

Literature as Resistance: Manohar Malgonkar's *The Devil's Wind* as a Counter-Narrative to Colonial History

Ram Sebak Thakur¹, Ajita Singh^{2*}

Article Type: Research Article

¹Assistant Professor, Ramswarup Ramsagar Multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

²PhD Scholar, Lalit Narayan Mithila University, India

Received: 17 February 2026;

Revised: 24 April 2026;

Accepted: 18 May 2026

*Corresponding email: ajitasingh033@gmail.com ISSN: 2976-1204 (Print), 2976 – 131X (Online)

Copyright © 2026 by the authors. Published by the Journal of Innovation in Academia (JINA). The articles in JINA are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International License.



Abstract

*The article explores how Malgonkar's novel *The Devil's Wind* (1972) operates as a discourse of literary resistance in opposition to colonial historiography and establishes itself as a counter-narrative to colonial history. Postcolonial writings customarily stem from the colonial experience, arising from European expansion and exploitation of Third World countries. Accordingly, the writings from the former colonies aim at writing back in an attempt to correct, review, and reinterpret the Western notion of its former colonies. Reinterpreting the Indian Rebellion of 1857 through the lens of Nana Saheb, the novel interrogates and dismantles Nana's colonial portrayal, assesses Eurocentric notions of history, and thereby claims back indigenous agency. This study employs a qualitative research approach within a historical framework. The study contributes to literary discourse by reasoning and attesting how literature can interrogate hegemonic discourses, and issue counter-narratives that give prominence to colonised voices.*

Keywords: Colonial history, counter-narrative, literature as resistance, post-colonialism, Sepoy Mutiny

Introduction

Colonial historiography has systematically and intensely prioritised and privileged the coloniser's viewpoint in the process of documenting historical events. Such historical documents often obscure the glory and greatness of indigenous people by marginalising their voices and stories. As a result, post-colonial writers have employed their fictional writings as a significant site of resistance, interrogating the authority of colonial narratives and reinventing silenced and suppressed histories. Malgonkar's *The Devil's Wind* actively engages in this counter-discursive mission by retelling the life and struggles of Nana Saheb, a nobleman largely portrayed as a villain in the colonial records of the 1857 Uprising. The novel puts forward a very significant question about the politics of historical (mis)representation and the role of post-colonial literature in questioning colonial historiography, thereby requiring a critical reading of the text as a counter-narrative to colonial history. Viewed in this light, the novel can be cast as a reorientation of the biased and monolithic colonial historiography of the 1857 Uprising.

When literature is used as a tool to exhume suppressed historiography, a unique shared relationship is established between them, influencing and guiding each other. Stated differently, the link between literature and history is deep, dynamic, and reciprocal. On the one hand, literature is shaped by history, and on the other hand, it shapes historical understanding. Ian Haywood, in his book *The Making of History*, claims that "Some historical writing was itself often a form of historical fiction, an amalgam of fact and fiction, of righteous and profane procedures" (37). Analogously, conservative historians like Prof. Toynbee too concedes that "the novel and drama contained good history, while history on its part was using fiction to select, arrange and present its facts (qtd. in Holborn 166). These remarks attest to the fact that historical writing is viewed and read as one of the most powerful forms of literature and often the most influential in creating a society's image of itself because literature makes an interesting and creative use of history. Stated differently, a litterateur interprets and decodes historical facts to align with his/her creative intent.

Both literature and history are arts that reflect who we are, how we think, and both equip us with lenses to see life in varied ways. Yaha Jubarah comments that, "The relationship between history and literature is not static or one-directional. It is cyclical and dynamic as events unfold, they shape literature, and literature in turn shapes how those events are remembered, understood, and reimagined" (199). While history provides the raw material, literature gives it meaning, emotion, and ethical depth. In other words, literature, as Zhu points out, "can offer a more nuanced and personal understanding of history, complementing traditional historical narratives" (4). It transforms historical facts into lived human experiences. The relationship between literature and the historical-political environment is dialectical. Further, literature acts as an alternative history. It often records voices excluded from official history—women, subaltern groups, indigenous communities, and the marginalized. Historical novels reinterpret events from the perspective of the oppressed. Quoting Mehta and Mollmann, Adelman and McNamara observe that "When carefully done, historical fiction can also take steps towards correcting archival imbalances and silences, by allowing writers to recreate,

and students to understand, the lives and experiences of subaltern, oppressed, or silenced historical actors, whose voices we might otherwise lack or only possess in heavily mediated forms" (48).

In many contexts, literature, especially post-colonial literature, becomes a tool of resistance. It challenges dominant narratives, foregrounds marginalised voices, and reassesses national glory through rereading and reinterpreting colonial discourses. Post-colonial writing "focuses on rewriting colonial narratives by subverting the negative image of colonized people and culture. In this model, the writers and theories involved in literary activities of reading and rewriting the colonial discourse to create a positive image of colonized people and country" (Bhandari 92). In particular, post-colonial writers across Africa, India, and other countries attempt to destabilise the tarnished portrayal of the formerly colonised nations and, to achieve this goal, they use literature as a powerful counter-discourse.

African writers like Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ayi Kwei, and Ngozi Adichie have employed their writings as tools to counter colonial stereotypes. Coming to the Indian scenario, writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, and others set their writings in a historical milieu for epistemic resistance. By the same token, Manohar Malgonkar's novel *The Devil's Wind* is also a terrain of resistance, challenging imperial epistemologies. Through "creative integration of the historical material with the fictional mode of narration" (Rajagopalachary 113), Malgonkar's *The Devil Wind* recounts the life of Nana Saheb, a lead personality in the Indian Uprising of 1857, and thereby instantiates literature's power and potential to serve as a counter-narrative to colonial history. In order to rehabilitate Nana, he narrates the revolt from an Indian perspective, imagining it as though Nana Saheb himself were recounting the events.

Building on the above insights, the study investigates how *The Devil's Wind* challenges dominant historical narratives and constructs the novel as a site of resistance. It further investigates the contribution of the novel in recovering silenced voices and reinterpreting India's colonial past. The study adds to literary scholarship by foregrounding the creative interplay of history, memory, and narrative on the one hand, and attesting the role of literature in questioning hegemonic versions of the past on the other hand. Through this, it also enhances the discussion on the (mis)representation of history in Indian English writing and decolonisation of historical knowledge.

Literature Review

Post-colonial Critical Perspective

Post-colonial discourse refers to the body of ideas, debates, and critical practices that examine how the history of colonial rule continues to shape cultures, identities, power relations, and knowledge systems after formal independence. It focuses on how colonial domination affected the ways people think, speak, write, and represent themselves and others, and how these influences persist in social, political, and literary contexts. This discourse also challenges colonial narratives that justified empire by exposing their biases and silences. It

gives importance to voices that were marginalized under colonialism and explores themes such as resistance, hybridity, identity crisis, cultural conflict, and neo-colonial control. In literature and cultural studies, postcolonial narrative analyzes how formerly colonized societies reinterpret their past and negotiate their present in response to colonial legacies.

Post-colonial discourse furnishes a commendable standpoint from which history can be reviewed and reinterpreted. It is a tool used to assess the colonial history and understand the present from a new perspective. Supporting this view, R. Veena points out that:

The motivation for such reinterpretation arises out of the need to understand the present itself, situated as it is in the context of history. This is one of the concerns, among many others, of what is currently known as post-colonial discourse. More specifically, post-colonial discourse has, as one of its major preoccupations, the reinterpretation of colonial history. Post-colonial discourse provides the space, literally and figuratively, for these new readings of the past. (1)

Post-colonial discourse assumes that the central concern of literatures from the previously colonised countries can be taken as resistance to the former coloniser in their representation of their colonies. It further suggests that the post-colonial writers "who write back to the centre are representing the people of their society authentically" (Das 7), and assert national identity with great emphasis.

As a critical approach, post-colonial discourse deals with literature produced in countries that were once colonies of the European colonial powers, and encourages thoughts about the colonised's creative resistance to the colonisers' depiction of indigenous people, history, and culture to serve their own interests and ordinate their Eurocentric attitude. Assenting to this idea, Avik Gangopadhyay writes that:

Colonised people reply to the colonial legacy by Writing Back to the Center, when the indigenous people write their own histories and legacies using the coloniser's language (e.g., English, French, Dutch), for their own purpose. 'Indigenous decolonisation' is the intellectual impact of post-colonialist theory upon communities of indigenous peoples, thereby, their generating postcolonial literature. (265)

Avik argues that postcolonial writers have "posed a creative challenge to Western understandings of the real world ... concept of subversive anti-colonial rewriting—the dismantling and realigning of colonial systems of meaning—has been practically and forcefully demonstrated" (Boehmer 357–358). Indeed, they write to establish their independent and individual identity on the far side of their coloniser and seek to demonstrate their independence in using the coloniser's language as a medium of their narrative resistance and creative expression.

Therefore, post-colonial discourse works towards the abrogation of European supremacy and the negative projection of the East in their so-called canonical writings. Post-colonial writers have used their writing as a tool to reclaim their past by eroding the colonialist ideology. National identity, culture, tradition, rituals, and indigenous practices form the core of post-

colonial writings. Here, we prefer quoting Pramod K. Nayar's view on post-colonial literature as a concluding remark. He notes that:

Postcolonial literature is that which negotiates with, contests, and subverts Euro-American ideologies and representations. [...] postcolonialism is perceived as the attempt at the retrieval of local, native, and particular histories freed —as much as it is possible —from Euro-American 'versions' of the same.... It is a literature of emancipation, critique, and transformation. (Preface)

Historical Context: Colonial Representation of Nana Saheb and the 1857 Uprising

Nana Saheb (Dhondu Pant) was one of the prominent leaders of the Indian Mutiny of 1857. He was the adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao II, the last Maratha Peshwa, and was deeply aggrieved by the British refusal to recognize him as his father's legal heir or continue the pension after Baji Rao II's death. This injustice turned Nana Saheb against British rule. During the Mutiny of 1857, Nana Saheb emerged as the chief rebel leader at Kanpur (Cawnpore). When the sepoys revolted, they declared him the Peshwa, and he led the siege against British forces stationed there. Although his leadership gave the rebellion regional strength, the revolt ultimately failed due to a lack of coordination and superior British military power. After the British recaptured Kanpur, Nana Saheb disappeared, and his fate remains uncertain. Commenting on Nana's lot, P. Anandan writes that "*...his forte is not doing, but suffering. He is not born to be a hero, and he fades away into history*" (46). However, Nana Saheb's role in the Mutiny of 1857 symbolizes early organized resistance against colonial domination and reflects the political, military, and economic grievances that fueled India's first major uprising against British rule.

The Revolt of 1857 generated sharply differing reactions across the world, with opinions divided between support for British authority and sympathy for Indian resistance. British responses to the uprising were shaped largely by imperial and political interests, particularly the need to avoid unrest spreading to other colonies. They also sought to reinforce notions of British racial dominance and to present their rule as a civilizing mission intended to reform what they viewed as India's backward and tradition-bound society. To sustain this image, narratives celebrating British superiority were circulated internationally, often overstating the bravery and sacrifice of British individuals in confrontations with Indian rebels. The actions carried out by the Britishers were justified and validated unilaterally, to which the post-colonial history interrogates and questions the justification. Thakur states:

British writings depicting the superiority of the Britishers were then circulated across the continents—these writings exaggerated the heroism of their citizens against the revolters in India [...]. The British literature also exaggerated the violence by the Indians with a view to sensationalising the same, and thereafter aroused hatred amongst the British populace and eventually justified their own retribution against the Indians. The most glaring example of this misrepresentation was the manner in which the Kanpur massacre was reported, wherein, in August 1857, around 200 women and children, who had been earlier taken hostage by the revolters, were massacred by the butchers and their bodies were hacked to pieces and thrown into a well. (5-6)

The quote attests the fact that the Britishers evaluated the mutiny as nothing but a savage, indiscriminate, and fanatical act of butchery. And by showing this, they validated and vindicated their counteractions to the mutiny.

Research Methods

Having adopted a qualitative approach to textual analysis, this study takes Manohar Malgonkar's *The Devil's Wind* as its primary source. The text is analysed through close reading and interpreted by coding themes and reading between the lines. Secondary sources such as critical commentaries on the novel, scholarly journals and articles, and relevant books accessed from libraries and online platforms have been consulted to support and develop the central argument proposed in the abstract. Furthermore, the concept of post-colonial discourse and literature, and the historical background of the Indian Uprising of 1857, is employed as an analytical lens to explore and highlight Nana Saheb as a *hero*, opposed to the British projection of him as a villain. This interpretive textual analysis enables a systematic examination of how the novel functions as an epistemic intervention in colonial historical discourse.

Analysis and Discussion

P.J.O Taylor's famous statement that "*History in any case is written by the victor*" (9) makes us believe that the existing recorded Indian history is only the British version, where they freely recorded the incidents with incongruous distortions. British historians like John Williams Kaye, George Bruce, and G.W. Forrest have sought to glorify the valour, the skill, and the strategies of the British in dealing with the Indian rebels, and have projected the Indians as weak, treacherous, and brutish. The novel under discussion is a powerful post-colonial text that counter-narrates the British claims and reestablishes a fresh interpretation from the Indian point of view. In post-colonial studies, counter-narratives refer to the revision of historical events that recenter marginalized voices and question claims of historical objectivity.

Quoting Hutcheon, Mahmoud El-Sawy has rightly argued that "authors of historiographic metafiction use ventriloquism to parodically install and subvert the structures of canonical literatures of the past for a serious critical purpose" (154). In other words, Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction is a tool to challenge dominant discourses by offering alternative perspectives that destabilise official histories. And, Malgonkar's political novel *The Devil's Wind* (1972) operates within this theoretical framework by reassessing and reclaiming Nana Saheb's voice and reinterpreting the history of 1857 from an indigenous standpoint. The novel does not merely reverse colonial judgments but critically examines the processes through which historical meaning is produced.

Written in autobiographical fashion, Malgonkar's *The Devil's Wind* overturns the myth of white superiority. Nana is the victim of the deliberate distortion of historical facts at the hands of British colonisers. Brian Wallace records that:

The Indian Rebellion leader Nana Sahib became Victorian Britain's most hated foreign enemy for his part in the 1857 Cawnpore massacres, in which British men, women, and children were killed after having been promised safe passage away from their besieged garrison. Facts were mixed with lurid fiction in reports that drew on villainous orientalist stereotypes to depict Nana. (589)

Similarly, encapsulating the English perception about Nana, Huma Ghaffar also recounts that "He was perceived by the Victorian public as a savage, morally corrupt, and fundamentally unreliable individual. Most of the British writers severely criticize the rebellious forces and declare them as despots, cruel, tyrants, and plunderers" (110).

Rajagopalachary notes that "His instinctive squeamishness at the shedding of blood and brahmanical humanitarianism were of no consequences to the British. The British have connected him with the crude barbarities of the Bibighar and Satichaura incidents and deliberately made him up into a monster of ferocity" (53). Malgonkar, in the Author's note, also writes that the colonial discourses have portrayed Nana as an infamous, dastardly, despicable, crafty demon, barbarous butcher, and arch assassin. Malgonkar is convinced that Nana's stories and his involvement in the revolts have never been written from an Indian point of view, and therefore, he becomes the victim of a disparaging portrayal. Malgonkar carefully destabilises Nana's image as painted by the British and projects him as a human being. The tools he employs to demythify English heroes and destabilise the British view are characterisation and narrative strategy.

For example, Sir John Malcolm, who chases the Peshwa from his Maratha Confederacy and overpowers his feudatories' step by step, is described to be magnanimous when compared with Lord Hastings, of whom Nana Saheb states that "Hasting himself, I feel sure, would have liked nothing better than to hang my father like a common felon and declare his wealth to be prize money" (10). The novel opens up and narrates the plots devised by Lord Elphinstone to reduce the Vanchurkars to a disgraceful circumstance and to snatch Nana Saheb of his title and pension.

The novel also makes a scathing satire and hits hard at the character of Lord Dalhousie. He has destroyed Nana's expectations of a rightful inheritance and declares that "*The Governer-General- in -Council recognizes no such person as Maharaja Dhondu Pant Nana Saheb*" (45). Here, Malgonkar is very much critical of Dalhousie, and he paints his image against English value judgments. Nana Saheb, the mouthpiece of the novelist, observes the personality of Dalhousie and describes him as "an enormous giant who spat fire and gave out blood-curdling honks as they were about swallowing kingdom after kingdom as though they were his natural food. His ambition was to clear India of Indian rulers, and he all but achieved it with the Doctrine of Lapse" (45-46). The Doctrine of Lapse was introduced by Lord Dalhousie. According to this doctrine, if any Indian ruler dies without leaving a male heir, his kingdom would automatically pass over to the British. This doctrine was regarded as a kind and compassionate strategy to control and tame the Indians, whereas for the Indians, it was an inhuman, tyrannical, and rude apparatus of confiscation of their kingly states.

Malgonkar equips Nana Saheb as a narrator with full liberty to speak to the readers, asserting his right to narrate history. Nana challenges the authority of colonial history and topples the biased and monopolised historical depictions of India and Indian heroes. By deploying Nana Saheb as the first-person narrator, Malgonkar foregrounds Nana's voice with great intensity and articulation. Nana is no longer an object of historical judgment, but has transfigured into a speaking subject claiming his authority, articulating his grievances, and debunking the injustices of colonial administration. It is in his attempt to resist and counter the colonial history that Nana Saheb compares Dalhousie with "the God who rides a buffalo" (46). It is interesting to note here that Malgonkar has debased the status of Dalhousie, whom the British hold as one who has "no equal among the rulers of India except Lord Curzon" (Marriot 15), to the extreme rewriting and revaluing him from an Indian point of view. In this regard, D. Maya aptly remarks that "Manohar Malgonkar's *The Devil's Wind* attempts the decolonisation of history by choosing the first national struggle for freedom as his subject and presenting it purely from the Indian perspective" (27). The novel is stuffed with incidents that show colonial excess and cruelty meted out upon Indian citizens and kings. Dalhousie is mad for Empire expansion and revenge from the feudal lords.

Malgonkar vehemently criticises and exposes the British indifference to the cruelty meted out to the Indian citizens and their deplorable state, and supports and encourages the British representative received from the English government. Dalhousie was appointed a Marquis and was granted a special pension of £5000 a year. Other evidence that shows the savagery of the English government in India are out and out rebuttal of Zeenat Mahal's claim to the throne for her son Jawan Bakht by Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, and the merciless murder of Mughal princes by Hodson and Metcalfe. Highlighting the British atrocities and their gory acts of plunder, Mark Condos writes:

The Indian Uprising of 1857 was one of the most significant anti-colonial revolts of the nineteenth century. Both sides committed atrocities during this conflict, but the British resorted to particularly brutal tactics and exemplary forms of punishment in a desperate attempt to suppress the rebellion and reassert control. They tied rebels and mutineers to the mouths of artillery, and literally blew them to pieces. The British also destroyed entire villages, slaughtering civilian populations indiscriminately. (569)

Mark's statement is a testimony that further speaks of the horror and heinousness, monstrosity, and enormity of the British rulers in India. The British representatives in India remained indifferent to the religious and moral sentiments of the common public, which ultimately accelerated the eruption of the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857.

The novel refers to several historical English figures like Sir Hugh Wheeler and Sir Charles Hillersdon, who merit recognition because they show respect towards Indian allies and demonstrated comparatively restrained enforcement actions against protestors. They are presented as generous and large-hearted individuals. Wheeler, in particular, assimilates the indigenous culture and way of life to such an extent that he marries an Indian woman, a choice that attracts severe condemnation. Branded as someone who has "gone native," he is consequently denied the position of Commander-in-Chief. Caught between two worlds, he fails to achieve complete belonging either to Indian culture or to English society.

Colonial histories and many mutiny novels often portray Wheeler as a gullible Englishman who is misled by Nana Saheb's assurances of protection. Malgonkar, however, offers a different perspective by suggesting that Nana Saheb's honourable intentions collapse amid the sudden outbreak of mob violence, ultimately leading to Wheeler's death. Significantly, colonial records rarely acknowledge Wheeler's benevolent actions toward Indians. Malgonkar brings him into focus, restoring his voice and presence in history. In the novel, both Nana Saheb and Wheeler emerge as victims of the relentless and uncontrollable forces of history. Apart from Wheeler, another character who also has sympathy for the natives and friendship with Nana is Hillersdon. But Hillersdon also meets the same fate as Wheeler. The central argument is that Malgonkar refutes the charges against Nana Saheb that he hoaxed his English friends. For Nana, commitment to friendship is as important as commitment to the nation. Nana remarks:

I could not, in my own mind, separate the national struggle from personal involvements ... Could I now stand by and watch the men and women who had sung and danced and laughed in my house slaughtered by howling mobs? They had done no harm to me, or indeed to India. Why should they have to be sacrificed for all the wrongs piled up by the East India Company over a hundred years? (115)

Malgonkar emphasises that Nana is wrongly associated with these unfortunate incidents, and his loyalty to his nation and his friendship are erroneously conflated. He writes:

I fervently hoped that the carnage would not be excessive; that somehow, only just that number of white men would be slaughtered for the remainder to be persuaded that their best course was to leave our land for their own. And, to be sure, there were a number of Englishmen I would not have liked to leave our shores either: families such as the Wheelers and the Hillersdons and the Morelands, or the half-whites such as the Skinners and the Herseys. My loyalties were hopelessly intermixed, and my hatred far from pure. (75)

Of course, Malgonkar does not idealise and heroise Nana Saheb. But he characterises him as a human being who becomes prey to and shaped by historical circumstances. Nana is not as he is depicted in the colonial discourse. Nana sent a message to Wheeler before his attack on him was prompted by his sense of friendship. It cannot be treason. Malgonkar does not romanticise or glorify Nana Saheb; instead, he presents him as a complex human figure whose actions are deeply influenced by the pressures of historical circumstances. Nana is thus portrayed in sharp contrast to his representation in colonial narratives. His decision to send a message to General Wheeler before launching the attack arises from a lingering sense of personal friendship rather than betrayal. Such an act, therefore, cannot be interpreted as treason but as a gesture shaped by moral conflict and human loyalty. Nana clarifies, "I sent him a word because I had promised to do so, and I shall never admit that my love for his daughter had anything to do with it. Somehow, it seemed important that the gesture be made before I became locked in as a part of the opposition. It was my last concession to a friendship I truly valued" (150).

Most of the colonial narratives celebrate the English combatants, glorifying and idealising them as embodiments of valour and heroism, projecting them as noble, courageous, and morally superior figures. English novels written on the theme of Sepoy mutiny portray the English officers as "brave, forceful, daring, honest, active and masculine" (Greenberger 11). Malgonkar, on the other hand, subverts this notion by laying bare the heinous viciousness of the supposed heroes of the British coloniser. The novelist contends that the British fighters were savage, cruel, and pillagers. Their horrendous act of arson is spine-chilling when the exuberant city of Lucknow is destroyed and converted into "a city without a soul" (106). Their acts of occupying palaces, looting the public property, damaging the religious shrines, and killing the innocents are exposed through characters like Commander Neill and Major Renaud. The novel reads: "They kill for sport: they burn for fun. They don't spare anyone — not old men or women or children. They go in parties, looking for people to kill, for villages to burn" (170). These lines expose the real face of the British figures. They are, as the novel suggests, cannibals. They are not the heroes who save and protect the downtrodden; they are the marauders devastating the villages brutally and disgracing the country women.

Further, the British colonisers' thirst for gold and wealth is vividly reported in the novel. At the sight of ransacking Nana Saheb's wealth, Azim reflects that "If only we had unlimited gold to throw in their paths...Then they would never go on campaigns. They'd just sit holding committees over a prize money and doing each other down" (236). Malgonkar carefully overturns the established images of the British figures as benevolent and projects them as muggers, smuggers, and bloodthirsty. In doing so, he has sketched Nana Saheb gloriously from an Indian perspective with great authenticity. Gauging Malgonkar's authenticity, Parameswaran contends that "Malgonkar's history is more authentic than that found in most history books because it examines the social and psychological motivations of people who made history" (331).

Conclusion

Manohar Malgonkar's *The Devil's Wind* stands as a compelling example of literature as resistance. By offering a counter-narrative to colonial historiography, the novel challenges imperial representations of the Revolt of 1857 and restores voice and dignity to Nana Saheb. Through its narrative strategy, characterization, and revisionist approach to history, the novel exposes the ideological distortions of colonial history and affirms the political significance of fiction. Ultimately, *The Devil's Wind* demonstrates that literature is not merely a reflection of history but an active participant in its re-interpretation. As a counter-narrative, the novel contributes to the postcolonial project of decolonizing historical consciousness and reclaiming suppressed pasts.

In *The Devil's Wind*, colonial rulers, who are at the height of their empire and driven by dreams of power and conquest, have been vividly portrayed. Malgonkar exposes the illusions and myths that fueled their ambitions, uncovering the realities behind colonialism. Without distorting historical truth, he retells the story of the mutiny from the Indian perspective, merely adjusting the lens to reveal a new pattern within known history. Against the backdrop of British oppression and cruelty, Nana Saheb emerges as a misunderstood figure who is

unfairly vilified and denied an esteemed place in colonial narratives. Importantly, Malgonkar does not romanticize Nana Saheb; instead, he presents him with both his flaws and strengths, illuminating the motives that guided his actions. In doing so, he fulfills Frantz Fanon's vision of decolonization as a spiritual process—one that redefines national identity and values. Moreover, *The Devil's Wind* succeeds as a historical novel, intertwining human struggles of race and culture with the lived reality of the mutiny, ultimately achieving the essence of great historical storytelling. He has achieved a "creative integration of history and art" and "has broadened our understanding of the Sepoy Revolt from a novelist's perspective, probing the protagonist's psyche, which, of course, lies beyond the historian's domain" (Rajagopalacharya 53).

Although the study focuses on a very wide and significant theme of exposing the ideological prejudices embedded in colonial historical documents and literature's capacity to reconstruct suppressed voices, it is limited by its selection and focus on a single text. The broader spectrum of counter-narratives to colonial history can be explored by undertaking comparative analyses of the novel under study with other post-colonial Indian historical novels to explore and investigate the role of literature in forming and fashioning collective memory and molding indigenous identity across varied colonial and post-colonial contexts.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the members of the Editorial Board of this journal, and the reviewers for constructive feedback.

Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Funding

There was no external source of funding for the research

Authors' Contribution and ORCID iDs

Ram Sebak Thakur: Selection of Text, Conceptualisation, Methodology, and Original Writing.

 : <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-2875-6758>

Ajita Singh: Selection of Text, Conceptualisation, Methodology, Writing, and Review and Editing.

 : <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-1131-8041>

Works Cited

Adelman, Juliana, and Celeste McNamara. "History and Historical Fiction: Experiences from History Undergraduates." *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2025, pp. 47–62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14740222251360103>

- Anandan, P. "Beyond the Victor's Narrative: The Novelist's Quest to Rehabilitate Indian Heroes." *International Journal of English Studies*, vol. 7, no. 9, 2025, pp. 42–50. <https://doi.org/10.47311/IJOES.2025.7.09.50>
- Bhandari, Nagendra Bahadur. "Resistance and Postcolonialism: A Critical Review." *Journal of Political Science*, vol. 22, no. 1, Feb. 2022, pp. 92–99. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jps.v22i1.43042>
- Bhandari, Nagendra Bahadur. "Resistance and Postcolonialism: A Critical Review." *Journal of Political Science*, vol. 22, no. 1, Feb. 2022, pp. 92–99. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jps.v22i1.43042>
- Boehmer, Elleke. "Postcolonialism." *Literary Theory and Criticism*, edited by Patricia Waugh, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 340–361.
- Condos, Mark. "The Ajnala Massacre of 1857 and the Politics of Colonial Violence and Commemoration in Contemporary India." *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2022, pp. 568–585. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2021.2022271>
- Das, Vijay Kumar. "Trends in Post-colonial Poetry." *Critical Essays on Post-colonial Literature*, Atlantic, 1999, pp. 1–16.
- El-Sawy, Amany Mahmoud. "A. S. Byatt's *Possession* and Historiographic Metafiction." *AJELP: Asian Journal of English Language and Pedagogy*, vol. 3, Dec. 2015, pp. 145–160. <https://ejournal.upsi.edu.my/index.php/AJELP/article/view/1224>
- Gangopadhyay, Avik. *Literary Theories and Criticism Beyond Modernism*. Rev. 2nd ed., Books Way, 2005.
- Ghaffar, Huma. "Historiography of 1857: An Overview." *Pakistan Perspectives*, vol. 12, no. 2, July-December 2007, pp. 107-121.
- Greenberger, Allen J. *The British Image of India*. Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Haywood, Ian. *The Making of History*. Associated University Press, 1986.
- Holborn, Hajo. *History and the Humanities*. Doubleday & Co., 1972.
- Jubarah, Yaha. "The Influence of Historical Events on English Literature: Shaping Themes and Styles through Conflict, Crisis, and Celebration." *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2025, pp. 195–200. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15326187>
- Malgonkar, Manohar. *The Devil's Wind*. Hamish Hamilton, 1972.
- Marriott, A.R. *The English in India*. Clarendon Press, 1932.
- Maya, D. "Decolonizing History: A Postcolonial Reading of Malgonkar's *The Devil's Wind*." *Post-Independence Indian English Fiction*, edited by Rajeshwar Mittapalli and Alessandro Monti, Atlantic, 2001, pp. 27–33.
- Nayar, Pramod K. "Preface." *Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction*. Pearson, 2013.
- Parameswaran, Uma. "Manohar Malgonkar as a Historical Novelist." *World Literature Written in English*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1975, pp. 329–338. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449857508588352>.

- Rajagopalachary, M. "Malgonkar's Meditation on History: *The Devil's Wind*." *Triveni Journal*, vol. 55, no. 2, July–Sept. 1986, pp. 53–56. <https://www.wisdomlib.org/history/compilation/triveni-journal/d/doc71341.html>
- <https://www.wisdomlib.org/history/compilation/triveni-journal/d/doc71341.html>
- Rajagopalachary, M. "Malgonkar's Idea of Novel." *Indian Fiction in English*, edited by P. Mallikarjuna Rao and M. Rajeshwar, Atlantic, 1999, pp. 112–119.
- Taylor, P. J. O. *A Star Shall Fall: India 1857*. Collins Indus, 1993.
- Thakur, R. S. "The Indian Revolt of 1857: Global Response." *Issue Brief*, no. 263, Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), 2020.
- Veena, R. "The Literature on the Events of 1857: A Post-colonial Reading." *Writing in a Post-colonial Space*, edited by Surya Nath Pandey, Atlantic, 1999, pp. 1–9.
- Wallace, Brian. "Nana Sahib in British Culture and Memory." *The Historical Journal*, vol. 58, no. 2, 2015, pp. 589–613. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24531993>.
- Zhu, Zimeng. "Literature in the Context of History." *Arts, Culture, and Language*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2025, pp. 1-5, <https://doi.org/10.61173/cp77nj52>.

Bios

Ram Sebak Thakur is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Ramswarup Ramsagar Multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University, Janakpurdham, Nepal. He holds a PhD in English Literature from Lalit Narayan Mithila University (LNMU), Darbhanga, Bihar, India. His research interests primarily include religion, ecofeminism, Dalit literature, and New Historicism. He has published numerous research articles in reputed national and international journals.

Email: thakurrs033@gmail.com

Ajita Singh is a PhD research scholar in the Department of English at Lalit Narayan Mithila University, Darbhanga, Bihar, India. Her research interests include postcolonial studies, New Historicism, and ecocriticism, with a broader engagement in literary approaches to history and cultural representation.

Email: ajitasingh033@gmail.com

Cite as: Thakur, Ram Sebak, and Ajita Singh. "Literature as Resistance: Manohar Malgonkar's *The Devil's Wind* as a Counter-Narrative to Colonial History." *Journal of Innovation in Academia*, vol. 5, no. 1, Jun. 2026, pp. 191-203. <https://doi.org/10.32674/xgyjhb06>

Note: The authors acknowledge the use of OpenAI and ChatGPT for final drafting and editing support. The tool was used for refining languages/ensuring clarity and coherence throughout the article. The contributions made by ChatGPT helped the overall quality of this work. The authors retains full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the manuscript.