CHAPTER I

MAN-WOMAN RELATIONSHIPS

Man-woman relationship is as old as human existence. It was, in olden times, a biological necessity. The modern sophistication of it is an addition of civilization. In literature which is a reflection of life it forms the core. Right from the ancient epics and legends, literary endeavour has been to portray this relationship along with its concomitants, and to bring out the tragedy or otherwise resulting from it. Fiction, the most characteristic and powerful form of literary expression in modern times, also hinges on it. It is “one of the staples of the European novel,”¹ and occupies a similar position in modern Indo-English fiction which is generally taken to be an offspring of the former.

The everchanging reality of life inevitably reflects itself in literature as Meena Shirwadkar said,² and Malgonkar’s novels are no exception as regards his depiction of man-woman relationships. Like other Indo-English novelists, he too explores the tensions and pretensions in this area of life. That man-woman relationship forms a major theme in his novels can be seen from the numerical index provided by James Y. Dayananda in his
analysis of the novelist's themes. All his novels taken up for study here reveal the varied phases of man-woman relationship—marital, pre-marital, and extra-marital.

A close study of Malgonkar's novels—not a chronological one—reveals the state of man-woman relationship as it existed in India in the nineteenth century and continued to exist in the twentieth. This was a male-dominated society as regards this relationship. The burden of chastity and seclusion was put on the woman while men enjoyed the freedom of permissiveness. They considered women as creatures for their delectation if not as a chattel, as Sushilkumar De observed. This attitude of man towards woman is seen at its best in The Devil's Wind in which Malgonkar portrays child-marriages, and superstitious beliefs affecting marital life.

Nana Saheb in Devil's is believed to have a curse on his marital life. But it is his freshly discovered manhood which he voraciously enjoyed with Champa, his first concubine, that causes the death of his first wife, not any curse as such. She was only an ignorant and unaroused young girl on whom the man blew himself in his savage attempt to get sexual ecstasy. The result was that something got ruptured in her, and continuous bleeding caused her death. Nana is not sure whether he wanted to punish her for
not being Mani whom he loved or whether he expected her to be another sexual athlete like Champa. But the reader is sure that it is both.

"The subjection of the Indian woman in the pre-British period," says A.R. Desai, "was rooted in the social and economic structure of the society of the period." Malgonkar has shown a correct grasp of this in the portrayal of man-woman relationship in this novel. Though the curse on Nana was widely known, there were people to give their daughter in marriage to him when a huge sum of money was offered. This was because of the poverty of the parents. As soon as they got the money, they disappeared as though anxious to avoid pursuit. Female children were a burden to the parents who were eager to get rid of them. Thus married, Girija, his second wife, and Nana come to understand each other within four months of their marital life without sexual relations. Nana is careful not to have it even when tempted by her. So strong is the curse on him, he believes, that she will die as did the vine plant to which he was ceremoniously married at first. As if to reinforce the curse, she dies while on her pilgrimage. But it was because of cholera though it was not known at the time.

Nana is a compassionate man who fears the killing of women by
having marital relations with them. So he tries to keep away from marrying a third time. But in the medieval period marriage was a social duty towards the family and community and there was no chance of individual choice. That it was a convenient ceremony, a sacrament for man and woman, observed as an inviolable convention, without any consideration for personal feelings, is proved by Nana’s third marriage to Kashi, a ten year old girl. After this she is shut up in a part of the palace. That the man, with his limitless licence, did not remain compressed into this sacrament is clearly shown when Nana goes to his concubine soon after the marriage. Because he has his concubine to satisfy his lust, he never goes to his wedded wife. Also she reminds him “of a crow brought to a snake-house for a python’s meal” (Devil’s 46) which stresses the cruelty in child marriage.

In medieval India marriage was held to be sacred and hence irrevocable. The parties to the marriage could not dissolve it at will. This is the fix that we find Nana and Kashi in, and he describes it thus: “A wife is a wife, a husband a husband, and the two are tied together in one bundle that only death could untie. It was almost a master-and-slave relationship” (Devil’s 47). Kashi and Nana continue in this fix for about twelve years. He
avoids sexual relations with her as he is afraid of the curse, and she becomes a ritualistic exhibit on public occasions. But she has, as is natural, all the feelings of a woman. She knows she cannot bear her own child, so she thinks of becoming a mother through adoption for which she seeks Nana’s permission. By showing Kashi pining for becoming a wife and mother, Malgonkar portrays the position of the Indian woman who cannot go out of man’s domination to satisfy her womanly hungers. Kashi becomes a sort of chattel Nana acquired for ritualistic needs. But, like Champa, she changes into a different position in the third part of the novel.

Though she waited for twelve years suppressing her womanly desires, she never yielded to temptation. But when the right opportunity offers itself, she makes the maximum use of it. In Nepal, she understands that her beauty can be put to good use for the benefit of both. Now she has the cover of contingency in being the mistress of Jung Bahadur because she is doing it to save the life of her husband from the British. When Nana is angry with her for her infidelity, she argues with him: “Don’t you see, my lord, that I am doing this as much for you as for myself?...” (Devil’s 263). In their first and last confrontation Malgonkar has brought out not only the possessive spirit of the Indian husband, and his anger when his wife goes
out of his control, but also the wife's reasonable desire not to remain a repressed freak. Nana shows himself reasonable in allowing Kashi to be a mistress; he saves his own skin, and gets a practical solution to his marital tangle also. Thus they render mutual help as husband and wife though only by bond.

M. Rajagopalachari says that Kashi takes revenge on Nana by rejecting him as her husband for having been rejected by him as his wife. This remark, based on Kashi's own hasty words, is not true since she does not reject him as her husband. In Nepal, every Diwali, she came to him for the ceremonial worship of the husband as she had done at Bithoor. In fact they remain a 'symbolic couple' with Kashi wearing the red dot while living as the mistress of Jung and a few others. Though Nana no more considers her his wife, she does not sever her connection with him. Being the palace-mistress at Kathmandu she is able to protect the life of Nana by informing him of events. She turns out to be a far more valuable asset than the most priced jewellery when she warns him off saying that the political conditions in Nepal require his hurried escape.

When she comes to Nana with warning in due time, and sheds tears of sorrow at parting, it makes her a sort of sister-protector in his eyes.
Malgonkar has treated man-woman relationship as a master, and he has unravelled the mystery in it also through Kashi-Nana relationship. Nana married her out of necessity, merely used her for sacramental purposes, and in Nepal as the valuable asset that protected his life. The maximum he did for her was to allow her to have her way, and that too, with an ulterior motive. His life is essential for her only to be able to wear the red dot on her forehead without which also she could have pulled on as the palace-mistress. Yet she shows concern and devotion to him, crying bitterly because he was going out of her life for ever. He believes that she has a sisterly affection for him, and so he kisses her on the forehead chastely, and gives her Mastani’s ear-clips as a parting gift.

So far Nana had not loved or honoured her. Before the final parting he tells her that she is breathtakingly beautiful as Mastani. Kashi is very happy to hear these words from the man who had married her. For a moment he becomes the husband praising the beauty of his wife, and she the dutiful and obedient wife touching the feet of her husband out of traditional devotion to him. At the next moment he gives her his blessings as a father to his daughter. To us Nana’s role in her life is that of a father who takes care of the daughter who grows into a beautiful woman after
which she is given to another man. Nana understands this, and that is why he blesses her as if she were a daughter. This multi-faceted relationship between the two is an extension of Nana-Champa relationship. Besides the sexual aspect of man-woman relationship, Malgonkar has treated the saving grace of it in Nana and Kashi trying to save each other’s lives. What is noteworthy is their mutual gratitude. She is perhaps one among the “large number of ...imagined characters” in the novel.

“The fictionalization of history, demands a romantic situation to go alongside the historical situation of the mutiny.” Accordingly, Malgonkar portrays a case of lust and love, and heroism and villainy. Rape and its results are found in the story of Nizam Ali who abducted Eliza. He rapes her with the help of his wife who has the ulterior motive of satisfying his desire for a child whereby she hopes to keep her hold over him. Eliza becomes a heroine when she kills the man, and Nana a hero when he kills the woman to save her. Though she had been raped by many, he accepts her as his companion, and she also does the same, for, both are in misery. “How else could they face whatever years were still left to them except by clinging together, by giving and taking warmth and comfort and strength and companionship?” (Devil’s 225). Nana’s love for her, even after her
pregnancy due to rape, shows that love is something beyond the flesh. Eliza is not ready to go away not only because she has nowhere else to go, but also because she has understood him and found him fit to love and be loved. This mutual understanding takes them to a new world which is 'nirvana' for him.

Superstition affecting marital life and disrupting it is found in The Princes also. The marriage of Hiroji and the Maharani was really a compromise directly springing out of tragedy, and it did not prove successful as is to be expected. As a matter of obligation he produced an heir-Abhay-to make the succession secure, and promptly turned to his concubines to the utter neglect of his wife. Here, again, we find the husband neglecting the wife, believing that she is cursed and destined to carry bad luck. As in the case of Kashi, the Maharani is treated only as a status-symbol. While in Kashi-Nana relationship the curse is on the man, here it is on the woman. But in both cases it is the woman who suffers because of superstition. Apart from superstition, Hiroji seems to have found his wife "unpleasing to his sexual appetite." Though she was the most beautiful woman of her time, he found pleasure in his concubines. It seems that her touch-me-not air of purity has curdled his sexual desires.
While the husband is happy, satisfying his desires and passions, the wife, enclosed in purdah, is condemned to the shadows. She becomes a 'sati' while in the land of the living. Through her pathetic plight, Malgonkar describes the pitiable condition of Indian women in the early twentieth century—"Married...tied to a pair of feet,...and afraid to raise her eyes to the face of her man..." (Princes 163). Apart from being a naked statement of her own experience, her heart's outpouring is a virulent attack on men and their traditional manners in the superstitious Indian society. That the Maharani is not given a name itself makes her a representative of her class.

Speaking of the portrayal of the Maharani in Private Life of an Indian Prince Asnani says that they are idealized characters with their abject surrender to their corrupt husband. While this makes them wooden types with no individual personality of their own, Malgonkar's portrayal of the Maharani is as a highly individualised character. Though she has given birth to a son, her womanly longings remain unsatisfied. Yet she is patient and devoted to a great extent. "One has to live with one's own destiny. The world has to go on. It doesn't run on happiness," she tells her son once (Princes 161). But at times she also felt like setting fire to everything, and breaking through the bonds of convention. Yet she wastes herself away,
leaving aside the desire to lead the life of a normal woman until she comes into contact with the palace-officer and breaks away from the king.

The discord and disintegration in the marital life of these two has a direct bearing on the action of the novel culminating in the dissolution of the State. Thought it is the work of the democrats, Malgonkar hints at it through the tragic marital life of the husband and wife. That the king’s fate of ruin has connection with his ill-treatment of his wife can be seen when we look at the action in the light of the following words of Manu.

The house on which female relations, not being duly honoured, pronounce a curse, perish completely, as if destroyed by magic (III, 58).

In that family, where the husband is pleased with his wife and the wife with her husband, happiness will assuredly be lasting (III, 60).\(^ {12}\)

Thus we can see that it is not for nothing that Malgonkar has made the Maharani break away, causing great ignominy to the Bedar tradition. Just like the inner concordant rhythm in the father-son relationship, the discordant rhythm in the husband-wife relationship is noticeable as contributing to the development of the action of the novel.
While Hiroji’s marriage was a case of the feet kicking away the wife the first night itself, Abhay’s to Kamala becomes “a delightful experiment of two complete strangers discovering each other in all their intimacy” (Princes 220). He who hated conventional marriages finds that it has its own rewards, falling as it does into a neat groove. When he discovers a ‘pagan completeness’ in the act of marital relationship, Kamala becomes pregnant. When he is thus thrown out of sexual life, he thinks of other women. His youthful idealism having disappeared, he finds that he does not have a single spark of love for his pregnant wife. Consequently he understands that sensuality is the bond that connects man and woman, and that love is only a euphemism for lust. This discovery takes him to Minnie again, and he thinks of Zarina. He is grateful to his wife who does not poke her nose into his waywardness, wrapped up as she is in her role of the ideal Hindu wife. He gives her chances to come out of her purdah, and bask herself in the sunshine of Westernized social life in New Delhi. Coming back to Begwad, he depends more and more on her, and shares his thoughts with her so that, at times, they looked more like two friends than a couple.

As the days pass, their conjugal relationship grows into full swing. Kamala is anxious at his welfare, and is not ready to leave him alone in the
adversity of abdicating the throne. She is afraid that he might do something rash like his father. So she makes him conscious of his position as a father and husband. Abhay too comes to be conscious of it, and also of the fact that he loves her. When the words of love slip out of his mouth, she gazes at his face for a few seconds, her hopes having come true. It is a great thing for her to hear that her husband loves her. It is a revelation that comes to both of them, and the recurrence and the relevance of the following words are noteworthy. "Sometimes it comes after many years ... it cannot be there in the madness of youth ... and then one day it hits you ..." (Princes 316). Repeating these words of his mother, they go on talking about their problems as man and wife.

The intimacy between Abhay and Kamala, says Arjya Sircar, seems to be out of character and unconvincing. This, a contradiction in terms of his tradition, can be explained through the following words of Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall.

The temptation to infidelity is a temptation to grow and to explore the self. It is a need to feel that unrealized potentialities within the self can be evoked. Such exploration of self through diverse others is probably necessary for young people who are just feeling their
way in growth and relationship. We may all go through such a period when a few trial (but honest) relationships help us to mature. But our greater maturity brings with it the potential for a deeper growth possible only in one, lifelong, committed relationship.14

This is what happens in the case of Abhay’s relationship with Kamala. Critics make such comments because they take the view that the novel is only about the Indian royal tradition. What Malgonkar does is to portray the decline of this tradition and the emergence of democracy. In fact the movement of the novel is from autocracy to democracy on the political level, and on the social level it portrays women’s liberation movement from traditionalism to modernity. Amur seems to be hasty in his remark that the novel makes no pretensions to modernity.15

Contrary to Abhay’s, Henry Winton’s turns out to be an unhappy one in Combat of Shadows. As a contrast to his marital life with Jean Walters, Malgonkar paints with a single stroke that of John Trevor with his wife who was pregnant at the time of their marriage. Theirs is the happiest one in the novel since he loved her “as no man ever loved a woman” (Combat 272). In contrast, again, to this happy one, we have the life of the Darts. While there
is suspicion in their marital life, there is confusion and tension in that of the Mirandas. But these people keep up appearances, and nothing more is said about them.

The marital life of Henry and Jean follows the Othello pattern of elation, suspicion, conviction, and destruction, with a slight variation towards the end. He falls in love with her at the game-cottage at Chinnar. He is happy to get her at Silent Hill after the initial uncertainty and obstacles. With her Indian background she likes India and Indians. The very first conversation between them is about the Indian soldiers whom Henry dislikes. There is, as in Othello, dramatic foreshadowing when she speaks enthusiastically about Edddie whom Henry disliked already. (That Henry is able to note the difference between Jean and Ruby Miranda in their lovemaking—the former in clear light, and the latter in darkness—is also part of this technique.) Seeing her naked in clear lamp light sends a delightful tinkle through his body, and she surrenders her whole being completely and wildly to him. He is proud of having got such a beautiful wife, and their days are of wild animal rapture and delirious intimacy.

But their days of elation are short-lived, for Eddie intrudes into their heaven of marital bliss, first with his killing of the python, and taking Jean
(against Henry's wish) to the scene of the kill. Her hero-worship of Eddie is enhanced, but the latter is entrenched in Henry's dislike. It is not simply a case of the notion of racial superiority severely hampering the development of East-West understanding which Hemenway spoke of, but also a case of severe masculine jealousy. To add fuel to fire, she dances with Eddie on the night of Jeffrey Dart's visit to the estate, and both are found in a blissful state by Henry. His jealousy comes out as much as to suspect them to be lovers. He admonishes her for showing intimacy with the Anglo-Indian, but really it is his guilty conscience that makes him suspect the two.

If Gauri exposes the cracks in Henry's English armour, as Amur said, Jean tears open the whole thing, and exposes him nakedly. In the quarrel between them, she unveils his hypocrisy and false morality, referring to his former relationship with Ruby Miranda. He protests and protects himself saying that it was all before his marriage. But he had not told her anything about it himself. And that is her complaint. While she had openly told him about her love for Tony Barwell, he kept his side a secret. He feels like Antony before Cleopatra, with Jean who has a thorough insight into his mind. She tells him that, because he is unbelievably naive himself, he makes
things far more difficult and complicated than they need be. She openly
blames him: “You have never given me your whole-hearted love, Henry,
although you have demanded it from me. You have always held back—and that a woman can never forgive” (Combat 200). She had nursed her
own suspicion of her husband ever since she found the flesh-pink stockings
tucked away under the mattress in the spare room.

Henry’s suspicion and jealousy make his life a muddle. Apart from
these two, there is in him the masculine selfishness which compels him to
expect from his wife a clean record before and after marriage which he
himself does not have. This is the reason for the failure of his marriage.
But he is not ready to accept failure. He strives to arrive at a readjustment
of values, trying to avoid suspicion, and keeping himself in an easy mood
of tolerance. Though he passes through crucial days of readjustment, the
pressure of his determination to wipe out all suspicion is dependent upon
Eddie’s going away, and the announcement of his engagement to Ruby.

On the other hand, Jean finds it difficult to tolerate Henry’s suspicion
of her anxious concern for Eddie and also her moods of joyless indifference
to the man. His suspicion and the consequent quarrel make her cold
towards him, especially after her sexual intimacy with Eddie. This gives
their relationship a hardened pattern and it becomes a poor substitute for the animal raptures of their honeymoon days. She is estranged emotionally, and simply submits to his lust which seems to him a sort of rape.

Wallach’s Folly is symbolic of Henry’s folly also. He had promised to take her there, but he did not. He should have disclosed all his follies to her and started life on a clean slate. The tragedy is the result of a lack of knowledge of the basis of marital life on the part of Henry. It is also the result of his male selfishness. He is the man who did not have any scruples in taking Ruby even after knowing that she and Eddie are lovers. But the very chance of Jean and Eddie to be lovers or even old friends makes him furious. And when she goes away from his life, he only feels a sort of numbness because he understands that he did not love her. Thus their case becomes one of pre-marital and extra-marital relationships breaking the marital one.

The marital life of Radha and Tekchand Kerwad in A Bend in the Ganges is different from all the ones described above. They both lead a completely satisfied life. As John Rothfork observed, the masculine god of discipline (Shiva), and the feminine god of love (Krishna) are both present in their marital life. Having lived for twenty one years of marital life
with his Radha, Tekchand does not feel that they have been married that long as he is never fed up in sexual life with her. On the contrary, their sexual life is even now vibrant. "... maturity had only given it a fiercer, wilder appetite. Like a musical instrument, he thought, seasoned by use, a taut string tuned for its best performance" (Bend 110). Theirs was the perfect marriage and love.

Yet Tekchand had indulged in sex with other women during the years of his marital life. But those were not of the same quality as he had with his wife. They were acts of lust, purely physical experiences, something that a healthy and hardworking man required for toning up his system like exercise. They were not capable of stirring anything deep in him. His own sexual infidelity makes him think of whether his wife also has done the same thing, perhaps with a lover or with his own servant. But soon he becomes ashamed of such thoughts.

Malgonkar describes the tenderness and the tempestuousness in the sexual relationship between the two. Sexual intercourse is generally done on the initiative of the male, and the other only succumbs to it. But in the case of the Kerwads it is the reverse. Instead of exercising the prerogative of the male, he is the one who usually responds. At a signal from his wife,
obediently and eagerly he joins in, beginning at the beginning according to the instructions of Anangaranga, as if he were seducing a virgin. Kai Nicholson sees the two as partners who have agreed to play the game their own way to develop their sexual experience. That Tekchand does not exercise his classical male prerogative, and that it is started at a signal from the woman, Nicholson attributes to the influence of English literature, especially of D.H. Lawrance. Radha is a woman who is depicted as being emancipated in the European sense because of the Westernization that has set in in the Indian society. Malgonkar is able to implement Lawrence’s attitude to love on the middle-aged couple because of their wealthy Western background. During the love act their individualities are fulfilled but it does not lead to the merging of their individualities. This preservation of individuality during the whole composition of the love act by husband and wife as exhibited in Malgonkar, is different from the sweetness of love heightened through “the unison of two souls into an indivisible one” in Ruth Jhabwala.

As Tekchand doubted and soon dismissed it, his wife had thirsted to be ravished by a complete stranger, and this is what we see in her bed-talk with him. “‘From the beginning, darling’, she whispered. ‘Remember we
are not married .... You are my lover”” (Bend III). Again she whispers to him: “‘You are a wild man from the jungle; a soldier who has killed his adversary and abducted his wife, me; a big, red-faced soldier smelling of drink’” (Bend 112). He does not feel shocked at these words because her mood had already changed to the brutal, gluttonous love of soldiers and wild men.

These whispers remind us of an earlier occasion when Debi, the son, discovers her being molested by a bull-necked soldier from the Scottish Borderers. While attributing a reason for Debi’s hatred of the British, Malgonkar gets an opportunity to probe into man-woman relationship. Her body bathed in moonlight, she was standing silently and without any protest. It is only when the son appears on the scene, and hurls himself at the man, that she struggles to free herself. Also, she does not show any squeamishness at this infidelity like Tekchand. Thus there are lapses on the part of both of them, but, since they have genuine love, their physical lapses do not affect them. Their lapses are merely attempts at the gratification of the physical urge when they do not have chances to do it to each other. Thus Malgonkar says that love and lust are different and that chastity is nothing physical.
Paul C. Verghese has condemned Malgonkar's depiction of sex-scenes on the ground that they are meant "to compel the reader's attention rather than to develop his convictions." Ayyappa Paniker also does the same thing when he says that the mating of Radha and Tekchand is a distraction, a sort of padding commonly found in pulp fiction, meant for the entertainment of the readers rather than for their enlightenment. He finds that it has very little bearing on anything else in the novel. But he is careful to concede that their re-enactment of youth is provoked by the visit of the prospective son-in-law. Herein we have to see Malgonkar's genius in interpreting human behaviour from the psychological stance. Also, it must be said that he does not introduce the scene unnecessarily. It is like the best performance of a musical instrument, as Tekchand himself thinks of their sexual act. Their joy in life is going to end with the arrest and sentence of their only son, Debi, and the description of the sex-act is only a fitting finale to their joyous sexual relationship.

After Debi's imprisonment and Sundari's estrangement with her husband, the happy marital life of the Kerwads is coloured by sorrow. They continue to live for each other's sake. Even in the wake of the Partition holocaust he is happy that his wife would never leave him alone.
She is such a devoted wife that she wants to be with him wherever he is. He is remorseful that he has left the dead body of his wife uncremated. His "return from the convoy to be with his dead wife" is one of the "two clear assertions of positive values in a world of total chaos and destruction." Among the different facets of human relationships exposed in the novel, that which attracts our attention, and lingers in our memory after the novel is finished, is the conjugal relationship of the two with their petty differences of opinion which in no way affect its beauty or its sanctity.

Placed in juxtaposition to the joyous life of the parents, is the marital alliance of Sundari, the daughter, with Gopal Chandidar. It was an inescapable coincidence that the young couple went on their honeymoon the same day Debi's ship started for the Andamans. So it was difficult for her to drag her thoughts away from her brother for whom she had a motherly affection. Though she tries to shake off the despondency, to step into the role of a newly-married wife, the thoughts about Debi interfere in the delights of the honeymoon. "The purely physical process of defloration proved messy and was accompanied by a good deal of pain" (Bend 145).
Gopal, the husband, feels disappointed as Sundari does not show a full blooded attitude. That she is nervous and shrinks away to sobs makes him confused. Though he behaves understandingly, he feels clumsy and unwanted as her body remains cold and unresponsive. That she was forcing herself to play her part vaguely reminds him of rape. To add to the complication, the barking dog, Spindle—it was Debi’s—creates a quarrel between them. "'How dare you, you brute!"' (Bend 144) is what she screams at him when it squealed, being slapped by him. When the first night set the pattern of their honeymoon, rankling in their minds as something grotesque and unseemly, he rebels against it more than she. Her passionless surrender takes him to Malini, his girl-friend, again.

Sundari “makes a fair and sensitive assessment of the situation she is in.”24 She tries to make up for her coldness at the honeymoon. But the intrusion of Malini shatters her hopes. After discovering her husband’s adulterous relationship, her mind hardens; it strikes her that her marriage is as good as broken. Her orthodox upbringing compels her to stay with him even after his infidelity. But she is not worried about it as she wants the break with him to be clean and painless.
Gopal attains the emotional stability of the Indian male who could be kind and generous to his wife without loving her. So he goes on making an effort to give their marriage a semblance of success just as her parents had enjoined her to do. He does not exercise the prerogative of the Hindu male, the religious and social authority to break up marriage at will. This is because he is “influenced by the presence of alternative means of sexual and emotional satisfaction.” He has extra-marital relationship with Malini.

Sundari who has not attained that emotional stature wonders why he does not divorce her. According to her, Gopal believes that “once two people were married, they must live together until death parted them—an unhappy grafting of Western rules of behaviour on Hindu orthodoxy” (Bend 321). She who thirsts for ardent, passionate love thinks that this unhappy grafting is dangerous. Though there is conflict in her mind as a result of differences in outlook, she is not ready to take the initiative for divorce as she is living in a convention-bound society. She simply arrives at disgusting conclusions about conventions. “The truth,” as Lewis Way remarked, “is that the idea of male superiority is too deeply ingrained in the psychology of the woman as well as of man.”
Apart from the fact that Sundari’s marital life with Gopal is in juxtaposition to her parents’, it has a striking symbolic, and hence thematic, value since the novel deals with the Freedom Movement in India. The pattern which Malgonkar uses to illuminate the political situation—of the Indians struggling under the British—is to be discerned in this relationship. That Sundari is symbolic of Mother India is suggested at the beginning itself when the crowd, at the ceremony of burning foreign clothes, cheers her, ‘Bharat-mata-ki jai! Victory to mother India!’ (Remember her consent was not obtained before her marriage as the Indians were overpowered by the British without their consent.) John Rothfork is also coming to this point when he says that their marital relationship is “simply a struggle for power.”\(^\text{27}\) He becomes more explicit when, again, he refers to this analogy: “Like India she has been abused to the point of despair. Her marriage to Gopal who looked “like an off-duty British subaltern” (157), was a kind of polite rape symbolizing the position of India in the Empire.”\(^\text{28}\) In this context one is reminded of Meenakshi Mukherjee’s comment that the novel is “not so much a story of men and women as of places and episodes, not an integrated human drama but an erratic national calendar.”\(^\text{29}\) And one fails to understand what prompted her to say so.
If Sundari-Gopal relationship is a case of good manners taking the place of sexual appetite, Sundari-Gian relationship—extra-marital for her and pre-marital for him—is a case of good manners leading to sexual appetite. If her motherly love for Debi resulted in the initial estrangement between her and Gopal, the same love apparently brings her close to Gian in the initial stage. It is to know more about Debi that she invites him to her house. Her attitude to him is not coloured by carnality at first. But her artless and gay conversation, her easy laughter and invitation kindle the dormant desires in him. "He was tormented by a longing for her company, and was guiltily aware that the longing bore strong overtones of sensuality" (Bend 257). But they were waiting for an opportunity. While Gian is recuperating in her house after the dockyard explosion, they indulge in unrestrained sexual intimacy. For both of them it breaks away all barriers.

Gian accepts it avidly, not knowing or caring where it would lead him since he is incapable of resisting it. But soon his Hindu orthodox background, the narrowness and rigidity of his upbringing, asserts itself. The thought that his romance was built upon deceit torments him. He is not ready to carry on a clandestine affair; he wants to have an open, world-
defying love with her as he is afraid of flouting conventions. So he asks her to be ready to marry him.

Love for Sundari all this while has been a game, an excitement and an escape from the dull existence of a jilted wife. So she is in a dilemma at this attitude of Gian—of not being ready to take what was there to take and let it go unhurt. Not finding an easy solution she wavers in the fetters of convention for some more time. Her stock-taking finds him as simple, sincere, and the only recognizable human being without a false face. When she thinks of leaving Gopal and turning to Gian openly, destiny intrudes in the form of Debi. And she turns into a goddess of revenge.

“Sex is not merely the place where two bodies or two souls meet or come to know each other, it is also the place where one seeks vengeance either on oneself or on the other person, when one becomes an utter stranger to the other and where one cannot arrive at any decision.” This is almost wholly true of Sundari. It is her frustration in her relationship with Gopal and Gian that makes her lie naked on the beach with the latter, adjusting the telescope for her husband to view the scene. In her anger at Gian’s deception she calls him a male whore and a cheat. But her severe
harangue does not destroy his composure nor his faith in himself and in human goodness. This is what saves her when stranded at Lahore.

In their relationship, for both of them, the forward movement is from innocence to experience. Sundari is to be viewed as a fellow-traveller of Gian in their quest for identity and meaning in life. Otherwise she need not be attached to him in her extra-marital relationship. She could very well have it with Prince Amjud or any of his set if Malgonkar’s intention had been solely to show her taking revenge on her husband. He has left the novel open-ended, and the future of Gian-Sundari relationship has become a controversial point. Sundari as his fellow-traveller in their quest gives the lie of the land. Suresh Chandra says that love does not occupy any position of material importance in Gian’s life because he is a seeker of a higher ideal, the ideal of freedom from bondage. And for such a man marriage may only be an inevitable bondage to another.\textsuperscript{32} Sundari also, we have reason to believe, falls within this line especially after her disgusting experience in the male world.

In contrast to this relationship, the one between Debi and Mumtaz occupies a short space. But it has its own value at the level of character and theme. After his saving her from the brothel she keeps herself attached to
him because she considers him as her saviour, "a god!" (Bend 356). Though their life together starts on a sort of "slave-and-master relationship" (Bend 317), her serenity and selfless service dispel the confusion in his mind, and create in him manly emotions towards her. He is gradually caught in the 'coils of sansar' which turns his attention away from political inequities and unsettled scores. But all their plans to lead a peaceful family life are destroyed as they are caught in the tide of Partition. Through the tragic fate of the two Malgonkar emphasizes the fact that human sympathy and bravery have no place in a world of religious apathy and savagery. It is gratitude and mutual understanding that create love in them. What if one be a Muslim and the other a Hindu? the author seems to ask. It is Debi who comes near Gandhiji’s ideal of non-violence and human love between people of different religions. Sood brings out this point when he says: "Like Debi, she too has freed herself from those considerations which divide man from man." Amur misses this point when he says that Debi’s casual commitment to Mumtaz turns out to be an act of destiny.

H.H. Williams finding fault with the psychology of the characters "as much less skilfully portrayed," says that "Debi’s passionate nature seems monolithic and his involvement with the prostitute, leading to their
tragic murder is not told convincingly enough, to make it appear an inevitable expression of his emotional blindness."\(^{35}\) One has to dismiss this view as it is totally erroneous. In the first place Debi’s nature does not remain monolithic since his movement, though very slow compared to Gian’s, is from terrorism to non-violence. Secondly his involvement with the prostitute is told convincingly enough to make it appear an inevitable expression of his natural kindness, and not of his emotional blindness. Malgonkar seems to give him a Christ-like stature when Mumtaz, the prostitute, considers him as her ‘saviour’. Also, we have to consider his love for animals. The author describes his consideration for her as that of a master for his tiger-cub. Her love for him is described as a slave-animal’s patient and consuming love for its master, for his kicks and caresses.

In Malgonkar there are “variations of wives dissatisfied with the double moral code”\(^{36}\) of society. The Maharani, with her secret affair with the palace officer, Abdulla Jan, is such a one. She is not satisfied with a few stolen moments of rapture from a clandestine affair. When even these moments are denied to her, she is not ready to fumble in darkness like an animal or leper kept in segregation. So she breaks away from the palace and the king without telling anyone. Going to her own house at Jhansi, she
continues her relationship with him, first by appointing him as her estate-manager, and later on by changing her religion to marry him. The Bedar Maharani marrying her Muslim lover is no mortification to her because she wants to identify herself with her husband in all respects. Thus her desire to find "a place of honour in a man's house" (*Princes* 320), as his wife who shares his joys and sorrows, seems fulfilled.

This episode has invited adverse criticism from a few. While Srinivasa Iyengar says that it "doesn't cohere with the total fabric," Arjya Sircar finds "indeterminacy and structural disarray" because of this episode, which, to Prema Nandakumar, "seems to be excrement elements in the narrative." Many commentators have, thus, taken a simplistic view of the novel, seeing only its political side to the utter neglect of the sociological aspect. They see the novel as an autobiography of the narrator, Abhay, and a biography of the Maharaja, as did Saros Cowasjee. It is partly the biography of the Maharani also, who is a representative of the Indian women who wanted to liberate themselves from "the medieval forms of social subordination and suppression from which they suffered for countless centuries" as a result of religious ordinances.
In Malgonkar the most prominent cases of pre-marital relationships are of Abhay’s with Minnie, and Henry’s with Ruby. Abhay falls in love with her at first sight, and his ‘anger and annoyance’ is only part of his moral idealism. His moral scruples every now and then interfere in his desire to possess her because he thinks that she is Punch’s girl. Even the letters that he writes to her are “so innocent; like a schoolboy’s letters to a girl in the same class ... a girl he doesn’t know very well” (Princes 187). He does not understand that she is a call-girl easily available to people like him. At least, his romantic idealism does not allow him to see her in that light. But he falls into her snare and slowly forgets his moral scruples when she goes on tempting him. The whole day picnic with her becomes to him a day of growing up, of coming of age and almost discovering himself.

Though he is passionately in love with her, she does not have any deep feeling for him. As an Anglo-Indian call girl she betrays her quality of acquiring security through worldly possessions. Behind her hesitant, helpless air she conceals a cool and calculating mind. There is a hard glint in her eyes when she speaks of the ten thousand rupees offered to her for his letters. She makes him conscious of the consequences of his proposal after his father’s interference in the affair. She tells him, just as his father
had told him, that love is not everything as it makes things complicated, taking one away from all that is one's own.

Abhay understands Minnie's attitude to him perfectly well from her letter found in Tony's wallet. This gives him a revelation as to what his relationship with her was and should be. This, coupled with her 'Dear John' letter, gives him the right perspective to view her in. Though he understands that her earthy sensuousness and air of helplessness are no more than a feminine weapon of attack cloaking a tough inner core always directed to the main chance, he does not have any hard feelings for her as she is the first woman who helped him to prove his manhood. They both indulge in extra-marital relationship under the guise of mutual benefit. It is a singularly rewarding experience to him as it "dramatizes his loss of innocence and growth to maturity."42

This growth to maturity is further explained by him in his nostalgic reminiscence of his reunion with Minnie.

No shadow of sin hung over us, nor a sense of guilt. It was as though whatever we were doing was merely a compliment to our respective married lives. It was, above all, an experience which wore away the barbs of intolerance that lay like thorns buried deep within me
for all these years. It taught me that my father and mother too were not sinners, but merely helpless human beings caught up in the irresistible urge for fulfilment, that it was just that they were not as fortunate as I was. (*Princes* 235)

Thus, in his encounter with the adult world represented first by Minnie, Abhay undergoes experiences which make him wise in the ways of the world.

Like Abhay, Henry is attracted towards Ruby at first sight. His intention is clear when he establishes a dual relationship with her, the schoolmistress during office hours and his wanton companion during non-duty hours. Since he does not want to marry her, he does not encourage her social advances. Like Johnny Tallent in *Bhowani Junction* he thinks that she will do anything because she is a chi-chi girl. But his “exclusive sexual interest”\(^{43}\) does not prevent him from appreciating her good qualities—"the rare mixture of the submissiveness and surrender of oriental womanhood with the freedom and gaiety of the West" (*Combat* 116). This appreciation makes him give her the position of a wife slowly but obliquely.

But he also believes that she understood the dual nature of their
relationship perfectly well and accepted it. So he is surprised and shocked at her flare-up when he marries Jean.

On the other hand, Ruby comes to him flouting the love of Eddie in her dream of becoming his memsahib. Like Victoria Jones in Bhowani Junction she "places the genetic question above all other considerations." So, she mixes the love-potion in the lemon-tarts given to him, and waits for his proposal. In her blind efforts to make him fall in love with her she does not pause to notice his attitude of nonchalance. She mistakes him totally; her English counterpart makes her submit herself to him, the Indian counterpart gives her hopes of marriage because he had asked her about her family.

When she is cast away in favour of Jean, her mind is full of hatred for the tingod snob that Henry is. So far she loved him for what he was. But now she becomes critical not only of his features, but also of her love for him. She calls him a white swine and breaks his bottle of perfume. He hisses at her calling her a half-caste slut and a chi-chi street-walker. When he pushes her away, she crumbles down. And like a tigress prodded to roaring, she swears revenge and spits at him. "The racial antagonisms
come out in full force. Each has hurt the other, at first as an individual, and then as a race."⁴⁵

While Henry's relationship with Ruby is a case of lust without love at first and love without lust at last, Eddie's relationship with Ruby is a case of love without lust at first and lacking both later on. He was in love with her, and wanted to marry her as soon as he got a job. He is against her taking appointment at Silent Hill, and his protest to her parents brings out the reality of the situation. His relationship with Ruby is well contrasted with that of Henry and Ruby, for "it had been something far, far deeper and more precious, going beyond mere sex and a desire for female companionship, more earthy and more noble at the same time" (Combat 120). But because of Ruby's selfishness, such a love does not thrive. Nor does Henry's love for her when he goes back to her thoroughly humbled and chastened.

Malgonkar could have been kind to exclude Ruby from revenge, and thus regenerate her though she had sworn to it. Her part in the act of the 'burning conclusion' shows her as ungrateful to Henry, thereby making her "possess nothing of the incalculability or unpredictability of life of the 'round' characters."⁴⁶ If at all the characterization does not give the readers
any sense of elation, the python symbolism incorporated into the action is surely a technique of elevation. Srinivasa Iyengar has noted this. The python's call to procreation results in their destruction as Henry explains to Jean:

'All because of a mating call. Instead of finding a mate, they get their heads blown off—it's horrible.’

'Well, if they would only keep away from tea-gardens, they wouldn't get their heads blown off. Was it very far?' (Combat 181)

Henry, without his knowing, is caught in the coils of the python represented by Gauri, Rubi, Kishore etc. At first he does not realize it, and when he comes to it, it is too late. Thus, with the python symbolism which explains the whole action beautifully and artistically, Malgonkar has created a novel of unusual distinction.

Pre-marital sexual relationship is found to have a strong influence in the development of the protagonist, Kiran Garud, in Distant Drum. His relationship with Margot Medley, wife of Bob, reminds us of the relationship between Tony and Jean, wife of 'Tug' Holland in the short story, 'Mission into Malaya' (Bombay 77-85). While the emphasis in the
story is on the revenge motive of the husband, in this episode involving an Indian and a British woman, it is on the chastening influence of it on the protagonist.

At Raniwada, Kiran adores Margot's beauty. This adoration leads to sexual intimacy, and both spend days of wild desire and fulfilment. When the clandestine affair is put an end to, they continue it at Calcutta. Not only does she take the initiative but also teaches him what his attitude towards women should be. "Don't ever tell a woman you are sorry you kissed her," she advises him (Drum 32). Her advice to him about Bob's sudden appearance also is in the same vein.

To Kiran it is not such an easy thing to forget soon. He takes the whole blame upon himself. He puts himself in the place of Bob, and tries to imagine his feelings—the feelings of a husband who sees another man in his wife's flat when he knocks eagerly at the door. His imagination breaks down as it does not bear thinking. He wishes that Bob punished him by killing him on the spot. He is ashamed of himself, and sorry for Bob of whose life he caused the ruin. It is his essentially moral nature that gives him the sense of guilt and consequent regret at what happened because of him.
Amur says that the novel shows the presence of fairly serious moral concerns, but these are not fully or consistently developed. According to him, Kiran’s exploration of the past is “not a dynamic moral activity affecting the values of the present; it is just a nostalgic act of memory caused by chance encounters and incidents.”

This is only a hasty observation. It is certainly his memory of the past that makes him considerate towards the British, and creates in him a sense of regret at his impulsiveness towards Col. Manners. He shows restraint in his relationship not only with men like Kamala Kant, but also with the girl, Bina, whom he loves, and gets chances to do anything with. Indira Bhatt also, perhaps after Amur, says that though the Margot Medley incident “awakens in him a sense of guilt, it does not, in any way affect him personally.” This, again, is totally erroneous. It is not because of his soldier’s training and army code (which is based on the British public school system which does not teach all the virtues) that Kiran does not indulge in pre-marital sexual relations with Bina. It is because ‘the Margot episode’ has affected him personally. We have Kiran’s own thoughts to testify to this. As he walks along the Najafgarh track, after parting company
from Bina and others, he wishes she were with him, alone, in the cold moonless night.

And then cutting across his thoughts like a knife, the chilling picture of a man standing in a doorway, looking stunned, and turning and running away down the stairs; a man blowing his brains out in a remote jungle camp. And in the wake of Bob Medley, inevitably Margot herself warm and perfumed and naked and deliciously wanton ... not again ... not again .... (Drum 99)

This tension between the past and the present which results in moral discovery in Kiran is admirably brought out by A.N. Dwivedi who says that Kiran "has a sense of human values above and beyond the military laws,"50 and by Ayyappa Paniker when he says that "Kiran Garud’s preoccupation with the army code ... has a non-military, spiritual side to it."51

Kiran-Bina relationship is one of pre-marital love without lust. In Delhi their love develops on the Western model, meeting at clubs and exhibitions, and moving in cars and kissing in them. Though he does not give any indication of his intention to marry her, she gives proof of her love for him. She goes to his room at Akbar Mess, and takes 'a man’s drink in a
man’s room’. The stanza quoted from Walter de la Mare’s poem is symbolic of the invitation of Bina who has fallen for him. Everything is done to wring out an assurance of love from her ‘handsome hunting man’. Since he does not give that, she finds it difficult to defy her father who wants her to marry Aravind Mathur. There is a sea of anguish in her words at the senselessness of society in its obsession with social and financial position which does not allow a man and a woman to do as they like. Yet she defies her father after getting the assurance of love from him. And it results in further complications.

Kiran’s falling in love renders enchantment to his life as it did to Abhay’s. He is very late in his open assurance of love for her. He believes that she has understood it. Thus they both are caught in the same web as in *Combat of Shadows* where the crisis in the relation between Henry and Ruby is precipitated for lack of open, honest dialogue. Because of his excessive preoccupation with the army and its prospects for a career officer like him, he gives “the impression of being an uncertain and unsure person.” As a man of honour he goes to Kashmir without informing her after he is transferred by her father. But on a sudden impulse he calls her when he
comes back for the Satpura Reunion, and speaks to her of his intention to marry her.

Kiran’s soldier iship is neither bellicose nor displayful. The slaughter and gruesome sights of battle, ‘the moving accidents of flood and field,’ as Othello put it, have not bred in him a blood-thirsty spirit. On the contrary, he has developed a magnificent sang froid, a stern equanimity. Like Brutus and Othello, he is a fervent worshipper of honour. The glamour and mystery of his romantic background is the source of Bina’s love for him. “You look nice in battle dress; most people don’t,” she tells him (Drum 106). But H.M. Williams finds her defiance of her father to marry Kiran as “little convincing,” and Shyam Asnani also finds it “uneasy to swallow.” Yet the latter comes to the point when he says that Malgonkar, himself a high military officer, knows the fascination brass hats have for ages exercised over maidens with a flair for adventure as against the bored prospects of a life given to luxury and affectation under people like Arvind Mathur.54 Apart from their love for each other their serene suavity which is their striking quality settles them to a steady and firm familial life for which Sonal’s attempts at their separation can be taken as a preparation.
This love-affair, though it started on the Western model, gradually becomes Indian. His love for her is the refined rapture of the complacent idealist caught in conflict between love and sense of duty. The chief value of love is that it makes suffering possible. Through suffering he comes to enjoy fulfilment in love. Apart from totally identifying herself with his sense of values, Bina has a correct insight into Kiran’s mind when she says: “I have often wondered if you were not deliberately preventing yourself from ... from liking anyone” (Drum 260). This is because there is in him, as said above, a deep conflict between love and responsibility, between the personal and the patriotic. But he does not have to sacrifice either because of his tolerance and capacity for understanding. To him comes the wisdom of accepting the realities of life, and the prize for it is his marriage to Bina.

Thus there is a comprehensive portrayal of man-woman relationship in Malgonkar’s novels. He speaks of what it was in the medieval period in India, and how it extended to the modern times without much change. He describes how superstitions and infidelity affected conjugal relationships. We are given a beautiful picture of how some women reacted to male chauvinism and how others acceded to it. As a novelist with a keen observation of life, he analyses the reasons for happy and unhappy marital
lives. With the keen insight of a psychologist, he portrays pre-marital and extra-marital relationships, and shows sex as the primary instinct in man-woman relationships. He has a clear and correct understanding of the working of the masculine and feminine mind. He portrays the frivolous attitude of man who casts away women like worn-out shoes in the presence of new ones. He shows that man is not able to fathom the mysteries of the feminine mind. He wants man not to consider women merely as a means for the release of his sexual energy.
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