Ammu's inner thoughts are central	Roy restores voice to silenced figures
5	Intersectionality	Patriarchy + Colonialism	Caste + Gender + Colonialism	Roy presents layered oppression more explicitly

## 5. Conclusion

The analysis of both *Things Fall Apart* and *The God of Small Things* highlights the detailed and complex ways in which postcolonial identity and resistance are shown. While the stories

happen in different parts of the world — colonial Nigeria and postcolonial India—both concentrate on the aftermath of imperialism on people, social memory, and political structures.

Achebe's fiction shows the consequences of colonial interference, including missionary work, laws, and language, which led to a breakdown in Igbo culture and harmony. Roy, by comparison, studies the continuing effects of colonialism in India, where caste, gender, and class oppression are still strong. They both show how colonialism disrupts harmony within a society, changes traditional norms, and leads to identities made of mixed traditions.

*Great Expectations* and *Things Fall Apart* each reveal how characters such as Okonkwo, Ammu, Velutha, Rahel, and others show resistance in cultural, personal, symbolic, and narrative ways. In *Apricot Hotel*, Achebe shows defiance that is open and usually leads to disastrous results, but in *The God of Small Things*, Roy has her characters rebel quietly using personal memories, silence, sexuality, and different narrative styles. Even though they did not win every time, these acts of resistance point to how well marginalised individuals stay strong against many forms of power.

To add on, the analysis of gender shows that Achebe mainly ignores female stories in a patriarchal context, while Roy turns the spotlight on women and different subaltern groups to confront, reshape, and break away from the boundary of dominant values. Her method of studying intersectionality helps explain both oppression and one's ability to act.

Generally, each novel contributes much to postcolonial literature by restoring lost histories and challenging the messages mainstream colonial stories shared. They remain relevant because they highlight injustice, affirm different cultures, and provide opportunities to discuss how decolonisation can happen on a personal as well as a political level through literature. They remind us that rather than being big and confrontational, resistance can be a quiet effort in memory, language, love, and starting from where you are.

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