

Rewriting History: Deconstructing Colonial Myths in Modern Literature

Jairam Kumar Mahato, Research Scholer, BBMKU, Jharkhand

Abstract

Modern literature has emerged as a powerful tool for re-examining and rewriting the historical narratives constructed during the colonial era. Colonial powers often imposed their own versions of history, painting themselves as civilizing forces while portraying colonized societies as backward, chaotic, and incapable of self-governance. These narratives justified exploitation, cultural erasure, and systemic oppression. In response, postcolonial writers have taken it upon themselves to deconstruct these myths and reclaim their histories through literature. Authors such as Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Arundhati Roy, and Salman Rushdie use their works to expose the distortions of colonial historiography and highlight the richness, complexity, and agency of indigenous cultures. They bring to light the perspectives of those who were silenced or marginalized in official historical records—such as women, tribal communities, and lower castes—and reframe events like colonization, resistance, and partition from their point of view. Through techniques such as magical realism, narrative fragmentation, and local vernaculars, these writers disrupt linear, Eurocentric storytelling and instead offer plural, contested, and more authentic versions of history. In doing so, modern literature becomes not only a form of artistic expression but also an act of resistance and historical correction—challenging dominant ideologies and encouraging readers to rethink the past in order to better understand the present.

Key words: Postcolonial writers, Local vernacular, Eurocentric storytelling, Plural histories, Historical correction, Artistic expression, Act of resistance

