CHAPTER III
FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The family is the smallest unit of society. Right from the Vedic times it has been accorded pride of place in our society and literature. The relationships that existed in this unit of society were based on noble ideals and generous personal conduct. This was made possible by the extinction of the ego for which, extolling of virtues and condemnation of selfish vices were professed and practised by our sages and 'rishis'. Because of the distinction between Indian and Western social system and values, the family came to exist in India in all its sanctity. The type of family we had till modern times was the joint-family which had its own merits and demerits.

The greatest changes in Indian social structure, says Bottomore, came during the British rule\(^1\) when India came into contact with western ideas of liberal individualism, and industrialization. As a result the joint-family system slowly broke up and gave place to the modern nuclear family with the parents and children, without any kinship relations included in it. The solidarity of this type of family depended largely upon sexual attraction
and companionship between the couple, and companionship between them and their children. Malgonkar tells us about the break-up of the joint-family in the story of the Big House in *A Bend In the Ganges*, and shows us the defects of the nuclear family in the story of the Kerwads in the same novel. Though familial relationships do not form the focus in Malgonkar as in R.K.Narayan, he too depicts these with remarkable subtlety though not in all variety. He portrays the changes in the pattern of familial relationships under the pressure of such varied influences as education, urbanization, ideological clashes etc. *The Princes* is a novel which is wholly devoted to the exposition of parent-child relationship in India at that time.

The whole story of princely life is-unfolded before the reader through the actions, arguments, reactions, thoughts, and feelings of the father and son, Maharaja Hiroji, and Abhayraj, thus making their relationship pivotal to the novel. Since the king had laid down a rigid time table for the princeling, he was taken to his parents only at fixed times. He saw them very little and never together, for they lived in sealed-off compartments. When he saw his mother, she gave him something sweet, but their talk was just like grown-ups. With the father the greeting was various as warm and perfunctory. Thus he got parental affection rarely though he thirsted for it.
warmly. But the king made this sort of alienation as a precaution to protect the princeling from palace intrigues. Consequently his early days were "a blurr of perpetual bewilderment, of an almost constant awareness of inadequacy, of a desperate striving to make adjustments" (Princes 35). Yet he gathers the essentials in his reminiscence.

Though he seldom got parental love, the dominant urge of his childhood was to prove his devotion to his father who strode his horizon like a knight in armour. Yet, he hated his father for his cruelties, to his mother, to his classmate Kanakchand, and also to himself as when he made him eat the eyes of his own pet ram. Since he does not understand the reasons for these at the time, there is resentment in him towards the father. But he takes "his first tentative step toward maturity under the tutelage of his father." He agrees to take a whipping without squealing and flinching—the virtue of the public school system of the British, which Kiran had acquired. (This reminds us of Meenakshi Mukherjee's comment that the British public school code of conduct constitutes the norm of life in Malgonkar.) Though he promises to observe all these, the father stands as an image of hatred before him.

Abhay's love-hate relationship with his father can easily be explained in terms of children's psychology as brought out by Mithal. As a boy he is
subjected to ‘mimesis’ which is “the general tendency of an individual to take over from others, their modes of action, feeling and thought” through ‘suggestion’ which is “the awakening of a like mental attitude by means of inner imitation.” For suggestion to work, there should be two persons, the giver and the receiver; the giver makes a deliberate effort to give it, and the receiver unconsciously accepts it—Mithal explains it.

Of the four kinds of imitation in children’s psychology, unconscious imitation and ejective imitation seem to be at work in Abhay’s case. In ejective imitation the child has an attitude of rivalry with the person whom he is going to imitate. His attitude is aggressive and disdainful. As the child grows up, he makes his own standard of conduct, and begins to criticize his own activities and those of others from that standard, says Mithal. Herein lies the reason for Abhay’s tiff with his father in the tiger-rug room which is portrayed in detail.

The father and son live in two different worlds. The son might seem to be a revolutionary before the father who is a taboo-ridden reactionary. Though the father is really so, the son is so only superficially. The primary difference between the two is that while the latter always wants to live in the present, the former is blind to it. He lives in the tightly-knit world of his
own princedom and enjoys the security of the old world. To him there is nothing to be worried about the nationalists because "they just don’t exist" (Princes 14). But the son feels a sense of bafflement in the newly emerging world. Thus we find both of them caught in the twilight world of a change from the medieval to the modern, and the awkwardness of the change is reflected in the tiff.

Abhay feels deflated by the inflated notions of his father and the consequent lack of father-son relationship between them. Their relation is mostly in the nature of ruler and successor. Even the son had to do ‘mujra’ (bowing) to his father, just like a subject, which shows that familial kinship was far below the sanctity of kingship. He wanted the king to behave like a father to his son, and a loving husband to his wife. He disliked his father’s kingly assertions, and wanted to see him as his father first, and king next. But, instead of getting to know each other better, they were becoming strangers. He even wishes for the death of his father so that he could come into his own, and fulfil his destiny like other men. But he does not understand that his destiny is different from other men’s.

"As a youth firmly rooted in the age-old aristocratic tradition and yet aware of the new democratic values, he is an admirable foil to his father,
the Maharaja, who is a perfect representative of the feudal order." While the son shows his awareness of the nationalists who are running the government in British provinces, the father views such words as heresy. He is displeased with Abhay who seems to approve of them. It is the king's lack of consciousness of the present, and ability to live in it that make him utter such sentiments as—"The British will never leave this country—never!" (Princes 15). It should be remembered that Abhay is worried about the insecure position of the princes in the light of growing nationalism. Through his arguments with his father he wants to make him conscious more of the insecure position of the princes than of the growing nationalism. This is to be stressed because he is likely to be mistaken for a nationalist, as does his father when he says, surprised, that horns are growing on the toreheads of lambs.

"The fact that the child so often chooses the chink in the parent's armour as his point of attack may cause the parent to lose his objectivity and to become angry." When Abhay hurls arrows of provoking arguments at his father in order to pierce his kingly bearing, the king storms at him and even doubts his parenthood. When the son is ready to bully him who sullies his mother's honour, the father plays the pucca king,
and orders him out of his presence. Living in the rosy, intoxicating world of make-believe, he mistakes tactics for treachery, modern awareness for stubbornness, and practical-mindedness for filial disobedience.

After the tiff Abhay’s attitude becomes more formal than before. They are “like two men living under a flag of truce” (Princes 22). But he feels a surge of achievement that he could bring down the king to speak like an angry man to his son. All these he attributes to the narrowness and naive values of his youth when he thought of himself as progressive and righteous, and his father as a reactionary. The estrangement actually is the consequence of the generation gap, the natural resistance of the rising generation to everything that the old one stood for. Thus Malgonkar achieves “the specifically historical, that is, derivation of the individuality of characters from the historical peculiarity of their age.”

Contrary to Abhay’s attitude of love and hatred, his father is wholly jovial and relaxed. As part of royal training he takes him during his morning drives through the city when anyone could stop his car to present petitions. He makes him sit by his side during his afternoon audience to his subjects. He also takes him on his visit to the Political Agent. By all these the father draws his son to his own sphere of activities and responsibilities
as the future ruler. Knowing that his son is in love with Minnie, he advises him not to write letters to her. Even when Abhay gets angry with him, he does not take umbrage. He is calm and cool. Knowing that his son has great interest in the girl, he pleads with him—"You will cause a lot of unhappiness, my son, a lot of unhappiness to all those who love you, if you go on with this foolishness" (Princes 171).

Even now Abhay does not see the king as a kindly, anxious father, having a man-to-man talk with his son (which he really is) because of his headstrong tendency. Even after his return from military training, he believes that his father is hopelessly out of touch with the time. This is true as far as the nationalist agitation is concerned, but one cannot say that the king is indifferent to the son’s affairs. He treats him as a grown-up man. In fact, it is Abhay who is out of touch with reality in his insistence on marrying Minnie who he is not sure of. His complaint is that his father does not make things easy for him. As at the first tiff, here also he feels a sense of triumph, a feeling that he has broken through the clammy web of antiquated taboos. Here we have to note that Abhay understood the values that obsessed his father after he had shifted his whole loyalty and love to him in the light of his mother’s illicit relationship with the palace-
officer. But these values were also bewildering to him in the days of undirected emotion and undigested knowledge. What happened in his case is aptly summarized by his father, though in a different context—"It is only when one gets older that one acquires a better appreciation of the value of things" (Princes 91).

The crux of the book, as H.M. Williams said, is the complex relationship between the father and son who, clashing at first, come closer later on. Abhay’s war-experience and his meeting with Tony Sykes pave the way for his contumacy changing into intimacy. His return to the princely fold is in the nature of the parable of the prodigal son. The father is glad to see the ‘conquering hero’ back from the wars, but the son is thoroughly disillusioned like Sergius in Arms and the Man. Now that realization has come to him, no more does he confront his father with unpalatable truths. Out of devotion to him, he remains in the army for more time than he himself wanted to, and acts as a listening post. He leaves his father to enjoy as much dreaming as he wants.

What is notable in the portrayal of their relationship is the see-saw movement given to it. Abhay comes closer to his father when he is no more the ruler, and their relationship becomes stronger. Just as the father was
impatient with the son, the son is now fed up with the father’s apathy at the State affairs. When everything looked lost, Abhay becomes eager to preserve it. So he seeks the help of his father in his desperate attempts to keep the integrity of the State. The father gives it though he does not entirely agree with the son’s views. He acts as an old father doing things to please his son. As a true father anxious about the son’s welfare, he tells him with a sad laugh: “That is my regret at this moment. I have at least had my full innings, perhaps more than full, for none of us have lived beyond fifty. You . . . you will be losing everything before ever getting to know what it means” (Princes 298).

As James Y. Dayananda observed, Malgonkar makes Abhay an extension of his father through certain incidents repeated in the novel. That their relationship did not end with the death of the father is shown by Abhay’s whipping Kanakchand as his father had done earlier. The whipping episode with which the novel ends has been taken as a major flaw undermining the structure of the novel as a whole. But Malgonkar himself has said that it was part of his trick to show the identity of father and son. His depiction of their relationship is masterly as it is also a reflection of the conflict between the out-dated princely traditions and the
modern democratic values. But, if Abhay is unquestionably the character fully developed by him, Hiroji is the one to whom readers respond more, especially in the later parts of the novel.

When Amur answers Naipaul who could not understand Abhay’s endorsement of his father’s values, saying that he with his deep roots in his tradition is not essentially a modern figure, he comes near the psychological truth explained by Mithal. On the evidence of Boring, Longfield and Ruth Benedict, he stresses the point that the environment—ideals, traditions, and ways of living of the social group—is everything that affects the individual except his genes. This is the explanation that can be given for the contradictory conduct of Abhay. The confusion of values becomes clear when we understand that all his nationalist reminders were part of his extreme devotion to his father which he had developed as “the outcome of an exaggerated sense of duty” (Princes 21).

A different form of Naipaul’s confusion seems to be with Saros Cowasjee who finds fault with the novel, for in it, he says, politics impinges on literature. Fidelity to history, he continues, is achieved at the expense of the story itself and for this reason the characters remain shadowy. In this connection it must be said that the story can exist even
if the whole Indian political history is removed from it. In fact, it is a prototype of the father-son relationship in India where they quarrel, drift apart, and come together in a crisis. The son undertakes responsibilities, but he is not able to tolerate the infidelity of the mother. The father and son are thrown against forces greater than themselves, or forces against which they are powerless to fight, and so they decide to quit, whereby the novelist stresses the similarities, and also the differences between the two in the culmination of the story of both. The father’s tragedy occurred because of his inability to live in the present, it being unpleasant. Apart from stressing his sterling qualities of courage and disdain for danger, Malgonkar gives us a lesson, through his tragic death, that it alone is the reward for those who detest the present, and refuse to see the writing on the wall. But whatever faults the father may have, his concern for the son who is to succeed him is a redeeming quality. It is this love of keeping up his heritage that colours their relationship, and slightly qualifies it from becoming the genuine love of a father to son, at least in the early parts of the novel.

Though the father-son relationship is pivotal to the novel, the mother-son relationship has its own part to play. While the political picture
of princely life is unfolded through the first, the social condition of women is revealed through the second. The mother has great love for the son. It is she who comforts him on occasions of sorrow as in his sulky mood after the whipping of his friend by his father. She spends sleepless nights nursing him when he is ill. When he thinks of punishing the palace-officer for ‘breaking’ his pet gun, she tells him: “Punishment always rebounds; it grows more and more evil. Punishment is a primitive way of resolving matters (Princes 82). While the father gives him training in royalty, the mother advises him to show humility, and to develop tolerance and understanding.

“The mother, in Adler’s view, is always a child’s first choice, whichever sex he may be . . .” Abhay has great love for his mother at first. One of the reasons for his tiff with his father was the latter’s infidelity to her. In her unfortunate position he tries to alleviate her sorrow by his personal attention. Yet she does not come to wield any influence upon him because of the patriarchal nature of society in which he is brought up, and also because of her illicit relationship which he strongly disapproves of. He who advised her to break away hates her the moment he hears that she has
taken a lover. He receives the news with "a shock too deep to absorb for him" which emphasizes his essentially traditional personality.

Abhay says that his experience in war, and in sex with Minnie, created in him a civilized tolerance for human frailties. As Amur said, this liberalization of attitude does not help in the case of his mother. Abhay himself explains this on the same occasion when he says that he "learnt to tear his mind away from petty and often false loyalties of childhood and youth" (Princes 53). We are to understand that this remark is in connection with his mother since he pitied her simply out of his youthful romantic idealism during the days of which he condemned his father's infatuation for concubines.

Abhay's loss of contact with his mother before and after his marriage shows the opposition of orthodoxy to modernity as regards women. That she appears as a shaker of salt around when his cup of happiness is full to the brim shows that in the traditional society he is brought up in, and the values of which he has unconsciously absorbed, happiness in life was the monopoly of men, and women could not aspire to it because they were mere puppets in the hands of the latter. This becomes all the more glaring when we think of Abhay whose sense of guilt vanishes as soon as it appears
when he indulges in sex with Minnie the moment his wife’s back is turned. To him, his mother also, like his wife, is the subject of a purely proprietary pride. He deserts her for her venture to enjoy what his father had refused to give her, namely, marital pleasure.

The mother, on the other hand, had been living under the fond hope that her son at least would understand and love her. But even when he disowns her for what she has done, she goes on loving him though it pains her very much to think of his ingratitude. She entrusts her whole property to him before she goes to Pakistan. Her sorrow floods out when she hears him saying—"You are nothing but a bitch, a shameless woman of the streets! You cheap whore!" And his repenting words—"It wasn’t me, Mother, you know it wasn’t . . . It was something that possessed me . . . it was . . ."

(Princes 321)—do not discourage her. For she is a determined woman who can see through the father image in him. Thus she appears as one of the "tragic victims of the passionate character of the princes."18

It is the peculiarities of the patriarchal Indian society that Malgonkar portrays in the novel. Abhay, the son, had never been able to see his mother as a woman of feminine instincts though in his boyish idealism he once asked her to quit. The tragedy is the result of the utter lack of normal
and healthy conjugal relationship between the parents, and the consequent veneration of the father image to utter disregard for the mother who was a goddess, 'a living sati' to him. He has a deep grounding, given by Pandit Sharma, in the Puranas and the Scriptures in which the picture of woman is that of the mother-goddess who is free from all blemishes. Yet a part of Abhay is able to justify the action of his mother as a woman's desire to satisfy her yearnings before ageing. But the other part, which was growing more and more deeply-rooted in the abstract values of the princes, is never ready to condone it. In his heart of hearts he has a soft corner for his mother, but it does not get prominence because he is not free from the tradition of male chauvinism. Malgonkar's method of characterization, in the case of Abhay, works admirably as he presents an idea of what it means to be an Indian caught between the opposing forces of modernity and tradition.

R.S. Singh remarks that the clash between the attitudes of the father and son indicates the possibility of the clash between kingship and liberal humanism, traditionalism and modernity, but it does not come out as the son finally decides to share the responsibility of the father. It can be seen in blatant terms in the mother-son relationship. Abhay, the son, is at the
core a male chauvinist like his father who could not tolerate liberation movements of the people, let alone of women. In his strong stigmatization of his mother as a whore and a shameless bitch, we can see "the reactionary resistance of the orthodox sections of society" against women's movement for liberation from the rigidity of society.

As regards the father-son relationship, while the story moves in one direction, tending to emphasize the chasm between them, Malgonkar introduces almost unnoticeably, as Arjya Sircar says, certain actions of symbolic value which tellingly shows that the moving apart is only an illusion, that they are really coming close. As opposed to this movement of the father and son which appears contradictory at first, and later on a bonding together, is the movement of the mother and son which appears a bonded one at first, and one of total separation later on. While the moving apart of the father and son is only an illusion, the first filial bond between the mother and the son also is an illusion. Thus Malgonkar's artistic skill can be seen in the portrayal of parent-child relationships, thus making the book "a milestone in the Indian novel of Indian life."

Parent-child relationship in *Combat of Shadows* is not given much importance in lengthy descriptions of strong attachment as in *Princes*. In
this novel which exposes racial relationships Malgonkar finds only a little space for it. But the attractive point of the novel is that it evolves from the parent-child relationship, not only of the legitimate one of the Mirandas, but also of the illegitimate one of Jeffrey Dart and Eddie. We have to thank Henry for his politeness and Nature for her kindness in the form of December rain in the Assam hills, for, these two give the novelist his occasion to portray the parent-child relationship in the Miranda family. Also, we have to thank the rogue-elephant for its second appearance, for, its pursuit by Eddie and his consequent death make John Trevor disclose the fact of the former’s real parents.

Poverty and resultant moral depravity are what we find in the parent-child relationship in the Miranda family. Mr. Miranda who finds it hard to pull on encourages Ruby, his daughter, to become the school mistress and earn money. He also hopes that she will be able to catch Henry for her husband, and thereby become a memsahib. Macmillan’s words highlight this attitude of the Anglo-Indian father. “He would rather see his daughter married to a low, vulgar European, and be ill-treated afterwards than see her marry one of her own kind” (qtd in Gaikwad23). This is what we see in the desire of both parents to send Ruby to Silent Hill and thus rend her
away from her Anglo-Indian lover.

"Dad was all for it; it was Mum who raised the shindy," says Ruby (Combat 98) about the reaction of her parents. Mrs. Miranda, first, wanted her daughter to get married at Tinapore because she knew, from her own experience, that the pucca-sahibs would not marry Anglo-Indians. She knows what type of mistress Ruby is going to become under Henry. She also knows about the thoughts of Ruby to rise up in the social ladder by marrying an Englishman. So her opposition to Ruby’s new position becomes a superficial one. Like her husband she too desires to make her a mem-sahib. But it is an unconscious one which can be explained in terms of ‘projection’. Speaking of the part played by projection in parent-child relationship, James D. Page says: “Parents also project their thwarted ambitions on their children . . . . Mothers who have made poor marriages utilize their daughters to fulfil their own ambitions for a successful marriage.” Accordingly, she takes her daughter to Bichwa Baba, the sadhoo, and gets his powder as the love-potion to catch Henry with.

The illegitimate father-son relationship between Jeffrey Dart and Eddie adds a great deal to the complication and crisis in the action. Malgonkar, with his characteristic turn for suspense, builds up the story of
Eddie, and tells us only at the end that he is the blue-eyed boy of Dart. Their relationship, which he exposes slowly, is very pathetic because the son never knows who his real father is. But he had no cause to find it out because John Trevor brought him up as his own beloved son. Eddie, on his part, had been a dutiful and loving son to him. The sorrow of Trevor at the death of Eddie is immense and heart-felt like that of Dart.

Dart could not, because of his racial and official position, acknowledge his son though he was childless. But he is always eager to favour him, which the readers take as a matter of British magnanimity. His disguised love for the son can be seen in getting him posted as the chiefstockman, and thereafter enquiring Heny whether there is any ill-feeling between them. One is again reminded of M.K.Naik's opinion that the moral issues of desire and aversion as opposite shadows are nowhere in evidence in the action and the characters in the novel. That this is not so is indicated even in the veiled relationship between these two where Dart at first avoided his child with the coolie-woman in marrying her to Trevor, and later on thirsted for him. It is the same thirst which makes him say, looking straight in front of him: "It's very important that I participate in the killing of this elephant" (Combat 275). In this context 'elephant' acquires a
denotative meaning to include the white elephant that is Henry who is responsible for the death of Eddie. Dart's firm resolution to kill the elephant even though he is physically indisposed shows the revenge of a father who feels angry at the death of his only child. As Srinivasa Iyengar said, "he takes double revenge" when he kills the rogue-elephant, and plans the murder of Henry, the white elephant.

Parent-child relationship in The Devil's Wind is only a very small part of Nana's magnanimity with which Malgonkar endows his personality to save him from the indignities heaped on by Western historians. In Distant Drum also this forms only a minor part of the action. However, it has certain significances. Malgonkar gets an opportunity not only to bring out a status-obsessed parent who is defied by his educated and employed daughter, but also to show how traditional a modernized Indian can be, as is the case of Govind Ram Sonal. A high official and a widower, he takes no heed of his parental responsibility of marrying his daughter, Bina, to someone suitable. But when she is twenty-five, he becomes alert all on a sudden. What he wants the bridegroom to be, is one of good social and financial position. He almost fixes Aravind Mathur as his son-in-law without consulting her.
Being a girl brought up in a traditional patriarchal family (but now westernized), Bina finds it difficult to defy her father. Though she does not say it openly, it is evident from her words. When Kiran asks her whether she wants to get married to Aravind, she answers: "It doesn’t matter what I want. It’s all so hopeless. Please, please don’t say anything" (Drum 192). Her pathetic question, why they ever had to meet and fall in love, also is nothing else. But after getting the assurance of love from Kiran, she defies her father whose questioning provokes tears as is usual with Indian girls. Again, like a true modern Indian girl, she gives hints to her father that she is in love though she speaks to the contrary.

Sonal, though westernized, is an Indian at the core. To him—"that Napoleon of Red Tape, that Generalissimo of Files"—marriage is only one among ‘the miles and miles of piles of files’ to be disposed off strictly according to rules, precedence and procedure, and not a ‘union of true minds’. Bina’s nonchalance gives him optimism to change her mind with time, tact, and manoeuvring. But the maximum he could do was to bring out her mind bent on Kiran. Knowing that she is in love with the wrong person by marrying whom she will lose her moorings, he turns all his tact and time to getting her lover transferred. He even goes to meet the man
and gets an oral undertaking from him that he will not meet her. Now, as a father, he takes his parental responsibility seriously, and gives great weight to material considerations.

Like Sonal, Tekchand also behaves as regards the marriage of his daughter, Sundari. But he and his son, Debidayal, are seen separated even from the beginning. Surely he has no time for familiar attachments since he is an industrial magnate. Though he is uneasy about his son’s gymnastic activities, he does not make a probe into it. He only says: “I mean it just isn’t normal. I don’t like it at all” (Bend 103). He does not know that his son is a staunch terrorist.

For his subversive activities Debi steals explosives from his father’s store. He is stabbed by an inner guilt which is the result of his filial feeling. It gives him tension in the midst of his lust for spectacular action. He believes that he is arrested because of the pressing of his father’s complaint about the missing explosives. So he hates his father, and does not want to see him in jail. Further, the father, being pro-British, is hated by the son all the more intensely. Because of the generation gap between them, the son is even glad that the father has taken his conviction so much to heart. That the father and son live in two separate worlds substantiates Nicholson’s
remark that in urban India communication between parent and child is
disintegrating.²⁸

Tekchand’s reflections on Deb’s terrorism and the consequent shame
to the family bring out the point clearly. He had never understood the son
nor had the son understood him. The two children, in the absence of
parental love, stuck to each other and the parents became outsiders. For this
the father blames the mother. Anyway, the thought that their own son
distrusts them is horrible to them. Yet, Tekchand does not wish Debi to
come back before his term is over as he would have to report him to the
police. The fact is that he gave more importance to family prestige,
business integrity, and his reputation for honesty. These are the things that
create trouble for him and result in his loss of filial love. The beginning of
the story shows how father and son (Tulsidas and Dada) are separated over
a woman and a piece of land. The ending of the story also shows the same,
since Debi and Tekchand are separated for reasons of the same nature.

Besides the relationship described above, A Bend in the Ganges offers
a variety of other familial relationships. Hari-Gian relationship is a case of
brotherly love precipitating crisis in the latter’s life. Hari who was Gian’s
guardian gives up the elementary comforts of life to send him to college
after their father’s death. All those years Gian had taken everything that was done for him for granted. Now it seems curiously humbling to him and produces in him a resentment beneath the surface of gratitude. "What right had anyone to burden another with so much that could not be repaid, making him powerless, breaking down his defences with unwavering kindness, saddling him with life-long self-denial?" he asks (Bend 27). This attitude is the result of his liberal education and sophistication, and it makes him think of Hari as a cartman, though for a second. He feels pain at losing his objectivity as a college-student when he reaches the railway station where his brother is waiting for him. He feels the station as a barrier between them, the overcoming of which requires some last minute adjustments. This is because he finds a gap wide enough between the world he secretly longed for, and the world he fitted into. Thus Malgonkar portrays the influence of urbanization on the rural Indian.

Hari-Gian relationship is not simply a brotherly one, but a contrast between the rural and urban attitude to life. The difference between them—Gian urbanized and Hari totally rural—can be seen in their attitude to the case over the land. While it was to Hari a matter of life and death, to Gian it was a rock to be skirted round. It is his moral cowardice that makes him
think of it as hopeless to fight for. Because of his sophistication he begins to consider his rural background and home in it as something extraneous. At the time of the scuffle with Vishnudutt, Hari is fully himself, but Gian trembles with fear. Hari’s concern for the safety of his brother prevents him from seeking his help in the scuffle, but it is the latter’s cowardice that prevents him from participating in it. It is the same cowardice that makes him think of running away leaving his brother to his fate. Hari takes to violence on the spot, and Gian later on. “In his case as in Hari’s, violence proves to be an act of liberation and self-fulfilment.”

Malgonkar portrays grandmother-grandson relationship also in this novel. Hari, being the elder male member of the house, acts as the ‘karta’ (head) of the family. Aji, the grandmother, is required only to welcome Gian before he enters the house. She wants him to pray before Shiva’s idol, and he does it only to satisfy her. Apart from such spiritual matters, no one paid any heed to the old woman. Gian is not worried about her being shocked if she discovers him smoking. It was easy to shock her as she had no power over the male members. That she has no control over the karta can be seen from her answer to the village priest who comes to ask her to advise Gian to be ‘sensible’ after Hari’s murder. “The boy will not listen to
me. He is the karta now, the man of the house. Who am I to tell him?" she says with a sigh (Bend 52).

Though Gian, after Hari's death, acts as the karta, yet Aji advises him to go back to college to complete his studies. She is ready to sell her bangles to meet his expenses. But he does not agree as he feels he has his debt to be paid to his brother and duty to be obeyed. When he is arrested, she sells her bangles to pay for his defence. But in Gian's mind there is no conflict between his debt and duty to his brother and those to his grandmother. It is because of the patriarchal nature of the Indian society of the time. As Suresh Chandra said, Gian is able to see beyond what is material and earthly. In him can be seen the working of the Indian concept of "iccha shakti." 

As brotherly love precipitates a crisis in Gian's life, Sundari's love for her brother, Debi, precipitates greater crises in her life. The relationship between the two is brought out less through their interaction than through her reflections on it. The day before the last visiting day at the jail, Sundari tells Gopal: "I have always loved Debi. You see, he and I have always been very close" (Bend 118). Again, during her initial days of intimacy with Gian, she tells him: "You see, I was the only person he was really close to. I
would do anything for him, really anything” (Bend 254). This closeness between the two is found early in the novel when one is unpleasant at the absence of the other for being unable to confide in each other. “One of the chief factors responsible for making the bond between brother and sister so obsessively strong is the fact that they don’t share a very good relationship with their parents,” says Sangeeta Gupta truly. The brother and sister depended on each other for love, approval, and protection due to the generation gap in their relationship with their parents.

Sundari being the elder, Debi always looked to her for help and guidance. “To her even now he looked small and in need of help, the baby with spaniel eyes, and soft chubby hands” (Bend 97) even after he had grown taller than herself. It is this attitude, the love and concern of a mother, that she shows towards Debi and things connected with him. When she comes to know of his stealing explosives, she does not expose him even after the father’s anguish at it. Instead of chiding him like an elder sister, she is shocked like a mother. When the initial shock subsides, she feels proud of his having become a revolutionary. She shares his ideals, and is the only one in the family, who is proud of his revolutionary zeal. She supports him when Gopal says he went astray. It is true she “at times
wondered if there was not something a little unnatural in her fondness for her brother” (Bend 142). It is this ‘something’ that makes Sangeeta Gupta convinced that there is “a sexual attraction at least if not a sexual relationship between the brother and sister,” and Asha Batta confused that it is “too unnatural for a sister to be overanxious for the brother so as to neglect her husband.”

There is nothing unnatural in Debi waking up at night and, pretending to have seen ghosts, asking his elder sister to get into his bed. Debi, as a young boy, thirsted for the love of his parents, but, like Abhay, he did not get it. It is this thirst for parental love that takes him to Sundari who, with her natural motherly inclination, fondled him. (One has to think of young girls fondling dolls like a mother.) And the attachment slowly grows into a mother-son relationship. (One has also to remember her picture as Mother India at the ceremony of burning foreign clothes.) There is not even a shadow of sexual attraction in their relationship. “But then if there had been anything sexual in their relationship, she would have found herself resenting his growing independence, she told herself” (Bend 142). Her conception of masculine beauty, taken from Debi’s physical features, does not give any indication about sexual attraction. It is due, rather, to her
pride in the beauty of Debi who is a son to her.

Sundari must have felt like a girl whose toy-castle is overturned when Debi is arrested. But Malgonkar does not make it very clear. What is clear is that her unconscious recognition of the mother-son relationship that existed between them shields him from all blame. Not for nothing does Malgonkar not bring in any occasion when Debi and his parents come face to face in the novel. He does not want to see them, but only Sundari. That it is not because of any sexual attraction, but because of a maternal affection is clear. It becomes clearer when we think of the anguish in Sundari on the first night of her honeymoon. “How could he [her husband] understand what Debi had meant to her; how could she prepare her mind for the delights of the honeymoon . . . beautify herself . . . when Debi’s ship was heading for the Andamans?” (Bend 144). This is not the anguish at the loss of a brother who she felt sexually attracted to. It is the anguish of a mother who is separated from her beloved son. This, again, reinforces the theme of familial separation in the novel, which gives it an epic dimension.

Debi guards his secret activities well from her like a son covering up his misdemeanours from his mother. That she is father and mother to him can be seen from his refusal to see his real parents. His willingness to see
her only, not with Gopal, is because "he looked almost like an off-duty British subaltern" (Bend 157). His wish is to see Sundari, his mother (India) who is not shackled by the British. He does not want to see Gopal because he is going to snatch away his mother figure.

That the relationship between the two is not one of sexual attraction, but a mother-son affection, explains the point raised by John Rothfork. "As a character," says he, "Sundari would be beyond the sympathy of the reader if she were not also a symbol of India at partition." Her affection for her brother, if seen in the right perspective, attracts the reader's sympathy not only to her but also to him because they are two children who grew up not getting parental love. Their relationship has led critics to speculate over her loss of sexual identity. Malgonkar himself is, in a way, responsible for this because just before she goes on honeymoon, he narrates the incident of both children reaching the house of the German, Muller, who is about to drown an unwanted puppy. Muller's comment that Debi should have been Sundari and vice versa is only a casual one on the occasion of Debi's excessive compassion. She is ready to hold the puppy in hot water, not that she is cruel, but to prove that the Indians are not as weak as the Germans accused them to be. The incident is meant to show Debi's
Christ-like compassion, and has nothing to do with her. It is the same dog
that he fosters and she keeps in memory of him as a lost child’s doll is
cherished by the mother.

During her days of companionship with Gian, when he says of going
back to the Andamans, she too wants to go because her Debi is ‘there’.
Even after her intimate sexual satisfaction with Gian, when she comes to
know of the deceit he perpetrated on Debi, she rants and raves at him like a
mother-goddess. Certainly it is not because of any sexual attraction. Freud
has said that incestuous desires are a part of the process of growing up.
This may be true of Ramaswamy and Bakha. But to say that “Sundari feels
the same pride in her brother’s manhood as Bakha and Ramaswamy feel for
their sister’s womanhood” would be carrying Freud to a ridiculous
extreme. What is wanted, and warranted in the context, is to see Debi as the
son of Mother India which is Sundari, and again as a Jesus Christ to whom
she is a Virgin Mary though the comparison cannot be stretched too far
which is not Malgonkar’s intention also.

This bond between Sundari and Debi is brought out further in their
relationship with their lovers. Her attitude to Gian is that of a she-leopard
that has found a foster-cub which she wants to shelter and protect. Debi’s
attitude to Mumtaz also is much the same. He believes that she is a tiger-cub he has saved. What traumatised Sundari’s sexual identity is obvious.* It is the lack of parental love. She has never been able to believe that she is a daughter because her mother did not show any such affection nor did her father. The role that she was required to play was that of a mother to her younger brother whose loss is what prevents her from enjoying sex with her husband. Later, when she enjoys it with Gian, she considers him as the father figure who offered help to her Debi. When she comes to admit of her feminine love for him, though shrinkingly, Debi returns to destroy it. And the desperation, which she shows in taking revenge on Gian, manifests her motherly love for Debi all the more.

Thus it can be seen that Malgonkar portrays the changes in familial life in India due to various influences. Here, again, his sense of history is evident. The familial relationships in his novels are not motionless like a painted backdrop. They also are seen precipitating crises, and thus taking the action forward.

* John Rothfork, on p. 52 of his article, says it is not obvious.
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13 H.C. Mithal, 64, 69.


15 Lewis Way, 72.


17 G.S. Amur, 88.

18 Haydn Moore Williams, 173.


22 Haydn Moore Williams, 174.


29 G.S. Amur, 105.


32 Sangeeta Gupta, 228.


35 Sangeeta Gupta, 235.