CHAPTER II,
INDO-BRITISH RELATIONSHIPS

Of all the Europeans, the British stayed in India the longest, and they had more contacts with the Indians. They were the rulers, and the Indians the ruled who hated their rule. Malgonkar’s novels deal with this part of Indian history in which the Indians were trying to throw off the yoke of foreign rule, and to gain freedom from its supremacy. For most of the writers connected with India, Indo-British relationship or East-West encounter was a favourite theme. “A large number of their novels tend to concentrate on the so-called encounter between East and West, not only at the level of people but also at the level of ideas,” observes Meenakshi Mukherjee. While the majority of these writers find a creative challenge in this tension between the two civilizations, Malgonkar does not exploit it as his contemporaries have done; it does not acquire the prime source of tension in his novels though the confrontation of the two cultures and values becomes a major concern.

As in the case of man-woman relationships Malgonkar’s novels provide the historical sequence of Indo-British relationship, starting from the nineteenth century, as seen in The Devil’s Wind. There is a truthful
description of this relationship at the political level. The East-India Company, as Malgonkar portrays it, is in the nature of a vulture ready to eat up the weak rulers, first by offering protection, and later leading them to destruction. The Indian rulers lived in constant fear of the British whose good-will was essential for their privileged existence. Under the policy of annexation they were like jungle animals, fearfully waiting for the game-drive to begin. The slaughter-house imagery that Malgonkar employs in this connection beautifully brings out their terrorized situation.

Where there had been tigers were now sheep—sheep waiting in neat, British-made pens, nervously eyeing the figure with the ax to make the next move, hoping they would be spared just this once. . . . that someone else, some other herd of sheep would stampede and trample down the butcher with the bloody ax. (Devil's 84-85)

While this was the case at the political level, there was greater discontent at the racial level. "The conquest of a race requires imaginative grasp of realities, human sympathy, tolerance and constant touch with the people. The British, on the contrary, were suffering from the common malaise of over-confidence due to perceptible consciousness of race
superiority." The new officials of the Company were incapable of exercising restraint in their dealings with Indians. Even in the dispensation of law and justice they were partial. When the Indian soldiers were blown off for not biting the greased cartridges, the British criminals were let free after a farcical trial. The Indians were never permitted into British drawing-rooms as they were considered untouchables. Even the Eurasians were barred from the army and civil services. In the past it was not so because there were 'bibis' who acted as the link between the sepoys and the sahibs. The racial arrogance started with the arrival of the British women, and the rejection of the 'bibis' for their sake. Thus we are told of "the changing condition of India, of the discontent and unrest among large sections of the Indian population produced by the British rule."3

While portraying Indo-British relationship in India Malgonkar contrasts it with his description of it in England through Azim's meeting with Sir William Russell. He, with whom a lowly port officer in Bombay refused to shake hands, was treated as an equal by Russell. His experience with the white women in England, and especially with Miss. Sylvia Bolten who comes madly to India to marry him, amply illustrates this contrast. And when Mrs. Scobie at Kanpur tells Miss. Bolten how she treats the
Indians--allowing them the use only of the back verandah and the back-gate--the contrast is more than clear.

"The social isolation of the ruling race" which "generated contempt for the ruled" is stressed by Malgonkar in describing the incident of the British community at Kanpur, meeting under the leadership of Mrs. Scobie to have Miss. Bolten certified insane, and, failing in it, deciding unanimously to extern her on moral grounds. How strong is their desire to maintain the purity of race can be seen in their thoughts and efforts to get her declared as "an 'undesirable person' (under a regulation normally invoked to get rid of disease-ridden prostitutes)" (Devil's 62), and then shipped back to England. So it is not a curious fact when she, after her marriage to Capt. Frazer, appears as the peer of Mrs. Scobie herself with her efforts to preserve the purity of her race.

Though the general atmosphere was such, Malgonkar does not portray Indo-British interaction as a matter purely of hatred and disgust on both sides. Nana is insufficiently committed to the cause of the revolt because of his friendship with many Englishmen. His close friendship with General Wheeler and Hillersdon, the Collector, has given him to understand that there are men without "the unqualified hatred of the
Coopers and Hodsons; as though deep in their heart of hearts, they were never free of a doubt that they were fighting for the perpetration of a great wrong, the enslavement of a gullible and hospitable race” (Devil’s 84).

Nana’s relationship with Wheeler illustrates that personal losses do not interfere in friendship. Since the General is more Indian than British, not only because of his Indian wife, but also because of his long stay in India, he and Nana become very close. Not only the two men, but also their families mingle very closely. That a brotherly love existed between them is proved by the fact that Nana feels that something he himself longed for all his life has been snatched away when the latter is denied the post of C-in-C for the last time.

Contrary to Nana-Wheeler relationship, Nana-Hillersdon relationship is a case of official status curbing true and intimate friendship. The racial fear and suspicion of the British result in their lack of trust in Nana who is their professed friend. First they decide to entrust their families to his protection, and later change it. This produces suspicion in him. So he concludes Hillersdon is no longer a friend. It is through the relationship of the two that Malgonkar strikes at a ‘blind spot’ in British character. They take patriotism and racial loyalty as their monopoly; they
are not able to understand that Indians like Nana might put them above the obligations of friendship. It is true that he shows patriotism and racial loyalty, but at the same time he succumbs to the obligations of friendship as far as possible. Before he locks himself on the Indian side, he keeps his promise of sending word to Wheeler and Hillersdon about the attack as a concession to a friendship he truly valued. "In fact Malgonkar tries to put before us a completely different image of Nana Saheb from the conventional image put forward in the pages of history."  

The social atmosphere before the mutiny, as Malgonkar portrays it, is one of fear and suspicion on the part of both nations. Nana tells Hillersdon that the British are afraid of the sepoys, and are trying to instil fear. How they can go on ruling the Indians when they are afraid of them and show it, he asks Hillersdon. Malgonkar delves deep into the imperial situation when he makes Nana ask such a perceptive question. It is the same fear of the Indians that made the Company deny the post of C-in-C to Wheeler because of his Indian connection. Nana tells Hillersdon that the degradation done to Wheeler has taken away the faith of the sepoys in their British masters when the latter speaks to him of their devotion for the General. In this context one is reminded of Ralph Crane who has noted the
difference of Malgonkar from the Raj novelists in the portrayal of the attitude of the sepoys towards the British. Hillersdon's view is of the Raj novelists while Nana's view may be Malgonkar's.

Indo-British relationship acquires the nature of a see-saw when the superior position of the British comes down to hard surprise at the upsurge of the revolt. Those who had put the Indians into sheep-pens were in the pens themselves. With their crookedness they create dissension in the ranks of the Indians. But such crookedness does not affect Nana's personal relations with Englishmen as is seen in his hurry to send them off to Allahabad. The British does not make any such distinction in their ruthless revenge on the Indians. It is a part of the counter-revenge of some of them who were craving to make the last retaliation before they were victimized that tragedy occurred at Satichaura and Bibighar, says Nana. Thus Malgonkar makes Nana willing to admit the facts and shame of the Indian savagery only in the light of British savagery. This, as Ralph Crane said, can be taken as an example of the skill of the historical novelist in him who, by breathing subjective feelings into his work, becomes a writer of fiction, not of history. As such, one has to disagree with Amur who finds in the work "more history than novel."
While *The Devil's Wind* deals more with the political side of Indo-British relationship, *Combat of Shadows* concentrates on the racial rather than the political side of this relationship that continued to exist in India. But no reader will fail to notice the political context of the book because it is in this larger political context that the racial and cultural prejudices of the characters could be fully understood. As in the former novel, here also there are men and women of the three races, Indian, British, and Anglo-Indian. Of the men the most important are Jugal Kishore, Henry Winton, and Eddie Trevor respectively.

Kishore was one of the favourites of Wallach who tried to introduce the privileges of British labourers into Assam. As the chief stockman Henry finds him soft and yielding whenever it suited him, and capable of violent recoil also. He is not a man to be put down with bluster, he understands. He needed far bigger guns, and plenty of ammunition too, Henry thinks in the hunter's language. His relationship with Kishore begins when the latter starts labour union activities. He doubts whether he has become the whipping boy of the low-caste fellow when the complaint is lodged with the police. This becomes the immediate cause of his hatred of the man. After Jeffrey Dart's admonishing he takes it too much to heart as he didn't
mean any harm to Gauri. It also makes him afraid, and so, hesitant of facing him when he comes to his bungalow with her for the post of a teacher. His behaviour reflects his racial and personal hatred of the man. He does not take her as a teacher because she is an Indian.

Kishore’s main function, as Amur observed, is “to constitute a political threat to Winton’s career in India and to hasten his downfall.” Surely, his complaint to the police was his way of retaliation. There are only two face-to-face meetings between the two. The second time he comes to Henry is to give him the news of his resignation to contest the bi-election to the Assembly. More than his helplessness to fight with the British manager, it is his hatred of the latter’s superciliousness that is reflected in his words: “It is so easy to be rude to someone who cannot be rude to you, Mr. Winton” (Combat 112). To his courteous behaviour the latter shows curtness, and then he reminds him once again of his superciliousness and racial hatred: “Now you are being rude to me again merely because I happen to be a subordinate . . . subordinate and an Indian” (Combat 111). With all his moral depravity he is correct in his appraisal of Henry’s apathy when he tells him: “We all have our feelings, Mr. Winton. Your failing is
that you cannot bear Indians: yet your tragedy is that you are doomed to work in this country . . ." (Combat 111-12).

This analysis of the reason for Henry’s alienation from the people of India is in the nature of the advice which Cockburn often gives him. Much of Cockburn’s advice Henry tries to follow, but coming as it does from an Indian and a politician, he does not heed to it. He is secretly afraid, and that is why he feels it irksome to meet the challenges of the man. He is not ready to face the fact that he is “no different from the Indian whom he hated for his substandard morality,” a fact which the other wants to make him conscious of. Instead he mocks at the Indian politician’s method of non-violence. Through this last meeting of the two Malgonkar exposes Indo-British relationship in its political nuances in greater detail. He shows the Englishman’s impatience with the Indian politician, and the latter’s annoyance at the continued supremacy which he hopes to fervently overthrow as an expediency.

To Kishore, Henry is a rogue-elephant he tried to catch with the scarecrow that is Gauri. But the White elephant does not fall into his trap. So he comes adequately armed to meet him. (The metaphor of arms and ammunition used in connection with the Indian and the British takes the
story to the realm of the political fight between the ruler and the ruled.) With his shower of bullet-like retorts, he drives Henry into his room. The picture of the Whiteman as the hunter, and the Indian as the hunted, a hint of which is given in the first episode of Henry shooting towards the place where Gauri was hiding, slowly turns upside down as Malgonkar portrays the political scene. There is also another side to this encounter. While the hunted Indian is going to become the hunter, he takes up the very values of the hunter-Whiteman as his legacy. As Kishore says, he is going to be a minister with the very same qualities of Henry, crooked, corrupt, and immoral.

Though Kishore takes on the bad qualities of Henry, like his sense of revenge and personal hatred, he is no enemy of the British. He submits to Dart's attempts to buy him off. He hates Henry only for his stance of moral rectitude. But the hatred that the two perpetrate for each other goes a long way. "Once he starts hating Kishore for his active role in inciting labour trouble for him, there is no end to it, even though the latter submits his resignation and goes to be a powerful political leader."¹² He sees Kishore's hand in everything that is unpleasant at the estate. Kishore, on the other hand, as the minister, shows the very same spite that Henry showed him as
his subordinate. It is he who does not allow Henry to join the War and escape from Silent Hill. There is no difference between the Indian minister that Kishore is, and his British master that Henry was. If at all, the Indian’s revenge on the White man seems a little unwarranted.

Henry does not exemplify the characteristic British reaction to a difficult situation. Kishore testifies to his running away: “Yes, run away; run away, that is the best thing you can do” (Combat 113). But the British in this novel are not totally without virtues. When Kistulal is killed by the rogue-elephant, Dart gives compensation to his family. Henry takes Pasupati, his eldest son as a coolie at the estate. It is the politician and labour leader, as Malgonkar portrays it, who does not allow the British to do as they wished, by interfering in their relationship with the coolies. In this context one is reminded of Mr. Withers, a tea-estate manager who Mulk Raj Anand refers to as having declared in his evidence before the Whitley Commission that trade unions would lead to trouble and hence should be banished.13

*Combat* is “a novel that tackles the E.M.Forster subject of a Britisher’s alienation from the Indians and the corruption of the British by imperialism and their own hatred and ignorance of India.”14 Because of his hatred of
their leader, Henry is found threatening the ignorant and innocent coolies with eviction and loss of job. He is not ready to discuss their problems or allow them the right conceded to British labourers. It is his false pride and sense of superiority that prevent him from a gentlemanly talk with them. He does not try to pacify them; instead his efforts are in the line of adding fuel to fire. Unable to vent his venom of hatred on Kishore, he spends it on Gauri and her brother by striking them to bleeding. This arouses her burning rage, and results in swearing revenge—"I shall kill you for this, you white monster!" (Combat 139).

Like Ronny Heaslop in A Passage to India, Henry also has no perception of the prospects of personal relationships between the English and the Indians, and the only bond that he conceives of is that of the ruler and the ruled. So, after the strike, he accepts more firmly "the Kipling structure of social position and race" which had been his before. His moral values give him a life of stress and strain under the demoralizing circumstances. So he abandons his commitment to honourable conduct and decency. And it creates drastic consequences.

Henry's initial attitude towards the Anglo-Indian world is one of aversion. But he is attracted by Ruby's sexy appearance. On the other
hand, what brings her to the Englishman is "the throbbing, compulsive craving of Anglo-India to seek living kinship with the West," and to prevent "further assimilation with the smothering, enveloping peoples of the Indian soil" (Combat 103). Malgonkar’s portrayal of the problems of the Anglo-Indians finds corroboration in V.R.Gaikwad who analyses the formation and development of opinions and attitudes of the community in the pre-Independent years towards the two groups they came into contact with. Pointing out the shift in their attitudes and opinions with the changing socio-political conditions in the country, Gaikwad says that the highest pro-British attitude was found in 1937. Since they feared that rapid Indianization would result in the loss of their ethnic and cultural identity, they attempted identification with the ruling Whites. But the Whites treated them with amused tolerance and merciless ridicule, not as their social equals. In the novel Henry is not ready to marry Ruby or accept her as his social equal because of his racial prejudice. But she wants to marry him to wash away the contamination of India. For the fulfilment of this dream she is ready to go to any extent.

The novel moves round "the foci of Winton and Eddie," and when the latter is appointed under the former, "the two worlds fully confront
each other." Henry's hatred of Eddie is the result of his racial pride, and feeling of superiority, manly jealousy and suspicion. He does not want himself to be known as a rival to the Anglo-Indian in love. Though he hates him as the lover of Ruby, he is compelled to take up his cause at orders from Dart. Before the strike he finds himself in a tight corner. "It was ironic, Henry thought, that he would now be having to oppose his own workers to fight for Eddie Trevor" (Combat 124). It is Henry's hatred of Kishore that makes him fight for Eddie, thus showing his preference of the Anglo-Indian to the Indian. This is a case of desire in aversion apart from other cases of desire and aversion. By creating such a tight corner for Henry, Malgonkar portrays the contradiction and complexity in human relationships.

Eddie's craving to join the War, when Britain was trying hard to get co-operation from all her colonies, sacrificing even his prospect of becoming a manager, shows, not his doing things for a dare as Henry explains it. It is 'the call of blood', the traditional loyalty of the Anglo-Indian towards the British. Dart, with his characteristic insight into the working of Anglo-India, understands this. Just as Henry is unable to understand Eddie, the typical representative of Anglo-India striving to surpass the White master
in loyalty to the Empire, he is unable to understand Ruby who sacrifices her love to be a mem-saheb, and Jean who likes India and the Indians. Through his relationship with Eddie, Ruby, Gauri, and Kishore, Malgonkar portrays "the crumbling of humanity in the isolated community so conscious of its superiority." 19

Apart from being an excellent work of art, the novel is also a social document wherein the political image is marked by fear and distrust, and the social image by jealousy and vendetta. The appointment of Ruby and Eddie, the Anglo-Indians, is disliked and revolted against by the Indians. Indian self-rule is detested by Henry and Dart. Malgonkar works out the action in terms of the three interrelated racial groups to portray Henry's fall. The moral disintegration and defeat of the Whiteman is set in motion through his encounter with the Indians. It is carried on through his relationship with the Anglo-Indians and the British, and finally all the three groups are found thirsting for his blood.

In this world of harsh hatred and consuming revenge, if we ask who is better, it is certainly the Englishman Henry in the sense that he dispenses with his fear, pride and racial prejudice in the light of his experiences. He evolves into a better human being in spite of his crimes. But this does not
happen to the Indians or Anglo-Indians. They do not dispense with their hatred and revenge though Gauri is seen helping Henry to reach his residence after his fall—a help really to the novelist. Ruby is painted as blinded by revenge which does not fit her nature very well. But as regards Malgonkar’s portrayal of Henry, most readers will agree with Iqbal Lukmani when he says:

He has presented a completely convincing picture in his characterization of the upright, dedicated young man whose colour complex blinds him into committing the most hell-worthy actions in the sincere belief that it is the right performance of duty. What is terrifying is that Mr. Malgonkar does it so well that instead of being shocked, the reader often finds himself sympathising with the hero. I, for one, have rarely come across so skilful a portrayal of the problem of race prejudice and the disillusionment and tragedy that follow in its wake.²⁰

Indo-British relationship portrayed in A Bend in the Ganges is purely political. There are three facets of this relationship portrayed in the novel—the attitude of the ordinary Indian, of the educated and enlightened, and of the Indian capitalist class. Also, the author refers to the two different facets
of the attitude of the educated and enlightened, by bringing in Gandhiji and Nehru with their peaceful and non-violent methods, besides portraying the terrorists dissatisfied with such methods. All these are encapsulated in this story with the Indian Independence Movement as its background.

Debi and Shafi, the prominent among the terrorists, do not have much political conviction to turn to terrorism against the British. Of the two, Shafi seems to have a better political motive for his hatred of the British. About the crawling order of General Dyer he tells his companions: “This is the sort of insult we have to avenge” (Bend 75). In their revolutionary zeal they hated the British and the non-violent nationalists. Shafi blames Gandhiji and the Congress for having played into British hands to make the Indians a nation of sheep. But their zeal for sabotage does not weaken the Government; it only awakens them, and they are ruthlessly suppressed.

The attitude of the ordinary Indian to British rule is portrayed in greater detail through Hari and Gian, and Tukaram, their servant. The great esteem and faith the ordinary Indians had in the British is seen first in the words of the unlettered servant to Gian: “Have you become a congress-wallah?-joined the cranks who want to send away the sahibs?
What will we do without the sahibs; they don't take bribes, like our people" (Bend 25). After the case was decided in their favour, Hari asserts before Gian:

We were lucky there was a British judge—no question of bribing him though the Big House must have done their best. Remember that. We in India can get justice only at British hands—never from our own people. They are clean—clean as grains of washed rice. (Bend 28)

That this "unabashed eulogy" of the British is not to be taken as the viewpoint of the novelist is corroborated by Bipan Chandra and others who say:

The secret of British power in India lay not only in physical force but also in moral force, that is, in the belief sedulously inculcated by the rulers for over a century that the British were the Mai-Baap (Father and Mother) of the common people of India—the first lesson in primary school language text books was most often on 'the benefits of British rule'.

It is Gian's pleasant experiences in life (from the British) that make him hold them in high admiration. His college principal, Mr.Hakewill, testifies personally to his exemplary character in spite of his nationalist proclivity, and thus his death-penalty comes to life-imprisonment. Debi, on
the other hand, had an unpleasant experience with a British soldier to hate them all. Through the reaction of the two, Malgonkar seems to say that most of the Indians loved or hated the British for personal reasons, not out of political convictions. In this context it must be said that he presents, as a contrast to these people, Gandhiji and his men at the beginning, who are the better for their hatred, not of the British, but of their imperialism.

The contrast between the fairness of the British and the pettiness of the Indian officials becomes so blatant in the novel that Meenakshi Mukherjee begins to take it as a statement of the author's own point of view. Gian's admiration of the British, in contrast to his hatred of the thoroughly corrupt and degenerate Indian officials, is to be taken as "a sociological phenomenon emanating from the innate loyalty of the underdog towards a master who is powerful and protective." We have the instance of Balbahadur, the Ghurka sentry, who cooks up the tale of Debi's attempt at suicide as a sop to Rogers, the escorting officer's conscience.

Another instance of the cultivated barbarism of the Indian officers comes when the same sentry stamps his foot on Gian's hand which tried to pick up the cigarette stump thrown by Rogers. (He does not blame the
sentry because it was important to back up one's official subordinates.) Later, after seeing off Rogers who gave Gian a cigarette, the sentry comes back to snatch it away, and to stamp on his thigh till he squealed with pain, thereby showing his degraded character in contrast to the generous nature of the British officer. No wonder Gian looks with revulsion at the typical Indian sentry drunk with the authority vested in him and reflects: "It was amazing how the empire worked, held its sway. With a crop of honest selfless officers at the top, and hordes of corrupt, sub-human, minor officials at the bottom" (Bend 124-25). Gian also refers to the cultured attitude of the British in refining and rehabilitating prisoners in contrast to the cruelty, in pre-British India, of cutting the arms or the tongue of the convicts.

Gian turns an "Empire Loyalist," a representative of those Indians who co-operated with the British, and tried to win favours at the expense of their fellow-men. Getting into the good books of Mulligan, the Jail-Superintendent, he earns his release from solitary confinement. With his allegiance to the secure order of life under the sahib, he has no thought of going back. He agrees to act as an administrative spy to the sahib, and to watch the movements of Debi. He is pleased that the sahib trusts him. In
return for this trust, he blows the whistle on Debi. Glad at the British sense of justice, he admires the superintendent's thoroughness in never pronouncing judgement without incontrovertible evidence. This adds to his innate loyalty to the sahib. And he hates the nationalist movement because it aims at putting people like Balbahadur in positions of authority.

But Mulligan is not a perfectly just man as Gian believes him to be. He shows "the British divide and rule policy"\textsuperscript{26} when he turns Gian against Debi. Just because Debi does not salute him, he gives him the undue punishment of five days' Kanji (rice-gruel) as the Pathan warder testifies. Debi does not have any good opinion of the sahib and his spaniel, Gian. He hates even his father and brother-in-law as "typifying the despicable people who made the British empire a stark reality, captives who hugged the chains and imitated their masters" \textit{(Bend 157)}.

In contrast to the son, Tekchand, the father, like most men of his class, is a staunch supporter of the British, and hence opposed to both terrorism and non-violent nationalism. Malgonkar presents the British attitude towards both of these movements through Tekchand, the capitalist, who says that the terrorists were "putting their puny rage against the might of an empire wasting themselves like flies round a raging fire" \textit{(Bend 246)}.\textsuperscript{26}
He is of the opinion that the British were right in ruthlessly suppressing the terrorists as it was for the good of the country. He is afraid of the chaos that would result at the quitting of the British. Thus we see that Gian is not the only character mouthing strong pro-British sentiments. While he wants “to ingratiate himself to the British masters and thereby get rid of the stigma of poverty and crime,”27 Tekchand wants the British to continue to protect his business prospects.

The Indian capitalist class, of which he is a representative, had to depend on the British Government as the day-to-day administrative authority which was in control of a major field of capital accumulation, i.e., government contracts. As such, the capitalist class could not be hostile to the government. This close economic relationship with the British Government, as Bipan Chandra says, compelled them to be friendly with the latter on which they depended for innumerable purposes. They wanted the British for guaranteeing law and order and social peace in the period of intense social turmoil and political and labour unrest. They had a certain aversion to any direct political action by the masses. They were not ready to encourage even the non-violent struggle as it would dampen the current economic growth and opportunities.28 This is what we see in Tekchand’s
pro-British and anti-nationalist attitudes. Not only does he not wish to see
his son back before the term of imprisonment is over, but he is also averse
to giving employment to Gian as he is an escaped convict. It might mean,
he tells his wife, "an official blackmark, no recognition, no rewards--
possibly even the cancellation of all Government contracts" (Bend 247).

Malgonkar gives great importance to the personal side of Indo-British
relationships. This is found in the army-world of his novels. That rank or
race is no bar to personal friendship in the army is proved in the relation of
Punch Farren, Abhayraj, and Tony Sykes in The Princes. In Punch we find
an Englishman who values friendship more than racial proximity when he
supports Abhay, and not the Anglo-Indian Minnie. When Abhay stands
stiffly to attention and salutes Punch who is his Adjustment, the latter with
a hard stare says: "Sit down, damn you, and stop being so damned G.S"
(Princes 177). In his talk with Abhay, he gives him a sort of training in
personal and official matters. It is from him Abhay comes to know of Tony
Sykes, the pucca Satpura officer.

Abhay feels jealous of Tony as he is a competitor for Minnie's love.
But when the two first meet in Burma, Abhay's feeling is just the opposite.
He is glad that his relation with Tony comes to be one of close friendship.
Though the Englishman is a senior captain, they call each other by their first name. Abhay admires his professional brilliance apart from his other qualities—"disdain for danger, a capacity for coolness under stress, an unfailing readiness to take responsibility, and above all, a stubborn, almost stupid refusal to bend under pressure" (Princes 198).

The military ‘camaraderie’ among the Indians and British is exposed through the relationship between Abhay, Tony, and Jamadar Dongre while fighting the Japs in Burma. The chapter entitled ‘Patrol Report’ is, except for the names of characters, essentially the short story named ‘Bachcha Lieutenant’ as Amur has observed. Dongre and Tony joined the regiment on the same day and became friends—a non-commissioned Indian soldier and a commissioned British officer. (The personal friendship between Abhay and Tony is that of two commissioned officers, but that between Tony and Dongre is that of a British officer and an Indian soldier.) That they are close friends is shown by the fact that the only man from his old battalion that he had made a special request for was Dongre. Abhay wonders at the strange bond between the two, each calling the other ‘sab’. The comradeship between the two races is clearly brought out through Abhay’s action of firing to warn Tony and his men, and Dongre’s open
attempt to save his commander, Tony, who shows equal or greater comradeship by trying to carry Dongre away.

The death of Tony and Dongre shocks Abhay. More shocking is Minnie’s letter he finds in Tony’s wallet after the latter’s death. Now he understands that they were rivals in love. Yet he had not done or said anything displeasing to Abhay. His was a purely professional relationship untainted by rivalry. The realization of Tony’s reticence in his relationship with people makes Abhay admire him for his princely manliness and magnanimity of heart as Madge said. Haydn Moore Williams sums up Indo-British relationship admirably when he says that in the novel the British are neither caricatured nor made into heroes or villains. They are warmly human with their multiracial comradely ideal extended to the Indians in the army which is seen to surmount racial and political differences.

This is exactly what we find in *Distant Drum* where Malgonkar gives great importance to life in the British Indian Army. Both in the ‘present action’ and in the past reconstructed through Kiran Garud’s memory, this relationship becomes impressive. His curse at the rigorous training course, and his invective at the severities of it, are balanced by the consoling
thought that even the British trainees are given the same treatment. Apart from this consolation, later reflection produces in him great admiration for the utility of the British training. "It was a process which, despite all its crudeness, had been proved through the ages to achieve splendid results ..." (Drum 79).

Among the satisfying relationships Kiran had with the British, he remembers best those he had with Bertie Howard and Ropey Booker among others. He remembers very well how Bertie 'took him in hand' for not evincing great interest in 'Freda' (a game) on a guest-night. Though at the time he feels like murdering him, he knows within himself that Bertie is right. The little encounter leaves no rancour, and both of them are able to play cricket, and sit late at the club-bar, drinking beer. Thus, Kiran gets the ability 'to take it'. Even after 'blowing up' someone, the impression created on both sides is that there is nothing personal in it. Nor is it merely an external impression since, in spite of the constant irritations resulting from full-blooded men living and working in close proximity, so many bonds of lasting friendships were made.

Unlike E.M. Forster, Malgonker does not show any scepticism regarding the possibility of genuine friendship between the Indians and the
British. In fact, Kiran-Bertie relationship is an exemplification of genuine friendship. They had come closer between the two Burma Campaigns, and did not correspond with each other after that. In the post-Independent India, Bertie, on his way to Malaya, comes to meet Kiran. The latter doubts whether their relationship would be the same as during the War when they used to spend their leave jolly well together. But all his doubts are dispelled at the sight of Bertie who comes smiling and dragging his stiffy leg. And Kiran is anxious to know what happened. Any way, they celebrate their surprise meeting. He feels great sympathy for Bertie; their conversation moves on the familiar grove. “Somehow, although they were not even in the same army, the old bond seemed to hold them together; the bond of being old Satpura officers who had shared life in the same battalion in peace and war” (Drum 146).

Malgonkar takes up the moral and ethical problem of mutual relations of the English and the Indians in the colonial army, as Kalinnikova says. Through Kiran’s memory he describes a case of regimental tie and friendship which brings tears to our eyes. There was no one to mourn the death of Major Harwood, except the battalion. Though not many were particularly fond of him, they all take his death as a personal loss. And the
more so it is to the Senior Subedar whom Kiran finds surreptitiously wiping his eyes at the time of the last post. They both joined the battalion in the same year, and were together in the long siege of Kut. The same subedar had not shown any quivering while reporting the death of eleven men including his brother in an ambush in another war. Such is the personal intimacy between the English Major and the Indian Subedar. And the way the officers and men in the battalion generously buy the belongings of the dead Major, thereby raising a fund to be sent to his daughter, is worthy of commendation as an example of good regimental relation.

The novel is "far more than a war book." In it the Britishers and Indians emerge as friends capable of sacrifice and love for one another. Kiran has great admiration for Ropey Booker who was his CO at Raniwada. "Dreaded by all the men he commanded... and loved and revered by many of them, he was like a stern and yet indulgent father of the Victorian era" (Drum 141-42). His love for India is seen in his spending ten days of his leave every year in the village-home of a retired Subedar-Major of the 4th. His fatherly relationship with his men is seen in the personal letters written to him by the wives and children of serving and retired men in the fond hope that he would do something to redress their grievances. It is a
noble gesture that the CO is prepared to share the sufferings of his soldiers, active or retired.

Ropey Brooker is one of the best army officers Kiran met in his army life. He is stern with the officers, but to the jawans he is always kind. He loved them, played games with them, spoke their language, and hardly ever lost his temper with them. He knows that sympathy for the soldiers is essential to win their loyalty. Malgonkar speaks of his attitude as one of the best examples of the camaraderie that existed between the British officers and the Indian soldiers. His actions illustrate the fact that camaraderie implies good feelings not only among the soldiers, but also among the men and their officers. He knows that it is not enough for the officers to command their men, and they in turn obey them; he also wants intimate and uninhibited mutual talk among them about their family problems. Only then can an officer be one among his men, that alone makes a regiment a living entity instead of being a mere collection of men and officers, he believes. An army which upholds the tradition of camaraderie is surely on the road to victory, he knows. And these are precisely what Kiran learns from the great master, as Abhay learns from Tony. As S.B.
Singh said, officers like Ropey are representative of the English humanism which they wanted to teach the Indians.  

Coldly professional, and sure of himself even under extreme stress, Ropey pulled out his battalion in the disastrous retreat from Burma, leaving behind the wounded, to save it from total destruction. And to save himself from the lack of ‘attraction’ in the army he does precisely the same: he pulls himself out, and joins the Imperial Metals. Kiran is surprised to hear this, and the more so when Ropey himself comes to tell him to ‘chuck’ the army and join his firm. He tempts Kiran, saying that “big business is far more exciting than any profession” (Drum 247).

Kiran’s British training has made him an idealist which he refuses to undo even after the man who taught him such ideals has rid himself of them. This is what his contact with the British in general has sprouted in him. He is shocked at the change that has come over ‘the military colossus’ that Ropey was. His reply to the old CO, explaining his inability to accept the post offered to him, is a model speech showing his affection for the army, and the satisfaction he derives from being in it. In contrast to the British Ropey, the Indian Kiran appears as a high-souled man “whom neither love of lucre can corrupt nor lure of high office and rich rewards
tempt from the path of independence.”36 His dedication to the army code taught by the British makes him better than themselves.

Malgonkar is not simply content with the treatment of the enviable personal relationships between the British and Indian officers. The historian in him has taken cognizance of the fact of anti-British attitude on the cultural level soon after the British quitted. This attitude is represented through Kamala Kant who, with his circumscribed views, is in conflict with Kiran who has a cosmopolitan attitude. Their relationship is portrayed entirely through dialogue. While Kiran gratefully acknowledges the beneficial influence of British training and association, KK finds it as a great bane on the cultural life of the Indians. He sees the British ‘get-together’ and their club-dance in India as “conflicting to the culture he has been nurtured in.”37 He tells Kiran: “To me no Britisher is all right; they are all bastards” (Drum 255-56). Earlier he had told him--

I should have thought we should have stopped all such woggish activities by now, I mean dancing and things. Aping the ways of foreigners, I call it. I don’t know why, but I’ve always been averse to our women dancing. To me, it is nothing but a legacy of the British rule and only betrays our slavish past. (Drum 68)
He believes that to teach a woman to dance is to encourage her to be immoral. He is worried about the immorality in society, which would increase when anyone holds anyone else's wife in his arms on the dance-floor. That sort of freedom would lead women astray like Mrs. Medley, he thinks. His strong conviction is that Indian women should not have the same kind of freedom as the Western women seem to have. Also, he is firmly against the Anglicization of the army officers, and wants the army to be truly nationalized. He does not like the English names of the roads and buildings in the cantonment, and wants them to be named after our own leaders.

Kiran feels deflated by the inflated ideas of KK. He had not expected that KK who strove to create the impression that he spoke English like an Englishman would have such extreme views. Even if we excuse his striving at Oxford English, his regret at not knowing Mrs. Medley 'personally', mars all his moods of morality. We can understand that KK is not so much an idealist, but a false nationalist brought up in a highly orthodox family like that of his wife. He is proud of her backwardness as if it were a proof of high breeding and respectability.
Kiran has no dislike for Western culture while KK wants to demolish everything Western. The explanation for this is to be found in A.R. Desai. Speaking of the electrifying influences of Western liberal education on a section of the Indians, he says that they discarded old norms and criteria, and embraced the cult of anarchic living which created a gulf between them and the masses. To add to this, the new education which greatly glorified and idealized British rule, depreciated India’s past, and gave them an impetus to identify themselves with the ruling nation. There was a social and religious reaction in India, says Desai, against such educated Indians’ throwing away all moral restraints, and hence against Western culture itself, stigmatizing it as anti-social and anti-national. Though an ephemeral phenomenon, these reactionaries justified the oppressive bans and taboos on the individual’s freedom in India on the evidence of some people, with their Western liberalism, having gone astray. In the name of nationalism these reactionaries strove to conserve the past with its archaic social institutions such as purdah, and superstitious outlooks such as confining women to dark corners instead of showing them the light of day.\textsuperscript{38} KK is a representative of such reactionaries. In him we can see the orthodox section of Indian society reacting against women’s equal status with men.
While KK takes a very offensive attitude towards the British, and a very tolerant attitude towards all that is traditional in India, Kiran strikes a via-media which is the right attitude for a modern Indian to adopt under the circumstances. Their conflicting attitudes and actions indicate one level on which the inter-cultural theme is treated in the novel. Kiran's confrontation with the British, and its beneficial results for him, indicate the other level. The summing up of the two levels of the relationship, which comes from KK, is not only a glowing tribute to the British, but also an attribute of the attitude of the novelist towards the British—"It is amazing how even those amongst us who really hated the British were so completely won over by them until they have become the most ardent protagonists of their ways" (Drum 71).

Malgonkar has portrayed not only the personal and cultural side of Indo-British relationships in this novel, but also the political side of it though in a slight degree. S.B.Singh says that the portrayal of the tiff between Col. Manners and Kiran is "indicative of the fact that even in the army nationalism played a very important role." This is erroneous because the tiff is not a question of nationalism, but one of loyalty to the British. What Manners doubts is the loyalty of the Indians to the British;
what Kiran wants to assert through his boycott is the same loyalty. The political side of the relationship is brought out through the confrontation of Kiran and Lala Vishnu Saran Dev who wanted to get the shamiana for the reception to the minister. Kiran’s hatred of the politician shows his ingrained servility to the British who considered the nationalists as seditionists. This hatred was created in the men of the British Indian Army by isolating them from the stream of national life to the extent that they were unaware of the political realities in the country. The British did this with a view to avert any possible threat to their imperial interests. And consequently we see Kiran, like Coriolanus and Cassius, as H.M. Williams said, asserting his military code of honour against politicians and against nationalism itself.40

Thus it can be seen that Malgonkar deals with the personal, political, and cultural aspects of the historic encounter between the two races. At the personal level it is one of close friendship resulting in love and friendship for one another. It takes the form of a collision between Indian spiritualism and Western pragmatism. There is a graphic representation of the confrontation resulting in the former being challenged and changed by the latter. He portrays it as having merits and defects, but the latter are rather
veiled. So the author is blamed for putting a premium on the British at the expense of the Indians. But the fact is that he is appreciative of good qualities irrespective of colour and race. The defects of imperialism are highly implicit in his novels, and so the treatment of Indo-British relationship in the context of colonial relations becomes a profile, not a panchromatic affair.
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