Manohar Malgonkar is a unique writer who stands rather apart from other novelists in Indian writing in English. As a novelist, he portraits distinct phases of the Indian national movement and its stirrings with the irresistible tenacity of a historian turned novelist. Although he never imitates neither in technique nor in intellectual equipment and awareness of earlier novelists, yet he has definitely made a mark in Indian Writing in English. C.D. Narasimhaiah observes in his critique of Kanthapura that “Indian fiction in English can make headway by
continuing the Raja Rao line, which is to say one must have not merely his technique, but his amazing high intellectual equipment and awareness of the Indian tradition.”1

Where as a strong humanitarian attitude enliveness the novels of Anand, an acute social sweetness marks in different ways the works of R.K. Narayan, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, and Bhabani Bhattacharya, and the cross-cultural conflict characterizes the novels of Kamala Markandaya, Raja Rao, and B. Rajan, there is a strong historical sense in the writings of Malgonkar.

In fact, Malgonkar was a historian of the Marathas even before he ended the domain of Indian writing in English. Some might claim this as evidence of the pancity of his imaginative and inventive powers, but the truth remains that he is a writer who writes with a firm consciousness of the area of his operation and the period of his depiction.

Manohar Malgonkar is a prolific writer with a number of novels, books of history, collection of short stories and a play and a collection of essays to his credit. He is a novelist with an accomplished technique and grounded firmly in the rich Indian historical tradition that he will survive in the days to come. His

The above novels, taken as a whole, tend to consolidate the proposition that Malgonkar is a novelist endowed with “a wonderful knack of weaving plots of singular originality”. This he could achieve not because of his inclination towards historicity, but because of his ability to commingle fact with fiction and recorded truths with elements of romance and adventure, in his works. After all, he is a historian with a difference, a historian blessed with a creative mind and a fertile imagination.

In the present chapter, an effort has been made to prove as well as establish Malgonkar as one of those novelists who have shown a keen awareness of Indian tradition and her hoary history. How is he still a force to reckon with. Khushwant Singh rightly places him among the select band of seven Indo-English writers and characterizes his monumental work, *A Bend in the Ganges*, as one of the few books that are “sample of good writing by Indo-Anglian writers of today.” V.S. Naipaul rightly noticed that Malgonkar was outstanding for his foundness for outdoor life. Other writers might sound bookish or – imitative, but
Malgonkar does not, though most of his recent works tend to be thrillers and entertainers, his popularity as a novelist is already secure.

*A Bend in the Ganges* became immediately popular and successful. A very exciting story is told with great skill in the novel. The novel is written on a grand scale and depicts the Gandhism era in all its manifestations. Its title is derived from a sentence in the Ramayan: “At a bend in the Ganges they paused to take a look at the land they were leaving”, and is symbolically used here. In it the two principal characters, Debi-dayal and Gian, also pause and look longingly at their land while they are getting deported to the Cellular Jail in the Andaman Island. Lord Rama had once left Ayodhya behind for fourteen years and Debi and Gian have also to serve a term of fourteen years in exile. This may also apply to the multi-millionaire businessman, Tekchand Kerwad, the father of Debi and Sundari, who has, at the end of the novel, to leave his home in Pakistan with a heavy heart, nostalgically recollecting the dying words of his wife, Radha: “Please don’t leave me here, darling, please take me with you…”, to which he had given the reassuring reply: “No, I shall never leave you... now rest”.

In a brief note, Malgonkar tells us: “Only the violence in this story happens to be true; it came in the wake of the bloodiest upheavals of history: twelve million people had to flee, leaving their homes; nearly half a million were killed; over a hundred thousand women, young and old, were abducted, raped, mutilated.” This powerful story tries to highlight the truth that freedom is a hard-earned trophy, and that when it came to India it was attended by violence, bloodshed, and tetryals. This novel explores more fully the origins of the two-nation theory and presents in some detail the sheer frenzy that possessed people in the Punjab in August 1947. Like war and revolution, civil strife of the kind that was witnessed in parts of India in 1947 was verily a bull-dozer that leveled up things, leaving an ominous calm in the wake of the precedent destructive storm. Humanity uprooted, humanity mutilated, humanity massacred.

*A Bend in the Ganges* showed that his sense of history was as strong as his flair for story-telling, and it is not surprising that he has now turned to history and historical biography Malgonkar is endowed with the three requisites of a historian: a dispassionate view of the movement of events, an instinctive perception of the quiddities of character through the veils of
voluminous records, and a talent for lively narrative. He has made good use of the available archival material, and has helped to discover many historical facts relevant to the period.

Manohar Malgonkar is another significant novelist who throws up flood of light on the agonies of the partition, and the lacerations that went by. The sweep, the grandeur, and whole drama of inhumanity that was enacted are snapped with artistic fidelity and beauty. The epic dimensions that Malgonkar’s novel acquires, thus brings it more close to Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* than to any other fictional work.

Malgonkar turns his attention to the turbulent years of the pre-independence phase of Indian history to celebrate a set of passing values and to probe the ideology of Ahimsa, the non-violence, which Mahatma Gandhi offered to the world as gift. The mood of the novel is one of celebration and denunciation, and is succinctly pointed out by the novelist himself in the epigraph:

*This non-violence, therefore, seems to be due mainly to our helplessness. It almost appears as if we are nursing in our bosoms the desire to take revenge the first time we get the opportunity. Can it be true, that the voluntary non-violence coming out of this seemingly forced on-violence of the weak?*
What if, when the fury burst, not a man, woman or child is safe and every man’s hand is raised against his neighbours? 7

The events that followed confirmed Gandhiji’s worst fears in the wake of freedom as the sub-continent witnessed incidents of violence and brutality. But is is obviously a part of the novelist’s strategy to discredit non-violence and demonstrate its ineffectiveness in the changed context, though it is by no means an endorsement of violence. It is a way of life, though it concedes the reality of violence.

The novel shows how violence is self-consuming and self-destructive, and how love transcends both violence and non-violence, and brings about freedom and fulfillment to the individual. This is the value that Gian Talwar, the unheroic hero, and Debi Dayal the heroic hero, discovered in their acts of living out their separate, and yet involved lives. Gian Talwar is exposed to Gandhi’s influence. He resists the attempts of Shafi and Debi Dayala, which are aimed at converting him into the creed of violence. He is a typical Indian youth, febrile and vacillating, but always hunting for new pastures. The critical incidents of Hari’s murder converts Gian Talwar into cummisting acts of violence
and he cries for reprisal, and consequently discards non-violence as it creates moral problems for him. This makes Vishnu-Dutta an easy prey to his anger and resentment. As he declares:

“I have just killed Vishnu-Dutt’, Gian told him (darogah)

“Killed him with the same axe with which he murdered my brother”.

He is transported for life with million others to the cellular Jail in Andamans. Gian Talwar had by now given up his ambition to become a Gandhian owing to the forced circumstances and his problem was to find a new identity to survive. Debi Dayal’s sister, Sundari, fascinates him, and he thinks of setting up family with her. He believes that Debi Dayal, whom he betrayed in Andamans, would not be able to return to India. But to his great surprise he comes to know that Debi Dayal too reaches Indian through a different route and is harbouring revenge against him for his past betrayal but unfortunately, he is caught up in the communal flare up and is swept along in the orgy of violence along with Shafi who succumbs to the mob fury.

Gian Talwar has been haunted by some unsuspected fear. He does not hesitate to cut the throat of dead Romeshi, a confirmed criminal, in order to steal gold coins hidden in his
‘Khu-Bri’. His degradation begins here and he had to hide his identity in Madras to assume the new guise of Marutirao in order to avoid the clutches of law.

Certainly it is as if his sins of omissions and commission are haunting him, he jumps out of the train, and rushes to his village Koushet, like a refugee. He enters his own little house, through the back door in the village, and lifts the Shiva statue and sneaks out like a thief. Thus, his renunciation of Gandhian values is total even as his gradualistic degration.

Debi Dayal, vexed with the destruction that followed in the make of partition, ponders “Is this the independence which India wanted? Is this the sunrise of freedom? Who is to blame”? These are some of the questions which beset most of the characters too. Even for Debi Dayal there are moments of regret when he thinks in terms of accepting the Gandhian way as it is futile to indulge in genocide. As he says:

*It almost makes one think that non-violence is perhaps the only answer.*

Debi Dayal convinces Basu about the efficiency of Gandhian methods of non-violence:
We may not hold with his (Gandhian) philosophy but no one can doubt his sincerity personally. I do not think he would retaliate with violence.\textsuperscript{10}

Thus, the same elements get the upper hand in the mind of Debi Dayal who had all along indulged in acts of senseless violence. Malgonkar implicitly concedes the victory (though unwillingly) of the Gandhian non-violent approach in human life. It is though he had not appreciated the Gandhian tenet of Ahimsa fully. As he writes

\textit{If Gandhism is a failure, it is not because of Gandhian imperfections but because people who are not committed and who are power-hungry and corrupt. But people who surrounded Gandhi caused the foul atmosphere, defaming the whole Gandhian values.}\textsuperscript{11}

And the final image that has been offered to us is that of Gian and Sundary who reach out to safety and freedom. Thus, the whole action of the novel is appropriated by the two pivotal characters, Gian Talwar and Debi Dayal, who represent the two sides of Gandhian ideology. Gian is evidently a Gandhian, at least in the initial stage, and believes in the rule of non-violence, until he is transformed into an \textit{agend provocateur} by the sheer force of
exigeney. On the other hand, Debi Dayal, who is associated, right from the beginning with violence, begins to see its futility at the end of the novel, when it becomes too late for him to set things right. Debi Dayal symbolized the ineffectiveness of violence that breeds violence and prefers to undergo the gyrating processes of transformation to give up the creed of violence.

These antipodal valuations in terms of character and incident and the emerging vision only show the utter futility of Gandhi’s non-violence as a political creed. In fact, this is what Malgonkar wanted to reveal and hence the elaborate fictionalization of the historical events, which verily build up his projection and hypothesis. Professor G.S. Amur points out:

A Bend in the Ganges is a highly satisfying account of an individual’s attempt at survival and search for moral identity and read as such offers but critical problems. The novel is not content to operate on a purely personal level. It is intended to be a political and philosophical allegory as well.¹²

In contrast to Gian Talwar, stands the hard unyielding but faithful Debi-Dayal, the terrorist, who too is an ardent love of Mother India but who believes in the use of arms against the nighty Empire? He may be guessed to be a follower of Bhagat
Singh, Azad and other martyrs in the cause of the country. Though he is of a steely heart, he recognizes human values in Mumtaz, a Muslim woman picked up from the clutches of his cristwhile companion. Flouting the rigid family traditions, Debi falls in love with her and decides to marry to her but on his way home near the Indo-Pak border he falls a victim to the fury of the Muslims.

The third important character in the novel is Sundari, who though married to Gopal, an army officer in Bombay, is in half-love with her own brother, and encourages the advances of Gian soon after his arrival from the Andamans. Debi’s arrival in Bombay brings a change in her attitude towards Gian, but later meets her again. Thus the novel is a fast-moving novel, full of stirring incident. It is one of the most-exciting narrations in the annals of Indo-Anglian fiction.

Manohar Malgonkar’s staple subjects are romance, sex, adventure, military life, hunting, the partition of India and other historical events, in organizing and presenting these themes the novelist displays an enviable narrative skill. It is not that there are no strands of story left out or unresolved, but that such strands are deliberately left unattended, in order to produce an
atmosphere of suspense and mystery. One incessantly absorbing subject for this writer is the history of the Marathas as evinced by his studies of Kanhoji Angrey, the valiant Maratha Admiral, the Purass of Dewas Senior and the Chatrapatis of Kolhapur. It is not the psychological, sociological, or anthropological themes that attract Malgonkar but the historial one.

Malgonkar is at his best in story-telling and plot – weaving. His stories are often eventful and entertaining. He is absolutely clear in his mind about his objectives as a writer, and observes:

... I do strive, deliberately and hard, to tell as story well, and I revel in incident, in improbabilities, in unexpected twists. I feel a special allegiance to the particular subcaste among those whose caste-mark I have affected, the entertainers, the tellers of stories.13

His novels, as a result, are well-constructed. And since he is very close to Indian history, his novels tend to be quite informative and knowledgeable.

Malgonkar’s narrative technique is always flawless. In describing an event or in unfolding a plot, he is unquestionably superb. Most of his stories are told in the third person and in the past tense. Nowhere in the works of Malgonkar do we witness the
formlessness of *The Serpent and the Rope* or the puranic style of *Kanthapura*. Though in *A Bend in the Ganges*, he becomes multifaceted and epical, like the author of *War and Peace*, he does not reach that height elsewhere. And also as a historian, he does not remain detached and dispassionate. His predilections and preferences are obvious enough and sometimes lend to distortion. As Meenakshi Mukherjee points out, “*A Bend in the Ganges* is not so much a story of men and women as of places and episodes, not an integrated human drama but on erratic national calendar.” Malgonkar mostly takes Englishmen as paragons of honesty and integrity, and occasionally accuses Indians of lack of sincerity and sense of justice.

Malgonkar’s characters include both types and individuals. Of the first category are the army men and the courtiers, the loyal ministers and the opportunistic leaders, the courtesans and the harlots, the prisoners and the businessmen; and of the second are col. Kiran Garnd, Henry Wnton, Debi-Dayal, Gian Talwar, Abhayraj and Nana Saheb.

We do find women and children in Malgonkar’s novels, but usually they are not allowed to develop fully. As for women, they mostly appear as symbols of sex and comfort, on plebis like
Sundari in *A Bend in The Ganges*, Ruby and Jean in *Combat of Shadows*, and Miss Bina in *Distant Drum*. Obviously, women play second fiddle to men in the works of Malgonkar, whose world is manifestly a world of men.

The linguistic achievement of Malgonkar is definitely commendable. Raja Rao, long ago, visualized the difficulty of an Indian writer in English when he pointed out the characteristic contrast between thought and medium of expression, between the tempo of Indian life and “an alien language.” The chief objection of scholars to the use of English in Indo-English literature is that such non-native English lacks the ‘fineness of nuance’. The English of Malgonkar is mainly traditional and conservative, but it is full and exact. Though Malgonkar is fully aware of the linguistic dilemma of the Indian writer in English, he has used English in a natural and spontaneous way, drawing his nuances from his close contact with the British officials in the Indian Army and with the other ranks of Britishers outside.

Malgonkar may not be as inventive as Raja Rao, or as impressive as R.K. Narayan, or as vernacular as Mulk Raj Anand, but he is always readable and enjoyable. The reason is that Malgonkar keeps an eye open for a ready market and prefers
“acceptability” to “experimentation”. He claims to have acquired ‘a fairly full vocabulary of raw words’ which he uses naturally, Malgonkar certainly recaptures the real speech of British officers in the Indian Army or that of hard-core hunters. It is no wonder, then, that the novelist’s linguistic excellence made a correspondent of the *Times Literary Supplement* once write that a “a new Malgonkar in a Piccadilly book stall puts the seal on British Achievement.”

Malgonkar’s Indianness can hardly be questioned. He had, no doubt, read English and served with the Britishers in the Army, but he was “no lover of the British Raj.” His admiration for the British officers does not go without qualifications. He shows a deep awareness of his cultural heritage and national history. *The Princess, A Bend in the Ganges,* and *The Devil’s Wind* present historical events with impeccable accuracy and perfect understanding. Most of his leading characters are Indians, and almost all the events take place on the soil of India, barring a few stray scenes here and there – the Burma Operation in *Distant Drums,* or the Cellular Jail episodes in the Andaman Islands in *A Bend in the Ganges,* or the Mecca voyage of Nana Saheb in *The Devil’s Wind.*
Malgonkar has been compared to John Masters, the author of *Bhowani Junction*. To some extent, the comparison is apt, as both write on identical themes – love and romance, sex and revellery, adventure and suspenseful situations, *thugee* and highway robbery, etc. In *A Bend in the Ganges*, we have plenty of these things. But the comparison should end there, because he is no imitator of anyone. He is rather endowed with a creative intelligence of the first order and an individuality of his own. K.R. Srinivas Iyenger is not altogether wrong when he remarks:

*Malgonkar is not an indigenous John Masters; nor is Distant Drum an Indo-Anglian variation of the Anglo-Indian Bhowani Junction. There is, on the contrary, an authentic quality about Malgonkar and his novel that can stand scrutuing without reference to the Masters recipe.*

Manohar Malgonkar, in the final analysis, is one of those Indo-English novelists who have shown a keen awareness of Indian tradition and her hoary history. Though he may not rank with ‘The big trio’ in the field of Indo-Anglian fiction, but he is still a force to reckon with and no to be forgotten by the posterity other writers might sound bookish or imitative, but Malgonkar
does not. V.S. Naipaul rightly noticed that Malgonkar was outstanding for his fondness for outdoor life.

The novels and short stories of Manohar Malgonkar mark a reaction against work-a-day social realism; romanticism is their key-note, they are rooted in authenticity and sound historical sense. He is not only a novelist of Indian life but also a novelist whose fictional concerns are of universal value. Malgonkar himself noted:

*To write of our own society and to be accepted by the English and American reading public we must be better than average writers.*

Malgonkar’s larger concern is with the passing away of old values, the destructive element in human nature, violence and revenge, *A Bend in the Ganges* for this very reason attains universality and epic grandeur. Though Malgonkar initially suffered critical indifference, he achieved immense popularity among the reading public at home and abroad.

The novels of Manohar Malgonkar set off earlier critics as they obviously operate on the formula of sex, violence and politics but his novels do have deeper structure of meaning. As regards violence, Malgonkar views it as the very essence of human
nature. *A Bend in the Ganges* serves as an interesting illustration of his vision of human nature. Unlike other Indo-Anglian novels, his novels are novels of out-door life, action, adventure and violence. A major element that mostly contributes to continuous external action, violence, and adventure in his fiction is the theme of revenge. It is a recurrent feature of his novels and it ultimately acquires the status of a major motif in them. But it is in *Combat of Shadows* and *A Bend in the Ganges* that Malgonkar uses violence, action and revenge, articulating his vision of human nature and as an integral part of his technique.

*A Bend in the Ganges* “raises the fundamental issue of the meaning of violence and non-violence.”22 It explores the inter-related destinies of Gian Talwar, a college student who becomes a follower of Gandhi, but who subsequently realizes that his creed of non-violence is not a practical one in real life; Debi-Dayal and Shafi Usman who are wedded to violence as terrorists working for the overth row of the British Raj, the former courting disillusionment and the latter becoming an andent communalist; and Sundari, Debi-dayal’s sister who breaks her own marriage for emotional revenge, against the epic background of the struggle for independence and the tragedy of partition. The
climax of the novel is “the stupefying bloodshed and violence that erupted from the dream of independence”, and which consumes Debi-Dayal, Shafi Usman and many others. Only Gian Talwar and Sundari are left with a faint promise of hopeful future.

*A Bend in the Ganges* is intended as an ‘anatomy of Ahimsa’ (non-violence). “A Bend in the Ganges”, says the novelist, “I tried to show how non-violence does not suit a large country like ours.” Gandhi’s creed of Ahimsa is discredited by the reality of violence.

The struggle for independence is yet to be fully explored in Indo-Anglian fiction; Malgonkar has tried to highlight the contribution of terrorist movement to freedom struggle. As R.P. Mehta has observed: “The background of the plot is equally authentic and possesses a sort of documentary validity” the story progresses on what C. Paul Verghese calls: pure coincidence” and with the device of the double hero or “an antithetical pair of anti-heroes.”

The central focus of *A Bend in the Ganges* is on revenge and violence. Each episode of the novel is structured on this reality of human life and Malgonkar shows how motives of revenge in his characters overcome their principles and superficial bonds of
relationship. The novelist seems to believe in the existence of force and violence as an inevitable element in human nature.

Violence gets a sharper focus in the novel also because the novelist wishes to emphasize element of heroism and marital virtues in the Indian tradition at the expenses of Gandhism and Ahinsa. Idealism and the creed of non-violence are meaningless before human instinct and human behaviours. Continuing this stand of the novel, Malgonkar views the Partition as an expression of accumulative violence.

The partition and its cataclysmic events of violence, carnage and bloodshed form the focus of attention in the last three chapters of *A Bend in the Ganges*. The theme of violence and revenge finds full articulation in the partition. The novel clearly shows that the creed of non-violence and truth is merely a political expedient; it is certainly not acceptable in real life. Human nature itself is made of violence and revenge. Almost all the episodes illustrate this reality of human nature. Certainly, the novel is a novel of psychological insight into human nature and a study of the everlasting problem of man’s remelty to others. Man is incapable of rooting out violence altogether and this is the
essence of the novel. Only for this reason it attains universality and epic grandeur.

Manohar Malgonkar explores the violent reality of violence but at the same time shows how it is destructive and self-consuming. Shafti Usman is an apt illustration. Also, violence overcomes violence. The oversriding message of the novel is therefore one of love, compassion and understanding. Despite being a tragic novel and ending on a wistful note.

The value that the novel does seek to affirm is the value of love which transcends violence and non-violence – the real and unreal- and brings about freedom and fulfillment to the individuals. This is the value that Gian, the unheroic hero, and Debi Dayal, the heroic hero, both discover in the act of living and their separate yet strangely involved lives.

There is no doubt that sex, violence and politics make A Bend in the Ganges a novel of popular appeal but the issues explored through these elements are significant and have relevance to Indian life even today. It is, therefore, difficult to agree with C. Paul Verghese when he says:

*The chief weakness of Malgonkar’s novels seems to arise out of his tendencies to concentrate his attention more*
on the exotic and melodramatic than on the worthwhile aspects of Indian life.27

A Bend in the Ganges explores themes which are related to worthwhile aspects of Indian life. True, Malgonkar writes romantic novels, and this novel is full of action and an adventure, revenge and violence, sex and love but his romanticism is paradoxically realistic and has sufficient relevance to the Indian context.

The world of Manohar Malgonkar’s novels and short stories is one of action, adventure, violence and outdoor activities. The revenge is a theme that runs through all his novels. This theme is a recurrent feature of Malgonkar’s novels and it ultimately acquires the status of a major motif in his fictional art. This is borne out by his major novels such as The Distant Drum, Combat of Shadows, The Princess and A Bend in the Ganges. However, the kind of role it plays in the novelist’s vision and art has not so far been examined closely and stands in need of adequate documentation. To begin with, A Bend in the Ganges may be cited an apt illustration. The revenge theme is a major motif of this novel but even a perspective critic of Manohar Malgonkar like
Professor Amur fails to appreciate its proper role and considers its persistence to be one of the blemishes of the novel.\textsuperscript{28}

The present investigation differs on this point. In his novels Manohar Malgonkar has explored bold and challenging themes and \textit{A Bend in the Ganges} is no exception. Writing about the theme of this novel, G.S. Amur very aptly comments:

\textit{.....the novel is by no means an endorsement of violence as a way of life. It concedes the reality of violence but throws it to be self consuming and destructive. On the novel’s showing, violence is certainly not an alternative to non-violence.}\textsuperscript{29}

But before this vision of love fully emerges, Malgonkar explores the world of violence and revenge. In fact, Malgonkar says in his prefatory note:

\textit{Only the violence in this story happens to be true: it came in the wake of Freedom, to become a part of India’s history.}\textsuperscript{30}

In fact, each episode is structured on the revenge and counter revenge. A novel which purpose to be a story of struggle for Independence and the tragedy of partition contains much violence and rightly begins with the burning of British goarments.
Gian Talwar joins the crowd of the followers of Mahatma Gandhi. The Geed of Non-violence strikes a sympathetic chord in his young heart. However, the revenge drama properly begins with his involvement in the family feud at Koushet between his family known as ‘The Little House’ and ‘The Big House’. In the dispute over the Piploda land Hari, his elder brother, is killed by his uncle Vishnu Dutt. For a while he behaves like a true follower of Mahatma Gandhi but his keen desire for revenge overcomes his principles. It almost possesses him; he spends several days in searching the axe with which Hari was killed and finally kills Vishnu Dutt with it.

Revenge alone satisfies Gian Talwar even as it lands him into jail. The novel from here onwards shifts its focus from Gian who had adopted Non-violence but who has been forced to choose violence, to Debi-dayal and Shafi Usman who are ‘Angry Young Men’ and are wedded to violence as a way of life. But both Debi-Dayal and Shafi Usman have become terrorists largely for personal reasons. Debi like Shafi and the other terrorists has a personal motivation in becoming a revolutionary. It is the traumatic experience of his adolescence, the sight of a drunken
Scottish soldier attempting to rape his mother, which turns him into a god of vengeance.

Debi chooses the path of violence to avenge himself on the British and he joins the terrorist group headed by Shafi Usman who is similarly motivated:

They knew his history. Shafi had a good deal to avenge.

As a boy of seven, he had been taken to identify the body of his father, flung obscenely on a heap of other bodies, in the enclosure of the Jallianwala Bagh.\(^{31}\)

Debi-Dayal, Shafi Usman and other terrorists work for the overthrow of the British regime in India.

Revenge for Malgonkar is a powerful motive in human life. Gian Talwar, Debi-dayal, Shafi Usman and Romashi Ghasita find their motive for action in the feelings of revenge.

“Motivation in Malgonkar’s fiction for revenge”, says R.S. Singh “is always born of the feeling of being slighted. More of venting anger than the idea of correcting the offenders, his characters take the risk of challenging their adversaries in public, where law fails nature prevails. Malgonkar’s characters, despite their personal and circumstantial limitations, obey their instincts more than their reason.”\(^{32}\)
Dr. Singh’s observation regarding motivation for revenge in Malgonkar’s novels is true of certain situations only such as that of Abhay’s mother in *The Prince* and that of Sundari in *A Bend in the Ganges*. Soon after her marriage to Gopal Chandidar, Sundari sees through a telescope that her husband is flirting with Malini on the beach in a state of nakedness. She feels slighted and plans a very sophisticated kind of revenge. Gopal also fully realizes the import of the situation. She uses the situation not only to humiliate her husband but also to insult Gian Talwar.

Sundari’s sophisticated mode of revenge is matched by Debi Dayal’s way of taking revenge on Shafi Usman Debi purchases Mumtaz, a favourite courtesan of Shafi Usman, at a brothel in Lahore to hurt him emotionally. Although Shafi cannot do anything to Devi for the present, he sneaks out of the back-door and throws acid-filled-bulbs at Mumtaz. Later when the Partition riots break out, Shafit and his companions attack Tek Chand’s house obviously to kidnap Sundari. In the fight that follows Gian and Sundari use the Shiva image as a weapon against Shafi and companions.

The revenge drama that begins with the Piploda land dispute from which the statue of Shiva had been dug up also
ends with the Shiva image playing a key role in the orgy of killing at the Kerwad House. Shiva is not only the god of destruction but also the destroyer of evil. From this angle, the novel has a circular pattern that basically arises from the revenge motif. Also, the revenge motif is invested with an imaginatige extension of reality by the symbolism of the Shiva image. Violence overcomes violence that the job that Gian found obviously with ‘the grace of Shiva’ finally takes him to hinderland of love.

The motif of revenge is an outstanding element of the novel that proves non-violence and violence. Each major episode focuses on revenge of one kind or the other; economic revenge, physical revenge, political revenge and emotional revenge.

There is thus enough variety within the broad element of revenge to sustain interest and not a mere boring repetition. Certainly, the recurring motif of revenge is used by Manohar Malgonkar as a sort of controlling device in the construction of his plot which largely depends on coincidence and accident.

The tragedy of Partition stirred the fiction imagination of our writers to creatively explore the various dimensions of such a colossal event. The partition and its horrendous consequences,
therefore, find thematic focus in a number of novels of the different novelists in Indian writing in English.

Whereas *Train to Pakistan* and *Azadi* directly deal with the Partition, *A Bend in the Ganges* is “an epic presentation of the whole struggle of the Indian Independence and its aftermath.”³³

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**Reference**


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